

A Pure Heart - Part 1

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of a broken heart and the need for cleansing and purification in order to be restored to a right relationship with God.

Duration: 43:43

Scripture: Exodus 20:2, Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Psalm 67:3, Psalm 103:2, Ecclesiastes 3:4, Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, Dr. Luke Reisman preaches from the historic pulpit of John Wesley in London. He highlights the power of reading and understanding the Word of God. He emphasizes the importance of reading scripture with sincerity and authenticity, rather than trying to be dramatic like actors. Dr. Reisman shares a personal story of a tragic experience in his own life to illustrate the need for mercy and the intimate relationship with God. He also references the 8th and 23rd Psalms to emphasize the greatness of God and His mercy towards mankind.

Transcript

Psalm 51. According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me truly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, thou desirest truth in inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be white, and make me to hear joy, and blot out my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

Place in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee. The seventy-five psalms that he wrote, eighteen of the psalms are autobiographical. Some of the psalms are prophetic.

Some of the psalms are historical. Some are autobiographical. They're wrapped round.

In those eighteen autobiographical psalms, there are seven penitential psalms. Out of the seven penitential psalms, there is one outstanding psalm of penitence, and this surely is it. If you notice there in verse one, you have, pardon me, in the first three verses, you have three different words for sin.

In verse one, he talks about transgressions, and then in the middle of verse two, he talks about iniquity, and in verse three, he says, my sin is ever before me. For those three definitions of sin, there are three words for cleansing and purifying. Verse one, he says, blood out.

Verse two, he says, wash me. And in the same verse, he says, cleanse me. If you read this psalm carefully, you discover there are three major prayers in it.

Three times in this psalm, the psalmist mentions brokenness. Three times, he mentions the spirit. Three times, he mentions sacrifice.

Again, and three times, he mentions brokenness. When we were in New York, we had a conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. His name was Leonard Bernstein.

He broke about every law in the book. He did everything he shouldn't do when he was conducting, but he became extremely popular, and he packed out the great auditoriums. He was a concert pianist.

And one day, somebody had been in Europe, and they came back, and they gave him a piece of dog-eared paper, and they said, look, this is a very valuable manuscript. I gave a great sum of money for it. It was written more than 200 years ago.

Majestic organs in a great cathedral in Europe. I want you to sit down and play it for me. Bernstein said, I can't do that.

You can. No, I can't. You can, but you won't.

I can't do it. Why not? Well, he said, if I could have climbed up behind that great organ and sung that piece of music, I might get somewhere near making a reasonable translation of it. But there's a gap of 200 years between the time that that majestic organ was swelling with a marvelous composition, for it is a marvelous composition, but I would do it injustice if I tried to play it.

Very often when I read the Word of God, I think of that. I hear preachers read the Bible as though it were a distinction, the historic pulpit of John Wesley in London. I like to hear him preach because he would stop preaching and go to the piano and he could really make those keys dance.

But he could read the Scripture like nobody on earth. When he read the Scripture, I often wish he'd say, and now the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be with you. He said so much by reading the Word of God.

Could you read a psalm like this, of a broken, tragic experience of life? How can you read it when it was written thousands of years ago? If actors were to say their lines like preachers, they'd be fired the first week. If we were to read the Scriptures like the actors, you'd say it was histrionics and we're trying to be dramatic. But you try reading this psalm ten different ways.

The man that wrote this psalm had a broken heart. He didn't dictate it to a British secretary. He didn't put it on an IBM machine.

Oh sure, this is printed on nice kind of rice paper. It's punctuated with commas and periods and it's very well fixed up dramatically. The man who wrote the psalm wasn't concerned about grammar at all.

He has no audience. This man is a broken hearted man. He comes with the most amazing statements a man can make.

He says, have mercy upon me. You could almost say the agony in his spirit. Have mercy upon me, oh God.

According to thy loving... What's his problem? Has no problem with Absalom. Absalom tried to steal his crown and pull the throne from under him. This is not his problem here.

