

Behold He Prayeth

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon emphasizes the urgent need for the church to awaken and authentically demonstrate the power of the gospel through prayer and personal transformation.

Duration: 1:14:00

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:26, Acts 9:3-6, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the need for the church to wake up and stand up in this critical hour of history. He highlights the seduction of worldly distractions like TV and video games, urging believers to focus on their calling and purpose. The speaker draws inspiration from the story of Moses, who endured 40 years in the wilderness and boldly confronted the king to free God's people. He emphasizes the importance of suffering and taking up one's cross in the present, rather than solely focusing on future rewards in heaven. The sermon concludes with a reminder that the church has a message for the broken and decaying world, and it is time to speak up or fold up.

Transcript

Reverend Leonard Ravenhill, we invited him to come to the United States 32 years ago, 1950. He's been a great blessing to me personally and to Bethany Missionary Church, and also to the Church of the United States, as well as many other places where the Lord has sent him. He's a very special friend of mine and of many here, and we're so glad to have him with us this morning.

God bless you, brother. We're glad to be here, my wife and I. We heard that the royal families were gathering this weekend, so we thought we'd increase them. I get the New York Times book review each week, it's supplied free.

A while ago, one of the most incisive writers in that amazing journal said this. I think the trouble with the modern preachers is that they have forgotten the awesome beauty and thrilling majesty of the gospel. I think that's a classic phrase.

I think every preacher should have it in his office that we have forgotten the awesome beauty and the thrilling majesty of the gospel. I think it's time for us to take this word and make our minds up that either it's absolute or it's obsolete. It's either got the answers or it does not have the answers.

I think of a caustic comment made by a girl about 16 years of age. She said, I find church as interesting as a Tupperware party. She didn't come to this church, let me make that clear.

But I think she's right speaking generally. I have, I hope I have it, here I've got an acorn. See this? Remember Jesus said, remember a parable of the fig tree.

I want to give you a parable of an acorn. I brought one with me. I put it on my desk in the bedroom and it was squirreled away.

I don't know who the squirrel was but I hope he has a bad time. Because it was a big acorn that I gathered from a giant tree there in Canada. Huge acorn.

Now this miserable little thing is a Minnesota acorn. I picked it up and we stopped to check the oil and there was some trees there and I saw the acorn and I thought I better take one and I took it. And it reminded me of being at school when the teacher asked us one day, what is there inside that acorn? I thought, well she's ignorant if she doesn't know.

But anyhow she said, what's inside? And a boy that always answered first said, there's a tree inside of it. There's a whole tree inside of that acorn. Well he missed it because actually there's a forest inside of an acorn.

Because that acorn that will develop hopefully and millions or hundreds of thousands of acorns will sprout off it. And then also maybe there's furniture in it because in England we love oak. And people have nice oak furniture.

And so that tree may have supplied lots of furniture and lots of other things. And that linked me up to a scripture that I read and I've read it I guess hundreds of times and I think you have. It's in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 9 and in verse 10 it says, there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias.

And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, behold I'm here Lord. And the Lord said unto him, arise and go into the street which is called Straight.

And inquire in the house of Judas. For one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold he prayeth.

And he hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Verse 15 says, but the Lord said unto him, go thy way. For he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and the kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how great things he must prosper in. That's in the perverse version. I'm reading from the Living Bible, the King James.

I will show him how much he must suffer. He must suffer, that's by psychology. We don't tell people to take up their cross now.

We tell them they're forgiven, they're going to have a mansion on Main Street in heaven, immunity from the judgment seat and a five-decker crown and rule over five cities or something. But the whole thing is laid out before this awesome character. Now I like to visualize this.

I'll give you my maybe rather dramatic interpretation. Because you see I'm quite sure of this, it's time in this critical hour of history, it's time for the church to wake up, stand up, speak up or fold up. Either we

have the message for the most crumbling, decayed generation that the world has ever known or we have no answer.

It's significant if you think of it that every new nation that is born is a coloured nation. There are no new white nations being born, forget it, we're on our way out. There have been about 30 new nations born in the last few years, they're all coloured, no white.

If there's a vote tomorrow morning in the United Nations and you see them all they seem to have strength to do is raise a pencil, do you notice that? And they raise a pencil, I'm voting for this. And you see the gallery and there are just half a dozen, maybe a dozen of the most white people, all the others, and I've no grudge against coloured folk, not for a minute. We've had our day, we must have.

We, all the men have had our day. I'm convinced we've moved into the greatest crunch in history. I believe that we're right there in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews where it says in the last days that everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that the kingdom that cannot be shaken may remain.

And time is running out on us. If ever there was a day when the priest should weep before the door and the altar, whenever we should put on our sackcloth, when we should quit feasting and start fasting, this is the day. And I like to come to students for the simple reason again, the promise is to them, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants and handmaids will I pour out of my spirit.

Somebody asked me the other day, do you believe in miracles? I said yes, every morning I wake up, I think it's a miracle the world isn't burning with judgment. We have had more light, more privileges, than any generation in history. And what we have had in the church of Jesus in the last twenty-five years, with all our massive crusades, has not even moved America nearer God.

