

The Charismatic Itch

by David Wilkerson

David Wilkerson warns against the charismatic movement's focus on superficial experiences and manifestations, emphasizing the need for sound doctrine, intercession, and prayer.

Duration: 52:34

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:1

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of staying true to the simplicity of the gospel and warns against getting caught up in complex interpretations. He shares a personal experience of feeling empty and ineffective in his preaching until he realized the need for deep prayer and spiritual renewal. The preacher encourages the audience to prioritize prayer and not let other distractions consume their time. He also highlights the power of prayer in transforming lives and urges listeners to seek a genuine encounter with God.

Transcript

I hope someday Jesus will give me a ministry of just blessing people, because I'm getting tired of the criticism. For example, I said in this vision that I foresee a time of persecution coming such as the world has never witnessed. Jesus said, they persecuted me and they persecuted you, and he's given you a blessing, not to get you ready.

We've moved away from the age of Aquarius to the age of persecution already. I've been warning the charismatic Catholic movement that the Pope and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church will eventually turn on their movement, there would be launched a neo-Catholic charismatic movement, it would not die, it would grow, but it would have to go underground. Whether that's the death of this Pope and a new Pope coming, I don't know.

But right now, friends, that's happening. I can produce right now all kinds of articles in the Catholic Weekly, in all kinds of magazines, decrying what happened at Notre Dame when thousands of charismatic Catholics gathered. They said, we don't need that, we don't want it, they don't want us, we don't want them.

Crying now for that movement to be evicted from the Catholic Church. That's coming, it's coming, and so many, many have said, well, you wrote a book to cross and switch blades, and you talked about this, and

many, many people who have received a charismatic experience refer to the few chapters, the last few chapters in the cross and switch blades. Friends, that's still my testimony.

I have not been removed from that. Some of you tonight will think I don't believe in the charismatic movement. Not at all.

First of all, I don't like the word charismatic. It sounds like asthmatic. I'd say you ought to go to a Phoenix and do something about it.

But since that's the only word we have to explain what's happening, that's what I have to use tonight. So I prayed about this. I said, Lord, I can't go there with Brother Jack and all those Methodist friends.

Many of you sitting here have a charismatic experience, and some of you may not. You may be searching and seeking God about it. I said, God, I can't get up there because you haven't called me to set the Church straight.

You haven't called me to condemn people. I don't want that. But, friends, I cannot be honest with myself in prayer anymore unless I obey God and what he tells me to do.

I've asked God for three days now to baptize me in love so that I could refer to these things he's asked me to refer to and that you'd receive it. So there'd be no malice. I believe in divine healing.

I believe in miracles. And, friends, there's something happening in the Church now that I've got to talk about. That's all I can say.

Let's pray. Father, I'm going to have to have your help tonight. I really am.

That you would give me the anointing and the unction that is so necessary that this word be driven into our hearts. Now, Lord, we've praised you and we've worshiped your name, and there's been a wonderful thing happening here at this Methodist convention, conference, and we thank you for the Holy Spirit that has been so greatly manifested. But now, Lord, whatever you have to do, whatever you have to do, God, do it.

Take the sharp two-edged sword of the word and drive it deep into our hearts. And Lord, we may not leave this building shouting tonight, but we'll leave this building ready to be broken. In Christ's name I pray, amen.

The charismatic itch. There's a solemn charge from God's word that every single charismatic Christian must hear and now. Never before was this charge so needed in the Church as it is right now.

Second Timothy 4, 1 to 5, I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead it is appearing in his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine. And friends, in a way, that's what I'm having to do tonight. He said reprove, rebuke, and exhort.

For the time will come, and here it is, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I'm now ready to be offered the time of my departure at hand.

Now friends, we are clearly warned by the word of God of significant problems that would come along and threaten the integrity and the reality of a true Holy Ghost experience. A time is coming, the Bible said, when men and women will flock after teachers who introduce innovative, strange, and unsound doctrine. Secondly, they would develop an itch for stories, fables, but at the same time become bored with sound doctrine and sound Bible methods.

