

Church That Is Isn't the Church That Was - Acts 3:1-3

by Leonard Ravenhill

The church today is far removed from apostolic Christianity and needs to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to be a church that acts in faith and has power.

Duration: 1:26:33

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the urgency of reaching out to a lost world that is nearing judgment and the possibility of another war. He references J.B. Phillips, an English preacher, who had a transformative experience while reading the New Testament in Greek. The preacher emphasizes the need for obedience and surrender to God, asking for the removal of selfishness, pride, and weakness. He encourages the congregation to sing a hymn and concludes by highlighting the power of Christ in overcoming the depravity of man. The sermon also mentions the account of Peter and John in Acts chapter 3, where they are questioned about the healing of a man at the beautiful gate.

Transcript

I want to read some verses from the third chapter, third chapter in the Acts of the Apostles. Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, which is called beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple.

Who seeing Peter and John about to enter into the temple asked an alms. And Peter fastening his eyes upon him with John said, look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Then Peter said, silver and gold, I have none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up.

And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood and walked and entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple. And they were all filled with wonder and amazement. At that which had happened unto him.

And as Elaine Madrid was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's Greatly Wondering. And when Peter saw it, he answered the people, ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why you look ye so earnestly on us? As though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his son, whom he delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let him go.

For a number of weeks I've been meditating on the disparity. Or if you like, the difference between the apostolic church and the church of today. I described it once in a book I hope to write, the church that is, is not the church that was.

We're just about as far removed from apostolic Christianity as we can be. And personally I'm embarrassed to be part of a church that I think is an embarrassment to God. There is no way to compare the church today with the church that was.

We can't compare it, we can only contrast it. For instance, if I come to my own vocation and say the preaching of the day, I think it's just about like candy floss compared to a ribeye steak. To compare the preaching of today with apostolic preaching.

These men had come out of that dynamic experience when the Holy Ghost fell upon them in the upper room. And it seems today that there are many people who are advocating a painless Pentecost. Doesn't cost you anything.

The only thing it does, it changes your own poverty to plenty. You get rich within two years. Never have any troubles, any problems.

That is not biblical Pentecostal standard. Pentecost meant to those people in the upper room, eventually, it meant persecution and pain. And it says in the fifth chapter, they rejoiced.

Why? Had they been to a banquet? Sitting with a bunch of broken film stars or football players? Had they been sitting with rich men and distinguished people? No, no, no. They had been threatened that they would go to prison. And it says they rejoiced and they rejoiced greatly that they were counted worthy to suffer.

For his namesake. Okay, here it says Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer being the ninth hour. Now, why in the world they went to the temple, I just wouldn't know.

I'm sure if either of those guys, those preachers, really got the anointing of God, if they began to pray in the Holy Ghost, which is something that I don't hear too often. People say, well, can you tell me something which, which I can really put my finger on and say, listen, that is the assurance that I'm filled with the Holy Ghost. Is it tongues? I don't believe in it.

I believe there's a genuine gift. I don't believe everybody has to have it or it's the initial sign. Is it that somehow I'll do miracles? No, that's not the sign.

I'll tell you one sign. Nobody mentions it, but the word of God mentions it clearly. In the epistle of Jude, which is an epitome of the whole of the Bible, it speaks there about praying in the Holy Ghost.

And remember, it was as they were praying the Holy Ghost came upon them. They were seated. They were relaxed.

They'd gone through ten tortuous days that we know not too much about. Do you think that Peter was saying to Thomas, you know, if you'd only quit doubting the Holy Ghost, you'd have been here three days ago? Or Thomas saying to Peter, you know, there's still something in you, you old rebel. And if you'd really get straightened, we could have gone home.

I don't think they were picking faults. They were all there slain as it were. Not just with fear, though they were afraid of the people and afraid of the hierarchy.

But they were there with one common need. They had been told that there was one who should come upon them. You remember when Jesus gave them the news he was going to leave them.

And as Mr. Chadwick used to say, love in tears is petulant. They said, we don't want you to go away. Well, you know, when I go away, another is coming.

Now some people think because the Spirit came as a rushing mighty wind that he was a wind and he was just a noise. Not so. He is a person, Jesus says.

Not again, the junior partner of the Godhead, equal with the Father, equal with the Son. Not Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but Father, Son, equal in majesty, equal in glory. And Jesus says this third amazing person is going to come and not only be with you, but be in you.

You know what they said? No, no, no. Now look here, we're quite satisfied. Don't you send anybody else.

Substitutes are never any good anyhow. I once went to preach for a very famous man. He couldn't make it.

He called me and I took a train trip and I got in a meeting late. And and people, you know, as soon as the door moves, they looked and somebody said, oh, it's only Ravenhill. Makes you feel great.

We don't want someone else. Jesus says, but when he comes, he's coming with power to endure you with power, power, power. Oh, how we've used that promise in Acts 1, 8. He shall receive power after the Holy Ghost comes upon you.

Again, it wasn't power just to be miraculous. It was power to be a miracle, not make one to be one. But he was going to take that defeated lives and make them more than conquerors because the Holy Ghost was going to indwell them.

He won't just be with you. He will be in you. You should receive power.

They needed that power. They needed it physically because they were going to be beaten in prison. They needed it intellectually because they were going to write epistles.

They needed it spiritually because they were in on a collision course with the powers of darkness to the most horrible machine on the world, which is religion. They came to that upper room. How? Well, you

know, the Lord said of the wood to God, it would say eight of us.

Did you hear the story? What story? Those men that disappeared for a few days, they're going around town like a bunch of crazy idiots. And people said, well, what do you expect? They've been drinking. They're drunk.

You know, the church never does anything when it's sober. It doesn't. Doesn't Paul say that in Ephesians, be not drunk with wine, where is excess, but be filled with the spirit.

Why does he compare being filled with a spirit, being drunk with wine? Because when a man is filled even with that kind of spirit, he isn't himself. He's released. I remember going down the street in Glasgow the first day of World War Two.

A preacher friend I was with, he said, I've got to go in this in this room here. And I have to get a gas mask. I told him he went because they were free being a Scotsman.

And he said, you stand by this lamppost. I'll come out of that room and the light will blind me and I'll step forward. And when you see me come, well, we'll go on our journey.

He was in there quite a while and a streetcar came up, stopped right in front of where I was and a man got off drunk. Typical man, he got rubber legs, you know, they wouldn't keep up one way or the other and he staggered. And finally, he stepped forward and he put his arms around the lamppost and me as well.

His breath was terrible. He stepped back and he said, who are you? And I told him, I owe Scotsman. No.

Can you sing? No. Can you fight? He said, no. He said quite a number of things.

And he said, listen, I can sing. And he sang Maxwell Town Braves of Bonnie, Where Early Falls the Dew. He meant dew, but it was near enough for a drunk man anyhow.