So something has to be discovered, there has to be a break somewhere. I like to think again that Christianity was not served up to the world on a silver platter. Christianity was born in a sophisticated totalitarian society.

I like to think of those men in the upper room, penniless preachers. They came out with that which money cannot buy. Oh, so often I say, thank you Lord, that the Holy Ghost cannot be purchased with money, He cannot be purchased with organization, He cannot be purchased with our skills or our theology.

They went in the upper room and they were a bunch of nervous, I guess failing people. I'm so glad you sang all those English hymns, I wanted to thank you, they're so inspiring this morning. And J.B. Phillips is an Englishman, a few years ago he had had a rather bad Sunday and he said on Monday he turned round in his swivel chair, he picked up a book which happened to be the New Testament in Greek, and it happened to open at the Acts of the Apostles, and he happened to read the first five chapters.

And he said, this is the Church of Jesus Christ, before it became fat and short of breath by over-fat and short of breath by prosperity. This is the Church of Jesus before it became muscle-bound by over-organization. This is the Church of Jesus Christ where they didn't gather together a group of intellectuals to study psychosomatic medicine, they just healed the sick.

This is a group of people where they did not say prayers, but they prayed in the Holy Ghost. This is where they did not talk about faith, they acted in faith. I think the word faith is mentioned over 300 times in the New Testament, in the Old Testament it's mentioned only twice, why? Because they worked in faith, we

talk about it, we theorize it, we philosophize it.

I believe with all my heart, and I'm spilling my heart out to you, you can fire me after, that's all right. But I'm telling you now, the world out there is not waiting for a new definition of Christianity, it's waiting for a new demonstration of Christianity. And the only way it can happen is when men confess their brokenness, their bankruptcy, and they plead with all they have to be really cleansed and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Now here's a man going down to Damascus Road, I'm convinced he was riding a horse. He wouldn't have undertaken the journey so far. And I can hang him with his own rope because he says, the things which I did in Jerusalem, many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I punished them in every synagogue, I compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them.

One translation says, and when he was desperately furious, you see we read the scriptures so easily, we forget that there have been a gap between Malachi and Matthew 400 years, without any prophetic voice, 400 years of darkness, without any prophetic light, then suddenly dramatically you have a man, he has no financial backing, bless him he doesn't even have a mailing list, and he appears in the wilderness, and they're drawn. Dear old Samuel Chavis used to say this, you never have to advertise a fire, neither physical nor a Holy Ghost fire, you never have to advertise it. John the Baptist came and disrupted that 400 years of stillness, he'd hardly got going, and he was liquidated.

Lots of young men write to me and say, I've got a commission from God to be a John the Baptist. And I write back and say, get extra insurance, you're going to die in six months, oh no I'm not thinking of it that way, I'm just, oh you see, well that's the price. And John did no miracle.

They weren't crying, have mercy on my son he's a lunatic, they were not bringing human derelicts. But they went there, even the Roman soldiers cried, what shall we do? See there's a difference between revival and evangelism. In evangelism we sing and we beg and we draw and we say, close your eyes.

Well Jesus didn't close his eyes going to the cross. If I should make an appeal, I may or may not this morning, you won't close your eyes I'll assure you of that. Jesus comes right after John, he does everything that John had not done.

And Jesus had hardly gone before the most amazing man I think in history. I think he had a colossal intellect. His mind was filled with God, his heart was filled with hatred, because some people were saying that that Jesus that was put to death is alive, and he is the son of God and he's abolished all our system of religion.

We can't shed blood anymore. We can't do our new moons and our sabbaths. We can't go through all our ritual, he says we're bankrupt.

See we don't enter into that. See the emotional disturbance in the nation, see the religious disturbance. And then they say we've got a champion by the name of Saul.

And he has vowed, he's already got a document, it's signed and sealed and settled. And just like Herod was going to liquidate the early church, Saul says I'll liquidate, pardon me, just as Herod was going to liquidate the infant Christ, Saul says I'll liquidate the infant church. He's going down that Damascus road, breathing out threatenings, he can't get there urgently enough, quickly enough.

And suddenly I see him pitched off his horse. And there he is rolling in the dust and he reminded me of this acorn. What is there inside of him? There wasn't an angel in heaven, even Gabriel could have prophesied it.

Do you think that our fire-breathing man will one day write 14 epistles, if you include Hebrews, which I think he wrote? Do you think he'll out-preach every preacher that ever lived, out-pray every man that ever prayed? Sometimes I think he's one of the few people that could really sing that lovely hymn that was played as a solo. Isaac Watts' great hymn. When I surveyed about, well the whole realm of nature might.

Do you think Dr. Toss was right when he said Christians don't tell lies, they go to church and sing them? Come on now, come on, don't you sing lies? Don't we all sing lies? Jesus, you lover of my soul, thou O Christ art all I want, and more than all in thee I find. And then we're fretting all the rest of the week for some trivia that we can't have. I like that hymn, Beneath the Cross of Jesus, I feign what take, it slays me, I've sung it since, well ever since I could sing it, about 70 odd years ago.

Beneath the Cross of Jesus, and the little phrase in it says, I ask nor the sunshine than the sunshine of thy face, come hell or high water, whether I am popular or unpopular, whether I am liked or disliked, whether God heaps on me more than I feel at times I should have, I don't care. I ask nor the sunshine than the sunshine of thy face, here is a man groveling in the dust. I think he'd had a lot of unhappy days, maybe sleepless nights.