Thirdly, others will appear who put on a front of superficial godliness, but who will deny the power, the witnessing power of the gospel. Also, there would arise prayer groups who creep into others' houses to introduce Bible teaching, new, innovative Bible teaching that excuses man's lusts and weaknesses, and they will spend all their time in learning, teaching sessions, but will never come into the knowledge of the truth. 2 Timothy 3, 6, 7, For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women who are laden with their sins, led away after divers' lusts, ever learning, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Paul warns Timothy and all of us in the Church, resist these new trends with the simple truth of God's holy word, resist it. Most of these, the Bible says, who are directing these new sessions will be basically corrupt, and it won't take long for them to be exposed for what they are. The Bible said their folly shall be known to all men, those who excuse sin and weakness.

Their folly shall be known to all men. And I found something out, friends, those who teach these innovative truths, these new mysteries of the gospel, as they call them, are often corrupt men trying to excuse their own sin. They preach to hide their own folly.

Paul said, test their doctrine, their teaching by a criteria that I want to be judged with. 2 Timothy 3, 10, Paul said, But thou hast fully known my doctrine, my manner of life, my purpose, my faith, my long-suffering charity, patience, persecutions, and afflictions, which I endured and was delivered out of. Now, friends, hold it just a minute.

How dare you and I believe what a man or woman teaches as doctrine until we know the manner of life behind it? What right have we to listen to a man or woman until we know what life he is? Paul said, You know my manner of life. So many charismatic groups today invite any Johnny-come-lately to share in their Bible teaching, and they have no other credentials often than a glib tongue and an ability to turn people on. The visiting teacher or preacher could be living in adultery, practicing homosexuality, and I have seen that many times as the case, running from the law, but too often now he's allowed to gather around him a large following before he's exposed, and then the damage is already done.

Paul said, I give you my record of patience and purpose and faith and charity from Antioch to Lystra. Check with these places. Make full proof of my ministry.

I've fought a good fight. I've kept the faith. These things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses.

I'm a workman who needeth not to be ashamed. In other words, Paul said, Check me out before you accept my doctrine. Check me out.

Paul further warns, Stay away from those who come along who do not rightly divide the word. Some, they're profane and vain babblings because what they teach leads only to permissiveness and ungodliness. Their teaching is like gangrene.

They keep introducing foolish and unlearned questions. I can even name them, like Hymenaeus and Philetus. They're in error.

They are overthrowing the faith of some, saying the resurrection is past already. Avoid these foolish teachings that only create strife and more questions. These teachers are snare of the devil, so pray those who are caught may recover themselves.

And how grieved I am lately in my travels across the country, hundreds of young people now who are involved in some charismatic renewal, say, Pray for me, Brother David. I've fallen under the teachings of a false prophet. I'm all mixed up.

I'm all confused. Never before have we witnessed such a flood of new teachings, new ideas, new doctrines, special gimmicks, and special interest groups who claim to have the deeper truth. And it's going to get worse, friends, because now we have in all of us a kind of supernatural syndrome.

It's inherent in so many groups, and it's leading to a trail of confusion, mysticism, and a craving for bigger, better, and more spectacular manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The poor little pastor who serves up just a simple, pure, unspectacular gospel teaching today can't even begin to compete with all the glamorous supernaturalists that are in the country today. And too often, if you don't have some kind of a gospel gimmick, you can't draw the crowd.

So not much amen, but I'm going to unload it and get it said. I've got converts in my program in New York City who can't stand more than thirty minutes of pure doctrine when we're teaching, but they'll line up for three or four hours to get in a big crusade hoping to get zapped by some great man of God. They come back to the center with glory reports of legs that were pulled straight, signs and wonders, and blankets that were thrown over dozens of people laying on the floor.

Now it's excitement, it's charisma, it's spine-tingling, it's unusual, it's crowded, and let me say something here and now, hear it please. It is often, very often, a true, genuine work of the Holy Spirit, and it must never be mocked or ridiculed, never, never. But let's go to the Word of God now and find where our true priorities are, whether you're charismatic or not.

First, Christ calls for intercession above exhilaration. Now let me repeat it in case you didn't sink in. Christ calls for intercession before exhilaration.

Too many of us today prefer the supernatural displays on the mountains of transfiguration to the agony of watching and praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. Today, the disciples were slain by the awesome power of God. After six days, Jesus took Peter, James, and John, his brother, brought them into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, and behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

Then answered Peter and said, Jesus, Lord, it's good for us to be here, if thou wilt let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased to hear you hear him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid, and Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid, Matthew 17, 1 to 7. They fell on their face.

