

An Awakening Sermon

by E.A. Johnston

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a full presentation of the gospel and the need for a powerful pulpit to transform lives, highlighting the danger of a compromised gospel and the importance of being awakened to one's sinful condition.

Duration: 37:55

Scripture: Romans 3:19

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher highlights the current state of the American church, describing it as compromised, powerless, and worldly. He shares the perspective of an Oriental pastor who visited America and observed a lack of preaching in the pulpit, with teaching taking precedence. The preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching, stating that teaching informs while preaching transforms. He warns the audience about the uncertainty and unpredictability of life, urging them to consider their eternal destiny and their relationship with God. The sermon emphasizes the need for repentance and a focus on eternity, rather than solely pursuing worldly goals and pleasures.

Transcript

We live in a day of a compromised gospel, a powerless pulpit, and a worldly church. I can sum up the American church today as described by a recent visit of an Oriental pastor who came to America to see for himself what the churches were like. He said, first karaoke, then a lecture.

That sums it up, friends. We have very little preaching in our pulpits today. It is mainly teaching, teaching informs, preaching transforms.

The message you are about to hear is not a politically correct gospel. Rather, it is a full presentation of the gospel of the Son of God, preached in the full counsel of God. Listen to it very carefully as we say in the south, I'm going to give you the oil straight from the can.

As the day begins, as the sun rises, it paints a picture of hope for a new today and a better tomorrow. Yet, this is not always the case. Listen to the words that describe a solemn scene as the sun rose over the plains.

The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord reigned upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And He overthrew those cities and all the plain and all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground.

Surely, had the Sodomites known in advance what utter destruction was about to fall upon them, how that they and their warm and comfortable homes, lying together and burning in their lust for each other, would soon at the break of day, rather than a pleasant sunrise to warm them, rather than the sound of birds singing to them, rather fire would drop out of heaven and burn them up, burn the very flesh off their bones. So great was the sudden judgment from God, so overtaking and consuming in its finality of destruction, that we are given the scene of this from the eyes of Abraham as he stands on the mountain and views the smoking cities below. And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord, and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

When I was a boy years ago in high school, I worked as a sack boy in a local grocery store. One of the duties of my employment was to take cardboard boxes that the produce came in and break them down with a box cutter to where they were flat and then take them to a cast iron furnace and burn them. I remember to this day the sensation I felt as I would carefully open that heavy furnace door.

The heat was so intense that my face would be singed from it. I would have to stand back and throw those boxes into an oven full of white-hot flames. The heat and intensity of it was powerfully frightening.

I can only imagine the intensity of the engulfing flames that fell upon the inhabitants of Sodom that morning, how relentless the fire and brimstone was to where the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace, a furnace fueled with burning bodies, burning livestock, burning homes and buildings and commerce and livelihoods. How great was the cry of those being burned alive at the break of day. How great was that cry.

Yet it was not as great as the cry which God had heard beforehand before he sent the fire that would consume them. Listen to the words from verses 20 and 21 from Genesis 18. And the Lord said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which has come unto me.

And if not, I will know what cry is God speaking of. Would it not be the cry of rape? Did not the men of Sodom want to take the angels from the house of Lot with violence and rape them? This Sodomite had become so hardened in their sins that they thought nothing of raping any boy or man they could lay their hands upon. Surely the cry of the victims went up to the ears of the Lord.

So the cry of their sins reached the ears of heaven and moved God to go down to have a look for himself. And what he saw made him filled with wrath that he sends a consuming fire upon all the inhabitants of that country. And their cry of their torments went up as the smoke of a furnace as well.

What a horrible noise Sodom of fire must have made that particular morning. A morning normally filled with the breeze and the treetops and the gentle sounds of birds singing, is now filled with cries and shrieks of pain and anguish as flames engulf their homes and their cities burn to the ground and all that they reside there. Surely had they known such a horrible and painful fate awaited them at sunrise, they would have done everything in their power to reform themselves, to repent before God, and avoid such a final catastrophe.

But they had no warning, and they perished in an onslaught of falling flames, and their cry went up along with the smoke of their burning city. The day before in Sodom was quite a normal day, quite ordinary. All the men of the city were engaged in their lustful enterprise.

