

Acts of the Apostles

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon explores the dynamic faith and miraculous acts of the early Church as a model for contemporary believers.

Duration: 1:01:28

Scripture: Judges 16:30, Daniel 6:16, Matthew 21:12-13, Acts 2:3, Hebrews 3:7, Revelation 1:1

Topics: "Worship Discipline", "Spiritual Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not substituting service for worship with the Lord. He encourages the audience to remember the secret to a fulfilling spiritual life is discipline. The preacher suggests taking time to be holy and getting rid of any hindrances, such as television, that may distract from worship. He also highlights the need to prioritize following the Word of God over public opinion or the opinions of others, even if it means going against the views of pastors or relatives. The sermon references biblical figures like Peter and Jonathan Edwards to illustrate the power of preaching with conviction and the importance of preaching as if it were one's last opportunity. The preacher also discusses the story of the man at the beautiful gate and emphasizes the significance of expecting to receive something from God. Overall, the sermon encourages gratitude, humility, and a deep longing for revival.

Transcript

But, permit me an indulgence for a minute, what I quoted last week again, what Philip said about this book, or the early chapters, or the early Church, if you like, this is the Church of Jesus Christ, before it became fat, uh, how do you put it, or fat and short of breath by prosperity. This is the Church before it became muscle-bound by over-organization. This is the Church where they did not say prayers, but they prayed in the Holy Ghost.

This is the Church that did not gather together a group of intellectuals to study psychosomatic medicine, they just healed the sick. This is the early Church that didn't sign articles of faith. If you join a good Baptist, pardon me, a good Church these days, you have to go through the list and sign at the bottom, yes I believe, you know, now you're one of us, that's the worst thing they could say, but anyhow, they didn't sign articles of faith, they acted in faith.

Someone else has called it the only unfinished book in the Bible. I don't like to use the word exciting about spiritual things, because you can get excited at football matches, and excited over lots of things. I like to

use the word inspiring.

And I find this wonderful book a very, very inspiring book. We mentioned last week about the cloven tongues of fire that sat on them when they were in the upper room. Again, it would have seemed to me, at least it would be more convincing if a dove had come and settled on each of their heads, they'd have said, well that's genuine, that's what Jesus had.

Jesus did not have a tongue of fire, because fire is a symbol of cleansing, and he did not need any cleansing. The tongue of fire didn't sit on the heads of these men too long. Let's go into this third chapter here, and read from verse 1. Again, I'm reading from the King James Version, which I call the Living Bible.

Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer. Why in the world did they go? They didn't believe in a single formula or operation they had in the temple. They were still shedding the blood of bulls and goats, and so forth and so on.

But they went together, notice. I think this is a good example that if two of you shall agree, two or three are gathered together in my name. A friend of Billy Graham's came to see me a while ago.

He's a very brilliant, wonderful man. And he said, you know, two or three million people pray for Billy every day. Wouldn't you like that? I said, no.

You wouldn't? You mean that? Sure. Why not? Well, I said, oh, of course, there's a text that says if two or three million are gathered together in my name. Oh, it doesn't say that.

Well, then I said, why do I need two or three million? You know, it's going to be pretty disgusting to get into the other side of eternity and discover what we could have done if we'd really agreed together in his name. Just twos and threes. I think it's another, I almost said exciting, so I won't say that.

Let's think of it this way. Do you know what the Acts of the Apostles is? It's the church of Jesus Christ doing everything that Jesus did when he was in the flesh. Did he heal the cripples? So did they in the early church, in the Acts of the Apostles.

Did he cast out demons? Yes. Well, so did these other men in the Acts of the Apostles. The early church did everything in the air of the miracle except walk on the water.

And that wasn't necessary anyhow. You know, the Roman Catholic Church does not recognize the ordination of men in the Church of England. They have a monopoly, they say.

We can go right back to Peter, which they cannot do. Because in the cathedral, you've got Westminster Abbey here, and across the corner you've got the Big Abbey, or really the central hall of the Methodist. Around the corner you have the church where Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones preached, and G. Campbell Morgan before him.

And then across Victoria Avenue you had a great monolith there, it's in ugly brick. And it's a Roman Catholic cathedral, excuse me. It is an ugly looking building, honestly.

And on the wall they have the, you know, the present Pope, and they go back. And then they get up here, then there's a big gap. And the name at the top is the name of Peter.

But they lost the succession. In fact, there was a period in history when there were two Popes that were reigning at the same time. There was a time when one of the Popes was married.

In fact, the first one was, Peter was married. Though he wasn't the first Pope. It's like talking, people say, at our church we say the Apostles' Creed.

I say, they wouldn't know it if they came, they never said it anyhow. Now, who's in direct line? The Church of England is despised by the Church of Rome. The Church of England doesn't like the ordination of the Methodists.

The Methodists don't like the ordination of the Pentecostals. The Pentecostals are not too keen on the ordination of the Holiness people. They're all edging each other out of the way.

Well, Mr. Ravner, do you happen to know the proof of apostolic succession? Yes. What is it? Apostolic success. There's no other way of proving it, is there? I believe that the early Church, the New Testament Church, is the norm of Christianity.

God never, never, never made any room, actually, for our backsliding and our failure. Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer, seeing it's the ninth hour. That was three o'clock in the afternoon, actually.

A certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, notice that, whom they laid daily at the gates of the temple, which is called beautiful, which actually, it's actually at the beautiful gate. It was a big bronze gate, about fifty feet high. It was bronze again.

It had an intricate pattern of the vine and the branches in it. And here is this man every day. I'm glad it says daily.

He was carried from his house to the temple, the temple back home again. Twice a day for 365 days a year is, what, 730 trips he made. Don't you think when they carried him, he knew every place where the birds lodged in the holes.

He looked every year for the birds coming and the flowers that grew in the crannies there. He was carried 730 times. Have you noticed how often in the scripture it doesn't mention the age of women? But it says in the next chapter that this man was over 40 years of age.

Now if he was carried 730 times a year for 10 years, that was 7300 times. And if he was carried for 30 years, which he was most likely, it's about 22,000 times he was carried. He was carried, but he was never cured.

He was helped, but he was never healed. The richest of the priests threw him a piece of gold. The other probationer priests didn't get paid so well, so they threw him a piece of silver.

And he looked and he says, well who in the world are these? Oh, these are two of those great marvelous men that we call the, they're calling them apostles or something. Oh, they're loaded. I mean they preached yesterday and thousands were converted.

They sure must have got a big love offering. And I'd like a slice of it. So he said, he asked for, what did it say? A-L-M-S.

How do you pronounce that? Alms. Isn't that what it said? A little girl said, why did he ask for alms when he needed legs? But, I think that's very much like us. We ask for things we don't need, and we don't ask for the things we really need.

But isn't it interesting that this man was met by Peter and John. But you know the thing that startles me about this is that Jesus Christ himself had passed this man a hundred times going into the temple and never spoke a word to him. What do you think he thought of when somebody came and said, you remember that old cripple that begs at the other side of town there? Oh, Jesus spoke the word, he got up and ran away.

Well he hasn't been round here, he doesn't come to me. Another day, oh that marvelous man that does miracles, the power of God is on him, he casts out demons. In fact, as a ruler now, he actually raised the dead.

One great Englishman said, that's what preaching is, 30 minutes to raise the dead. Well anyhow, oh you'll get that on the way home, but so... But he hasn't been round here. Peter and John passed him dozens of times.

I believe they went to the temple every day in the year. They went there and back every day. Passed him twice a day, over 700 times.

And never once had any compassion or concern apparently. You see, God answers prayer when he wants, not when I want. And keep in mind, delays are not denials.

God keeps things on file. He's going to work everything after the counsel of his own will. Jesus could have healed this man, maybe two or three years before.

But there's got to be a moment when the healing of this man will do a most stupendous thing that's yet been done. Here is the first manifest power, here is the first miracle, after these men were filled with the Holy Ghost. Oh the other miracle of course, as I said last week, Peter had a tongue on fire.

You cannot divorce God from fire. If you have a bumper sticker at one end of your car that says God is love, well put one at the other end, Our God is a consuming fire. You maybe lose your car, but anyhow try it.

Our God is a consuming, he makes his angels ministering spirits, his ministers a flame of fire. When God was in residence in the tabernacle, there was a shaft of fire up in the sky, a pillar of fire by night, pillar of cloud by day. Elijah says, if your God can do the things you say, if he's a sovereign miracle working God, let's build altars.

You build your altar, I'll build my altar. But you start the morning shift and you start praying. Start the sun up and pray and call, and they did and beat their breasts, but the criteria was the God that answers by fire, let him be God.

And to show there was no trickery, he had the water, 12 barrels of water, saturate that sacrifice. You know, we so often try to make it easy for God, God doesn't need easiness. Any more than he needs cheerleaders.

I looked at a program this morning for a few minutes, and some of the great athletes in the country have decided to be Christians. Boy, won't that make angels excited. What's it got to do with a Christian message? Keep this in your little mind or your big mind.

No man, past, present or future, ever does God a favor. God does the favors. Why, we're even favored to be in his kingdom.

Why are some people in dirty, filthy, rotten taverns tonight, telling dirty jokes and inhaling horrible tobacco juice and stale beer smell? And we're here. What did you do yesterday? How, what was the height, depth, length and breadth of your thanksgiving yesterday? Did you thank him first of all for saving your soul? Or just for a fat turkey? Again, the other side of the veil. I think we'll be amazed how ungrateful we've been so often.

The only reason I don't drop into hell every day is the restraining power of God, his love, his mercy, his long suffering. But here's this man at the corner, at the beautiful gate of the temple, one of the most conspicuous places in the city. And he asked alms.

Seeing Peter and John, verse 3, going to the temple, he asked alms. Peter, fastening his eyes on him with joints, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something.

Peter said, Silver and gold I have none. I guess that stunned the fellow. Ever see a poor evangelist? Silver and gold I have none.

Now why didn't Peter heal this man years before? Why didn't John heal him? They'd already gone out and had miracles. They came back and said, Demons are subject to us. We've cast out evil spirits.

We've cured the sick. But there's a stop there. Because again, in the divine program, God is going to get more glory in this man being healed at this moment than he would at any other period in his life.

Silver and gold I have none. You know, there's a story about Thomas Aquinas, the great Roman Catholic theologian, one day standing in the Vatican, and the tribute money, the Peter's pens, that people pay, you know, for masses and so forth, was being put down a chute that goes into the basement, I understand. And the Pope said to Thomas Aquinas, You know, Thomas, Peter can no longer, Look, look, look, look at this vast sum of money, gold, silver, precious thing.

