

# Totally Committed

by Dennis Kinlaw

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*Dennis Kinlaw's sermon calls for total commitment to God in light of significant historical and spiritual changes facing the church today.*

**Duration:** 57:12

**Scripture:** Ezra 4:1-5, Isaiah 42:1, Haggai 1:14, Matthew 6:33, Luke 9:23, Romans 3:28, Hebrews 4:12

**Topics:** "Committed"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his age and questions whether he should retire or continue working for God's kingdom. He emphasizes the importance of using our opportunities and not backing away from them. The speaker also shares a story about a delegation from InterVarsity who had a profound impact on a Russian educator. He suggests that we may be living in a new day where we need to lift our eyes in hope, knowing that God is still in business and is working to win.

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## Transcript

I'm not going to do anything much except launch into what I have to say, and it's not a carefully prepared manuscript. I want to share with you some things that are burning in my heart, and I am interested in finding whether what is burning in my heart finds a corresponding response in yours, because if what burns in one heart is originated by the Holy Spirit, there will be something comparable to it burning in another heart. And it is what he is feeling and thinking these days that is important to us.

But I don't want to say it's a privilege to have you on the campus of Asbury College, every one of you. And I'm sure that Dr. McKenna, who has had some surgery today, he would say the same about the privilege of having you on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary tomorrow and on Wednesday. We are pleased to have a group that's as illustrious as this, because if you go the rounds of this group, there's some remarkable people in it, and you need to get acquainted with each other while you're here during these days.

They'll go too quickly. I'm a little hesitant to do what I'm going to do tonight, because I'm going to talk way beyond my knowledge, and I'm going to talk beyond my head. But that will mean that some of my statements may not be accurate, but I'm going to count you as friends.

And you will be able to, where you have knowledge that I don't have, you will be able to correct those statements and those concepts. And I simply want to get them out to say, indicate to you something of

what I believe the Lord is trying to say to me. It's interesting to be 67 years of age, and it's more interesting to have just come through open-heart surgery and to have some of the thoughts that come to you in moments like that.

It means that you do some evaluating of who you are and where you are and what is taking place and what you want to give, what energies you have, and what days you have left, too. So, I come with that background in recent weeks. My own feeling is that we may well be meeting at a juncture in history that is as important as any juncture in the course of all of human history.

Now, I surely don't have enough knowledge to make a statement like that, but I'm just simply telling you the thoughts that are going through my head these days. I wonder if we're not living in a moment that is as significant as when Rome fell or as significant as the Renaissance and Reformation when the medieval synthesis broke up. I wonder if we're not at a period when what has been called modernity and the fruit of the Enlightenment, when that is breaking up and we may be moving into a new world and we as Christians need to be ready for it.

There are a number of things that have impressed me as I've looked back across the years and pulled them together to give me some canons for attempting to interpret where we are in human history. I was a student at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1954, taking a course in Syriac literature under Dr. Bruce Metzger. You know, oftentimes in those courses it's the asides that are the most important things that take place in the course, and I felt that way about that course.

One day Bruce Metzger, who is certainly one of the greatest New Testament scholars in the world and one of the greatest of the twentieth century, and a biblical scholar as well as a New Testament scholar, he turned to us, it was a small group, there were nine in the class, and he said, there are some remarkable things going on in Eastern Europe that you need to keep your eyes and ears attuned to. He said some of the most vigorous biblical exegesis that has ever taken place in the Roman Catholic Church is taking place in Eastern Europe now. He said it is the result of Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Divino afflante spiritu*, which originated in 1943.

This was eleven years later in 1954. He said the end result of that is that Roman Catholic scholars can now go behind the Vulgate and produce their scholarship without the Vulgate being a lid on what they publish and on what they say. In that encyclical there was a thrust that biblical scholars should attempt to get to the literal meaning of the text wherever possible.

And with that freedom from the shackling of the Vulgate, and with that emphasis upon going to literal interpretation of scripture, there was a whole host of Roman Catholic scholars that began producing commentaries in French and in German, primarily for a European market. He said it may be interesting the fruit that comes from that. It was seven years later that a Jesuit friend of mine gave me two tickets to attend a lecture in Boston College.