They were enjoying themselves to the full. They were filling the cup of their iniquity and had no regrets while they were doing so wickedly before the eyes of a holy God. In the days of Noah, when he was building the ark, the inhabitants of his country would observe him and his family as he labored building the ark and preaching righteousness to them.

But they mocked, they laughed at such a spectacle of an old man building such a monstrosity as an ark, when it was obvious to anyone with any sense that there was no need for it. And God looked down and beheld the wickedness of man, and it grieved him. In Genesis 6 we read, And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air. For it repenteth me that I have made them.

Here is a land full of people whose hearts are corrupt, and their lives are an overflow of that corruption. They grieve God by their sinfulness. Even their evil thoughts grieve God.

So God calls a man named Noah, a man that the Scripture says of. Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations. And Noah walked with God.

Here was a man in the midst of an evil nation, who stood out from his countrymen, in that he walked with God Almighty, while the other inhabitants of the land grieved the heart of God through their wickedness and sin. And their destruction came upon them suddenly and without warning. And they all were drowned except eight persons in the family of Noah.

Christ spoke of this in the Gospels, saying that they were eating and drinking and being given in marriage up until the very day that the flood came and destroyed them. The apostle Peter speaks of those destroyed by judgment as examples to us today. And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly.

Surely, had the people of Noah's day known in advance what tragedy would befall them, what rains and floods would surround and engulf them, what the extent of the raging waters would drown them and their cattle and all the beasts of the field, that their homes would float and then sink, and that they would be helpless to alleviate their dire circumstance. Imagine the sorrow and regret that filled their hearts as they were drowning, as they did not heed the warnings of Noah and book passage on the ark of safety. Rather, they laughed, mocked, and they drowned.

Surely, had they known all of this, they would not have become so foolish. They would have become grave and serious and reformed themselves and repented before God to avoid such a horrible end as drowning today in the land. People go about their normal activities of their day.

They eat and drink. They laugh and enjoy themselves, pursue their goals and their careers. They build.

They gather. They work. They labor.

And they do wickedly against a holy God. For any sin is grievous to a holy God. Man is sinful.

Man is corrupt. Man is alienated from God and the world and oblivious to Him. Your average person today cares little about eternity.

They seldom think of a final judgment and a burning hell. While there are so few preachers of righteousness today who even speak and warn of such things, mostly in pulpits, you will hear about God's great love in heaven, but you will seldom hear about God's wrath for sin and sinners and a burning hell prepared for them. No, there are few preachers of righteousness today warning men to flee from the wrath to come.

Rather, they speak peace, peace, when there is no peace. Although we have a Bible to warn us of these things and bring us to repentance before God, many today are unconcerned about spiritual things. They could care less about matters of eternity.

Why, just about everyone you would ask would tell you that they are all right in the eyes of God, that He is just fine with them and they won't go to a place called hell. Why, the God of today wouldn't send people to such a terrible place. He is just a God of love.

Many preach that nonsense. But the fact remains that God will judge every man at the great judgment and every knee will bow to the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge Him. Those who die in their sins enter a Christless eternity.

They are forever separated from God. A person has to be awakened to his sinful condition before he can even realize these solemn things. Only the Holy Spirit of God can awaken you to your danger.

Only God can awaken you to the fact that you are on the wrong side of Him, that you were lost before just and holy God, and that you stand in a place of great danger. You see, you need to be warned of your danger. If you were driving your car and the bridge ahead of you down the road was unstable, that as soon as your vehicle got on it, the bridge would give way and plunge you to your death in the waters below, you would want to know about it.

You would want to be warned in advance. The true gospel warns you to flee to Christ because of the great danger you are standing on your own merit. But you compare yourself to the men of Sodom and the wicked in Noah's day and others in our day, and you say to yourself that you are not as bad as they.

You think your sins aren't as great as others. But the Bible says all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way.

You see, friend, sin is going our way when we know it isn't God's way. God views all sin as rebellion against Him. You are a rebel against a holy God.

You need to be warned. The apostle Paul states in 2 Corinthians, Listen, friend. In Psalm 7, the Bible declares, You foolishly believe yourself to be standing in a place of safety.