He was always having opposition from the Philistines. The Philistines are not assailing him here. He says, have mercy upon me.

That the bones which thou hast broken may be... He hadn't got a broken bone in his body. Burning Hotel, it was 1951 actually. Back in three places.

My left leg was in three pieces. My feet were shattered. And I lay in that alley outside of that Burning Hotel in snow at three o'clock in the morning in my pajamas.

No preacher should be out in his pajamas at that time in the morning. You're going to get a chill. What are you doing here? He said, you can't stay here.

And all the more you may come around the corner and you'll get hurt. Lifted me and when he did, oh, I screamed. I actually bit the inside of my lip.

I bit a hole in it because a British bulldog, you know, holes on, he never squeals. I feel the jarring of them. And David says this.

But when there's a broken relationship with God, I need you to heal me, he said. I've got a broken heart and I've got a broken spirit. Dictating it to some charming person.

He wrote this psalm on his face before God. He's sobbing, he's heartbroken. He's punctuated with groans, not periods and commas.

He's punctuated with groans. After all, the greatest loss in life is not losing an arm or losing a friend or losing your fortune. It's losing relationship with God.

Closer to God than this man. Remember how he says in the eighth psalm, What is man that thou art mindful of him? Well, we're still trying to find that out. A woman says she's found footprints of men three and a half million years old.

Well, a few days on either side, but you've got to believe it because science says so. We spend millions and millions. We subsidize through the government.

We subsidize people to go and do what they call archaeology. Does it matter a hell of a beans where we came from? I believe in the biblical record. The most important thing is not where we came from.

It's where we're going that matters. The government won't give you ten cents to investigate that. Bobby's crying.

I was sobbing and my mother said, Len, what's wrong? And I said, Mother, the boys have been after me again. I was narrow-shouldered and skinny and a big head. And the boys nicknamed me Big Head.

And one day they teamed up on me. And they said, Big Head, Big Head, Big Head. And I ran home and Mother said, What's wrong? She thought she'd comfort me.

She said, Don't bother. There's nothing in it. I discovered that there's what? About 1,000 million things called neurons in your brain.

These can meet on one neuron. You've got two, what is it? I put a note here. 10,000 million of them in your head.

They're miniature computers. Things can go feeding onto a neuron and they'll store up in your mind and they'll sort out and they'll collate and they'll put on records so that you can recall it at any minute. That's done.

Just one neuron can do that. You ought to be brainy around here. It says here that you've got a hundred.

Tell me you've got 10,000 million of them in your mind. You're supposed to have three and a half pounds of matter between here and here. Here and here.

And then you've got all the other things that are there, you know. The good book says we're fearful and wonderfully made. I've only got about 10,000 million neurons in my mind.

Some things so delicately constructed in my personality that though the heavens declare the glory of God, there's nothing in it. They're not constructed like the human brain. And then you cannot fathom the human mind.

You cannot fathom the human spirit. There's no x-ray can discover where your conscience is or where your memory is or where your bitterness is or where your hatred is. We're the most delicately constructed piece of fabulous mechanism in this world.

Creation and his crowning glory. So he not only writes in that eighth psalm what is man, he writes the twenty-third psalm. And if ever you go to Scotland, you must hear them sing it.

Nobody can sing it like the Scots. It's a kind of national anthem with them. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

You can imagine him on the hills of Bethlehem playing his harp in the coolness of the night, singing when I consider thy heavens the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast taught. What is man that art mindful of him? And then he recalls the mercy of God, goodness and mercy have followed me. He talks about going into the valley of the shadow of death.

I often think he's recording his experience of going down to meet Goliath. He felt the awfulness. He was crowded in with hostility and hatred.

There was a man on the earth who was prepared to do the job and a little fellow called David goes with a sling and a stone. He wrote the 138. He is as closely to God as any man ever lived, not only in his own experience, but in Psalm 139 he's right dead in line with the will of God and the purpose of God and his mind is set on doing everything that God says.