Isn't it amazing that he stood there, and he watched a very charming young man stoned, and not long after he got stoned, he saw a young man led like a lamb to the slaughter, maybe the most brilliant young man in the early church, full of faith, full of the Holy Ghost, full of wisdom. There's more said about his sanctification and baptism than anybody else as far as I remember. But you see this man is blind with rage, and then God took his eyesight, he was physically blind.

Do you know what? I don't think he ever got his sight back. Physically yes, but in a true sense no. I like his statement at the end of Galatians there, where he says, the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.

Of course you and I never saw a crucified man. A crowd could go at six o'clock at night, you could throw rocks at him, throw filth on him, he had no rights once he's nailed to a tree. And thousands would go and see a notorious man crucified, but nobody went at six o'clock in the morning.

The birds got there and pecked his eyes out, the birds got there and tore his guts. The blood ran out, the dogs ran around. A crucified man is about the most horrible thing you can think of.

And Paul says, I'm crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me. You see we've just about lost the line of demarcation. Some of you, oh you sing well the whole realm of nature mine.

You say so often if I had more time I'd study. Well what are you going to watch the Vikings play this afternoon or somebody all afternoon for? You don't fool God, none of us do. One of the most terrible things I think in Christian living today is how we're seduced by TV and then TV's got boring so we've got Atari and video games.

And now you can get a private library of all kinds of films, filthy or good or otherwise. And people have no time. Oh mercy.

The crisis hour is coming on this generation and make no mistake about it. The most famous men in the nation today have depicted a total collapse of the economy by David Wilkerson, my neighbor and friend we discuss and pray to, talk together every week. And he's been saying, I went to a meeting, there were 10,000 people there and he told them that God had revealed to him the collapse of the economy by the end of 1980.

Where are we to now? 83. A doctor that lives down the road from us for six years has been preaching the collapse of world economy. By December of this year, Dave Wilkerson brought a little man to see me.

He told me about him often. Nothing to him. Nothing to him.

I think he's one of the few men on the devil's list of 10 most wanted men in America. I hope I'm on that. Where's Brockie? Do you want to be on that? Oh, you'd better not say no.

Okay. My dear precious friend there, Ted too. This little man came in my office.

He prays 8 to 16 hours a day by himself. He's getting a bit worn out and recently the Lord changed the order and said you can pray a minimum of 5 hours and a maximum of 10 hours a day. He says the nation will collapse by January of next year.

So you have three, he says December of this year, one says December of this year, another says January, another says the end of it. What if they're all wrong? It won't shake me. For the first time in history, America can't give any money to the poor nations.

Couldn't do it this year. We've done millions, billions. Not this year.

Somebody has said unless we straighten out the bankruptcy of that big bank there in Mexico, it's going to have a chain reaction around the world and brother, we're in for serious trouble. But you see, when you talk about a collapsing economy, when you talk about the wickedness in the world, and even evil men now are talking about an evil day. Crime, we don't know how to handle it.

And when you think of it all, go back to the debacle there in Vietnam, look at the rape of Cambodia, as it was called the rape of a gentle land in Reader's Digest. You watch the invasion of Afghanistan, nobody lifts a finger. You see the horrors of Poland.

We forget all about the civil war in Northern Ireland. And when you put it all together, I'm convinced in my spirit, the greatest tragedy of this moment is not political or economic, the greatest tragedy is a sick church in a dying world. And you and I are responsible partly for that.

Dave Wilkerson said to me the other day, he said, Leigh Arden, I've cancelled all my engagements. I needn't fill auditoriums, I was with him. Maybe I said that in an auditorium, it was jammed to the rafters with 10,000 people in a few weeks ago.

I need to know God more intimately. God is blessing my ministry. Sure, we're having a supply of money.

But he said, I need to know God. I'm craving as I've never craved in my life. And I'm taking four months off in a little cabin, a little house he has in Arkansas.

And usually he comes and gets a box of books from me. He reads a book a day, at least he has been doing. But this time he said, I'm just taking the word of God and I'll be called the other thing, a lexicon or

what do you have at the back of your Bible? You know, I can't think of the name of it.

Concordance, thank you. Thought you might say you're offering, but anyhow. A concordance.

And he said, I'm going to seek the face of God as I've never sought the face of God before. I'm determined we're near to one of two things, either greatest collapse or, and maybe at the same time, the greatest outpouring of the Spirit there's ever been. I'm believing God, I'm getting old, I'm in my 76th year, I'm a bit ahead of Brother Hagley, that's why I'm wiser.

But anyhow, I'm getting up the hill. But I'm believing God that I'm going to see an outpouring of the Spirit. I'm going to see a Pentecost that will out-Pentecost Pentecost.

And you know it could start right here this morning. Now I may be wrong, I'm not often, I may be wrong, but you know I woke up this morning with a feeling that Bethany is at the crossroads again. We've spent seven happy years here.