Peter can no longer say, Silver and gold have I none. Good old Thomas Aquinas turned round and said, No, your excellency, neither can he say, such as I have given unto thee. You know, when the church is poorest materially, she is richest in God.

Once we become an affluent society, we can build gorgeous buildings, and put gorgeous rugs on the floor, and foam rubber seats like this, so people can sleep easier during the sermon. When we get to that state, we're in a mess. When the church doesn't have to struggle and strive in faith, and hope and expectation, she's weak and ineffective.

I have no silver and gold, maybe under his breath, saying you don't even need that. But such as I have. He knew he had something, and he didn't charge for it.

I give to thee. Silver and gold I have none. Isn't it amazing that this man who's gone out, maybe in the morning, same morning saying, Oh, I keep hearing of miracles, I keep hearing of wonderful things, but

here I am crippled, helpless, I'll be carried back tonight to my little shack.

This is torment. And then come along to unusual, unpredictable, as you say, unanointed, not unanointed, but certainly didn't receive what preachers get today when they talk about ordination. They were just two concerned, cleansed, compassionate Christians.

They didn't just look at him. Peter stretched forth his hand. And I guess immediately he touched that man, the man felt as though he'd had a thousand electric volts going through his body.

Why? Because the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead was living in the heart and mind and life of that apostle. And he was just transferring heavenly power like just a thin piece of wire can bring a current from somewhere and illuminate something or generate some power. He is the communicant between God and a needy man.

You know, I don't see that man as a physical cripple at the gate of the church. I see him as a type of the church today, a paralyzed, ruined generation in which we live. But the world isn't saying to us, give me a hand up.

It has no confidence in us. When he saw that twisted, deformed body, I can imagine him saying, this is depravity. This is what the devil has done.

God isn't in this thing at all. A young man called me last night from Portland, Oregon. Said one of the strangest things I've ever heard in my life.

He said, you wrote an article for Last Days Magazine. I said, yes. He said, well, it's about the tank.

He said, it's really got hold of me. It's really troubling me. I'm being torn apart.

I said, well, that's good. And, you know, he didn't agree for some reason. He said, no, no, no.

I said, well, tell me a story. And he told me. And he said, would you like to pray for me? I said, yes, I'll pray.

And I prayed the Lord would clean up his life, straighten him out, purge his life, indwell him with the Spirit, give him courage to go from strength to strength, and so forth and so on. And he said, thank you. I said, well, thank you for calling.

He said, can I pray for you? Oh, I said, any time. Go ahead. I like people to pray for me.

So he prayed. Do you know what he prayed? He said, I thank you for the ministry of Brother Ravenhill, his writing and his tapes and so forth. But Lord, I want you to give him a new anointing.

I said, amen. He said, I want every tear that Jesus ever shed over a lost world to come into the heart of Brother Ravenhill. I said, good, I agree with you.

I've been reading, turning over and over again, Lamentations 2 and verse 20. Where that amazing man says, when he sees that God has now become an enemy of the nation. They've had all the glory.

God had divided the Red Sea. God sent them angels food from heaven, sent manna. That must have been delightful.

He'd split a rock. He'd done miracle after miracle after miracle. What did they do? Went to backsliding.

As I said maybe a couple of weeks ago, remember that when that happened, when they got carried away into Babylon, into captivity, what did they do? They said, by the rivers of Babylon there we sat down and wept. Why? Because they remember the glory of God. And now there's no glory.

The tabernacle is there, but there's no glory. The priests are there, they have no power. So they sat down and wept.

The same thing is there in Lamentations. In that second chapter, God has become their enemy. You remember in Hebrews it says, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

A great Scotsman by the name of Robert Louis Stevenson wrote some beautiful children's stories. And he turned it round and said, it may be a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. There's only one thing worse, and that's when you fall out of the hands of the living God.

When he leaves you alone. And that's what he was doing in the day of Jeremiah. What does it say? It says, my heart is torn, my liver is torn open.

The only time it's mentioned I think in Scripture. And my bowels are deeply moved. I can't see through my eyes.

I've curtains of tears on my eyes. Why? Because the glory has gone. As I said, I believe that's one reason why Jesus stood and cried in the temple on the last day, the great day of the feast.

He was thinking of the glory that they'd had in that temple or the temple before it. But now their altars have no fire, their priests have no power. There are miracles being done, but outside of organized religion, so to speak.

And Jesus stood and cried. He didn't shriek. He didn't shout.

He cried. The implication of the Greek is, it was with great compassion and yearning over them. Why? There's hundreds of priests there.

But the paralyzed are all over the place. The diseased are all over the place. They don't see it.

They don't feel it. They're not concerned about it. And they've had a gap between Malachi and Matthew again of 400 years, as dead as any cemetery you're ever in.

No manifest power of God. No prophet. But it never troubled them.

Then in his infinite mercy, God sent one of the most remarkable men in history. That unpredictable, unexpected, unusual man by the name of John Baptist. What did they do? Put him to death.

Another stretch of mercy, God sends his only son. What did they do? Put him to death. But you see, these people here, with a 400 gap from Malachi again here, down to Matthew, they've no yearnings for God.

They're not fasting and weeping. They're not entreating God. They're not saying, Oh, take away our reproach.