The lecture was to be given by Hans Kuhn of Germany, a young Roman Catholic theologian. That night I listened to one of the most exciting addresses that I think I have ever heard. Some of the promise of that night, from my point of view, has not been fulfilled in the life and in the theology of Hans Kuhn, but that night was a radical statement from him as far as I was concerned.

You must remember that was before Vatican II. There were a thousand Roman Catholic priests in that audience tonight in their black robes. And that night, that young Roman Catholic theologian stood up and

said, we must get back to scripture.

And then he did an exegesis, a New Testament passage on justification by faith. And he said, our church must get rid of the index. I'll never forget he thundered, it has to go.

We have to open up the windows to the Holy Spirit and let the word of God speak to our generation. There were two of us who were there together that night. The person with me was another graduate student at Brandeis University.

He was a graduate of Faith Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Now, I don't know whether you're familiar with Faith Theological Seminary or not, but Faith was the break-off from Princeton in the controversy around Machen about 1932. And it was then a break-off from that break-off, because out of Princeton came Westminster, and then Faith broke off because Westminster was too liberal.

He came from that background. I'll never forget watching him through that. And as we came out, he turned to me, mouth open, and said to me, Kinlaw, we've heard history tonight.

Now, that was 1961. You see, I was a Protestant from North Carolina. Where I came from, a Protestant, a Methodist particularly, wouldn't be caught dead with a cross on his church, certainly not a cross on his altar, and he would have been horrified at a cross around any Methodist preacher's neck.

You see, some of us are old, come from a different world, but those were the days when people like my friend who sat next to me looked upon Rome as the Antichrist. And you will remember that it was the next year that Vatican II occurred, and out of that has come a different world for us. Because some of the people who in 1960 were saying that Rome was the Antichrist had been marching arm-in-arm with Roman Catholics in the anti-abortion movement in this country, and they find themselves as colleagues in common cause in the name of Christ.

In the United States, that world, that world that I lived in, changed radically through that. You will notice that Harold Burgess told you that he had spent a year in sabbatical in a Roman Catholic institution in Minnesota. Here we have tonight the President, Harold Spann from Wesley Biblical Seminary, his theology professor did a year in that same Roman Catholic institution in Minnesota.

We are finding that our world has changed, and that world is open now to us in a way that it's never been before. Now a second experience that happened to me that sets a bit of background for tonight. It was 1982, just seven years ago.

I found myself in Hong Kong in a Hong Kong Keswick convention. On about a Tuesday night, a young lady came up to me and she said, I think you and I have a common friend. And I said, oh, who is that? And she named a former student of mine, a graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary.

I said, yes, he's one of my former students. How do you know him? Well, she said, I was an Australian journalist, a pagan atheist, and God reached me through grace and put me in that man's home, and I lived in his home for six months. And I attended a small Bible school of which he was principal.

God transformed my life, and I found myself in Hong Kong as a Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary. Then I found that as a citizen of Australia, I could get into mainland China. So she said, two and a half years ago, I enrolled in the University of Tianjin, the oldest university in China, as a graduate student.

She said, I've had a remarkable experience alone there, living in a Chinese dormitory with Chinese graduate students. But she said the most significant thing in my experience has been the fact that in two and a half years, in the major, in the oldest university in China, I have met one graduate student who was a Marxist. That was seven years ago.

My ears perked up, and I quizzed her a bit about that. No, she said, they're nihilists. They've long since rejected communism.

Now that may be a bit of a background for Tiananmen Square. And the old guard may have some control, but they sit on a volcano, and they know they sit on it, and you and I know. It was during that same trip that I had the opportunity to get into Canton and go to a Wednesday night church service.

1982, they had just opened four churches in that massive city. And one of those churches was the one I attended. There must have been 250 or 300 people on a Wednesday night.

A Chinese former pastor who had been in prison, who had been converted under a British Methodist earlier in the century, he did a Bible study that night of about 50 minutes. I thought I was in an inter-varsity Christian fellowship Bible study. Because the missionary, one of the missionaries that was with me spoke fluent Cantonese, and he sat in the chair behind me and translated everything into my ear.