This proves beyond a shadow of a doubt, in my mind, there is a Bible precedent for people falling out under the fear of God, but let it be known to every evangelist who is being used by God to cause people to fall out, and that's happening in all of the United States today. Thousands are flocking to meeting where people fall out on their faces. Let it be known by every evangelist and by every disciple who is ever slain by the Spirit of God.

Look at the word, hear it now. No one touched them except to tell them, as Jesus did, Arise, and be not afraid. That is the testimony of Jesus Christ.

They experienced a vision of heaven's glory, and they heard God speak directly to them. It was a very personal experience, and Jesus warned them, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen from the dead. Notice this, please.

I give you a Bible. It was fear that caused them to fall out. It was fear.

It was the fear of the awesome power of God that caused them to fall out. But it was Jesus who rebuked that fear and commanded them to stand up. Now, God help me, God help any evangelist who through fear or any kind of personal charisma should cause any child of God to fall on their face.

I believe with all of my heart that being slain by God's Spirit is valid. It happens. I've seen godly saints being carried out of churches so full of the vision of God's glory where they couldn't walk or talk.

When I was a boyfriend, my friends, in my dad's church, people would be slain by the power of God, and I remember at three o'clock in the morning they were still there. They didn't even know that they'd seen a vision of God's glory. They'd caught a glimpse of their own sinfulness and the holiness of God.

I remember we had ushers who did nothing more than carry people to their cars and drivers driving them home. It was not light and frivolous. It did not focus attention on any man or woman meeting or directing its flow.

It was spontaneous. It was the result of the fear of God that came from seeing the sinfulness of a heart and the pure holiness of God. Now, friends, this is not to refute anybody or anything that is happening today.

I warn, though, every evangelist who has an honest heart because I have been deeply involved in this very thing, and the fear of God is on my heart. God don't ever let me touch a man to fear a pure charisma of my flesh and ask that he be slain. I pray that, oh, mighty God don't come upon any congregation, any hungry heart, and in His choosing, slay.

But then when I see that man laying there slain by the power of God, as Jesus, I want to go to him and say, arise and be not afraid because the Holy Spirit is here. Jesus touched them only to cause them to rise without fear. Now, it is wrong, it is deadly wrong to go anywhere in the country to any meeting to seek only the exhilaration of falling out.

And it is the grossest kind of error to believe that any human being on earth has some kind of supernatural power to zap people. Never. That is in God's hand, and it comes of a revelation of seeing the heavens opened.

Hallelujah. And I tell you, if you want to fall out under God's power, be sure that you've been dazzled by the consuming glory of God, and be sure you hear that voice from heaven that goes with it. Now, like the disciples, we want to bronze the blessing and bottle the glory.

Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it's so good for us to be here, if you'll just allow us, let's start a building program of three tabernacles right here, one for you, Moses, and one for Elias. And Peter was saying, Lord, this is so good, we just have to stay right here, let's keep it going. We want to stay in the glory, we want to keep on witnessing the supernatural, we want to stay where God's power keeps us slain, we would like to go all the way through life sitting in these heavenly places on the Mount of Transfiguration.

But it was on another mountain where these same disciples, who had been so excited and exhilarated about the supernatural, fell asleep on the matter of prayer and intercession. Matthew 26, 36 to 43, then came Jesus with them to a place called Gethsemane. Are you listening? And said to his disciples, sit ye here while I go and pray yonder.

And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said he unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, tear ye here and watch with me. He went a little further and fell on his face and prayed, saying, Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

He cometh to his disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith to Peter, what, could ye not even watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation, the Spirit indeed is willing. Sure, the Spirit is willing to be exhilarated, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, O my Father, this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, then thou wilt be done.

Now these disciples knew the blessing of the mountain, but not the agony of the garden. They had no trouble staying wide awake for the supernatural demonstration, but they were bored to sleep when it was time to pray. Now friend, if it's not the exhilaration of the mountain, it's the exhilaration of casting out devils and healing the sick.

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two by two before his face into every city and place, whether he should come. And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan's lightning fall from heaven, behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing by any means shall hurt you, notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

Now friend, if this passage of Scripture is really true, if we're to take the words of Jesus Christ literally, then we've got to face some hard facts right here and now. First of all, we are not to praise God for everything. We're to praise God in everything.

Jesus did not praise God for the cup. He prayed to be delivered from the cup, because prayer changes things. I do not praise God for divorce in somebody's life, never.

I pray that God heal the marriage. He prayed to be relieved and finally for grace to accept it. We are in fact warned against praising God that the devils are subject to our prayers.