And he says bravely, Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me. Now, maybe we should sit for that photography and when we got the picture, we wouldn't want to show it around. He says to the eternal God, whose eyes are like a flame of fire, Search me, O God.

Search me like you search Jerusalem with a candle, God says. I search Jerusalem. He says, search me.

Search all my thoughts. The secret springs, the motives that control. The chambers where polluted things hold empire of the soul.

Search till thy fiery glance hath cast this holy light through all, and I by grace am brought at last before thy face to fall. Search me, O God. And he was spiritually healthy.

That was before that relationship was broken. That was when that heart and that voice and that spirit used to make glad the heart of God. So I don't care where you're searching the New Testament, you can talk as much as you like about the spiritual life, and so we should.

Nobody ever hit the heights of praise like David, did they? He gets a prophetic view of Jesus coming in his glory, and he says, lift up your heads, O ye gates. Be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord, strong and mighty.

Isn't it amazing that this man who walks so near to God would forfeit it for a few minutes of pleasure in the flesh? Again, I remind you, in that 139 psalm, he says, search me, O God. You notice he doesn't say that here. He says, hang thy face on my sins.

Not search me, hang thy face. The holiness of my corruption. Amazing thing.

It took me years to find out what he was saying. I found out, to my satisfaction at least, when he said, take not thy holy spirit from me. Why? Why? Because prior to him, that had been the first king of Israel.

God didn't want them to. And he gave them a king. They were going to be a theocracy, ruled by God.

And they chose to be ruled in the flesh. And God granted their request, but he sent leanness into their soul. And listen, if you push God far enough, sometimes, because you're petty and small and dwarf, he'll give you what you ask for, but you'll get leanness.

Yes, but he sent leanness. Handsome, like the novelists say. In circumstance, they took a horn of a beast, full of oil, and they put it on his head.

The oil is the consistent type of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures. And those drops of oil came upon the head of Saul. And not only was he filled with the spirit, he had gifts of the spirit because he prophesied that he died of suicide.

God took his spirit from him. Walking with God, he's groveling at the feet of some dirty spiritist medium. And he says in his despair, could you bring up Saul? Pardon me, could you bring up Samuel the prophet? The only time of any genuine return of the spirit, as far as I'm concerned.

And he thought I was on good terms with Samuel, and he won't go back. He says to him, he says, Saul. Come, he says, Samuel.

Appeal to my God, not our God. He says, ask of your God. He knew God had deserted him.

Forsaken me. And he says, God hath forsaken thee. That's the most tragic thing in the world, as far as I'm concerned.

I remember preaching in Australia. There was a fine, handsome man sitting over on the right. The preacher whispered to me, you see that man a bit bald there with that wonderful face? He was the most anointed man on this continent, and now he's backslidden.

He just came to hear an Englishman for a change. But he's no interest in the things of God. Oh, how tragic.

The high road of Christian living is strewn with has-beens. Samson, they pulled down the pillars and they wrestled against lions. The lion being a type of the devil.

And Samson, with his anointing, tore up that lion. For God said, after all, in the end upon me. And he demonstrated that power.

David had his fun. Satan, they used to tell us as kids, always finds something for idle hands to do. And then he envied the girl that was nude over there.

And he watched her and watched her, and he coveted her. And he committed adultery with her, and then he sent a note to the captain, see that this young man, her husband, gets to the front of the battle where he's sure to get killed. And so he did what we all do.

Committed sin and committed another sin to cover the sin. And here he is. Weeks were terrible.

She was a saintly, godly woman. But in the last few days, a few weeks, particularly the last few days, she was in agony. And I've heard people say, and you have, that this is the most devastating of all pains.

It's in the soul, it's in the spirit. We get emotionally torn. The Roman church has played on the fact, wherever you go there's a crucifix with big splashes of red blood to imitate the death of Jesus, His agony.

His blood from His feet and His hands, and we sing, see from His head, His hands, His feet. But that was not the death. Acts 53 does not talk about the physical suffering.

It says, Thou hast made a solemn offering for sin. The psalmist says elsewhere, Suffering the most excruciating pain. The pain of a broken heart, separated from God.