Send us the glory that existed with our fathers. They're not doing that in any shape or form. But I believe Jesus is not only concerned that they're thankless and unmoved and unconcerned and ungodly.

He's concerned because he was already anointed of the Spirit. And what happened? He knew that just up the road, this same people who had rebelled against God, forgotten the laws that God had given them, the Ten Commandments, forgotten that God gave them the greatest spiritual giants in world history, between Jeremiah and Isaiah and a bunch of others. Because of this, payday comes.

I was reading again today in Luke 11, where Jesus says the blood from the day of Abel to the time that Zechariah was in the temple when they had a riot. And right down to this day, he said, all the blood of the prophets will be required of this generation. Which generation? The generation he lived in.

What happened? Well, in AD 70, Anno Domini 70, there was a massacre, one of the greatest massacres in history, when blood were told ran up to the knees of the horses in the streets. Nobody knows how many millions were slaughtered in that bloody holocaust. But Jesus knew that it was coming.

They had been warned and warned and warned and warned. The last attempt again to awaken them was through John Baptist. And then came Jesus.

You see, unless you read this this way, if you forget that history, this doesn't seem as shocking and amazing as it should be. You think of all the accumulated privileges they'd had for centuries, millennia. Then they go to sleep.

The priests are fat. The beasts are driven to be slaughtered day by day. They keep up their sacrifices, their ritual.

They still preserve Passover. It doesn't mean a thing to them. They still talk about Pentecost.

That's the historic Pentecost. It didn't mean a thing to them. And then the last great day of the feast was typifying a feast that we do not celebrate.

We celebrate Pente... We celebrate... Pardon me. We celebrate the Day of Atonement now on Good Friday in the Christian calendar. Fifty days after we celebrate the Day of Pentecost.

We do not celebrate the ingathering of Joel because it's not yet happened. But when you think of this nation again, asleep for four hundred years. Then comes a man like Halley's Comet flying over the sky.

And he stands there all by himself. No committee. Asks no favors.

No handouts. Doesn't in any way try and get favor with the hierarchy, the priests. He just stands in splendid isolation anointed with God.

And has one of the biggest revivals in history. Four hundred years and nothing had happened. Then this dynamic man comes.

That's a cultural shock to them. It's a shock to their religion. It's a shock to everything.

They're just getting over that. Then up comes a man by the name of Jesus. More staggering.

More amazing. He does everything that John didn't do. John did no miracle.

He had no miracle ministry. No healing ministry. As I say, he didn't raise the dead.

He did more than that. He raised the dead nation. I would to God we had a John Baptist in every city in the nation tonight.

Every city in the world needs a John Baptist. But if the Christ is doing what he did, he lived in the wilderness amongst the wild beasts. He had no social life.

He had no truck with the religion of the day. He's building up his faith. He comes with complete assurance.

And he steps right out into a wilderness again. And has the anointing of God. Then Jesus comes and shocks the nation even more.

When that dies down, up come a bunch of fellows going in an upper room. And there they are praying for some days. And they come out like an army of men with almost limitless power.

And the whole nation again is convulsed. Why can these men do these things? Why does the high priest do it? He wears a helmet. Solid gold round band.

And it says on holiness to the Lord. They never thought there was any holiness about him except on his forehead. He stands and drowns out Isaiah 35.

When new years come, the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, lame leap as a hawk. Well you see the men that did it went into that temple with more than 2,000 people in it and stood there in the middle of the feast. One of the most heroic things in history.

In the first verse it says they said we'll kill him. In the middle of the chapter the people say, well why don't you kill him? He's there, you said you'd kill him. I think of this every day of my life.

The moral majesty of Jesus. He under breastplate. He under bodyguard.

He stands there. What do you expect him to get? That's in the 7th chapter of John. In the 2nd chapter, what did he do in the 2nd chapter? He went to the temple and kicked over the tables of the money changers.

In the account of that same story by Matthew it says that he said, come on. Let me step out of here a minute. You know what my teacher used to tell me about the great characters of famous men, heroes in the Bible.

Daniel in the lion's den. Samson pulling the house down. Wonderful.

Daniel in the lion's den. Jesus isn't in the lion's den. Do you know what he says? He says you're a den of thieves.

And then he walks in the midst of them. Why didn't they slaughter him? Because again of the moral majesty. Because of the anointing of the Spirit of God.

When he stood there and trembled, I'm sure he's not thinking of the departed glory. Again, do you know why you and I do not sigh and cry and groan and fast for revival? Because we've never seen it. That's why.

Oh, we've been to a good meeting now and again. A few more people went forward. I think most churches have a door at each end.

They come to the altar and walk straight out to the world. And there's two Russians that were in New York a few weeks ago. They permitted, they got a permit to come to America for a few weeks.

They wanted to go to a sanctuary on Sunday. They went. When they came out, all the men lit up.

They staggered. What's happening? Oh, well, these, what do you mean? Well, these men are smoking. Don't they do that in your country? Nobody ever smokes in our country coming out of church.

Well, they go straight into restaurants, not in our country. They go to football matches, not in our country. This is the country we're praying for, Russia.

As I told you the other week, Dave Wilkinson brought some men to my house from Poland. When he mentioned the gay communities, they said, what? What is a gay community? Oh, we have colonies of homosexuals and lesbians in most of our big cities. Don't you have them in Poland? Never heard of any.