Rejoice not that the spirits are subject to you. We are to praise God, what, for Jesus. There is all our praise.

That is the object of all of our praise, who has written our name in the book of life. Therefore, a true Christ-honoring healing conference or meeting is where the congregation does not praise God for the supernatural manifestations of healing, but for the souls who are repenting and who are being redeemed and written in the Lamb's book of life. Oh, they say, Brother Dave, you don't believe in divine healing.

I've never believed in it more. My wife came through very serious, five operations for cancer. It's been the healing power of Jesus that has kept her alive.

But the Bible makes it very clear, we are to rejoice as do the angels who glorify God for one sinner who repents, then for ninety-nine physical miracles among those who are already in the hold. Rejoice in this, not that the devils are subject unto you. We are not, if we are to be exhilarated, it must be over the joy of sinners repenting and not of devils fleeing.

Immediately after giving the disciples power over all unclean spirits and over all the power of the enemy, he warned them to keep their priorities straight. You have power, Jesus was saying, but don't exalt in that power, don't rejoice in that power, don't show it off, go mainly after lost souls. That's what makes heaven rejoice, that's what should make you rejoice.

Heaven rejoices in what? In one sinner who repents. God is calling the charismatic movement to a new life of watchfulness and prayer. Oh, I believe that, I believe it.

We are a praising people, but we are not a praying people. We want the miracles, the manifestations, the gifts, the blessings, the visions, but we don't want the hard work and sweat of watchful prayer. Those sleeping disciples in Gethsemane had no discernment at all about what was happening.

The end was near, time was running out, history was in the making, and they were barred to sleep. Men who had cast out demons and healed the sick and turned the cities upside down could not pray for one hour. And we today have the unique ability to travel hundreds of miles to get into a supernatural meeting and sit for hours rejoicing in miracles and go everywhere telling about our baptism, and we can't shut ourselves in the secret closet to pray for one hour.

Christ is coming, the ends of the world are falling in on us, old things are about to pass away, a new kingdom of God is coming, and about all some of us can do is think about another blessing. We have no burden to pray, no urgency to intercede for our lost families and friends, no discernment of the signs around us, no heartbreak and tears for the dying millions in the ghettos and in the heathen lands. Give me one broken-hearted prayer warrior for every ten thrill-seeking, bless me, Jesus Gadabows.

Persecution is the only antidote God has for the charismatic itch. Now just in case you don't understand what I mean by the charismatic itch, let me spell it out once again in plain, simple terms. It's an ailment that afflicts very sincere people who yearn for truth and deeper learning.

It's an ailment that can't be scratched or satisfied by simple, pure doctrine or the truth about living by faith and not feelings, because that usually doesn't satisfy the itch. So they heap up learning experiences, running from teacher to teacher, new truth to new revelation, miracle meeting to conference, the tapes and books and records. They go away loaded down with material, but they never really come into the knowledge of the truth.

Now, friends, I've put out as many sermon tapes and records as anybody in the country, and I believe in them. But my friends, I've seen some of the manuals and the books and the teaching today, and it's so complicated you'd have to have a prophet with you 24 hours a day to interpret for you. I've read some of the manuals and listened to some of the new teaching, and I've said, God, if it's that hard, I'll never make it.

How in the world will a new convert make it? Well, I can't even figure it out. I've got to have a map. No wonder Paul warned us not to be removed from the simplicity of the gospel.

And you can mark it down. The harder it is to understand and the bigger the yoke, the further it is from the truth. Therefore, now listen, the itch becomes a way of life.

The pursuit of truth becomes more important than the discovery of truth. If some people ever came into the simple knowledge of the truth, they'd die of boredom. Because it's fun seeking the truth.

You meet a lot of nice people. This is the end of side one. Please stop the machine at this point and turn the cassette over.

It becomes addictive to stay on the run and make the rounds. It's too comfortable to stay in Jerusalem and break bread with others of like testimony if you want to stay near the upper room. Now God's only alternative is to send persecution to chase us out.

Acts 8, 1, 4, and Saul was consenting unto his death, and at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem. Now friends, there was persecution against the first charismatic church, there was going to be persecution against the last one. And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.

And devout men carried Stephen to his burrow and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women, committing them to prison. Therefore they were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word.