I remember when students packed that room at the back and I tell you honestly, before God, I was in near eternity in that back room in the times of prayer than ever I'd been. I've been around the world a couple of times since. I remember, there was a fellow that used to get us singing Like a Mighty Sea, Bishop Duggan I think it was.

And he would strike up Like a Mighty Sea and there was a little guy that was trying to climb the wall once or twice. That's all right, he got so excited. But all the anointings of God that came.

You know it doesn't matter what else we do if we don't pray. If you don't learn to pray at this school, forget it. I say that in every school.

Prayer is the capital for this day in which we live. You see again, here is a man, and I won't have time of course to get through this, but did you notice what we read? This, as the youngsters say these days, it blew me away. The Lord said unto him, Arise, go into the street which is called straight.

Aren't you glad that Ananias was listening in that day? And enquire in the house of Judas. You see he knew the straight he was in, he knew the house. Do you believe God knows your name and address? You're in trouble if you don't.

I'm sure he knows my name and address. And ask for one Saul of Tarsus for behold he prayeth. I've read that a hundred times.

I read it in my bedroom as I was praying. I rushed into my office and I just said, My God, I've never seen it like that. You mean to say the God of the universe, the God who sits on the surface of the earth, the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, the one before whom millions bow and say, Holy, holy, that he looks from heaven to a little thing called earth, and he looks on that earth to a little country called Palestine, and in the middle he sees a man no bigger than a grain of sand, and almighty God takes notice of him.

He's a bloody man. He's a devourer. He put people to death.

He destroyed their homes. And yet God almighty has time for one man like that? If that isn't a miracle, what is? I apologize to God that I've read that for 60, 70 years, and it never hit me with any force. The high and lofty one, he runs the universe.

Never mind if they say we just discovered that there are 100 trillion more stars. Isaac was living before Wesley said, He made the stars, those heavenly flames. He counts their numbers, calls their names.

His wisdom's vast and knows no bound. A deep where all the thoughts are drowned. What is a creature's skill or force? The sprightly man, the warlike horse, the piercing wit, the active limb, all are to mean delights for him.

But saints are lovely in his sight. God doesn't get any fellowship with stars or universes or rivers. He made us that we may be partakers of the divine nature.

He delights in us. We're his pleasure. Sometimes I'm not as good at drawing or painting as Mr. Brockie, but I do a little, you know.

People, some people will give a thousand dollars to see him. They're blind. But, and I've been sketching one day, sketching what I like to sketch, an eagle.

A man came in the house and, Oh, he said, I guess you sketched that. Yeah, could I have it? Fine. He stayed an hour.

It's 55 minutes too long, but he stayed an hour. And going out, he said, Would you do me a favor? I said, No. He said, You don't know what I'm going to ask.

Oh yes, I do. You're going to ask me to autograph that drawing. Yes, I was.

Well, won't you autograph it for me? No. No, I won't. I won't even autograph it for a hundred dollars.

Try me with a thousand, I may give in, but. I said, No, I'm not going to sign it. Now, please do.

I may never come in this office again. That was good news, but anyhow. He said, I may never come in this office again.

And I'd like to pin it on the wall and have your name on it. No, no, no. All right, he said, and out he went.

He didn't swear. He did like Christians do, bang the door for all he was worth, you know. Just to show how mad he was.

But you know, as soon as he went out, the Lord said to me, Look, you are my workmanship. Can I autograph your life at the end of every day? Hmm, that made me sit up. We are his workmanship.

Oh, it may be an uneventful day to you, but somewhere in that day, I should have glorified God. Can he really, with honor, with joy, sign my name, his name at the end of the day and say, There, I put Ravenel on trial. There, I put Ravenel on exhibition.

It's pleased me today, in the things he said, in the things he thought, in the things he spoke, which about covers sanctification. Notice, will you, in the 26th chapter of Acts. Again, he says, verse 14, When we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me.

Notice in verse 13, he says there, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven shining about me. Verse 14, When we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Okay, at midday, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun. I'm going to ask you a simple question.

I hope you'll ask yourself every time you come in this sanctuary, because I ask it every night in meetings now. Because the Lord one night just shot it into my heart. Did you come here to meet God? Or did you come here to hear a sermon about Him? Did you expect the One, the Holy One, who lives in the midst of the seven golden canvases to walk the isle and search your heart while the preacher or the singer is singing or speaking? Do you come to meet God? Ninety-five percent of people in America or England today, I believe, go to hear a sermon.

They check off your theology in this or that or the other. Could this man, is there any way on God's... You see, this man afterwards testifies. He believed John 3, 16, that God so loved the world.

He believed that Christ loved the church and gave Himself. But he says, do you know something more wonderful than God loving the world and God loving the church? He loved me and gave Himself for me. And he would have sung that hymn that we sang this morning of Newton's with excitement.

No, this man has no stinking record. He's not an adulterer. He has no crime record.

He has no blasphemy. In one sense, he's impeccable in his morality. In another sense, he isn't because he murdered and he persecuted.

But he did it all in the name of his God. And then he said, I was going down that road, I got it all signed and settled. Look, there he is in the dust.

Turn him over and have a look at him. Look in his pocket. There he's got his birth certificate.

He was born as very few Jews. He was a free man in the Roman Empire. He was a Pharisee.