And he said, who's your father? And what nationality? And he went around a whole string of questions and then finally put his hand in his pocket and he had a lot of silver there. He pulled this great handful of silver out and he offered it to me. And you know if a Scotsman offers you a handful of silver, he's surely drunk.

And you know, immediately I thought about that man. Everything was characteristic of the man who's really filled with the Spirit. He's a liberated soul.

The son of the soul set free. You see, the church is still in Romans chapter 7. We're still living in that dirge. Romans 7 is a funeral march.

Romans 8 is a wedding march. Romans 7 is bondage. Romans 8 is liberty.

The law of the Spirit and life in Christ Jesus had made me free from the law of sin. These men had gone through that amazing upper room experience. Sure, Pentecost was going to mean persecution and pain and privation and prisons, but also it meant purity.

And love that is pure is passionate. Here are two God intoxicated men. They come out and here is a man at the temple gate.

The next chapter says that he was 40 years of age. And if I know anything about professional beggars, I could go to some countries now and find a man at the same place he was at when I was in that country 10

years ago. They get a place and there's honor amongst them.

They won't steal each other's place to beg. I suggest to you that this man had been at that beautiful gate of the temple 30 years. What was wrong with him? He was crippled.

Why was he crippled? Because the church was crippled, that's why. Why? How in the world did he sit there year after year? I said yesterday, I think. It amazed me when I consider this recently.

Jesus must have passed this man a hundred times when he went into the temple. He'd been there for years. Peter and John must have passed him many times.

The high priest had passed him and taken his money out and ostentatiously thrown him a silver or a gold piece. It says he was carried daily. So they brought him from home to the temple.

Temple, home, twice a day, 365 days in a year. That's what, 730 times he was carried. If they carried him 10 years, he was carried, what did I say now, 730 times.

10 years would be 7,300. 30 years would be somewhere around 22,000 times he was carried but never cured. He was helped but he was never healed.

And when he saw Peter and John coming, of course he was quite sure that since they'd a revival a day or two before, that they were loaded with money, they got some big love offering and he wanted a share of the pie. And he cried again, silver and gold, he wanted them to give him gifts. Peter said, silver and gold, I have none.

Do you need any other proof that he wasn't the Pope? Do you need any other proof that the Pope today is not in apostolic succession? Why don't people take them to the Pope instead of going to Lourdes? If God has put all his invested, all his power in a man like that, he ought to be moving around as a peacemaker and doing the miraculous every day. He does nothing. Here is a crippled, twisted, tormented man, day after day, living as he lived yesterday, anticipating tomorrow, in the same chronic condition.

And there's a great monstrous system of religion that let him stay there. And as far as I'm concerned, the man at the gate, beautiful, is the world, and the Church hasn't the power to heal him. And tonight the Church hasn't the power to do it either.

There's a gulf between apostolic Christianity and the Christianity today, far greater than the gulf of the Great Grand Canyon. God never designed his Church to backslide. God never intended the Church to stand at the side of the road while Communism and others paraded in the middle of the road.

The cost was too much. The hymn writer says, the Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, our Lord. She was his new creation by water and the blood.

From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy bride. And these men are intoxicated because they had witnessed the most amazing thing the earth had ever seen. You remember when they had trouble in the first chapter there? Peter always got something to say, and he says it again a little later in the same book.

He says, you crucified the Lord of glory, but him hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses. And in case you want to isolate that and say, well, that just belonged to, to the days, you know, it all ended at the end of the Bible, which is a nice alibi. I want to tell you tonight, Almighty God doesn't need any alibis.

I want to tell you tonight, God is not looking for sponsors. The guy you listen to on TV maybe, but Almighty God isn't. He is a crippled, tormented, distorted body.

How did he get deliverance? He got deliverance through two simple, consecrated, cleansed, committed, concerned disciples. That's how he got it. They were totally yielded to Jesus Christ.

They obeyed the commandment, ye shall receive power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you. Peter no longer runs away when a girl points a finger. He points the finger at the whole nation and says, you crucified the Lord of glory.

We don't do that so much in the days in which we live, do we? Everybody comes up with the same idea. If you say anything that's a little disturbing, well, they say, well, of course, you know, we're not to criticize. Or if you want it scripturally, we're not to judge.

But I read here in John 7, it says we're to judge righteous judgment. You know, I read the scripture, I almost feel an orphan. I'm not disagreeing with my brother talking about liberty and joy, praise the Lord for it.

But when it comes down to the nitty gritty, how much of it gets under the door into the world? How far can we touch a world that's lost and never, never nearer to judgment and never, never nearer to another bloody war than the moment in which we live? But what does the church do? If you want a history, the thing in the finest summary that I've ever read of this amazing church was given by J.B. Phillips, an English preacher, not just because he's English, who one day, a little weary, turned round on his shriveled chair and grabbed for a book. It happened to be the New Testament in Greek. He happens to be a brilliant Greek scholar.

He read Acts chapter 1, Acts chapter 2, Acts chapter 3, and about to chapter 5, and the book exploded like a bomb in his hand. He made this amazing summary. This is the church of Jesus Christ before it became fat and short of breath by prosperity.

Now think a minute. Is the church, are the organized branches of the church, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, are they fat and short of breath by prosperity? This is the church, he said, before it became fat and short of breath by prosperity. This is the church of Jesus Christ, he says, before it became muscle-bound by over-organization.

We talk about liberty and now they get liberty in any denomination these days. You have to tow the line, you'll get a letter from headquarters. Somebody spoke in tongues in your church, they think it was the end of the world and the devil had invaded the place.

One of these days we're going to be smart enough to let God do the teaching instead of us do it. The church before it became muscle-bound by over-organization. This is the church, he says, before, another before, not only before it was muscle-bound, muscle-bound by over-organization.

This is the church, he says, where they did not sign articles of faith. You know, you go to a church usually and they give you a sheet of paper and say, well, if you, if you can say yes, yes, tick it all off, sign at the bottom, we'll take you in. Well, that doesn't demand any moral power or spiritual power, does it? Philip says, this is the church where they did not sign articles of faith, they acted in faith.

This is the church where they did not gather together a group of intellectuals to study psychosomatic medicine, they just healed the sick. This is the church, he said, where they did not say prayers, but they prayed in the Holy Ghost. And I've heard the greatest preacher in the world in the last 50 years, and yet the outstanding experiences of my life are not in hearing these amazing men who can do a juggling act and almost blind you with their theological science.

The greatest memories I have are of praying with men who were anointed by the Spirit of God, and we prayed until two or three or later hours in the morning. Do you think you can find a church on earth that fits into that pattern? Huh? Does your church rule in that liberty? Not in bondage to headquarters, not studying psychosomatic medicine, but having power. He looked on Peter and John and said, will you help us? He was asking for arms, A-L-M-S, phonetically it sounds like this arm.