How did they fight? Remember Jesus said he's going to give them a penny cost to send them to Judea and Samaria? How did they finally get there? They'd still be in Jerusalem if God hadn't allowed persecution. Through persecution. Now they could handle demons and devils, but they weren't ready for persecution.

They weren't expecting it, they weren't prepared. Now look what happens. They're chased out of Jerusalem, they're scattered everywhere, and they begin to evangelize the lost.

And those, listen closely now, those who once looked earnestly on Peter for miracles and exhilaration are now looking earnestly on the Lord for personal guidance and personal ministries. Who wants to leave Jerusalem? Man, those mass meetings with thousands being converted every day, those unique shadow healings of Peter. That's right, he walked the street in a shadow film, boy, everybody comes, I'll bet he had thousands following him to see where the shadow was going to fall.

They called him the shadow. People were not only falling out, they were falling dead. The full gospel fellowship meetings were citywide, people went to bread-breaking banquets and they were tremendous.

Miracles, signs, wonders, healing cloths, and the respect of the whole city. But with all of that, they were out of God's will. And any charismatic move of God is out of the Lord's will when it becomes satisfied only to live off itself and maintain the Jerusalem experience.

Now God has tens of thousands of angels praising his name, but only a few men to witness. And when men do not use their Pentecost to spread the net for lost souls, it becomes introspective, mystical, and self-serving. Men become more interested in getting relief from their pains than from redeeming the world.

We become mired in our own depressions, our fears, our anxieties, and we're preoccupied in building up our own faith with signs, leadings, and miracles. Then we qualify eventually for those indicted by the Lord, and evil generations seek us after the signs. Now among many charismatic groups today, there's no urgency for missions, there's no burden for dying heathens.

Too often we prefer to gloat in the last VIP testimony of who got the baptism. I'm praying for Billy Graham. I've heard that all over the country.

And we've got people praying for the Pope to get the baptism when all the children are going to hell. Now, friends, I am not trying to be facetious. I have a burdened heart.

My heart is burdened. We sometimes travel all over the world to give our testimony or to hear one of how the Holy Ghost got a hold of our lives, yet we do little or nothing about the millions dying without Christ in the ghetto. And I've seen banquets, thousands of Christians come to New York and sit there on banquet tables praising God and telling how the Holy Ghost got a hold of them, and they couldn't even get there until they walked past thousands of drug addicts and alcoholics and prostitutes, where a handful of us out there were trying to do something for Jesus.

And that's why persecution is sure to come. He's going to allow, once again, havoc to be made of the Church and chase us out into highways and hedges to compel them to come in. Now the application of this entire message that God's little more heart can be found in the ministry of Philip.

Here is a great charismatic heeding evangelist who has dramatically taught what really pleases God. Acts 8, 4 and 8, and hear it good and loud, please. Therefore, they were scattered abroad whenever we're preaching the word.

Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. Unclean spirits crying with loud voices came out of them that were possessed with them, and many taken with palsies, and they that were lame were healed.

The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And here rose and went, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority, and a candidate queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship. He was returning, and sitting in his chair, read Isaiah the prophet.

Then the spirit said to Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot. Now hold it just a moment. Why would the Holy Spirit stop a man of God who was doing the right thing in the right place at the right time? Jesus had commanded them to go to Samaria and Judea and heal the sick and preach salvation.

That's exactly what he was doing. He was in the perfect will of God. His crusades were successful.

Crowds were flocking to hear him. The lame were walking. The blind were seeing.

The spirit was falling. But suddenly it was interrupted by God himself. God said, Shut down your miracle meeting.

You're going to the desert. Cancel the crusade. The sick and the poor will always be with you, but I want you alone in the desert of Gaza.

And the greatest lesson God ever taught me, that he was more interested in winning all of me than he was in me of winning the world. I know of many great evangelists that I have been associated with in some way or another. I've seen as they stood before people in tears and beautiful spirit, and people were flocking and being healed and things were happening.

And then you go behind stage and you see associates that are treated like dogs and you hear that something happens between the stage and the back room. And I often said, Oh God, if you ever used me, make sure that you get all of me first. All of me.

You see, friends, with God, big is not always better. God wanted to see if he had won the man who was winning the world. God was testing a servant who had been faithful in the many ministries of Samaria to see if he'd be just as faithful out of sight and out of mind, away from the spotlight, away from the microphone and the charisma of the crowd.