His father was a Pharisee. I believe he was a leading scholar in the school of the Pharisees in that day. And yet he would have sung triumphantly, my richest gain I count but loss.

He finishes his Galatians again saying, I bear in my body the brands of the Lord Jesus. For when a slave ran away, he could run into the temple of Heracles and be branded by any, a branding iron of any God he wanted. And after that, his old master had no claim on him.

The world had no claim on him. He'd lift his foot up and say, see there's a brand. See it's there.

See it's in the back of my neck. I think the hymn writer thought of that when she said, let my hands perform his bidding. Let my feet run in his way.

Let my eyes see Jesus only. Let my lips speak forth his praise. I believe that one of the determining things in our Christian life, and it was sung so often when I was here, he used to sing, give me a vision.

This man has a vision. I think the first time this vision was given was maybe at a banquet in Egypt when all the kings and nobles were there. There's a young man daydreaming.

He's thinking and somebody says, the young prince isn't very interested. And they didn't know what was happening. Do you know what was happening? He was looking down the corridor of time and he saw Jesus and he resigned his richest gain he counted but lost.

The richest empire in the world. He might have been Rameses III. But he fell in love with Jesus because it says that Moses chose rather to suffer affliction.

Chose affliction. He couldn't die past it, he chose it. Rather than suffer the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ.

I say respectfully, my God, how did he know the reproach of Christ? How did he see it? I believe he saw into eternity. I believe this blessed man who says, God appeared to me on the Damascus road. He revealed himself to me and then he says later, he revealed himself in me and then he's taken up into the third heaven.

Could he forget this vision on the Damascus road? No. Could he forget being lifted into the third heaven? I believe he saw part of the ages, the glory of the ages and I have a deep suspicion in my heart he saw hell and all the anguish of lost people. And our generation has lost sight of the holiness of God.

We don't tremble at God's holiness anymore. I preached through our fellowship down the back road there the other week. And I said if the holiness of God, I'm convinced of this, God burned it on my heart one morning as I meditated, that if I claim to be filled with the Holy Ghost, then the things that grieve the Spirit will grieve my Spirit.

And I believe the church is grieving the Spirit. After all in the Old Testament God's problem was not Amalekites, Hittites, Perizzites and otherites. God's problem in the Old Testament was Israel.

And when we quote 2 Chronicles 7-14, If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves. He's not speaking of a nation there, he's speaking of them as the church. They couldn't live like other people.

They couldn't use the Sabbath day like other people. God had a continual controversy with Israel about the Sabbath day. He still has.

He says remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. We think it finishes at 12 o'clock. And we put on our sports attire and run round any old house.

Forget it. Don't ever think of revival if you break the Sabbath. Because God says we're to take our foot from the Sabbath, from doing our pleasure on his holy day.

You don't have time to do that. You need to be still and know that he's God. And I believe that the Apostle, he never wavered.

You can't find where he backslid for five minutes. His resolution was this, this one thing I do. I went down that Damascus road, I went into a quiet time with God and I exchanged my life for his life.

It was an exchange life, it was an explicit life. This thing, this one thing I do. It was an exciting life.

He wrestled with wild beasts at Ephesus. But I'm convinced that just as Moses endured through the rottenness of the wilderness 40 years. Why most of us can hardly stand 40 minutes by ourselves or 40 hours.

And this man in his royal robes now smells of sheep. He doesn't get a decent meal, he can't get a bath. And he's 40 years on the backside of the desert.

Then he comes back and walks into the presence of the king that had put a price on his head and he said, let my people go. Have you ever thought of the guts and grace it took to walk into a royal palace when

there's a price on your head? And say to the greatest king in the world, you let my people go and I'm going to have a duel with you and I'm going to win. Do you wonder that the Apostle pulled down principalities and powers? The Spirit said to him a bit later in this 26th chapter, arise and stand on my feet.

And he never bowed the knee in his life except to God. He stands up against kings and rulers, it makes no difference. I saw a light from heaven.

Oh verse 12, I went to Damascus. Verse 13, I saw a light from heaven. I heard a voice.

Do you know I'm simple enough to believe that God would ordain this lovely audience it's a good full house this morning. And you know what, I believe that God would ordain this audience this morning to speak to one man. Because Paul says, there shone round about me and them that journeyed with me a light from heaven.

I heard a voice. Daniel had the same thing and he said, they all saw the light but I heard a voice. And if you hear that voice and see that face, come hell or high water.

Come principalities or anything else. You'll never cringe, you'll never back off from it. Paul says, well so what? He must be crazy, do you know what he gloried in? Well, prosperity, success.

He had a big house in Jerusalem, he had one for fishing up at the Sea of Galilee or Lake Malacca somewhere. And no, no he didn't. This man is totally void of anything in the world that can charm him.

And he says, I glory in tribulation. Huh? Do you do that? Or do you call for the pastor as soon as you're in trouble? I glory in tribulation, in necessities, in reproaches. Oh mercy, those are the things you run away from.

You see, he's so wedded to God. He's seen the vision glorious, he's heard a voice. And he never heard another voice after that.

All other voices threatening him, but they discovered there was something in him and they couldn't whip it out of him. He hung on a piece of water, a piece of wood in the water for 36 hours, a night and a day in the deep. And they couldn't wash it out of him.