The Sunday school teacher was teaching a class of girls, and they read this scripture that this man asked for arms, and one of the girls said, why did he ask for arms when he needed legs? I wonder sometimes if the Lord doesn't wonder the same thing about us. We ask about something secondary instead of asking about the real thing. But remember this, if we are going to have another Pentecost, it's going to mean persecution, it's going to mean hardship, it's going to mean sacrifice, it's going to mean that we're rejected and considered maybe fanatical even by the nearest and dearest.

And I think when the scripture says that a man's friend should be those of his own household, it means spiritually as well as physically. For time and time again God has come on people, and what happened? There's a split in the church. For what reason? Because some of the old rascals want to stay there and they did it grandfather's way.

But listen, we're living in a new age. There has to be something come on the age in which we live or we're doomed. And every political society and every other society is leaving no mark on this generation except a mark for evil.

Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. The man fastens his eyes on Peter and Peter said something very wonderful, I think. He said, I've no silver or gold.

Look on us, look on us. Can your church say that in the region you live in? Not being arrogant about it, but friend you won't get your problem solved, you won't get an answer to your situation anywhere else but you come to us, look on us. And he not only saw the man's need but he reached down, he touched him and immediately touched him.

I'm sure that man felt as though he had, he touched an electric current. The resurrection life of Jesus, the power of the spirit, went into that twisted deformed body and immediately his ankle bones received strength. Well then they got a crowd round.

This was at the beautiful gate of the temple. The high priest had passed, a thousand times passed the man. Jesus must have passed him many times.

But you see there's a timing in the affairs of men. Even Shakespeare said there is a tide in the affairs of men which if taken at the flood lead on to higher things. And there was a timing here, it was for the glory of God that this man's body was going to be miraculously delivered.

Every bone that was locked would be unlocked. He's going to stand and leap and praise God. And do what the apostles didn't do apparently, go running through the sanctuary.

Now I reminded you last night that temple held more than six thousand people. You see Christianity is something you can't really bottle it up, you can't get it into shape, you can't squeeze it into a theology. We said last night that Jesus on the last day, the great day of the feast, he stood in that temple, he had no right to be there.

For six days the priest had stood there in his gorgeous garments of beauty. And they'd remember the time when the rock was split. And Jesus stood in that very place and said, listen I'm going to tell you something.

If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. And they were celebrating the feast of tabernacles. I think this is one of the most courageous things Jesus ever did.

He's got six thousand enemies, he's got high priests and others around him. He's got six thousand pairs of eyes upon him. He stands there sublime and majestic in holiness and authority.

The eyes of the multitude are upon him and then he stands and delivers that word. If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. They'd hardly got out of that situation when this other bunch of Christians come along and start upsetting things.

You know people pray for a revival. They say, well of course we don't really want to be disturbed. Well why don't you order an earthquake from a Sears Roebuck and see if the, well they wouldn't have one, but could you have an earthquake without being disturbed? You can't have a revival without being disturbed.

You can't have a revival without some people being cut down. Peter and John stretched forth their hands, or Peter did, and touched the man, and his ankle bones received strength. And the multitude came around with their, oh, oh, and wonder, and Peter said, look not on us.

He said to the man with his knee, look on us. In other words, we've got the answer to your problem. But when they wanted to glamorize those two men and give them praise and adoration, he stepped out of the way and said, no, no, no.

Don't put any halos on our heads. Don't attribute any greatness to us as though by our power, our own holiness, we have made this man to walk. Listen, you may be the greatest saint on earth, but there's no power of holiness through you to someone else.

It must be the Spirit of God. He's jealous. The Holy Spirit of God has the power.

He has the authority. I'd like to have been in that situation and seen that man. Sure, one thing, he's not going to be just a pew dweller.

He's not going to sit down and just be very rigid and careful. No, sir, he's received the wonder-working power of God. It's evident to everybody else round about.

As Wesley says, my chains fell off, my heart was free. I rose, went forth, and followed thee. From that day forward, he became a fanatic, I'm sure.

But who in the world wouldn't be when he sat there for 40 years, he heard somewhere the temple, he could hear the old priest chanting away, when he is come, the eyes of the blind shall be open and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Maybe many times he said to people, where are you going? Oh, the miracle worker Jesus is up there, and he unplugs the ears of the deaf, and he puts sight in blinded eyes, and he straightens with the limbs. And the poor fellow must have thought for years and years, the three years in

the life of Jesus, why did he do it to me? Why did he leave me here in my bondage sorrow night? Why didn't I come out of sickness into his health and out of my poverty into his wealth? Because there was a timing in the situation, that's why.

This was going to bring more glory to God, than if he'd been healed with a multitude who were healed one day. Yes, it's going to get these men into trouble, all right. After all, it's very rough to shatter the religion of your father or your grandfather, isn't it? What did they do with Peter and John? Well, they just got them together and said, uh, we've had enough of this.

We're going to have a high court tomorrow. So in the next chapter, you'll find that they gather together, the intellectuals and the hierarchy of the church. And Peter and John are brought up to give an account of what they've done.

And these poor fellows were trying to get out of it one way or the other, and they couldn't get out of it. And so they whispered to each other, and then they said, well, ladies and gentlemen, and this distinguished company, there's no way we can get around this. This is the man that sat at the beautiful gate.

We all know him. And not only that, we know he's been liberated. We don't know how it's been done.

It's got us pretty shot, and it's burst our theology open at all ends. And we can't sleep at night for thinking that he's been at our doorstep all these years, and we could never do anything but give him a bit of money. The thing he didn't need, we could not supply his need.

And then came along these two men. But we wanted to know this. Number one, they're not ordained preachers.

Not one of them, neither of them has a preacher certificate. And they're not well trained, and they're not good theologians. And we're kind of figuring that this thing might die off.

We do hope your trouble doesn't come back to you, old fellow. But this man, we wanted to know this. But both these men, by our standards, you know, we've got certificates, first-class certificates in paralysis.

We can't do anything. We can't say anything with any life. And this fellow's come on like a streak of lightning.

You see, these men were filled with the Holy Ghost. Oh, they're not only filled with the Holy Ghost. It says they filled Jerusalem with their doctrine.

It says that they were filled with joy. We just want to say this before we dismiss. These men, Peter and John, they come from a working class.

Really, they're good fishermen, but bad theologians. And all we have to say to you, watch it. Watch it.

Because they're both unlearned and ignorant men. Well, they missed it by about a million miles, didn't they? Dr. Coffman says the Gospel of John, or rather says John was the Plato of the New Testament. He's the most profound thinker.

Ninety-two percent of the Gospel of John has not been mentioned by Matthew, Mark, or Luke. He introduces us to new characters. He had an intimacy with Jesus Christ that no one ever had.

He was there on the Mount of Transfiguration. He was there on each occasion when Jesus raised the dead. But keep this in mind, that Jesus fellow's gone anyhow.

And these fellows are trying to live in the afterglow, and they're trying to work something up. But listen, we want to warn you, they're unlearned and ignorant. And John gave us what? Well, Peter gave us two epistles.