So I was able to participate in that experience. Every person there had a list of questions on a sheet, and with the questions in one hand and the Bible in the other, we had a magnificent Bible study. I looked around, and it seemed to me that at least 60 percent of the people in that crowd that night were under 30 years of age.

Now if you'll just do a little arithmetic, under 30 years of age, 1982, it meant that 60 percent of that crowd had been born under Mao Zedong and his rule. They had lived in a culture that had been hostile, totally hostile, to Christianity. So after the service, I sat down with the pastor, and I said to him, I notice you have a lot of young people here.

How did they become Christians? And he looked at me and smiled a bit, as if he knew a secret I didn't know, and then looked over and gently said, they're children of believers, or else they're friends of children of believers, or else they're friends of friends of children of believers. And I found myself saying, yes, the gates of hell will not prevail against the church of God. It cannot be wiped out.

And that night I knew it as I sat there. Now the third thing that I want to put into this picture is what's taken place in Europe, in Eastern Europe and Russia in the last six months. I heard the other day, you may know far more about this than I, so if you do, you be patient with me.

But a few days ago, I heard the story of the man who was such a strategic person in Carter's administration in terms of foreign policy, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who this past summer was invited to give some lectures in Moscow. So he prepared himself well and decided he would take his courage in his hand and found himself speaking to intelligentsia in Moscow, leadership in the Russian government, and he said to him, the day will come when you will have to accept pluralism. And he thought he was incredibly courageous.

And they looked at him at the end of his lecture and sort of said, ho-hum, what next? And Brzezinski went to the American embassy and wired the State Department back in Washington that what he found in Moscow was not what he expected. And you know the next steps as well as I. Poland and Hungary and

East Germany and Czechoslovakia and you can keep going. I remember we had here in 1972 the Methodist district superintendent from Czechoslovakia.

Elfie and I kept him in our home and I had a chance to pump him a bit. You see, that was 17 years ago. I will never forget how he looked at me and said, Ken Law, the greatest problem that I have in the East is to convince anybody that the devil is at work in the West.

And the greatest problem that I have in the West is to convince people that the Holy Spirit is at work in the East. He said, you see, we're having a remarkable ministry with Russian soldiers who are occupying Czechoslovakia, getting Russian soldiers converted to send them back to their home country. We have lived in a remarkable period of human history.

I think there are two things about what has taken place that I think we need to note. I noticed that U.S. News and World Report had a cover picture and a cover headline that said, Communist Meltdown. And you know what happens in a meltdown.

It is not an illness. It is death to the operation. And that was their perspective on it.

We have lived to see, it seems, what we once thought was the scourge, the demonic scourge of human history, self-destruct from within. Not because of a single tank we own or a single bomb we own or a single division of American soldiers. I'm not saying that our military defense has not been right.

I'm just simply saying it has self-destructed from within, not from external forces that have brought them to their knees. And they're the ones who have been telling us about the meltdown from within. Second thing that interests me is that they have failed at their point of what they felt was their greatest strength.

When I was a graduate student at Brandeis University, I developed a bit of a friendship with an Orthodox Jewish rabbinical student. His name was Zvi Abush. Zvi is now teaching back at Brandeis.

I found that Zvi, to my shock, was a fervent Marxist. And I think it was the first time I had ever known personally a person who was committed to Marxism. And so one day as we were talking, I said, Zvi, you're crazy as a loon.

He did have some other indications of that diagnosis because his life ambition was to get a good Ph.D. from a major Eastern university and go to Israel and spend the rest of his life farming. But then he grew up in Brooklyn on the streets of Brooklyn, and I suppose if you had grown up on the streets of Brooklyn, you might have some wild ideas like that, too. I said that once, and somebody in the crowd was from Brooklyn and took me to task afterwards.

But nevertheless, Zvi, I looked at him and I said, see, you're crazy as a loon. Will you, with your Jewish orthodoxy, know that if this country became thoroughly Marxist, you'd have the same problems here that your brothers have in Russia? I'll never forget. Zvi looked back at me and said, if that's what it takes to feed the hungry of the earth, how can I object? Because you see, he felt that Marxism was the one way that you could feed the hungry of the earth.