God was also reminding us, hear it now, God was also reminding us that he will not let us get too far away from the fact that one to one witnessing is his perfect will. Philip needed that black Ethiopian as much as that Ethiopian needed Philip. Philip needed him as much as he needed him.

They needed each other. He needed to come down out of the clouds and be reminded he was called to win souls and teach men how to enter the kingdom. Now, friends, as important as healing the sick and casting out devils may be, and it is, God has given us that power.

We're to use that power. Yet there are millions who want nothing more or less than to know the way more perfectly. Like the Ethiopians, they want to know the way.

There was no request for divine healing. There was no need to cast out a devil. They want the miracle of being born again.

Now, some of you are headed for the desert, and I say good for you. It's a dry, lonely, unglamorous place. You'll wonder what God's trying to put you through, but you won't have to look too far to discover God's most satisfying ministry of all, personal evangelism.

This desert ministry is going to take you out of the civic auditoriums for a while. It puts you in the hospital wards where a demonstration of true baptism and healing power are really needed. Oh, God, if he could turn loose just one of these conferences like this, up and down the corners of all our hospitals, in and out the jails, and Jesus said, I was in prison, you visited me.

How many of you are going to be there to answer that? That's why when I go to a city, I have my associates say, any prison witness, any prison invitation you get, you grab it for me. And I'll go to a prison more than I'll go to a convention, and I believe God's called us all to that ministry. I remember, with this I

close, standing on a rooftop in Brooklyn 15 years ago.

I was known as a healing evangelist. I was on television on six stations, and I had people come half the day to line up to get in to the meeting. I really thank God for those gifts of discernment when people are called out with ailments.

I believe in that. When it's operating through a true vessel that's sanctified by the Holy Ghost, I believe in it. Friends, it was easy to stand in my church in Pennsylvania, and when the buses piled up outside and the television cameras, it was very exciting, very exhilarating.

It was very difficult, friends, one time to stand in front of a crowd one day, and the anointing wasn't there. But I remembered how it was done, so I started calling them out, and it worked. But when I went to prayer, I heard it, you big phony, you big phony, and I heard it loud and I heard it clear, and I said, Oh, God, please give me an honest ministry.

I can't allow that anymore in my life, and I began to seek the face of God, friends. Lord told me to leave that church, leave that ministry, because he wanted me to go into a desert, and there's no bigger desert than New York City, a spiritual desert. I mean, it's another world, and I weighed 115 pounds, and friends, I remember walking down the street one day and seeing five kids on a doorstep, and they were on the nod.

They were falling asleep, and I got mad. I said, I'm a preacher. I thought I was your friend.

Why are you sleeping on me? They said, Because we're junkies. One of our guys went to cop a bag of junk. We're going up on a roof for a tea party.

I didn't even know what he was talking about. They said, Well, come on up and watch this drill if you want. They were drug addicts ready to take off.

And a kid comes up and looks at me suspiciously and says, Oh, he's not a narco, he's a preacher. He's all right. He took me up on a flat rooftop, eight floors high.

I was there in my beautiful blue blazer with gold buttons, wide tie, colored shirt, flared pants. Well, they weren't flared then, they were skinny pants, if I remember. Boy, I was fresh from my crusade ministry.

Boy, I preached faith. I preached miracles. I told everybody I was in dude with power from on high.

And all of a sudden, I see a kid take out a dirty needle. They'd stopped in a restroom. He'd got a Coke bottle, filled it with cold water, and here he is on this flat rooftop.

There's five of them, little kid named Shorty, full of jaundice and hepatitis, just as yellow as he could be, his eyeballs yellow. And I watched him put the syringe and the needle together, and he swished it around in that dirty Coke water. And I said, What are you doing that for? He said, I'm sterilizing the needle.

He actually thought he was sterilizing the needle. And I watched those boys like animals. Shorty was the sickest one of all, and I watched them put it in the cooker and cook it.

They tasted it to see if it was what they called dynamite. And I watched him pick up his belt and make a tourniquet, and it bathed in his neck sticking out, and their lips were watering, their eyes were bloodshot. And I watched him shaking, stick that filthy needle, draw the blood into it, and push it in.

And those other boys around him say, Don't shoot at all, Shorty. And they forgot I was there. They were in another world.

And I watched them all shoot off that dirty needle. And after the third boy had shot off that dirty needle, I passed out in that new suit and all, right on that dirty tar, tarry roof. And when I came to, there they were looking down at me.