You have homosexuals? Oh, odd individuals. Don't you have shops selling nudity things? Not in Poland. No nudity in Poland.

No pornography in Poland. No homosexuals in Poland. No lesbians in Poland.

Come on, how long do you think God is going to wink at the sin of America? There's nobody on this earth who's going to move this generation to God except the Holy Ghost. Last this week, people have talked to me about expeditions. Bless her, some lady last week got up and asked for prayer after the meeting, you know, for the skeletons they found of dinosaurs.

If we can find human bones as well as the dinosaur bones, it will prove the flood. It will prove the Bible. Listen, nobody proves God's truth.

Nobody proves the Bible's truth. It's true because God says it, not because science agrees. Let them go to hell.

I don't care whether they agree or disagree. When I was a boy, the latest discovery was that somewhere in Siberia they found the skeletons of a whole host of mastodons. Remember those monsters about twice the height of an elephant? They had long fur coats on.

And they found all these skeletons going in one direction and they all had hay in their mouths. They'd been frozen. And they were all running away from the area of the flood and then there was a change in atmosphere and they were all frozen there.

A proof of the flood. Did people repent by the thousand? No. They ridiculed the whole thing.

Just now some wealthy Americans are trying to get up through Turkey to find the remains of Noah's Ark. And if they do, of course, the whole world will believe. Come on.

One of these boys on TV will buy a lump of it and he'll sell a piece for five dollars. It's amazing when you think what Peter and John could have done. They could have got an expedition, you know, people looking for Noah's Ark, couldn't they? Or the Ark that came out of the tabernacle.

Or, would you like to stand in the place where Moses stood and viewed the landscape? Or, I can take you up there, you know, cost you fifty dollars each but it's wonderful. I got an invitation last week to go with a

party to study revival in the Alps. Of course, in the Alps, you see, you're nearer heaven up there.

But, do you know what the pull was? Oh, we're going to study revival with some of the great men in the world. Dr. So and So from London. Dr. So and So.

We're going to study revival. And we're going skiing every day in the best skiing places in the world. You know, like Elijah did and Joel.

I mean, who's fooling with almighty God? That's right. You don't want to go, Patty. We're going to go and not only that, but listen, here's an added bonus.

We can get on a train and go through the Alps to Austria. All the leather work there, the handbags you can buy and all the rest of it. Oh, mercy on us.

Isn't it nice to make it so comfortable? You know, doesn't talk about fasting and praying. Don't say, we'll save all the money it will cost 200 of us to fly over there and give it to missions. And let's get in some back place there in somewhere around Garden Valley or somewhere and get on our bellies before God.

Do you think God's going to answer prayer to folk who are panting and praying, Lord, help me to ski faster today? What a foolish thing. The only reason we don't have revival is the price is too high. That's all.

It means it's almost like cutting your throat physically. You cut your throat socially. You don't care whether you ever get invited to dinner.

You don't care a hill of beans about the pastor or what he says. You just get alone with God and have a love trice with him. I was trying to get to these young preachers down from Detroit this afternoon and warmer, thought out talking.

Get a love relationship with the Lord. Don't substitute service for worship. Remember the secret is discipline.

Take time to be holy. One thing you can do is throw your TV away. Or some other thing.

If it's a hindrance. It isn't to everybody. I use mine for news.

I like to know what's happening in the countries where my boys are before I go to bed at night. You don't know what's happening these days. But you see there's such a horrible mixture today.

Jesus said sell all you have and take up your cross and follow me. And take a cross means going across. Across public opinion.

Across the opinion of your relatives. Maybe across the opinion of your pastor. Well if he's wrong and the Bible's right kiss him goodbye.

And follow the word of God. Here are two simple men. Not one of them has ordination.

Not one of them has any reputation. I think in the eyes of the rest of the world they were despised. Peter? Oh that's the man that ran away.

That girl put a finger up and he ran away from a girl there. They all forsook him and fled. As I said last week once Peter got talking with the anointing of the Holy Ghost his tongue was a sharp twedged sword.

He severed all their conceit. He deflated them in their pride. And it says they were all amazed.

They were dumbfounded that Peter should stand with that authority when previously he'd been such a coward. You know the more learned the church gets in just natural learning the less she knows of God. Don't confuse wisdom with knowledge.

You can know all the knowledge in the world and not be wise. Knowledge in itself is not wisdom. Wisdom is acting on the knowledge that you have and in this area in the power of God.

You know in the days of Charles II you won't remember that. I don't except historically. But in the days of Charles II the early 1600s there were a group of men massive men massive intellectually massive spiritually we call them Puritans.

And maybe the greatest teacher of them all was John Owen. He wrote about five huge volumes just on the epistles of the Hebrews. He was the outstanding preacher of the day.

Down in England a bit further in the south of England there was a man in jail a preacher by the name of John Bunyan. You remember he gave us the greatest classic maybe outside of the Bible Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. If you haven't read it you should.

If you haven't read it you're cheating on your children. You should read it to children. And read the second volume The Holy War which I think is better.

Two of the greatest classics ever written. Here is this humble tinker for 15 years in jail because he wouldn't concede to the government. Here is John Owen who had become who was a a Presbyterian preacher right.

I think afterwards he became a Congregationalist. Here is this man with his towering intellect everybody listens aghast when he opens the word of God. Oh wasn't he marvellous.