Man, I get so much out of the first epistle of Peter, the first chapter. I think it's a fantastic--it's worth the whole Bible in itself. How many millions of people have been blessed through Peter's writing? He wrote one epistle, he wrote two epistles.

He didn't gather any royalties for them yet. Gonna get those when he gets up there. And this fellow John, he wrote the Gospel of John, the first epistle of John, the second epistle of John, the third epistle of John.

And then to really prove that he was ignorant, he wrote the book of the Revelation. Well, who would you like to be? Would you rather be the high priest that sat there in splendor and lived like a king just for a few years, and then you don't even know his name? Or a man like Peter and John, endued with power from on high, but having authority over the power of sin and the power of death, and liberating a man who'd been a captive all these years? What do you want to settle for? The Church has never had more intellectualism than it has today, and I'm not knocking it. Scholarship on fire, as in the case of Wesley and some other men, is a marvelous thing.

That scholarship by itself, when it sits there just splitting theological hairs and deciding to call a few cronies together and have a conference, which of course the poor and needy are not invited to, I'd rather keep it. Peter looked on this man, he not only looked on him, he touched him. He put his hand down and immediately it seemed as though life was transmitted into the body.

And a man jumps up and he leaps and he praises and he magnifies God. And the whole of Jerusalem heard about it. And again I say, they passed it almost as it were a sentence of death.

Give me some money. It seems safe to say that when the Church is rich, financially, she's always poor spiritually. And usually when she's poor financially, she's rich.

The greatest revivals in the last ten years have not been in cultured, civilized countries as we think of it. They've been in Indonesia and other places where the New Testament has been relived again in every manifestation of the power of the risen Son of God. We sit in our comfortable pews and we're so satisfied with our portion.

Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have give thy own to thee. What a difference between the apostolic church and the church today. You read, if you read it as I read it, the whole book is full of the supernatural.

It's branded right through. There is no explanation except that God works through men. They heard his voice.

They moved in the power of the Spirit of God. Now, the end of the hedonism. Again, let's get out of our minds the idea that we're the most, you know, we deserve more pity because we live in such a terrible age as communism, Mormonism, Moonism, all the other devilish things.

This monstrous monolith of a thing called communism. I remind you tonight that Christianity was not served up to the world on a silver plate. Christianity was born in a sophisticated totalitarian age.

There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. Jesus never spoke about slavery. The apostle Paul never spoke about slavery.

And yet these men unlearned and ignorant. Reminding you again, as my wife and I and a friend stood on the southern rim of the Grand Canyon, I read the legend there, maybe you've read it. That yellow ribbon across there, seven miles away, is the Colorado River.

It gives you the statistics. I think it's 450 feet wide and about 45 feet deep. It's seven miles away.

It doesn't look so far. The floor of the canyon is a mile deep, so that if you're down there, you'll have rocks to climb a mile high on any side. And you can't get up that way because there's the river.

And then there's a great, tremendous cliff. As I looked at that, I thought to myself, or the Lord reminded me of it, say, how would a baby get out of that canyon? A one-year-old child, a two-year-old child could never get out of it. Sure couldn't swim the river, it goes so fast.

It couldn't climb the crags, they're far too steep and difficult. And just as I thought of that, I thought of the early church. It was walled in on this side by the greatest military machine in the world up to that day.

It was walled in on this side with the intellectual greatness of the Greeks. It was obstructed away there by the Jews who believed they alone had a monopoly of God. Remember that they were shedding bloody sacrifice every day.

There was a given hour when the priest went in his royal robes there into the temple. And they believed he alone could speak with God and he alone spoke with God once a year to one people. Do you know what? I think the marvel and the mystery and the majesty of prayer has escaped us.

Because if you had been a Jew in that dispensation even today, only one man could meet God. And you and I could meet him anywhere at any time that we want to go. He is made as a kingdom of priests unto God.

And Peter and John are exercising their royal prerogatives. Not only did Isaac Watts write when I surveyed the wondrous cross, I guess his best-known hymn. But he also wrote the hymn, Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth its successive journeys run.

His kingdom stretch from shore to shore till moon shall wax and wane no more. Blessings abound where'er he reigns. The prisoner leaps to lose his chains.

The weary find eternal rest and all the sons that want are blessed. And then he goes on, he finishes it by saying, In him, Christ, the tribes of Adam boast more blessings than their fathers lost. You can tell me as much as you like and butt it in my ears a million times a day, if you like, about the total depravity of man.

And tell me about sin and tell me about the tide of iniquity running against us. And I will just shout back in your face that greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. But the thing is we don't switch on that power.

All we need is a bit of grace to get through today. Lord, don't let anybody hurt us while we're driving. And don't let us hurt anybody else.

And isn't it awful? Gasoline's going up five cents. We can say all those things and forget. Do you know what? We lie.

We lie the way we live. We try to tell God we believe him. We kneel in front of him.

We believe he's your Lord God omnipotent that reigneth. We believe that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and forever. And the church is in a state of bankruptcy tonight.

The glory doesn't fill the temple anymore. As I asked the other night, did you come here tonight to meet God or hear a sermon about him? Can you remember the last time the glory of God came in the temple and you couldn't speak going on? And you felt the cloud upon you for days and days and days after that divine invasion. That's what happens in, that's what happens in revival.

Do you think Jerusalem is different? Every time people look at that spot, they say, you know, that's where he used to sit. That's where he used to sit. That's where he used to sit.

Have you seen him now? He's a healthy man. He has a family. He has a business.

He has this. The very empty space was a rebuke to the emptiness of the sanctuary. The early church, I say, was a supernatural church and we're a superficial church.

It began in the upper room with men agonizing. My God, I'd love to have heard them pray those ten days. Not merely praying because they were delivered, but praying that they would have the strength and the wisdom because Christ was going to invade their lives.

And he has made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. And I say to some people, if I preach in Pentecostal places, I say to them, well, look, let me remind you of this, that there are no gifts of the Holy Spirit. Oh boy, that makes everybody say that.

You say, well, prove it. I can prove it easily. Because it says in his resurrection, or in his death and resurrection, what did he do? He led captivity captive.

And he gave gifts unto men. There are no gifts except gifts that have been purchased by the blood of Christ. The Holy Ghost is the executive of the Godhead.

It's like a man who has left a will and you go and sit in the office and some man officially, he says, well, listen, this has been left to you, and that has been left to you, and this has been left to you. They're not his gifts, but he dispenses those gifts. And the Holy Spirit dispenses the gifts.

They were purchased by the blood of Christ. The hymn writer says, the purchase of thy death divide, give me with all the sanctified the heritage of love. So this early church, shining brilliantly with the power of God, persecuted.

Why, these fellows spent more time in prison than they spent free, at least some of them. So it was a supernatural church, and now it's a superficial church. It was a living church, now we have a languishing church.

It says that they went, and when they went, they were all amazed. How often have you been to church and had to rub your eyes when you went out saying, was I really there, or was I dreaming? It was a suffering church. We're a sufficient church.