And when I finally woke up, one of them said, What's the matter, preacher, you chicken? I said, No. I said, Shorty's got jaundice. Y'all shot off his dirty needle.

Y'all have it now. They said, Well, we know that. I got up and shook myself.

I said, I don't believe it. I said, What do you do it for? They said, Well, after you're a mainliner like we are, you don't do it for a thrill. You do it just so you can stay alive, just so it can come up to halfway normal.

Seventy-five percent of the kids on the block shoot it. We sell it to them to support our habit. And I said, Well, why don't you go to the hospital, go to the doctor, get cured? They said, Boy, you are crazy.

One boy said, I went up to a cop once. I got so mad, I wanted to get locked up so I could kick a cold turkey. I grabbed his billy club and hit him over the head.

They locked me up and I came home, went right back to drugs after two weeks in jail. One said, I went to a voodoo service. I got so scared of that voodoo, I had to go out and get a shot.

And one of them said, I was hypnotized by a psychiatrist and he had a little ball and chain and went back and forth. I had to repeat, I will not shoot drugs. I will not shoot drugs.

He said, You're cured. I went right out to the nearest pusher while I was sticking the needle in my vein. I kept repeating the same words.

I will not shoot drugs. I will not shoot drugs. And I was getting high at the time.

And I said, Well, now there, that's not, that's not right. There's got to be a way out. And one of them, I'll never forget it.

That's when my desert experience became real to me. When one of those little fellas, Shorty, right after he told me a vision of heaven, he said he died and went to heaven in this vision. He saw a beautiful mountain of white dynamite.

That's all heroin. He's sitting on top of this mountain and thousands of needles as far as the eye could see in a lake of water. And he was sitting there on that heroin pile shooting all through eternity and the pile never went down.

That was heaven. And here he was pointing a finger in my chest. He said, Mister, there's only one way out, suicide or God.

And when he said God, he said it with a question. In other words, you're a preacher, you're up here, you tell us. And I suddenly stood before four men, young kids who were dying.

I stood on the rooftop, fresh from my evangelistic victories in television, and stood in front of four boys, remembering all the messages I preached and what God can do about faith and miracles and healing.

And I stood there stripped. I stood there empty.

And all of a sudden, all my preaching sounded like hollow clichés. All those things are so easy to say within the safety of four walls. And all the shouting I had done and all the praising and all the miracles that I had seen there face-to-face, hand-to-hand combat, I found something out.

I had not prayed through. I had been so interested in exhilaration, I'd forgotten the intercession. And I bowed on that rooftop, friends, and I still remember.

I go back to that rooftop every time I go back to New York City. I go right to Havermeyer Street, 107, and I climb those, walk upstairs, and I kneel on that same rooftop. And I look around, and I pray the same prayer I prayed 15 years ago.

Oh, God, if the baptism of the Holy Ghost is not a baptism of love, then there's no hope. And I say, oh, God, fill me with love, baptize me so that I can see the world through the eyes of Jesus, so that I can reach out and touch them, and see your healing power away from the limelight, away from the crowds, where, God, if you'll keep, please don't take from me the gift of discernment, but give it to me now so I can discern the sin in these lives, these young men, one at a time, Lord. I don't care if anybody sees it or hears it, friends, and from that day on, I've never had a public ministry of discernment.

I believe there is a public ministry of discernment, but all, friends, I believe the greatest demonstration of it comes one-to-one, where nobody sees you, no one can attribute you to being a prophet, no one can glorify you, even though you say, give all the glory to Jesus, where no one can see or hear, because that which is highly esteemed among men is often an abomination to the Lord. And, friends, those that are least among us are going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God, and I believe that those who serve the greatest are going to rule the highest in heaven, or those who have had these personal, hidden ministries, whose hearts and charismatic lives have gone out to feeding, caring, loving, and reaching the lost without the applause of men. I want to tell you, friends, I have to work at it even now, because it's so easy to get away from the right priorities.

If there is anything that God wants for you, and by the way, friends, it was that rooftop experience in that desert, my Gaza experience. I didn't have a black Ethiopian, I had four little drug addicts. I said, Lord, I'm going to give my life to you right here and now to meet a human need, and I don't want to hear one more word about a baptism of the Holy Ghost, I don't want to talk about the Holy Ghost, I don't want to be a blessed me club where people just sit around and conjure the Holy Ghost and talk in tongues.