And you know what the greatest fear in Moscow and in the Kremlin is these days? It's the total breakdown of the economy and the possibility, probability of major famine and hunger in Russia. You see, when you take a materialism that is pure materialism, the one thing most certain to go is the material, which brings us back to Matthew 6.33 and a political version of that, or an economic version of that. Now I've raised the

question, if this is true, and if we are living in a period when we are seeing an age breakdown, that means that there's a possibility there will be a new age.

And that raises the question as to what the possibilities are in that new age. I found myself running my mind back through history, and particularly biblical history. And the thing to which I found myself turning has been, interestingly enough, those two little books in the Old Testament of Haggai and Zechariah.

Do you remember the context for those two little books? You will remember that Israel had turned its, the northern part of Israel had been so backslidden, turned its back upon Yahweh, that you will remember they broke away from the southern tribes and then they were carried into captivity. The Assyrians took care of them. And so those northern tribes were gone.

Now the southern kingdom continued for a while. And then you will remember it became backslidden enough that God moved in judgment on the southern kingdom. And the day came when Nebuchadnezzar came in with his Babylonian hosts and they besieged the city of Jerusalem.

And in 608 and 597 and 586, they destroyed the temple and the city and left it a rubble, more for jackals than for Jews. And they carried away the heart of the people into Babylonian captivity. And as far as they were concerned, their future was gone.

And then there came the day when an emperor came to the throne by the name of Cyrus. It's interesting, no indications that I can find that he was ever a believer in Yahweh. But one day he turned to the Jews and said, Why don't you go home and rebuild your temple? And Isaiah called him the servant of Yahweh.

You will remember that they came back and then they created enough with their activity, they created enough tension with their pagan surrounding or their idolatrous surroundings that they appealed to the government and they were stopped for 18 years. The temple foundation was laid and that was all. I never come to that story, but that I am reminded of something told me by a Southern Baptist in the South back closer to Depression days.

When I was growing up in the South, one of the things I used to notice was Southern Baptist churches that would dig a basement, put a roof over it, and then they'd worship for a while in the basement in hopes one of these days of building the first floor and then maybe a second floor on top. It was interesting that some of those churches never got out of the basement. And I remember one Southern Baptist pastor who said to me, If you spend five years in the basement, you'll never get out.

And they spent, you will remember, 18 years in that kind of situation. Then along came Haggai and Zechariah. You know that Zechariah means Yahweh remembers.

And Haggai's name, I love it, it really in Hebrew means My Festivals. But really if you were to translate that into good, our popular English, it would be something like Mr. Easter Penny costs Christmas. Because you see, that's what they had never known.

In Babylon they had never been able to celebrate a single one of their major festivals. And then along comes, and when they came back, the temple was essential to those celebrations. And so now comes a man whose name is My Festivals, and he looks at them and says, You need to finish the building of the temple, and they started.

And then Zechariah said, The Lord has not forgotten us, and he began speaking. Do you remember the succession of visions in Zechariah? Let me quickly just run through them. The first thing he saw was a horseman and then some horses and other horsemen with him going out through the earth, multicolored horses.

And he says, What are these? And the angel who interpreted things to him said, These are the Lord's CIA. And they run throughout the earth to report to Yahweh what's taking place in the earth. And they find that everything is at rest except in Jerusalem, and Yahweh is concerned about that.

Then he had a second vision. You will remember all of these have the same date on them. It was a very active night for the prophet, because there were eight of these visions that night.

The second vision was a vision of four horns. And as he looked at these horns, he turned to the angel interpreter and said, What are these? Oh, he says, These are the Assyrians and the Babylonians and the Medo-Persians and the Greeks. These are the world powers that have trodden down my people.

And then he had a third vision, and it was for four craftsmen, smiths, who came. And he said, What are these? And he says, These are the carpenters who are going to saw off the horns. Always loved that, because, you see, the one that sawed off Marxism wasn't American capitalism.

It was a craftsman, a carpenter, who came out of Nazareth. And he's the one who speaks the final word on every world power, always has and always will. They may have their day, but he will have the last word.