Oh you should have heard him last Sunday. Oh you should have heard him so and so. He is awesome.

He treads paths other men don't tread. He gets revelations other men don't get. He reveals secrets of scripture nobody else knows.

What's his secret? Oh they say he lives with God. He does? Yes. Well do you know what he did one day? John Oaks with his illustrious congregation he invited this poor tinker that didn't know much about theology but knew God.

Invited him to preach. The king Charles II sent for John Owen afterwards and he said Sir they tell me that you being the most learned man in the British Isles today invited a tinker to take your pulpit? Did I hear right? Yes sir you did. How could you tolerate it? He hasn't your expansion of thinking.

He doesn't have your revelations. He has none of your fantastic theology. How did you listen to that man babbling from your pulpit? Now tell me John how did you do that? John said Your Majesty I would lay on one side all my intellectual knowledge my culture my vocabulary my eloquence I would bundle it all up and give it away to have the revelation and simple faith that that tinker has.

His walk with God is so high above mine. Oh I could better him in argument but he has an intimacy with God I don't know a thing about. That's exactly the same with these men.

Filled with the Holy Ghost. What did this world say about them? It said they were unlearned and ignorant men. Isn't that right? If they've got ignorance I'm going to try and graduate from it.

They were unlearned and ignorant men. What happened? Well they got into trouble. For what? For doing good.

This crazy world you go to jail for doing good as well as doing bad. What happened? Well all the big scholars got together and they said well look there's no way we can contradict this. They tell me that man was healed.

Oh that's not the worst of it. What's the worst? Oh do you know he desecrated the temple. He ran through the temple jumping two feet off the ground leaping and praising and magnifying God.

Oh abominable they said. You can't do that. We're God's chosen and frozen.

So please don't break rank. Don't break rank. Let me show you the situation for a minute.

I remember standing with my dear wife and a friend. I wanted to see what everybody wants to see when they come to America the Grand Canyon. We stood there on that southern lift and look out it was so gorgeous and breathtaking.

I looked at the sign there it said when you look down to the canyon the floor is just one mile down. Good way down. When you're down there the walls look higher than a mile but they are a mile high.

In the distance there's a yellow ribbon that is the Colorado River in its infancy. Though it is about what a hundred feet wide thirty five feet deep and so forth and so on. The speed of it is so many knots and what have you got.

I looked down in that canyon somebody on horseback looked about this side and I thought well this is a picture of the early church. Here are people down there however in the world they were going to get up here. The walls were a mile high.

The river is two or three miles away you couldn't swim across it. It's four hundred and fifty feet wide it flows so fast. Then the wall at this side is a mile high.

So what? Well I said to myself that person there is the early church. This wall is the Roman Empire in its splendor. They'd already gone to England.

We used to live in a city in England that was founded by the Romans in fifty five B.C. Fifty five years before Christ they'd colonized England. If you go around England you find cities with Chester behind. Everywhere there's a Chester that the Romans colonized.

Manchester, Chichester, Chester, Goldchester, all the rest. These men are up against the greatest military machine in the world. That's one thing that walls them in.

The other wall is the Greeks were still in their splendor with all their colossal intellectualism. They were still talking about Socrates and Plato and Demosthenes and all those other one glittering persons. And the river across there which is the worst barrier is the Jewish nation that thinks it has a monopoly on God.

What are these men going to do? They don't go with fire breathing from their nostrils. They're not going to pronounce curses. They're going with blessings.

They're going into a world that's dead and doomed and damned and they know it. And so you see almost it seems like a contradiction but I'll use it. They have almost a ferocious love for Jesus Christ.

As the Apostle Paul had when he said I'm a debtor to all men. I don't believe he ever got up feeling good. I believe every day he felt a fire in his bosom beyond anything any of us have ever known I suppose.

He makes his angels ministering spirits and he ministers a flame of fire. What did they do? Oh, these men are a nuisance. These men are showing the hollowness of our religion.

They're showing the emptiness of our preachers. They're showing the powerlessness of our ministries. So what do we do? Bang them all in jail.

Do you know why they got to jail? Because they forgot to preach prosperity. What did they do? They went to prison. Not to palaces.

Not to prosperity. Not to praise. They went to prison and what? Sat down and cried and said Lord this is a raw deal.

We're pioneers. I mean we've no money. We couldn't give that poor beggar any money and here we are with no homes not much we've got.

Instead of that what did they do? They went to prison and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his namesake. How many people rejoice when God lays a double portion of grief on them? I said remember the minor prophets talk about the burden of the Lord. The man that is my closest friend whoever he is I don't know but he doesn't come and tell me all his rejoicing and success and everything.

He dares to share his heart with me. His grief, his burden. The thing that's tearing him apart.

How many of us pray for brokenness? When that young man said I'm going to ask God to give you every tear that Jesus had for those I said go ahead. I believe I can take it. In fact I've been praying about that for two days.

I've been praying about Lamentations 220 again. How many of us pray for blessing? All of us. How many of us pray for brokenness? Few of us.

What is God saying? Jesus says my yoke is easy in my what? Burden. All people say I just take my burdens I roll them on the Lord. Well who does he roll his burdens on? Gabriel? Michael? Archangel? No.

On who? His saints. The people that live very close to him. I like that.