Peter stood up, lifted up his voice, spoke to the man. The man stood up, and there was a whole chapter written, and they started in a new sphere of power and authority. Silver and gold, I have none.

I have none. But such as I have, I give. He didn't even sell healing cloths.

He didn't ask you to subscribe to his magazine. Freely you have received, freely give. I can't give you any money.

You know, there's a great joy in having nothing. One thing, if you have nothing, you can't lose anything, can you? If you have no opinion of yourself, nobody will ever hurt your feelings, because you've already got ahead of them. See, I'm a nobody.

As soon as you respond to something, it shows there's something alive in you. You know, it's somebody that rubs your nose, and immediately you resent it. Oh, well, well, well, then you've got something in there that causes the resentment.

If I give three men a glass of water, a glass of milk, a glass of oil, and I tell them to run, and one of them stumbles, what comes out of the glass? Well, obviously, if he's got oil in it, he's going to spill oil. If he's got water, water will spill. If he's got milk, milk will spill.

Jesus said, the prince of this world cometh, and he findeth nothing in me. And then the scripture says, as he was, so are we in this world. Now, listen, what's your weak spot? What's your vulnerable spot? When you go down and retire and feel hurt and miserable, because somebody kind of punched your nose, you know, said she's not very smart, or, you know, I don't think he's so spiritual, or that fellow's arrogant, or this woman has temper.

Again, I say there's a great advantage in having nothing, because you can't lose anything. There's a great embarrassment in having nothing. There's a story there where in Luke 11, the story of a man whose friend came at midnight, and he knocked on the door, and he said, well, well, well, you told me to come any time.

Remember, I did you a favor, and you said, now listen, you've got me out of the hall, I don't care where I am. I went, yeah, I did, but the wife's in bed, you see, and we haven't been for groceries. Well, but come in.

And the man goes down the street, and he knocks at the door. Gets no answer. He knocks.

He persists. Finally, the guy up there opens the window and says, what do you want? He says, a friend of mine has come on his journey. And this on earth, and I've nothing to say before him.

And I believe, speaking generally right now, the church has nothing to say before the world in which we live. We can't display our power. We can't display authority.

The scholarly Francis Schaeffer says, I believe that in this day, the preachers are not saying as much as they could. Well, brother, if Pentecost meant anything to these men, it meant that they lost their fear of man. For the fear of man brings us near.

And God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but the spirit of power and love, and of a sound mind. We need to display that we're intoxicated to the world. Let them think we're idiots.

If only God's glory fills the temple, if only again people come in and say, listen, there's a man down the street, the biggest rogue and liar and thief we have in town, and he's been marvelously changed by the grace of God. You see, this man's healing was delayed because God was going to get glory. Peter and John were not going to get glory.

Surely Peter would, people would say, well, I remember Peter, boy, he used to be a bad tempered, roaring fellow. And there's something very different about him now. But the ultimate was that Jesus Christ was glorified through the healing of this man, who for all these years had been there in bondage.

Samuel Chadwick said, when he was a young man, he spent all his time making sermons of exegetical exactitude and homiletical perfection, and they were grammatically correct. And he erased certain words and put better words in till they shone, you know, like a diamond flashes, and people were saying, this man's going to be one of the greatest preachers in England. But there was no breeding of God in the sanctuary.

He said, one night I knelt down in my little room and it had a fireplace just about that size, that's all. A bedroom fireplace in England isn't more than two spans wide. And late at night as he prayed, he said, God, I'm sure my theology is correct.

I wouldn't do anything to grieve your spirit by a false interpretation, but the atmosphere isn't instinct with God. People don't tiptoe out of the sanctuary saying, God is in this place. The disciples went to the upper room and the Holy Ghost came upon them.

I want the Holy Ghost to come on me. And God said, burn your idol. Burn my idol? What's my idol? Your sermons.

The monuments of perfection, theologically, grammatically, exegetically, and you glory in your own ability, burn your idols. He said, I got them all out of a drawer and I put them on the fireplace and I set fire to them. And he said, they did burn.

They were so dry. And he said, as the smoke went up the chimney, the fire of God came down on my spirit. Now, Lord, he said, there's a key to revival in this area.

What is it? And the Lord said, read a certain scripture and he read it. They came not, N-O-T, not to see Jesus. But to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

They'd seen Jesus very often. But here is Lazarus. He was bound and there he was.

Remember, Jesus says, you take away the stone. You see, there's something we have to do. We want God to send us a painless Pentecost.

Something that I don't have to fast for and weep for and pray for and disorganize my life. God says, no. You roll away the stone.

I'll bring him to life. They rolled away the stone and Jesus stood with a loud voice and cried, Lazarus, come forth. And he came forth.

Oh, he was alive, all right. I'll show you how much alive he was. He was alive like this.

Why? Because he was still bound. Ninety-five percent of our church members in the country, if they're saved at all, they're still bound. He was alive, otherwise he couldn't have moved out of the grave.

And he's coming out as slowly, with a cloth over his face and over his hands and over his feet. And Jesus says, loose him and let him go. His brother mentioned that earlier in the meeting tonight.

To be loose, to be free from all the bondage. The Lord said to Chadwick, you find a Lazarus in town, a man that everybody knows. He's not only dead, but he stinks in his death.

He's corrupt on top of his death. You go find him. Get everybody to target their prayers on him.

That's exactly what they did. They all ganged up in prayer. A few weeks after, Chadwick went to see the man.

Now, he doesn't say, Lord, you send Gabriel and let somebody. He went to see this man who was notorious for fighting, drinking, and his wild living. And he said, I want to tell you something.

I'm the pastor now at the Methodist church down in town there. And I believe that God wants you to become a Christian. You're the worst man in town, and God wants you to be the best man in town.

And the man told him to go to hell. Get out of here. Chadwick says, well, I'll go, but I want to tell you something.

Every day before you get up, I'll have prayed for you. You're going to be one of the outstanding men in this community, ransomed and redeemed and liberated by the power of God. The man again cursed him.

But one night, to the surprise of everybody, in came this ragged man, this rude, rough, rebellious man. And as soon as Chadwick told him he could be delivered, that men could be delivered, emancipated, he staggered down the aisle. He knelt there and cried out in his sin.

Do you know what happened? Next Sunday, the church was packed. There wasn't a seat empty. God fulfilled his word.

They came not to see Jesus, but to see Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. They came not to hear Chadwick with his brilliant, marvelous oratory. But they came to see the miracle.

They came to see the man who had been delivered from his bondage and sin and his uncleanness, and now was restored and in his right mind. The power of God unto salvation. Isn't it embarrassing that we have nothing to say before the world right at this time? If we didn't put signs up outside of our churches, folk wouldn't know they were churches.

When they legislate in Washington, do you think they take notice and say, now what should we do? The churches may rise up against us. Oh no, they know the teamsters will rise up. They know the union leaders will open their voices, but all the church won't say a single thing.