And so the prophet said, Who are these? They are the ones to cut down these empires. Now the next thing he saw was a man with a measuring line. And he said, What's this band? What is this about? Oh, he said, He's the one that's measuring for the rebuilding of my people's city.

Isn't it interesting how God has tied up his identity and his mission with certain places and Jerusalem preeminently? And so he said, He's measuring the city of Jerusalem for it to be rebuilt. And then a second comes and says, Stop him, because he doesn't need to. Because if he measures it, you'll build it too small.

Because my designs for you are bigger than what you ever dreamed. And I suspect that is the permanent judgment upon us, the permanent judgment upon the church in which he speaks and says, If you measure it, you'll draw it too small. And the prophet said, But what about walls? He said, You're not going to need those either, because the city is going to be bigger than you thought, and it's going to be safer.

Because I will be the wall of fire around about the city. You're not going to need brick walls, because you will have divine walls. You will remember that he said, And the glory of this city will be greater than the glory of David and Solomon's Jerusalem.

When the gold in the city was like the stones in the street for plentifulness, and the glory of that temple with its gold and its silver, but he said, The glory of this house will be greater than that, because I will be the glory within it. Now, you know, I wonder if we don't need to work our way through a philosophy of history involved in that. Moving from symbols to reality, and the symbols never state the greatness of the reality.

And that reality will come, because he is sovereign. You will remember that after this, he saw the high priest, the chief priest, his name was Joshua. It's interesting, these names at the right spot.

Joshua in the Old Testament at the Jordan, and Joshua here. And you will remember Jesus, which is Joshua in the New Testament. And so here he is.

But this is a different kind of savior. You will remember that he was in filthy clothing. And the prophet looked, and his heart broke when he saw the representative, the intermediary that stood between the people of God and God, clothed in filthy, defiled garments.

And an angel spoke and said, Take them off, because we have fresh garments for him. And when they started putting the clean, fresh garments on Joshua and giving him a new ministry, I'm glad there's a second chance for preachers, aren't you? So he said, when the text tells us that when he saw him putting the clean clothing, the clean vestments on Joshua, the prophet sort of lost himself and said, Put a clean turban on his head, too, with its words, Holiness unto the Lord, on it. And so they took a discredited priest.

I'm glad for that, because I think the church today is discredited. You may not. I think the church today is discredited.

But God can take the discredited priest and make him again the intermediary between God and man if the discredited priest will let God clothe him in his own righteousness and holiness. And so they put the crown on his head, and Joshua was able to perform. And then God said, Joshua will do his work, but there is another coming, my servant.

Isn't it interesting that the best we've got is but a poor picture of what is to come? And that's the biblical word. And so he speaks of another high priest who will come who's never been touched by the defiling and the unclean. You will remember that the next vision was, and in that vision, when he sees Joshua restored, you will remember that God speaks and he says, and the day will come when the guilt of this land will be taken away in a day.

Isn't that an incredible concept? The guilt of this people will be taken away in a day. And then comes the next vision. It is of a lampstand.

You will remember the sevenfold lampstand, like the menorah in the temple. And standing side of the lampstand are two olive trees. And from the two olive trees are tubes that run into the lampstand so it is perpetually supplied with the necessary oil for that lampstand to give its light.

Now, I don't need to talk to you about the symbol of the lampstand, but that lampstand is symbolical of Israel. And in that same sense, it is a predecessor to that word of Jesus when he looked at his own and said, I am the light of the world, yes, but you are the light of the world. And what awes me tonight is that I'm looking at the light of the world in front of me.

That's what he called us. That's what he called you. So here is this lampstand because we are to give the light of God and the light of life, the light of salvation, the light of truth to a world.

And he says, how can this be? And the prophet God speaks and says, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord. Now, I used to know a little bit about Hebrew, and when I was working in it, one day I became interested in that text, and so I checked out the use of the two words in that text, for might and for power. One is the Hebrew word koach, one is the Hebrew, the other is the Hebrew word hayo.

And I pulled down a Hebrew lexicon and noticed the usages of them. I'm not going to do a study of that tonight, but just let me tell you what is there. I found that those two words are used for all human

resources.