But God stands against you. That in any moment, a sudden accident or calamity can remove you from this earth, send you into an eternity unprepared to meet the God of that eternity. Have you ever seen yourself as lost? How can you consider yourself saved if you have never been lost? Has there ever been a time in

your life where you knew you were on your way to hell and that you deserved to go there? How then can you feel a need for a Savior and a remedy for sin if you have never considered yourself in need of that remedy? I fear many today have entered the church and walked an aisle and made a decision for Christ and believe themselves to be saved, but they have never seen themselves as lost.

Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. To be off here affects our destiny. You have to be lost before you can be saved or you will be consigned to an eternal place of torment, a place of fire and flames, heat and agony, and anguish and regret.

There will be no escape from the regions of hell. It is a final prison engulfed in flames and torments. As the tree falls, so it shall lie.

As a man dies in his sins, he shall go to hell for sure. I remember the day well when God showed me that I was lost. I was a church member in good standing, but standing on the wrong side of God.

I was reading a sermon by Solomon Stoddard and suddenly God revealed to me that I was on my way to hell and not only that, that I deserved to go there. I couldn't believe it. I questioned God and wrestled in prayer until I was convinced that I was lost.

It was terrifying. I was shaken off my self-righteousness. All my props were kicked out from beneath me and I stood guilty before a holy God.

I then became a seeker, a seeker of Him, and became a recipient of His saving grace. How about you? Listen to these words from the Word of God which describe a lost sinner's condition. This is how the Bible describes man apart from God.

Ephesians 2.1 states, And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. You need to realize that you are dead in sin and if you die in your sins, you will be consigned to an eternal hell and be locked in that prison for all eternity separated from God. Perhaps this next verse from Ephesians can show you that if you were dead in sin, you were on the wrong side of God and an object of His wrath, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Did you hear those words? Were by nature? You were born with a sin nature because of the sin of Adam. The entire human race enters the world spiritually dead and with a depraved nature that is inclined to sin. Did you hear also the words, children of wrath? That is a vivid description of a lost person on their way to hell under the condemnation of a holy God who hates sin and must punish it.

You must be awakened, friend, to the fact that you are an object of God's wrath and you can die in a moment and slip into hell and never get out of there for there are no exit doors in the regions of hell. Once you are in there, you can never get out and you fall into hell without a moment's notice. You have no guarantee of tomorrow.

To think you do is foolish for you could die tonight unexpectedly and tragically. I was in Edinburgh, Scotland at a hotel. I had just stepped into the shower.

It was a death trap. The floor of the shower had just been waxed. As soon as I stepped in there, it was like stepping on slippery ice.

My feet slid from beneath me and I did a somersault into the air and landed on a hard concrete bathroom floor. My arm broke the fall, but I hit my head. I broke my wrist as my head hit the floor.

I could have easily been removed from this earth suddenly and without warning. My foot slid unexpectedly. Listen to the Word of God as it describes your perilous position outside of Christ.

To me belongeth vengeance and recompense. Their foot shall slide in due time for the day of their calamity is at hand and the things that shall come upon them make haste. How many times have you sat carelessly in church thinking you were just fine and in reality you were lost and any moment an unexpected accident or heart attack could make you slip and fall into hell.

Hell opens before you waiting to receive you. Demons reach up to grab you and drag you down to hell and its horrors. You do not realize your perilous position apart from a true saving knowledge of Christ.

You may be a good church member who just believed on the fact of the death of Christ and you believe that believing in that fact was good enough to save you, but in reality you cannot be saved by believing just on the death of Christ. You must believe on the Christ who died. Perhaps you have reformed yourself to look your best in the company of others, but when you are alone you know how unchanged you really are and there has never been a true work of regeneration upon your heart.

You have never been born again, never been washed in the blood and born of the Spirit. You have no assurance that you were truly saved. Why is your Bible a closed book? Why do you not regularly witness to the lost? Why do you still hang on to your sins and sit on the throne of your life? Where is your joy, the joy of your salvation? Why do you lie? Why do you not obey Christ's commands? Jesus said, If you love me, you will keep my commands.

Why do you not conform to Christ and grow in holiness and obedience to Him? Is it because you have never exercised true repentance towards God? You see friend, when we come safely to Christ, something happens. Self is dethroned and another is enthroned there. Self is dethroned and Christ is enthroned in our lives for He is a risen Lord.