They'll just hide in corners and have prayer meetings. There's a time when we've got to stand and be as brave as lions and stand up against the powers of darkness. It's embarrassing to have nothing.

The man has come at midnight. Well isn't it midnight now? Doesn't darkness cover the earth and gross darkness the people? We're caught in a web of unclean spirits. I read in a paper today that the pastor takes, I think it was Jerry Falwell's paper, that 60% of the fellows who meet, who are joining the Hare Krishna cult, are Jews who are dissatisfied with the Jewish religion.

40% of the Mooniites are young Jews, intellectual Jews. I don't know how they get trapped. But the question is, why hasn't Christianity fascinated them? How is it that somehow we haven't displayed that power? That people know that we're ransomed and healed and restored, forgiven, that we don't love the world, the flesh and the devil.

That we become habitations of God by his spirit. Come on, narrow it down. What has your church got to offer in your community? Do people ever say, well if you want to know what apostolic Christianity is, did you ever read the Bible and think it's a kind of a museum piece? Can you tell people to go to that church? Because if there's somebody in bondage, you have a group of people who get together.

And I'm convinced with all my heart, if we had spent the time training people in prayer, like we spend them for training the choir, and I'm not against singing. I believe there should be departments in the church, different departments of prayer. Some people have a gift of faith for money.

And if they have, you don't need to beg. Some people have a gift of faith for one particular disease. There are healings.

And I think of a man that I knew in England, who almost every time he prayed for a cancer patient, that cancer patient got delivered. I have an old friend in England now, every time he prays for somebody with deafness, they get delivered from their deafness. Well, you can say I don't think every gift should operate in every church.

I believe it should operate in every community anyhow, if not every church. I believe we should go to some Methodist brother and say, you have the gift of wisdom and boy, we need some wisdom in our church. And say, pastor, could we have this brother come to us for a month? And they come to you and say, you have a man who has a particular gift for people who are demon possessed.

Would you loan him to our church for a month? You see, Paul says that my preaching is not in word only. Oh, we excel in words. These boys pour torrents of words over the radio.

But he says, my preaching is not in word only, but in power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost. But somehow there's a bottleneck. That power is not coming through.

That demonstration is out there. Why? Is it because we're fat and self-satisfied? A man is coming in his journey. It's midnight and I have nothing to set before him.

We watch the world crumble. We watch these systems go down. We see Africa falling like a bunch of dominoes.

We think of the rape of Cambodia. We think of the hellishness that Laos has gone through and Vietnam. We're told now what a million, more than a million men on the Chinese border with Russia and, you know, if they get into a jam, somebody's going to release one of those atom bombs.

That's all they're going to do, in my judgment. It's a terribly late hour. When Jesus said, I give you power, he said, I give you power over all the power of the enemy.

Poor David spoke on it this morning. Binding the strong man. You know, in the early days of the Salvation Army, they had some fantastic meetings.

I talked with a man who was 80 some years of age and that was in 1930, let me see, 30, 31, 32. He'd been the right hand man of William Booth in the Salvation Army and he told me about those early days of revival. You know, I wish I'd had a tape recorder.

They weren't out in those days. It was the most exciting thing I think I've ever heard of. But a condition of being in the Salvation Army was every Salvation Army core, as they call each church they have, I'll call it the Salvation Army Church, it was a law that they had a prayer meeting Saturday night until midnight or after.

And as that man told me of the power of God that used to come over communities. You see, revival changes the moral climate of a community. We don't have revivals.

We get some guy to come in and give us a little pep talk. Somebody to come in and sing nicely for us. And a week or two after, we've gone back to the old routine, as cold and lifeless and unconcerned as we were just before.

I'll tell you what, when these men, when the Holy Ghost came upon them, I don't find Peter running away from anybody else. They run away from him. I don't find him warming himself at somebody else's fire.

He got the fire. And I don't know where that 120 went out of the upper room, but I know where some of them went. And they said about them, these men have turned the world upside down.

There's no way of measuring their power. We can't find out their secret, but this we do know. But they're more than conquerors.

Let's take it down to a church. In the book of the Revelation, the third chapter, there's a church. The church is always revealed as a woman.

Man has a hundred sheep. A man has two sons in between. There's a woman and she's digging in the dirt type of the ministry of the church.

And she's got a man in the middle of the church in the filth. You know, a lot of us are afraid to get our hands dirty. I've said, and I say it wherever I go, I say if there's 30 buses, and some of them have 30 buses outside of the church.

I don't believe any church needs a bus to gather people on Sundays. How would we get them there? Fill all the empty seats in all the cars that come. I see big cars come with one person in.

Another car comes with two. They could get three or four or five other folk in if they like to do it. we don't need all that money.

We're draining money that could be used for other things. Compassion. The Salvation Army used to sing, Except I am moved with compassion, How dwelleth thy spirit in me? In thought, word and deed, Burning love is my need, And I know I can find it in thee.

And if we're going to reach the twisted, deformed and despised, we're going to have the compassion that Jesus had. And those who can't go out and reach them can stand behind and be in prayer. And pray the power of the Spirit of God on the ministry.

The early days of the Salvation Army were some of the most sensational days in the history of the church. Maybe I mentioned it before, I think it's in the first volume of Begbie's Life of William Booth. He said when the old general had preached, and boy he roared his head off, and then at the end of the meeting he would say, Buy a head! Everybody ducked down nervously, you know, when he shouted that.

And then he'd start telling them to come and leave their sin. Come on you prostitutes, get up to the altar, come on you thieves, come on you liars, come on you drunkards, come on you wife beaters, he named them. He said some nights the meeting was like iron when he finished.

And then he'd say to the officers behind him, Pray! They'd all start praying. And Begbie says the Spirit of God would take men off the back row, nearly all the old drunks and thieves went on the back two or three rows, and the Spirit got all of them by the back of the neck, and carried them all over the congregation, and dropped them at the altar. My goodness, if that happened in our churches, we'd beat it to the door, we'd say this is demon power, wouldn't we? You know, God is welcome to come as long as he doesn't disturb us.

As long as he doesn't do something we can't explain to our children. I mean, we're going to lay a track down like you lay a track for a train, and then Holy Spirit, you come down there, you see, because in our church we don't happen to believe in gifts of the Spirit, and our pastor says he doesn't believe in healing. A lady told me that one day.

I said, I saw your pastor in hospital the other day praying for somebody. Was he praying she'd die? Every preacher in the country prays for the sick when it comes to it. He may not anoint them with oil, but he prays, that's part of his job.

We all, when the church of God is healthy, it's productive. When the church is healthy, she has power. When it's healthy, she has authority.

And these men exercised it, but here is the church like a woman, beautiful woman. She says, there never has been a church like me. I'm the most perfect, beautiful church, and I've etched it before.

She paints a picture of herself. Wavy hair, lovely eyes, lovely cheeks, lovely teeth. Neck like a pillar of marble, teeth like a flock of sheep coming up from the washing, the Word of God says.