For instance, hayo can be used for an army, and if you have a city that has no walls and no defense, you need an army, don't you? When you live in a world of Babylonians and Nedo-Persians, you need one. Hayo is a good word for army. Koach is a word that is used for the strength of a horse.

Do you know what a horse was in that ancient world? He was easily the equivalent of the best tank that the Russians had, or the best fighter plane or bomber that the Russians had, or that we have, for that matter. In fact, if you take those two words, they are used for every physical, military, human, personal strength or wealth or resource. So they are exhausting.

The combination is to exhaust human resources. Not by human resources, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord. Now that has become very precious to me, because it seems to me that what we are seeing in our day is the work of God being done, not by our resources, but He is working.

And we have the opportunity of joining with Him if we will. Now with that, I began to say, could it be that we are at a stage in human history when we need to hear a word like that and when we need to lift our eyes, not in despair but in hope, knowing that the God whom we worship is not going out of business? He's decided to stay in business. And He's not only decided to stay in business, no matter whether ABC, CBS, NBC knows about it or not, or whether the U.S. government will recognize Him or not.

He is in business and He's in business to win. Now, there are some things that have happened in what has taken place that we need to know. I had the privilege of talking today with Mary Fisher, and she's the young lady that I met in Hong Kong.

She is with InterVarsity. She handles much of the overseas work of InterVarsity and is one of the ones laying the groundwork for the next Urbana convention. And she was telling me, I had not realized this, she said, Dr. Kinlaw, did you hear ABC's Ted Koppel's report the first night from the Berlin Wall? And I said, no.

Well, she said, if you had and if your German was good enough, you would have heard over ABC German young people standing on the Berlin Wall singing Christian choruses. Is anybody here who can authenticate that? Then she said to me, the leader of the opposition in East Germany comes out of an evangelical church and that that's where the plotting started. I noticed that in Leipzig it was from the cathedrals to the streets.

And we've gone through 1917 to 1989. We've gone through two solid generations of a government that said, if you'll give us a half a century, we will show that religion is over forever. And the demonstrations start in the cathedral.

And what was it, three or four weeks ago, the Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church preached on Soviet TV. I don't know about you, but I think we are at a turning point and we have lived to see the end of an age. Now the question is, what will the next age be? Mary told me that they had the leadership in the inter-varsity said to some of them one day, do some dreaming about what I.V. should do in the days ahead.

And so she said, we just sat down and began to say, Lord, guide us. So she said, we found ourselves talking about the possibility of Christian student work in Soviet Russia. And she said the leadership in inter-varsity was sympathetic enough to what we were about that they put up the money and sent one of

our staff to Soviet Russia to see if there was any possibility of student exchanges where American Christian I.V. students could register as students in Russian universities and where it could be reciprocated here.

She said the man who went over went with some fear and trembling, found himself on the plane flying into Moscow. And the fellow sitting next to him was the new person assigned by the State Department in Washington to handle cultural affairs and educational affairs in Soviet Russia, in the American Embassy. And he said, I'm very interested in what you're talking about.

I will introduce you to the person whom I am replacing. And when he met the person whom the new appointee was replacing, the I.V. fellow found that he was a born-again, fervent Christian. And he said, I think we can introduce you to the people who are interested in this kind of thing.

And so I.V. had a delegation in Russia, and they would spend the day with the Russian educators and Russian students, and then at night they had their debriefing period and then their prayer time. And one day the counterpart of the head of the I.V. delegation turned and said, what do you do when you leave us in the afternoon? And the I.V. leaders explained what they did. He said, is there any way I could attend one of those? I promise you I won't open my mouth.

And so the I.V. group voted to let him come. And he sat through the debriefing, and then he sat through the prayer period. And the next day he went back to his own group to say, I've never met a group like this.

They love each other, and they love us. You should have heard them pray for us. I think we're living in a new day.

Now I don't think we can take much credit for that, but I think we can recognize that the Spirit of God is breathing in our world, and we ought to be sensitive to it. But now the thing that troubles me the most is, I wonder if we are in any sense ready for it. I wonder if Asbury College isn't predominantly educating students for a world that's already gone.