He sits on a throne at the right hand of the Father and He got there by way of a bloody cross. How can you claim to know Christ and take His name as a follower of His and call yourself a Christian if you are still in your sins? If you have never been washed in the blood and born from above, if you only knew of your great danger, you do not realize how close you are to being past your day of grace and dropping down into hell unexpectedly. You can slip into death at any moment in this dangerous world.

You can be run over while jogging, killed in a car accident, or your heart could just stop beating. You have no guarantee of tomorrow. Life is uncertain and unpredictable.

The very ground you are walking on is a slippery place and your foot is ready to give way from underneath you. Surely, thou didst set them in slippery places. Thou cast them down into destruction.

How are they brought into desolation as in a moment you may be young and feel you have all your life ahead of you, or you may be in perfect health and pleasant circumstance and feel like you will live to a ripe old age, but that is presumption on your part, for you have no guarantee of tomorrow, for today might be your very last day upon this earth. Then you die and go into another world quite unexpectedly. For man also knoweth not his time as the fishes that are taken in an evil net and as the birds that are caught in the snare.

So are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falleth suddenly upon them. You could be the victim of a terrorist attack. You could be in a plane crash.

You could be gunned down in a movie theater or killed while you stand in line. You live in an evil day where death surrounds you at every turn. Where would you be if you died tonight? Would you drop into hell quite suddenly? Are you certain that you are joined to Christ in a saving way? Are you in a vital union with the living Lord? Do you have the Holy Spirit within you? Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Perhaps you have been the victim of poor evangelism and some evangelist told you that you were saved, but the Spirit of God has never given you that assurance.

Perhaps you walked an aisle and became a church member, but your life was never transformed by the person of Christ. When Jesus was here in His earthly ministry, when He entered a village, the persons that He encountered, those people they encountered changed. Their lives were transformed and forever changed.

Is your life different since you have become a Christian? Or have you merely reformed some of your gross sins? John Wesley said that conversion was a change which God works upon the heart. I repeat, have you been changed? Are you different since you accepted Christ? Please, do not stand upon a false foundation or rest upon a false hope. Do not rest your hopes on a feeling or a verse of Scripture.

Have you met the living Lord? Have you seen a revealed Christ? Is Christ real to you as your Savior? There are no second chances in hell. There are no gospel invitations in hell. Rather, hell is a sentence carried out to those who die in their sins without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Christ will say to those unregenerate church members on that day, away from Me, I never knew you. Do you know that you are a sinner? Having a recollection of sin is not the same thing as being convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can convict you of sin.

Have you ever fallen under the conviction of sin? God's law is unyielding. Thou shalt not lie. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not give fault witness. Every man will be held up to God's perfect law and no man will be able to stand against that law.

All will fail that test. For man is a sinner and unless he has a sin substitute, he will fail the test of standing alongside the utter strictness of the law of God. This is the purpose of the laws found in Romans, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Then it goes on to say, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Listen friend, the shortest definition of sin found is in the Bible.

I repeat, all we like sheep have gone astray. Every one has turned to his own way. Hear me friend, how will you stand against the strict law of God and not be cast down to hell? Do you see your need of a sin substitute? Do you thirst for Jesus? Like I said, you must be awakened to your lost condition.

Dear friend, have you ever been lost? How can you claim to be saved if you've never been lost? You have a conscience. You know right and wrong. That is given to every man.

A law is written on the heart. When the law of God, from His written word, is applied to your conscience, then the Holy Spirit has the power to grind you under the conviction of sin and show you that you are guilty before a holy God and that He is just to send you to the hell that you deserve. You then know you are a sinner on your way to hell and you deserve to go there.

You then become a seeker of God. You desire the grace of repentance. Oh, how you wish you could turn from your wretched sins.

You want a new start. You don't want to live that way any longer. You desire a true ability to turn from your sins, to agree with God about what He says about them, to be able to loathe them as He loathes them, to turn from them in a true work of repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ.

Friend, this is saving faith. This is grace. God is the author of salvation.

He can give it or withhold it and still be a just God. Jesus said, but you believe not because you are not of My sheep. Jesus said, and you will not come to Me that you might have life.

Jesus also declared, no man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me. Draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. Saving faith is a grace given.

You cannot earn it. You certainly don't deserve it, but you can become a seeker of God. Seek Him earnestly for the grace of repentance and faith.