Now, friends, I pray in the Glossolator, I pray all day long, I'm driving along the car or anywhere else, I pray in the Glossolator, I believe, for me, this is a devotional experience, and I honor and glorify the Lord in it, but more than anything else, I want God to put something in me through the power of the Holy Spirit that I can go into my room. Jesus said, when you pray, you enter that room and shut the door, and you pray to the Father in the secret, and the Father who sees you in secret shall reward you openly, and the only reward openly that you want, friends, is that the power of the Holy Ghost God has given you can be used to discern the needs of those around you, that you can reach out and see the miracles, every one of you should be a healing evangelist. I believe in this conference, I believe God brought you here, I believe in this with all my heart, we have got to be gathered, the disciples kept year after year going back to Jerusalem to get their batteries recharged.

I believe in that, and if all you get out of this is a praise session, and you don't go home burdened to pray for your family, and don't tell me you don't have time, if you can sit for three hours from twelve to noon and watch as the world turns inside out and upside down, you've got time to go in and pray. Look at all those men clapping, and they're the ones who sit for four hours watching football. There's nothing wrong with that, friends, but oh, we've got time for everything else, and if you don't take time during this conference to just shut yourself in the room, say, God, break me! And friends, I have to work at this, I get worried when people say, well, you just live a life of prayer, you know, you breathe it, that's what Jesus said, you go in the secret closet and you shut the world out and you pray to the Father in secret.

Shut the door! Now do it! Friends, and that's my battle, oh God, don't let me become a pencil pusher, don't let me become just some kind of a crusade speaker, don't let me become just one of those exhilarated saints. God, I believe in that, I do, I do, I do! God, break me, and melt me, and give me a broken heart for this world before Jesus comes and it's too late and we have not eaten the gall! Now if you really believe He's coming, you'll do like my granddad did, he believed and prayed down what he called Holy Ghost Miserables. God, make Him so miserable I have to get saved! Now, what I've just done has not been easy on me, because I wanted to come here and tell you some stories of victories and bless you good, but God had to spank me first, and He did, and I accept it.

Before God, I ask His forgiveness if I have said or done anything that would hinder His work, or that if I appear to be speaking out against any specific ministry, God knows my heart. Never. But I can't help but feel that the Holy Ghost is trying to say something to all Charismatic Catholics, all Charismatic Lutherans, all Charismatic Methodists, all Charismatic Pentecostals, and everyone who does not consider them a part of that particular movement.

God is saying, I've blessed you, you've been exhilarated, you've been on the mountain, but now the end has come. Your cross is near. Come on, I'm going to take you into the garden now.

There's going to be some pain, there's going to be some agony, there's going to be some suffering, there's going to be some persecution. You people who have shouted and praised my name, you're going to be able to watch with me. You're going to be able to pray with me.

And I hear the heart cry of Jesus once again, oh, how I hear it. Come on, Saints, get ready, pray. And I confess tonight before you, I have not prayed like I should.

I've been reading all the time and Newsweek and everything, watching the storm clouds gather, and I've not prayed like I should. I'll tell you one thing, though, he's not going to let me preach like this without making me do it. And I don't want him to make me do it, I want to come in love because he draws me.

And not a person in this building has been praying like they should, not one. And not a person on this platform has been seeking God like we've been told to, not one of us. This whole conference would be a total failure unless we hear what the Holy Spirit is saying.

You're going to be blessed, you're going to praise my name, but then you're going to come with me and you're going to pray, God, we sang with Brother Jack tonight, melt me, break me, try me, fill me. Thank you for the miracles, but Lord, if we sang it and we mean it, then Lord, let it be a prayer, do it Lord, break us right now, forgive us for not praying, forgive us for having time for everybody and everything, but not watching with you and praying with you. God make this a praying Methodist outfit, Lord, make the Methodist Charismatic the biggest praying group in the country, God give them a burden for prayer, Lord,

it would be nice if we could all just get on our knees right now and start praying, because I've never seen that in a great convention like this, I want you all to just get on your knees right now, turn around, get on your knees, and I want you to pray, Jesus, give me a burden for prayer, Jesus, help me to watch with you, now I want you all to pray together, no one beating you, in just the next ten minutes we're just going to pray, that's all, open your heart, lift your voice to him, and pray, Jesus, break us, melt us, draw us aside, we've been so exhilarated but we've not been broken, we've not been broken, break us, thank you, Jesus.

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