There is no balm in Gilead. There is no physician. I have to come like everybody else and say, nothing in my hands I bring.

Why is he so perturbed about this? He's the most popular man in the world. He hit the top of the chart with his psalms. People used to sing, Saul has slain his thousands.

And they changed it and sang, but David is tens of thousands. You've seen Saul? Saul's nothing compared to David. But there's no music inside now.

He's going to have to come eventually and say, nothing in my hands I bring. He still rules an empire. He still has soldiers.

He's still a millionaire. He still lives in a palace. He still has servants.

Forget it, you'll get over this. He says, no, no, no, no. He's been increasingly impressed, as I've read recently.

Convinced of the wonderful fact of this, that the greatest man that ever lived, not only a king, but the king of kings. He never had a penny. He had to borrow one one day for an illustration.

In his greatest sermon ever, the Sermon on the Mount, he never blessed a material thing. And he never left a material thing when he died. He shut up totally to the eternal, the spiritual things.

Do you know what usually happens? It's happened in America as well as in other countries. The richer we get in the church, the poorer we get in spirit. The tough evangelists.

Chicago, a fellow there says, there's been a great prophecy given, that within a very short time, that nation America is going to be split, ripped right down the center with the greatest earthquake we've ever known. Maybe the world has ever known. Free TV screen this week.

They watch some other idiotic thing, you can't warn people. Earthquake, but I know we need a spiritual earthquake very badly. And God has said yet, just before the end time, yet just once more I will shake the heavens and the earth.

Christ to pay for sin. Surely he had his fun with Bathsheba. And now every time he hears a baby cry, one of his servants has a little baby there in the cradle, as she's making meals.

And the baby cries and it stabs his spirit. He looks out and sees a soldier on guard. And he remembers he put one of the finest men in the army to death.

And he says, my sin is ever before me. In the states right now, above anything else. It's something we don't talk too much about these days.

Mighty avalanche of conviction of sin. Ever as cheap. You just come out, weep on the shoulder of the preacher and say you're sorry.

The sinner's prayer as they say, God be merciful to me a sinner. And you're in. This is what you get.

Eternal life. A mansion on Main Street. A five-decker crown.

A free ticket to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And rule over five cities. That's an awful lot when you've sinned for thirty years and it only takes thirty seconds to get that bunch of stuff, eh? Except it's not true.

Not for everybody. W. P. Nicholson, the great Irish evangelist. He's the most devastating evangelist I've ever heard.

Some meetings that people were under conviction of sin, they'd have handbooks in their hands and they'd be shredding them and there were piles of handbooks on the floor. In a subtle way, he'd go into a stately Presbyterian church holding fifteen hundred people and before everybody said a thing, he'd put his Bible and handbook down and say, Nicholson, God have mercy on you tonight. This is the greatest collection of hypocrites in this city for a hundred years.

Now that's a nice way to start a meeting with cultured Presbyterians, isn't it? Pentecostals would hardly stand for that, never mind Presbyterians. ...on a congregation that this man said to me, I went in a drunken, I was a blasphemer, I was one of the most unclean men in Ireland and before he finished, sweat was dropping off my nose and off the end of my chin and I said, God, if I ever get out, I'll never hear this idiot again. But I was there the next night.

And he said, when I came out the second night, I said, what a fool I was. That man scared me to death. I didn't know whether he'd put hell in me or scared it out of me.

But he said, I'll tell you one thing, you couldn't pay me thousands of pounds to come and hear him another night, but I was there the next night, he said. And he said, when he said, look, there's mercy if you can. He said, there was a stampede to the altar, we were like a herd of buffaloes going down and there were men cursing as they went to the altar, they didn't know any better.

He'd stand up and say, stand up and they'd sing, God save our gracious King. Predestination, we talk about trusting God, but we squeeze some meetings as though God needs an awful lot of help. We don't know too much these days anymore about conviction of sin.

Multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Days in Teen Challenge, I may have told you before, I took the chapel service one morning. When I went in, there was a tiny little Puerto Rican fellow and he said, Mr. Radner, I've come.

I'm trying to lead the service. Before he speaks, let's sing the National Anthem. And I thought, oh heavens, National Anthem, get out of here.

What do you want to sing the National Anthem for in a gospel service? And this side had about, I guess about 80 girls, gorgeous girls, all prostitutes. This side had a bunch of anything you like, black men, white men, all kinds of men. They were all bad men, mostly redeemed.

And he got up and the little fellow says, now we sing, we sing our National Anthem. So I got, you know, started to sing and they sang the National Anthem. Their National Anthem, you know what it was? Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I've never heard it sung as good. Before we finished the first stanza, and even those boys, you know, men don't like to wipe their eyes, so they run them down their sleeve like this, you know. And they were standing there, running their tears down their sleeves.

And before we got there, and then at the end the little fellow said, we sing again the last verse, when we've been there 10,000 years. No, no, no, we sing the, we sing the, when we've been there 10 million years. Well, that won't put a strain on the clock of 8,000 or 10 million.

You see this man, this man, he's so sordid, he's so corrupt. He's so conscious that God owes every right to cast him into hell. Do you wonder if he was a clean Methodist or a good Pentecostal or something else? Look, fellow, I don't care whether he lifted you out of hell or not.

You would go into hell if he unsaved you. And you could go to hell at the communion table as well as the gambling table. He lifted me.

He never forgot what he did for Israel. In 1942, no, 1932, in a church in England, the senior pastor was Dr. Fawcett, I think the most brilliant preacher I ever heard in my life. To preach on Sunday night, and we always got a packed auditorium.

This character, she's sitting on the usual two seats she sat on. Well, she's so big she needed two seats anyhow. She was the most notorious sinner in town.

She used her husband as a pawn. She knocked him out so many times he couldn't even keep count. A man said some dirty words to her and she pulled her fist back and she just slapped him one and he was out cold.

They called the police so she waited around the door and as the cop came up she just hit him like that. There were two of them there. Muhammad Ali never knocked two out in two hits.

But she knocked them both out. She waited for me at the end of the service. Go ahead.

Oh, not now, she said, not now, wait till everybody's gone. I thought, boy. She said, not here, in the church office.

I said, all right. I went in the church office. I said, please sit.

No, no, she said. Shut the door, put her arms up like this, behind the door. You couldn't see the door, so.

I knew I had no chance of getting out. I said, what's your problem? What's my problem? She said, you held me up for ridicule tonight. You were talking about drunkards and liars and people who won't forgive and other things.

Everybody knew you meant me. I said, I never thought that. The priest that night, if you will not forgive men their trespasses neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you.

And I'll go to hell before I'll speak to either of them. I said, good, you go to hell. I'm going to bed.

I said, you've already told me that. And again she said, I'll go to hell first. I said, well, I've told you, go to hell.

I must be a prisoner for the rest of this place. So I just went down and I prayed. And suddenly I heard a crash.

She was on her knees. She had a big handbag. She took out cigarettes and matches and movie tickets and lipstick and I don't know what in the world she didn't take out.

I thought, boy, this is a place for a woman to clear her handbag of all places. Start tidying that mess up. I said, well, excuse me, but what's this all about? And do you know what she said? I've never forgotten it.

She said, if I'm coming to Jesus, I'm coming clean. You see, you bought bundles of tickets for the movie house. She had a bundle.

She had a cigarette. She had a match. She had a lipstick.

She had all kinds of things. I won't need those anymore. As a result of that, her husband got saved a few weeks after.

A few weeks after, he was killed in a coal mine. And she was waiting at our door one morning. At least she knocked on the door about nine o'clock and said, I want to tell you my husband got killed in the coal mine last night.

And I'm so happy. I thought, happy? What, you got rid of him? She said, no, no, no, no. I'm so happy because he got saved.

You see, if I hadn't have forgiven my neighbor, I wouldn't have got saved and he wouldn't have got saved. I don't know how to raise the family, but she said, he's forgiven me. God has forgiven me.