Oh friend, if you are under the conviction of sin, I can promise you that if you will come to Christ, you will come to Him savingly. Jesus declared, if any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Listen, friend, to this promise to you from Scripture. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. And he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat.

Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Are you thirsty for Christ? Then come and be filled. Listen to His promise.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and let him that heareth come, and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. The pearl of great price is for the thirsty, the hungry, the weary. Come.

When we come to Christ and surrender our lives to Him, when we throw down our shotgun of rebellion and lay the arms of our rebellion at His sovereign feet, when we take up our cross and follow Him, we die to the world and now live for eternity. For we are bought with a price, and that price was His blood. We are no longer our own.

We have a new Master. Listen to the words of the apostle Paul. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.

When you come to Christ savingly, He plants a new disposition in you. A disposition for holiness. You will want to live for Him and be pleasing to the Father.

You will have the evidence of your salvation. George Whitefield, the great British evangelist, came to America in 1740 during the Great Awakening. And under his preaching, many thousands were melted

down under conviction of sin and were converted.

He was once asked by a Boston pastor, Mr. Whitefield, how many converts have you had since you've been to America? To which the great Whitefield replied, I don't know, sir, but I will be back this way in a year or two, and I shall look for the evidence of their salvation. Let me ask you, dear friend, is there an evidence of your salvation? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a son of God? Do you long for holiness? Do you enjoy reading your Bible? Do you spend time in prayer on a regular basis? Do you witness for Christ and share your faith on a regular basis? Surely, you cannot be truly born again and not witness for Christ regularly. Do you weep over the lost and perishing? Do you hunger and long for revival? Do you thirst after Christ and yearn for more of Him each day? Can others see the evidence of your salvation? Can your family members testify that you have a new disposition toward them? Are you truly saved? Examine yourselves.

Whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? Friend, is Jesus Christ in you? Come to Him now and trust Him to save you. Seek God and ask Him to give you the grace of repentance and faith.

Listen, friend, when I stand up against the strictness and severity of God's holy law, I know I will fail the test. I am a sinner. God's law requires perfection.

I have failed that test. I need a substitute for sin in the person of Jesus Christ. So do you, friend.

You need to stand not on your own righteousness. Your righteousness is like a filthy rag in God's eyes. You need to rest in the merits of Christ as a substitute for sin.

If you die apart from Christ, you will die of your sins and stand guilty before a just and holy God and you will have no excuse. Surely, had the men of Sodom been forewarned of their coming destruction, they would have reformed themselves and sought repentance towards God. The people of Nineveh, under the preaching of Jonah, repented from the king down to the beast.

They were clothed in sackcloth and ashes as they turned to God in repentance to avoid their own destruction. Had the people in the days of Noah only had a second chance, they never would have mocked Noah and the ark, but they would have run to the ark of safety to avoid being destroyed in the flood. Listen, friend.

Jesus is the ark of safety. He is the only way of salvation. Flee to Him now.

You, my friend, have been given a better opportunity than the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, for you have been warned. You have been warned in this message. You have heard a full presentation of the Gospel.

I have spoken about ruin, repentance, redemption, and regeneration. Christ paid the price on a bloody cross for your wretched sins. The very nails in His hands were driven there by your sins.

Because of sin, you stand guilty before a holy and just God who must punish sin to be true to His nature. He is a God who is angry with the wicked every day. But in His great love, He sent His only beloved Son into the world to die for sinful man.

In that, He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. And he that believeth not the Son shall not see life. But the wrath of God abideth on him.

I don't preach a politically correct Gospel. I'm not here to impress you. I will be faithful to God and to the Word of God.

I preach the full counsel of God. And today, you have heard it and you have a duty of immediate repentance. God demands repentance.

Jesus told His disciples, unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish. That means you, friend. Don't be fooled by the watered-down Gospel of this generation that removes the need of repentance and does not proclaim the reality of a future judgment and a burning and literal hell.

A clear Gospel that does not warn you that God is angry with the wicked every day is no Gospel. Friend, you have been warned. You have no excuse now.

I am free from the blood of your hands. I beg you. I beg you to flee from the wrath to come and fly to Christ.

Fly to Him now. Repent now and become a seeker of Christ before it is too late. This world is an empty bubble.

All that matters is eternity. Where will you spend eternity? Ask yourself. Will it be in heaven or in hell? Flee to Christ now.

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