A gang of men got together and vowed that they wouldn't die till they put him to death, and they didn't unnerve him at all. We could do with a few sanctified folk like that, don't you think? So Moses had a vision, quickly, and then Paul has a vision, and then there's that other vision. Pastor read this morning from Revelation 3, I think it's Revelation 4, where John says, I saw a door open in heaven.

Oh my. Did you ever look in a room you shouldn't have looked in? Were you mischievous like I was as a boy when mother said, no, you don't go in that front room, there's something there I don't want you to see? She thought that was an order, I thought it was a challenge. And sure enough, I go and I open the door and I look in and I go to my sister and say, Annie, come quickly, before mother comes up, blah blah blah, you know.

Oh God knows, I wish I could push that door in heaven, in eternity, open for you an inch this morning. You'd never complain again, you'd never backslide again, you'd never zigzag in your Christian life, your prayer life wouldn't be in rags, your love wouldn't be frozen, to seem to eternity. Mr. Heger was pointing, you notice there, as we were sitting here about the hymns, all the hymns were written in the 1700s and

1800s.

You had those massive men like the Puritans. These men have seen. Oh yeah, turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim.

Well, I think that's right. But I'll tell you what, when we stand at the judgment seat, the things of earth will look strangely grim. We'll wonder why we spent so many times about things that perish with the using.

As A.B. Simpson called them, perishing things of clay, born but for one brief day. John saw the glory. If you'd ask where he was, they'd say, oh our pastor's been sent away, he's in the Isle of Patmos.

And he wasn't there at all, he was in the spirit. Oh he's in the Isle of Patmos physically, but he wasn't there spiritually. He's in the Isle, which was the devil's island of the day, they put all the scum of the earth in it, and yet there he is.

In the midst of a hell hole, he has the greatest revelation of heaven and eternity that man has ever had. Or you say, if I was somewhere up in a cabin and I suddenly had a vision, heaven opened and I saw it. No, God doesn't have to do that.

Why not? Because he's done it in this book, that's why. Isn't it awesome to think that God has not another word to say to mankind? He said it all two thousand years ago. As the hymn says, What more can he say than to you he has said? All he waits is for a bunch of people who are obedient and willing.

And not theoretically, but actually. Not necessarily selling your home, but selling every right you have to yourself. I heard a voice.

I said, Who art thou? Lord, and he said, I'm Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise and stand upon my feet. I've appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and nobody else can make you a minister but God.

A minister, and a witness, both of the things which thou hast seen and of those things which will appear unto thee. Can you imagine again a tree a hundred feet high with a trunk this width, and somebody cuts it down and makes all the furniture. Can you imagine that one rebel there who would have been listed except for the grace of God.

He would have been listed with Pharaoh. He would have been listed with Herod that liquidated the children. He would have been listed with Hitler.

And in a magic moment, the wonderful grace of Jesus came and took hold of him. And out of his inmost being there flowed fourteen epistles. There were churches all through Asia Minor.

Pretty much the same as Jesus did. The devils were subject to him. Death was subject to him.

Frankly, you may think I'm over critical, but I've got an answer to God, not to you. I don't think my generation, to use the figure in the 47th chapter of Ezekiel where there's water to the ankles and the knees and the loins and water to swim in. I don't believe my generation's got its feet wet yet.

We've got so lost in organization. It doesn't matter whether it's Bethany, and I love this place as much as any place. I pray for it every day of my life.

Whether as a collective people or individual, there's a danger of getting to a plateau and being satisfied on that plateau. These abnormal days they demand abnormal men with abnormal methods and abnormal messages. I believe organized Christianity as such has had its day.

I believe with all my heart that America is going to suffer for the sin of the church rather than the church suffer for the sin of America. We're the rebels, we're the disobedient, we're the commandment breakers. Every one of us, I'm convinced, know how to live better than we're living.

A couple of things. I preached for a month in the First Baptist Church in Atlanta. It's a good church.

Charles Stanley, you may see him on TV. He's a great preacher. He's a prophetic minister.

7,500 people. The auditorium only holds 3,500, and that's quite a nice crowd. I preached almost everything I knew, and some things I didn't know, but I risked it.

And then there were... I got to the last night. Now what do I do? The meetings had been running till midnight. We had to put microphones down the church so people could make confession.

We had to put microphones there for the prayer meeting. Hundreds and hundreds came. What will I preach on? I like to get something on the back burner, you know, by about Tuesday so I can keep warming it up.

And I got nothing Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, stayed up all night. Two o'clock in the morning a voice said, Oh, Lord, the pastor says this church is being cleansed through and through. A prodigal? I preached it anyhow.

I preached two prodigals, one that went to a far country and the other that stayed at home and wasted everything he had. Why didn't you give me a fatigued calf? His daddy said, I can't do that. You own the whole herd.

Your brother got his cash. You got the land. You've done nothing with it.

Our danger is not what we're doing wrong. It's what we're not doing at all. The judgment is going to be terrible when I'm judged, not for what I've done, but for why I did it.

And right in the middle of that service in that great church that was nearly full that night, I said, you know, there are a lot of prodigal fathers here. Yeah, you send your children to Christian schools. What? So you won't have to have a family altar.