Doesn't Jesus talk about those who have been saved from much? They love much. The thing is, we forget, God had to keep provoking Israel. Remember, thou was the bondsman in Egypt.

Suppose God hadn't intervened in your life, say, a month ago, a year ago, two years ago. Where would you be? You might be a dead elite. You might be a prostitute this morning.

You might be in jail somewhere. You might already be in hell. Transported with the view I'm lost in wonder, love and praise.

Tony spoke the other morning, I got great bless, the bless when he was telling us how the Psalmist is trying to provoke people, push them on. Oh, that men will praise the Lord. Not quicker than we praise, I think, don't we? And while he was saying it, I was thinking of an old hymn written by Horatius Bonner.

Oh, for a heart to pray. No, no, Charles Wesley wrote that. Praise to the holiest in the height.

Was that it? And in the depth be praise. In all his works, more wonderful, more sure in all his ways. Now, that isn't the one because Newman wrote that.

Scottish hymn writers, brothers. But my whole being may proclaim thy being and thy ways. Not for the lip of praise alone, nor in a praising heart, I ask.

But for a life made up of praise in every part. Praise in the common things of life. It's going out and in.

Praise in his duty and each deed, however small and mean. So shall no part of day or night from sacredness be free. But all my life in every step be fellowship with thee.

You know, this suddenly says, on an instrument of ten strings will I praise thee. I wonder what it was. Guitars don't have ten strings, so it wasn't that.

Well, let's suggest it was this instrument. Ten strings. Two hands, two eyes, two feet.

That makes six, doesn't it? Two lips, two strings. My heart and my mind. Upon the instrument of my personality, let it all be in subjection to thee.

After all, God gets out of this man. He plays on the strings of his intellect and his emotions and his heart until he writes all these rhapsodies and all these amazing things. Right through the seventy-five psalms he composed.

He prays not only a prayer of a sinner, have mercy upon me, O God. But he prays another prayer, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation. To see people going to church in England a while ago.

The historic churches and I watched people go in. And really they looked as though they were going to the dentist. I watched them come out, they looked as though they'd been.

Full of praise and adoration, I think there are times when God humbles us and we might walk out of the sanctuary humiliated and heavy in spirit. But by and large, there is no joy. You see, when there is no joy, you have to fill the gap up with entertainment.

Think of yourself. In the steeps of heaven, majesty of God. But when he gets into this situation, Holy Spirit again.

Notice he says, take not thy Holy Spirit from me. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth and therefore he convicts of error. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of life, he convicts of death.

He's the spirit of power, he convicts of weakness. He's the spirit of fire, he convicts of coldness. He's the spirit of joy, he convicts of sadness and heaviness and bondage.

Like no other man I believe in all history. That's why Christians get excited. Notice how easily we grieve.

Fearfully and wonderfully made. Somebody working on a bulldozer. He could put that rocket off course a hundred.

One little grain of sand, half a grain of sand. Getting in that thing at the wrong place could send it off course. The closer we walk with God, the more we realize how easy it is to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

If he has put more wisdom into you, if he's put more strength into you, he's given more revelation to you, it's a stewardship. Watch it, guard it. The higher you go up the mountain, the longer it is.

And the air gets... A very simple thing, you can climb a mountain for three days and get near the edge. You know, you'd hardly believe this, it doesn't take you three days to hit the valley. Amazing thing, isn't it? If you drop two things from a great height, one would both hit the ground at the same time.

The saying is this. It's easy to get out of that very, very intimate relationship with God. A snowy night, I remember it well.

And I prayed with some men and I saw this girl with a gorgeous golden braids come down to the front. And she sobbed and sobbed and sobbed. And I had prayed with men till about eleven o'clock and I was ready to go home.

And somebody said, would you help us with this girl? And I said, my dear, there's a time to weep and a time to refrain from weeping, as the book says. What's your problem? Lost it. To quote the scripture, we've lost our first love.

It doesn't say that, it says you left it.

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