And then when she's got that picture painted, she writes underneath it. And as she moves off, I shout to her and say, come back a minute. She says, haughtily, why? I don't care what you think.

I say, you don't need to care what I think for sure, I'll tell you that. But you better take notice of what God says. Sit down.

Let me unveil this picture, and I unveil the picture. What do I see? What does she see? A beautiful woman like the one she's painted? No, there's an old hag. Here, the hair is wavy.

There, the head is nearly bald. There, the eyes are blue. There, the eyes are bloodshot.

There, the face is round. Here, the face is shrunken. There, the face has color on it, lively vitality.

Here, the cheeks are shrunken and hollow. There, the teeth are flawless. Here, the teeth are rotten and yellow.

And underneath, she says, I'm rich and increased in goods. I have need of nothing. And God says of the same person now, naked and wretched and blind and poor and miserable.

The church never had as much organizing as she has now. She never had less agonizing. We've office equipment and duplicators.

And we were in a church not long ago, I was amazed. The staff, the staff, the staff they had there. It's almost like an insurance company.

There are churches now with computers in them. And they say, oh well, we're really up, we're really efficient. Efficient? Dear Lord, they're as deficient as anybody on earth.

They've got everything which is spectacular to the eye. And it's making the mechanism of the church go. And they know your name and they know your number.

And they know your social security number. And heaven knows they've got your tabulated as a church member. They know your income.

They know your tithing amount. They know, know, know, know, know. Oh, they know so much.

What they don't know is they're bankrupt. What they don't know is that while they're preening their feathers, the world is going to have fire. A simple thing.

Very shortly, we're rushing quickly to Easter. The week before Easter, obviously, is Palm Sunday. You remember they spread their garments in the way.

And then Jesus finally went out of the city. We usually say T.E. It was a triumphant entry. I changed that round.

I don't think it was a triumphant entry. I think it was a tearful exit. They didn't want him.

And he wept and he said, Oh, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings. But ye would not. Your house is left desolate.

They didn't kick him out of the city. He left them. Two thousand years ago and they haven't had a prophet since.

They haven't had a revival since. Do you think Almighty God dare not leave America? Do you think our books are keeping the kingdom of heaven together? We've had more light, more gospel broadcasts. We've got more Bible schools than the rest of the world put together.

The rest of the countries in the world put together. We five thousand gospel broadcasts every day. We've had more than a hundred thousand hours of broadcasting through the week.

And yet tonight we're drunken and immoral and broken. We flaunt our sexuality. We boast of our immorality.

We put in God. We toss in our coins to hell with his commandment. We've abolished the death penalty.

We've legalized prostitution. One state, Nevada, has it. We've legalized abortion.

We're more drunkards at this moment than ever we've had. We've more kids, more girls under 16, pregnant last year. Unmarried girls than ever in our history.

Wouldn't you think that somehow we'd go and say, listen, this machine's running wrong. And we're only operating on two cylinders instead of eight. What in the world's wrong with us? But we're just about too proud to admit that.

You know, the road to revival is paved with tears. Paved with groanings and sobs. And my fear is this, that we say so often, oh, God keeps all his promises.

Well, there's one promise he made to the church, and that was this, because she was in that state, and she would not come and repent and seek his face. You know what he said? I'll spew you out of my mouth. And people say, you know, oh, they get in big conventions and get thousands of people and raise money.

They've been doing that for years. What have you done? We put millions of dollars on the mission field, and we don't move them one inch. Scarcely.

Why? We're trying to do it in the energy of the flesh. That's why. We're trying organizing instead of agonizing.

God says, I'll spew you out of my mouth. He said to Israel, your house is left desolate. I was in a meeting a good while ago, and I quoted this scripture.

God says that he spews out of his mouth. An old man, an old preacher on the front row, said in a stage whisper, I don't know if others heard it. He said, I think he's already done it, and we don't know.

He's already done it. Does your church have any sign of supernatural power on it? Are there times when we drop everything and say, listen, because it's true of all of us here tonight, not many of us need new light. All we need is obedience.

We've enough light, brother, to deliver a thousand times more folk than we have here. With all our obedience, we're so stiff-necked and hard and rebellious. And when it comes down to the issue, a man has come on his journey and had nothing to set before him.

Sunday school teacher, do you really set something before those children that will make them think and stir their hearts? Are you just a storyteller? Father, have you anything in your home to set before your children? A godly life? A praying life? A devotional life? Peace? You say, I have nothing in that line. Power? I have nothing in that line. Prayer? I have nothing in that line.

This won't take me a minute to say, my daddy, in his early days, he moved around with society in England, with dukes and lords and ladies. And I remember this was being discussed once at dinner, after he'd married, of course, and we youngsters were around. And I remember plainly my daddy saying to some folk who were at dinner with us, I'm glad I wasn't born to nobility.

The castle where he lived, the king used to come and they had solid gold dinner plates and solid gold knives and forks. And all the waiters wore their knee breeches and pure silver buckles on their shoes. And they served everything with white gloves, lest they should defile your dinner, your plate.

And everything was done, you know, bang up to the last law of etiquette. My daddy said, I'm glad I wasn't born in society like that. And somebody said, why? He said, because all the years I was there, I never heard the gospel.

They live in that artificial realm of, we've got everything, we wear the best clothes. They went to Paris to get the gents' suit hand tailored. The ladies wore the latest fashion, the biggest rings, everything else, it was all show style.

Our yacht is bigger than your yacht. Our castle is bigger than your castle. Our estate is bigger than your estate.

And he said, they never, never once put anything out in the way of the gospel to the family that met around the table. I'm glad my daddy came out of there. He was the first challenge to my Christian life.

And then he told me about a man called C.T. Studd. And then he took me one day. I went to hear C.T. Studd.

They told me about the Salvation Army. And I guess I, I just remember faintly seeing a man with a beard who I'm sure was William Booth. And I remember other men came along, Paddock Wilkes and some of these men who founded missions.

And I began to stir inside, even when I was a youngster. There was never any sports magazines in the house. All the literature in the house was spiritual.

Every bit of it. And if I picked it up, I got to read something about some missionary. I got to read something about somebody in Japan with the Japan rescue mission.

I got to read about somebody up the Congo. And the books all on the shelves were all books of spiritual matter. Daddy set things before us.

And he not only told us, he did it. He put a ragged coat on on a Saturday night and went out down by the tavern and waited till men came out staggering and put his arm in them. And he took them down in the basement of the church and gave them hot coffee and led them to Christ.

And the next night we had no automobile. Next night we, daddy would go off and I'd say, where's daddy gone? Or he, he, he met a man last night and he'd bring the man into church, you know, scruffy and his collar all torn and disreputable. My dad would go and see him during the week and he'd go for him the next Saturday night, next Sunday night.