Him crown him with many crowns. Remember there's a phrase in it that says who of Jesus who every grief hath known that rings the human breast and takes and bears them for his own that all in him may rest. Maybe a simple question is to ask ourselves what's your breaking point spiritually? And I don't mean what do you break under spiritually? Trial and temptation? I mean how much can God lay on me without me saying Lord hold it back.

I'm getting crushed. Oswald Chambers had a phrase you may remember if you read Oswald Chambers he talks about us being broken bread and poured out wine. Have you read Oswald Chambers? How many of you read Oswald Chambers? Oh.

Not many. Oh you need to read it. If you get 20 of his books and 20 of Dr. Tozer's and then some good ones like mine to balance them up kind of thing you'll be surprised how much you'll move in the next year or two.

But he talks about us being broken bread and poured out wine. Pouring your life out in some hell hole. Some dark place of the earth.

You become bread to those people they feed on you like a child feeds on the breast of its mother. And poured out wine. Well there's only one way to get wine that's crush the grapes.

Have you noticed how often Jesus took things and broke them? He took bread and broke it and said this is my body which is broken. In fact he can't use us when we're whole. He can't use us when we think we're spiritually athletic.

The scripture is so different from human philosophy. It says in the spiritual life the lame take the prey and to those who have no might he increases strength. What did Paul say? When I am weak then am I strong.

When I am shorn of all my own abilities shorn of my petty little confidence. Charles Wesley has a great hymn you remember Jesus you are lover of my soul. And in one phrase in it he says hangs my helpless soul on thee.

We don't like to admit our helplessness do we? Lord I'm getting stronger. Oh by the time I get through Bible school Lord you've got another Elijah coming on the scene. Or another something else and then you go and fall flat on your face and realize look I'm no stronger in God because I've been to the best Bible school in the world because I've gained more knowledge.

If it doesn't get into my bloodstream what did they do? They saw this twisted man they looked on him. Well thousands looked on him but they stopped and stretched forth a hand they had compassion they touched him in his misery. And he communicated life.

His ankle bones received strength and he immediately jumped up and he ran through the temple walking and leaping and praising God. That's the normal cause. That should happen every Lord's day in our sanctuaries but it doesn't.

People come in dead, sit there dead and go out dead. Usually listen to a dead man delivering dead sermons to dead people. I tried to urge these young men today, look if it doesn't burn in your heart stay at home.

Don't even preach. I told them I preach a message sometimes I like to preach it. I preached it for 50 years.

But it has to be born again. I spend as many hours in prayer over that message as I never preached it in my life. If it don't live in me it won't live in you.

We communicate life or we communicate death. Oh it must be nice to stand up and preach to crowds. I never found it that way.

If I preach in any meeting in the anointing of the spirit I know this whether anybody comes to the altar or not doesn't worry me that much. If I'm preaching in the anointing of the spirit somebody gets saved in that meeting without any sign I don't care. But on the other hand people go out dead, damned, doomed.

It's God's last call to them. Richard Baxter went to, I've forgotten the city now, Kidderminster. It's a great cathedral there, it has two great towers in red stone, beautiful place.

In the middle of town there's an oversized statue, a statue maybe twelve feet high of the man that revolutionized that town. Church of England minister. When he went he said there was not one family in the town that had family devotions.

And when he died they said there wasn't one family in the town that didn't have them. They built five galleries in the church to accommodate the crowd. Men came to ask him the secret.

Who are you studying? Word of God. Where do you get your eloquence? By prayer, by the anointing, quickening of the Holy Ghost. But you must have a secret.

He said here's my secret. I preach as if to never preach again. I preach as a dying man to dying men.

In other words he's saying exactly what that great wonderful man said. Jonathan Edwards said that, preached that most memorable sermon in American history about 1747. When he preached that message on sinners in the hands of an angry God.

When people fell off their seats or they clung to the pillars supporting the gallery and he didn't spare them and say oh pardon me I didn't mean to upset you like that. He just put the word of God and hacked them to pieces. Until they screamed until they roared with conviction.

Not eloquence. Not just some terrible illustration of people falling into eternal burning. You know we preachers, God pities us, we preachers it's an option.

You know you can take the Lord today if you like. Come on. Today if he will hear his voice.

Read Hebrews and see how many times it says to today. As I said we read that epistle. I'm going off tomorrow.

I'll be back Monday night and we'll have our class Tuesday God willing. Okay so in that epistle. It begins God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days and that was written two thousand years ago.

But where in God's name do you think we are today? How does revelation begin? It talks about the things which was and notice it's the revelation. Preacher says we're going to read now from the revelation of Saint John. There isn't one.

It's the revelation of God to Jesus Christ and the revelation of Jesus Christ to John. About what? Things. This is written two thousand years ago by a captive.

Things which must shortly come to pass. Do you know where God reveals his treasures? When it's stripped out of everything else. Who had the greatest revelation of God? I don't know.

Moses on the mount when he saw God in his majesty. Paul when he was caught up into the third heaven. John on the isle of Patmos.

God lifts the veil and shows him into eternity. Shows him the end of kingdoms. He shows him not only the end of the age with everything that will happen beyond the end of the age.

That's why we don't need to be nervous. That's why we need to take time to be holy. Get in this word.

Read it to your children. My dear wife and I read more to each other now that we've done for years. She, I listen.

She reads so well. But oh I enjoy these things so much. We're the only people treading the earth tonight that has reality.

Everything else is false. I don't care how good it is. It's false.