I won't speak about Asbury Theological Seminary, but I suspect we're educating people for a church that's part of a world that's passed. And it may be that we need to be rethinking, repraying who we are and what our mission is if we are to be in league with the Spirit of God that is at work in our world this way. One would assume that the Church of Christ is subordinate to the Spirit and under His control.

And if that's so, then we ought to be in step with Him and preparing young people for a world that is, rather than a world that was. Now it's obvious that we are not ready for this kind of thing. We are probably at the lowest period of spiritual strength in our history.

At least we, I would think you would have trouble finding one that was worse. For instance, significant to me that a student at the University of Kentucky, a girl, has to raise the question as to whether it would be legitimate, whether it would not be legitimate for a student at the University of Kentucky, a male student who rapes a female student, to be dismissed. Isn't that fascinating? Forty years ago, thirty years ago, twenty years ago, if you had suggested such a thing, anybody would be horrified.

We would say, of course the state protects its young people. But that's the discussion and the administration said, we will take that under advisement and perhaps next year we can face that question. That's 17 miles from here in a university with what, 25 to 30,000 students.

But that's typical across the United States. We have a public school system in which we cannot even tell accurately about the religious heritage of our country. And so we educate our young people in delusion rather than reality.

You can keep going. You know this as well as I. And our government, isn't it an irony that the Senate will not give up its chaplain while it runs a government in which no state university can have one? The contradictions in our society are incredible. One can only explain them as what comes when we commit ourselves to delusion.

So how can we be ready for the opportunity that is ours? But I want to say God is at work here. And I have an interest in Methodist theology. And we have had something happen in the last three years that's never happened before in my lifetime.

The first and second volumes of a three-volume projected systematic theology has appeared written by a United Methodist. Tom Oden has published his first volume and his second volume of his systematic. The Living God is on the Father.

And what is the Word of Life, the second volume is on the Son. I read the first volume and found it pure devotional material. I began reading the second volume and it was better.

He doesn't question the virgin birth or defend it. He exalts in it. That's never happened in my lifetime.

He exalts in it. He says, the curse came through Eve, so God gave us an answer in Mary. And the answer came through Mary.

And he said, it's interesting that it was not a male that provided the answer because males can't do it. And what dignity is given to womanhood. And that it was only through the woman that the Redeemer could come.

And then he goes ahead with the deity of Christ. Said you'll never understand Jesus unless you believe in the preexistence, unless you believe in the deity of the second person of the Trinity incarnate in Jesus, incarnate in Mary's Son. So, it is a thoroughly orthodox systematic theology from my point of view.

I challenge you to read it. I think you will find much of what happened to me in reading it will happen to you. Then he comes to the treatment of Scripture and he begins to say, we have lived through a period when we have been controlled by a hermeneutic of suspicion and doubt.

That any self-respecting scholar when he comes to an ancient text, his first stance is to be critical and stand superior to it. He said, my deliverance came not through a Christian but came through a conservative Jew, Will Herber. He said, if you think I am speaking from outside, you must remember I was a radical form critic and a thoroughgoing Boltmanian until 1973.

And he said, Will Herberg, a conservative Jew, began to work on me and he said, you need to know your original sources, Odin. He said, you need to know your history and you need to read some of your ancient documents. And he said, when you read them, you need to come to them without the grid that you put between you and those texts.

He said, you see, you with your modernity decide ahead of time what those texts can say. And then when you've decided that, they can't say anything else. So he said, there's no dialogue between you and the

text.

He said, I began to say, is it possible for me to dialogue? He said, you must let those texts say what they say and listen if you're going to be honest. Tom Odin said, I began to find my, he said, if I was reading Nemesius, now I never heard of Nemesius. I won't ask how many people here have heard of Nemesius.

Mel Dieter's probably only one in the crowd. Maybe some of the seminary profs, but he was a church father from 390 AD writing on the nature of man. Tom Odin said, as I read that church father, something began to happen to me, began to happen to me.

And I began to dialogue and I found that the key to understanding one of those texts was obedience, not criticism. Then he said, I read Cardinal Newman and he said, Cardinal Newman told me that the faith had been revealed and was not to be improved on with my idiosyncratic interpretations. He said, you know, I had been indoctrinated until I was 50 years of age in the belief that a theologian was supposed to find new theology.