And about two or three weeks, the man came with a clean shirt and a new suit and everything else. And I'd say, well, who was the man you came with tonight, daddy? Oh, oh, it was the man that came last week. No, no, no, no, no, you came with a nice man tonight.

Not, not the ragged man, the, the dirty man, the smelly man, the man with the rags, the same man. You see, that's what Jesus does when he comes into, into the life. Somebody said, you expect me to believe Jesus turned water into wine? He said, I'll tell you something he did better than that.

He turned beer into furniture in our house. Do you know why we put on so many programs in the church and so much entertainment? Because we've no real joy. And you know what? Even angels get excited when folk are redeemed.

And brother, if they get excited, we ought to get excited about it. And when the Holy Ghost comes back on the lives of the individual, that's one thing for not, you, you, you like a thing that's boring to most people now is the prayer life. But you know, the day's too short for the man who wants to pray.

It's the greatest engagement in the world, this side of eternity. To wrestle in prayer, to set the captives free, to pray for people that you've no idea who you're praying for. God will lay maybe China one day on your heart or somebody else or somebody else or somebody else.

I was in a meeting with Raymond Edmond and he, he talked about going to South America as a missionary. He was a president, you know, of, of Wheaton. And when he got down there, he had a chronic illness and he was dying.

They dug his grave. His wife was mopping his brow. The sweat was there and the death rattle was in his throat.

And she died a wedding dress and hung it on a tree because she hadn't a black dress to go to the funeral. And she said, I was puzzled. Why should my husband, a brilliant mind, knows his Greek and Hebrew and Latin and language down here and ready to start the missionary work and here he's dying.

And she said, I mocked his brow and he sat up straight. He said, bring me my clothes. And she nearly died.

He never turned back. Years after in Boston, he told me this himself, years after in Boston, a little old lady came after he testified and said, could you tell me the date? He said, yes, so and so. And he said she had a little notebook worth about 10 cents.

It was all ragged around the edges. And she opened it and went back a bit and said it was the year so and so on a certain day. What time would it be in Uruguay? I think he was in Uruguay.

What was the difference in the time? And he said, so and so. She said, that's right. That's right.

What's right? I was in bed and the Lord told me to get up and pray for Raymond Edmund. The devil wanted to kill him. Why did God lead a little old woman to help him? After all, he's omnipotent.

But he says, I want you to pray for a little woman, for a man thousands of miles away. A little old lady prayed and she'd made a note, got into bed in victory. But not only was he in victory, she was in victory.

The spirit of discernment, the spirit of wisdom, hearing his voice, obeying his command. Peter and John unlearned, an ignorant man. Do you know what? If Jesus had said, ye shall receive brains, the Holy Ghost coming upon you, there'd be a line from here to New York of young guys wanting new brains.

And they sure need them. But anyhow, he didn't say that. If he'd said, ye shall receive the miraculous church, they would be lining up for it.

But he said, ye shall receive power. And power is preceded by purity. And purity is preceded by repentance and sorrow for sin.

Look, there's nothing in your hands you can bring. As the songwriter says, nothing in my hands I'd bring. He's looking for brilliant men.

Somebody asked Hudson Taylor, why did God choose you to go to China and establish the China inland mission? He said, because he'd been looking for years for somebody weak enough to use. And at last he found me. They were unlearned and ignorant men.

The Holy Ghost came upon them. And the world hasn't yet seen what's going to happen as a result of that. I can paint a picture as black as hell, I sure can.

And you can contradict it if I gave you a lot of statistics and stuff tonight. But I'm not hanging my harp on the willows. God's going to bypass organized religion and systems before very long.

I believe that many denominations are breathing their last right now. They're struggling to try and plug the hole up and stick the hole up here and stop something else. And the world says, but you've got nothing real and vital and living and powerful.

So what's he going to do? He's going to fulfill his word like he always does. Pour out his spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

So it's young people, not the old greyheads. We've had our day. We missed it.

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your young men shall see visions. And all men dream dreams.

And on my servants and handmaids. Not intellectuals and bishops and presidents of colleges. But he says that young men see visions.

And all men dream dreams. And on my servants and handmaids. Where did he go the first time? Did he not come and go to the Sanhedrin and say, hey, have you some very likely prospect? I want a man with a sharp intellect.

Did he go to the high priest and say, well, who do you think is a fine-ish young priest you've got around? He ignored the whole bunch. He went to some smelly fisherman and said, come on, follow me. He went to a man making insurance out of a tax thing.

And the shadow fell. And he looked up. And the man heard Jesus say, follow me.

And do you know what? I think that's one of the greatest acts of faith in the New Testament. Nobody talks about it. He just looked down.

And Matthew said, all right. And he dropped his pen and left the master. And he didn't know that much about him.

And you and I know this story from beginning to end. And yet we hesitate to be obedient. We hesitate to go out on a limb, as we say.

We hesitate to say, Lord, come and burn out of me all my selfishness and all my pride and all my weakness and all my excuses. Then shall all bondage cease, all fetters fall, and I shall find my peace, my all in all. Let's sing a verse of a hymn before we close.

Do we know? Spirit of God descend upon my heart. Do you know that? No? Oh, OK. 1 3 8. Let's sing 1 3 8. I rise to sing.

The altar is open. If you want to come, I'm not going to beg for you to come. Spirit of God descend upon my heart.

We need from us through all its pulses move. Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art. Then make me love thee as I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasy, no sudden rending, no angel visitant.

We thank you that you've not cut us off either as individuals or as a nation. We surely test your patience. You said your spirit will not always strive with man.

Lord, maybe if we knew the alarm signal is already ringing out for this nation. Maybe we're almost at the end of our tether, as it were. Maybe you said for us as a nation, the harvest is passed and the summer is ended and you're not saved.

But yet, Lord, we would stand in the gap tonight and plead as thy servants of old. We would plead like the man whose tree was to be cut down. And he pled, Lord, you'd give just another year that he might fertilize it and get it all in good condition.

And then if it bear not fruit, then he said, then cut it down and take it away. Lord, some of us tonight have very unfruitful lives. We have nothing to offer to our children.

We have nothing to offer to our church. We have nothing to offer to our community. And yet there are all these riches in glory by Christ Jesus, which can be ours if we're obedient to thee.

Oh, God, we know that the cripple at the gate is the world. We can't bind up its wounds with politics. We can't heal its diseases with any intellectual power.

It must come through the body of the church of the living God. As we have sung this week, revive thy work, O Lord, revive every heart here tonight. Grant, O Lord, that nobody should leave this house in bondage.

Nobody should leave it fettered. Nobody should leave it in failure. But Lord, we may touch that spring which is in thee and invite the fire of God to come in consuming power, and burn out the draughts, and burn off the fetters that hold us, and liberate us that are going out like this man who is leaping and praising God.

There'll be something so different in our spirits, in our attitudes, in our words, that they'll have to say a verse as they said with them. They took knowledge of them that they'd been with Jesus. And for this, we'll give you praise in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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