I said to them, I said to you this morning, how many of you are king in the home, you men? And how many of you men are priests in the home? You open the Bible every day. You counsel your children. It's a very wealthy church.

A lot of famous people there. In the middle of the message, I said, every one of you prodigal fathers that does not read the word of God to the children, does not pray with them, you're running a communist home. You get up right now.

There's a stampede to the altar. Boy, did they weep. I let them go back after a while after I prayed with them.

I said, what about all you children older than the enormous gallery? You're teenagers. You always send mother a card. You're the best mother in the world.

One day in a year. 364, you're sassy and you come in late and you fool around. Come on, you get out of that gallery.

There's a stampede out of the gallery. Then finally I said, look, you can't stop your car outside of this church at the light because if you do, a prostitute will open the door and get in with you. You can't go to the back because there's a big old mansion there and it's jammed with homosexuals and they're loving each other in the street.

And you've got a swanky, beautiful church here. When did you last go after those immoral lepers? When did you last extend compassion? I said, everyone who acknowledges their failure, you come up right now. The altar was filled.

The church was filled almost to the doors. I called Dr. Stanley. I said, Dr. Stanley, would you please pray for these people? And he came up.

He's a tall, handsome man. He was as pale as death. And he said, I can't pray for you.

I can't pray for you. The reason you don't love the lost around here, the reason you haven't visited, the reason that you don't extend a hand, the reason you'd rather stay at home and get in the back alleys and rescue the perishing is that I haven't. All I've prayed, I've prayed, God, take this scum out of the city.

I said, Dr. Stanley. The speaker this morning, Reverend Leonard Ravenhill, we invited him to come to the United States 32 years ago, 1950. He's been a great blessing to me personally and to Bethany Missionary Church and also to the Church of the United States as well as many other places where the Lord has sent him.

He's a very special friend of mine and of many here in Bristol. Glad to have him with us this morning. God bless you, brother.

We're glad to be here, my wife and I. We heard that the royal families were gathering this weekend so we thought we'd increase them. I get the New York Times book review each week. It's supplied free.

A while ago, one of the most incisive writers in that amazing journal said this, I think the trouble with the modern preachers is that they have forgotten the awesome beauty and thrilling majesty of the gospel. I think that's a classic phrase. I think every preacher should have it in his office that we have forgotten the awesome beauty and the thrilling majesty of the gospel.

I think it's time for us to take this word and make our minds up that either it's absolute or it's obsolete. It's either got the answers or it does not have the answers. I think of a caustic comment made by a girl about 16 years of age.

She said, I find church as interesting as a Tupperware party. She didn't come to this church, let me make that clear. But I think she's right speaking generally.

I have, I hope I have it, here I've got an acorn, see this? Remember Jesus said, remember a parable of the fig tree. I want to give you a parable of an acorn. I brought one with me, I put it on my desk in the bedroom and it was squirreled away.

I don't know who the squirrel was, I hope he has a bad time. Because it was a big acorn that I gathered from a giant tree there in Canada, huge acorn. Now this miserable little thing is a Minnesota acorn.

I picked it up and we stopped to check the oil and there were some trees there and I saw the acorn and I thought I'd better take one and I took it. And it reminded me of being at school when the teacher asked us one day what is there inside that acorn? I thought, well she's ignorant, she doesn't know. But anyhow she said, what's inside? And a boy that always answered first said, there's a tree inside of it.

There's a whole tree inside of that acorn. Well he missed it because actually there's a forest inside of an acorn. Because that acorn that will develop hopefully and millions or hundreds of thousands of acorns will sprout off it.

And then also maybe there's furniture in it because in England we love oak. And people have nice oak furniture. And so that tree may have supplied, well lots of furniture and lots of other things.

And that linked me up to a scripture that I read and I've read it I guess hundreds of times and I think you have. It's in the Acts of the Apostles chapter 9. And in verse 10 it says, there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias. And to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias.

And he said, behold I'm here Lord. And the Lord said unto him, arise and go into the street which is called straight. And inquire in the house of Judas, for one called Saul of Tarsus.

For behold he prayeth. And he hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight. Verse 15 says, but the Lord said unto him, go thy way for he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles and the kings and the children of Israel.

For I will show him how great things he must prosper in. That's in the perverse version. I'm reading from the living Bible.

The King James. I will show him how much he must suffer. He must suffer, that's by psychology.

We don't tell people to take up their cross now. We tell them they're forgiven, they're going to have a mansion on Main Street in heaven, immunity from the judgment seat and a five-decker crown and rule over five cities or something. But the whole thing is laid out before this awesome character.

Now I like to visualize this. I'll give you my, maybe rather dramatic interpretation. Because you see, I'm quite sure of this.

It's time in this critical hour of history, it's time for the church to wake up, stand up, speak up, or fold up. Either we have the message for the most crumbling, decayed generation that the world has ever known, or we have no answer. It's significant if you think of it that every new nation that is born is a colored nation.

There are no new white nations being born. Forget it, we're on our way out. There have been about 30 new nations born in the last few years.

They're all colored, no white. If there's a vote tomorrow morning in the United Nations and you see them all, they seem to have strength to do is raise a pencil. You notice that? And they raise a pencil.