So he would have a place, a niche in the theological world. And he said, if you can find anything new in this volume, I've made a mistake. Now you explain that to me.

You know who the five people were that influenced him most? Let me see if I can remember. Albert Outler first, who introduced him to Bultmann. Bultmann read his dissertation and critiqued it and was a friend of Tom Odin's.

And he felt that he was obligated to be a spokesman for Bultmannianism. Then he said he was introduced to Karl Barth. He said, I tried to go that way, but he said his rejection of synergism, human freedom, I could not take.

So he said, then came Will Herbert and Richard Niebuhr. So he said, it was through Outler that I was introduced to Wesley. And he said, I found myself going to him, leaving and coming back.

Now, I think we have seen one of the most remarkable conversions in the 20th century. I challenge you to read it. Work of God, not an evangelical influence on him.

Now, that gives me courage. God is not going out of business and the faith is not going to perish. You and I may depart from the faith, but the faith will not perish.

It will stand. You and I may not stand, but the faith will stand. And we have an opportunity to be a part of it and to be identified with it.

Now, what does that mean for us at this stage of the game? I think it means that we've got, if this is true, if there's any semblance of truth in what I'm saying, you know, opportunity determines responsibility. And if we live at a period of opportunity unequalled in the 20th century, then our responsibility will be comparable to that. You see, I suspect that there will be an openness to our theological history in Eastern Europe and in Russia that will be greater naturally than what would come out of either Geneva or Wittenberg.

Now, I may not know enough to say that, but I'm just simply telling you what I think. It could be that we have an opportunity that's unequalled almost in the evangelical world. As I've looked at it, I've wondered if the next stage is not something beyond.

If we are not reaching sort of a post-Reformation period, as well as a post-modern period, in which there's going to be a new explosion of grace in our world in unexpected ways and unexpected places, not inconsistent with what's gone before, consonant with it, but fuller than what we've known before. There are three things that I have thought about applying to myself. One of them is this, and with this I'm through.

One of them is, I wonder if this is not the day, more than any day in my lifetime, when a Christian has an obligation to total commitment, to where he puts himself in the hands of God and says, God, if you're in big business today, you need people who are free and detached, loose. Isn't it interesting how our security structures have bound us? And our radical obedience is determined by our security structures, rather than our security structures by our radical obedience. I wonder if it isn't a day for us to say, Lord, I'm yours.

You're holy. What do you want to do with me? I'm yours to be poured out. If this is the kind of opportunity that we have in our day, it needs to be seized.

Secondly, I wonder if this is not a day, and I think I've begun to sense this, I've certainly sensed it in my own spirit, when there'll be a greater emphasis among us on intercessory prayer than we've had before. Because if it's he who's going to have to do it, not by might nor by power, then the way we link into that as believers is by intercessory prayer, praying for one another, and praying for every believer, and praying in every way we can as mediators for God to have a fresh opportunity. And I wonder if this is not the day when we need to be cleaner than we've ever been before.

I've debated a little how to say what I want to say, because so many of us come with our predilections as to what it means to be holy. But I remember that in Isaiah it says, they that bear the vessels of the Lord must be clean. Think of what we've gone through in the United States in the charismatic leadership in the last few years.

I urge a day of another case like that. What if our emphasis had been on being clean all the way through? Here's the place where I think the holiness thrust, more needed now than ever before, and maybe a greater receptivity to it. Can the blood of Christ really cleanse a human heart and cleanse it holy, cleanse it fully? I suspect those are going to be the only channels that can fit into the next stage of the history of the Church with full effectiveness.

I wonder if during these days, again, I told you in the beginning, I'm 67. It's interesting. Do you retire? I'm not telling you what to do.

I'm just telling you one of my questions. Do you work for security? Or do you say God? It may not be worth much, but if you can use an old burned out person somewhere in this thing, you got one candidate. Now, you're not in that stage.

See, it won't be long before I stand to face him. One of the things he's going to ask me is what I did with my opportunities. And one of the things he's going to ask you is what you did with your opportunities.

The only thing worse than never having seen them, which is where many of us are, is to have seen them and backed away.

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