There's no question in the mind of John. No question in the mind of Peter. If it's gonna cost everything we have so be it.

But they blazed a trail. Can you imagine that one instance? Where that man went? Don't you think everybody in the city talked about that for days? Don't you realize why there was a great awakening? Because they dared to go out on a limb. Defying their feelings.

Defying the Roman Empire. Defying the Greek intellectuals. Defying the Jews with all their monopoly of God.

Because again, one man with God is a majority. If two shall agree that's wonderful. But sometimes there's not two.

You may have to go up the Amazon in a canoe somewhere. Up the Amazon then up the Orinoco River and off the Orinoco to somewhere else and get away there for the rest of your life. And there's nobody there except God.

Was it Madam Gein? Tell me, come on now. Was it Madam Gein of Faber who said tell me, Could I be cast where thou art not? That were indeed a dreadful spot. But with thee my God to guide the way it is equal joy to go or stay.

Maybe God will take you to a situation where you're the only person in that whole environment maybe for hundreds of miles who can stand and say to somebody demon possessed, in the name of Jesus Christ and let us be liberated. You know, if we really got back to the glory days of the New Testament all our doctors will be bankrupt in three weeks. There'll be nobody in our hospitals.

What do we do in the church? Oh, pray for Mrs. so and so, she's going a bit off her nut. We're going to get a very good psychologist. A Christian psychiatrist you know, well that sure helps.

Come on, forget it. What did they do in the early church? They bore each other's burdens. Again, these men were unlearned and ignorant in the eyes of the world.

They had no money. They had a self imposed poverty. They sold everything they had.

I don't hear anybody preaching this. Oh, I had an Acts 2 experience. Oh, I had an Acts 2 experience.

I don't believe you. Are you judging me? Yes, on your words. Why? Well, did you go down in the church and sell everything you have? Well, the pastor says that isn't for today.

Well, I said the liberals say the Holy Ghost isn't for today. So, where do you stop? I'm not saying you have to sell your house and your car and walk home and do something. No, you have to do what God says.

As I try to get into the minds of these young men today, I said, listen, keep this clearly in mind as we try to do in our class every Friday. Trust and obey. There's no other way.

There's never, never been such need. You know, it doesn't seem much. I'm going to quit right here.

It doesn't mean much, does it, when you read in the paper there that Stalin's daughter has been here for 17 years and decided to go home last week. For what? Because she gathered 17 years of information from the greatest secrets we have in the nation. They didn't want her to go to England.

Why not? Because Russia is going to do a big interference job in England before very long. We're living on a margin of mercy from God. Again, the greatest hold-up in the world is not communism or Mormonism or humanism.

What have you got? Moonism. The greatest hindrance in the world tonight is an unsanctified church, an infidel church, an impure church, a church that's so mixed up with worldliness. You guys want to be holy, but you want to talk football and cowboys after the afternoon morning service, eh? You think God's going to let you flirt with the world like that? Sure it costs something.

Charles Wesley Nahum says, The dearest idol I have known, what e'er that idol be, help me to tear it from the throne. There are some things I have to do. I have to write out a list of renunciations, the things I will not do and then the things I will do.

And set a course to be obedient to God in every single detail he puts in my life. If people don't like it, forget it. Who am I pleasing? Men or God? This situation can't go on much longer.

We've such exaggerated corruption. As I heard somebody quote today, the West has never been so corrupt with immorality, venereal disease, drunkenness and everything else. We have never been more corrupt.

We're not ripe for judgment, we're over ripe. And the only thing that keeps God from coming right now is his church is still in the world. That's the secret.

We're the salt of the earth. If he took the salt out, how much more rotten would the world be? But you see, things that have been normal suddenly become abnormal. They'd seen that little man that was part of the stone that held up the gate, then suddenly realized he was a human being with a desperate need and religion couldn't do anything for him, and priests couldn't do anything for him, and the new moons and sabbaths couldn't do anything, and shedding all the blood of beasts couldn't do a thing for him.

And Peter sees it all and says, well my Lord, my Master has commissioned me to do this. We have no silver, we have no gold, but such as we have, we give. Now, Norwich, will you say, let me say this quick.

He says, look on us. Can you say that to your Sunday school class? Can you say it to your children? Apart from reading the Bible, you look on Daddy and Mummy. We live exactly like Jesus would live in this house.

Look on us. And he looked. And then when the miracle was done and the swarm of people came round, they said, look not on us.

Oh, that's not the program on TV, is it? Oh, do you know how big our ministry is? Do you know what building we're putting up? Do you know how many pieces of literature we're sending out? Do you know we've sent 890,000 bags of flour to Ethiopia? Good, but why parade it like a Pharisee? Look on us if you have need. We've got the answers to your problem. We have it in God.

We have the wisdom needed for your problem. We have the strength we can share. We have love.

We have compassion. And he looked, expecting to receive something, but never expecting to get what he got. But then the crowd again swarmed round and said, hey, that's Peter and John.

And Peter says, don't look on us as though by our own holiness we've done this. And the crowd said, well, in whose name have you done it? You just go through the Acts of the Apostles and see how often that phrase is mentioned, his name. Jesus is mentioned more in the Acts of the Apostles and even the Holy Spirit is mentioned.

Because he's the key to everything. His power. His resurrection.

It's the promise of the Father fulfilled. They manifest it.

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