I'm voting for this. And you see the gallery and there are just half a dozen, maybe a dozen of the most white people. All the others.

And I have no grudge against colored folk, not for a minute. We've had our day, we must have. We old men have had our day.

I'm convinced we've moved into the greatest crunch in history. I believe that we're right there in the 12th chapter of Hebrews where it says in the last days that everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that the kingdom that cannot be shaken may remain. And time is running out on us.

If ever there was a day when the priest should weep before the door and the altar, whenever we should put on our sackcloth, when we should quit feasting and start fasting, this is the day. And I like to come to students for the simple reason again, the promise is to them, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams, and on my servants and handmaids will I pour out of my spirit. Somebody asked me the other day, do you believe in miracles? I said yes, every morning I wake up I think it's a miracle the world isn't burning with judgment.

We have had more light, more privileges, than any generation in history. And what we have had in the Church of Jesus in the last 25 years with all our massive crusades, has not even moved America nearer God. So something has to be discovered, there has to be a break somewhere.

I like to think again that Christianity was not served up to the world on a silver platter. Christianity was born in a sophisticated totalitarian society. I like to think of those men in the upper room, penniless preachers.

They came out with that which money cannot buy. Oh, so often I say, thank you Lord, that the Holy Ghost cannot be purchased with money, He cannot be purchased with organization, He cannot be purchased with our skills or our theology. They went in the upper room and they were a bunch of nervous, I guess failing people.

I'm so glad you sang all those English hymns, I wanted to thank you, they were so inspiring this morning. And J.B. Phillips is an Englishman. A few years ago he had had a rather bad Sunday and he said on Monday he turned round in his swivel chair, he picked up a book which happened to be the New Testament in Greek and it happened to open at the Acts of the Apostles, and he happened to read the first five chapters.

And he said, this is the Church of Jesus Christ, before it became fat and short of breath by over... fat and short of breath by prosperity. This is the Church of Jesus before it became muscle-bound by over-organization. This is the Church of Jesus Christ where they didn't gather together a group of intellectuals to study psychosomatic medicine, they just healed the sick.

This is a group of people where they did not say prayers, but they prayed in the Holy Ghost. This is where they did not talk about faith, they acted in faith. I think the word faith is mentioned over 300 times in the New Testament, in the Old Testament it's mentioned only twice, why? Because they worked in faith, we talk about it, we theorize it, we philosophize it.

I believe with all my heart, and I'm spilling my heart out to you, you can fire me after, that's alright. But I'm telling you now, the world out there is not waiting for a new definition of Christianity, it's waiting for a new demonstration of Christianity. And the only way it can happen is when men confess their brokenness, their bankruptcy, and they plead with all they have to be really cleansed and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Now here's a man going down to Damascus Road, I'm convinced he was riding a horse. He wouldn't have undertaken the journey so far, and I can hang him with his own rope because he says, the things which I

did in Jerusalem, many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, and when they were put to death, I punished them in every synagogue, I compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them. One translation says, and when he was desperately furious, you see we read the scriptures so easily, we forget that there'd been a gap between Malachi and Matthew 400 years, without any prophetic voice, 400 years of darkness, without any prophetic light, then suddenly dramatically you have a man, he has no financial backing, bless him he doesn't even have a mailing list, and he appears in the wilderness, and they're drawn, dear old Samuel Chavis used to say this, you never have to advertise a fire, neither physical nor a Holy Ghost fire, you never have to advertise it.

John the Baptist came and disrupted that 400 years of stillness, he'd hardly got going, and he was liquidated. Lots of young men write to me and say, I've got a commission from God to be a John the Baptist. And I write back and say, get extra insurance, you're going to die in six months.

Oh no I'm not thinking of it that way, I'm just, oh you see, well that's the price. And John did no miracle. They weren't crying, have mercy on my son he's a lunatic, they were not bringing human derelicts.

But they went there, even the Roman soldiers cried, what shall we do? You see there's a difference between revival and evangelism. In evangelism we sing and we beg and we draw and we say, close your eyes. Well Jesus didn't close his eyes going to the cross.

If I should make an appeal, I may or may not this morning, you won't close your eyes I'll assure you of that. Jesus comes right after John, he does everything that John had not done. And Jesus has hardly gone before the most amazing man I think in history.

I think he had a colossal intellect. His mind was filled with God, his heart was filled with hatred, because some people were saying that that Jesus that was put to death is alive, and he is the son of God and he's abolished all our system of religion. We can't shed blood anymore.

We can't have our new moons and our Sabbaths. We can't go through all our ritual, he says we're bankrupt. See we don't enter into that.

See the emotional disturbance in the nation, see the religious disturbance. And then they say we've got a champion by the name of Saul. And he has vowed, he's already got a document, it's signed and sealed and settled.

And just like Herod was going to liquidate the early church, Saul says I'll liquidate, pardon me, just as Herod was going to liquidate the infant Christ, Saul says I'll liquidate the infant church. He's going down that Damascus road, breathing out threatenings, he can't get there urgently enough, quickly enough. And suddenly I see him pitched off his horse.

And there he is rolling in the dust and he reminded me of this acorn. What is there inside of him?

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