

Mature in God

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon emphasizes the journey towards spiritual maturity through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of obedience and fruitfulness in a believer's life.

Duration: 56:17

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Ezekiel 15:2-4, John 14:26

Topics: "Maturity"

Description

In this sermon, Reverend Leonard Ravenhill discusses the importance of going beyond simply reading the Bible and becoming 'bibliographers.' He emphasizes the need to seek the Lord beyond the sacred page and to be filled with His grace. Ravenhill highlights the different ways in which a room can be filled, such as with people, air, light, noise, or even a pungent perfume. He also suggests that while prosperity may be seen as a sign of God's blessing in the Old Testament, adversity is the sign of God's blessing in the New Testament. Overall, Ravenhill encourages listeners to become mature in their faith and to follow the example of Jesus and the early church.

Transcript

The following message was delivered by Reverend Leonard Ravenhill during a regular session at the Christ for the Nations Institute. His message is based on the 15th chapter of John. His subject is Becoming Mature in God.

Often in England I have the privilege of listening to Dr. Campbell Morgan, considered by many to be one of the greatest Bible teachers that the world has ever had. Before his lectures he used to have us sing a lovely old hymn, Break thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me, as thou didst break the loaves beside the seed. Beyond the sacred page I seek thee, Lord.

Because there's an awful danger of stopping at the sacred page and becoming bibliographers. That is, that we worship the Bible or we worship a text, we worship a theology, instead of getting to the person of God himself, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And this is what we ought to do in the studies that we have, get beyond the sacred page.

And I was trying to think how many different ways there are of teaching. I don't know them all. I haven't done much teaching.

I did teach one period in a Bible school in England, but that was years ago. And if the students remember what I taught, I don't, because I've forgotten it all. But uh, there are many ways for us to teach, and there are many ways to learn.

And I notice you've got lots of, you rich students, got your recorders here, and they're very good, but don't substitute it for your brain. And secondly, don't substitute your brain for something more important. Just the other day I talked with a lady and she said, you know Brother Raheel, the things that I learn with my mind, I forget.

But the things that I learn with my spirit, I remember. And how true this is, because again, the Holy Spirit is the teacher. I get into trouble sometimes, I get into trouble often, but uh, in preaching, because I say, now the last person you should take any notice of is a preacher.

Don't believe them for a minute. Listen to what they say, check it with the word of God. If it doesn't correspond, throw it out.

Doesn't matter how brilliant the man is, if he's 60 degrees, 20 degrees, I've told you enough, 32 and still be frozen. But don't take too much notice of teachers and preachers. Take what they say, and take the word of God as the slide rule, and run it over what the teacher, preacher says.

And again, if it's worthwhile, he won't be offended if you throw it out. If it doesn't fit in with the book, at least he shouldn't be. And I thought again, of the word of the psalmist this morning, when he says, my word have I hid in my heart.

Now if you only had it in your head, you'll forget it, for sure you will. But if the word of God is hidden in your heart, you'll not forget it. Now again, don't take any notice of what I say.

What you have to do is find a scripture for it. And uh, I did think if we get to it, we'll talk about John 15 this morning, and maybe tomorrow morning start on Hebrews. But remember in John 14, 26, one of the best known verses, but the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.

Now if you stop there, you'd be in trouble. Or if you take the next phrase, and bring all things to your remembrance. Now if I were to say to you, what, what is there on page 10 of the fourth volume of the 1969 version of the Encyclopedia Britannica? Anybody know it? You couldn't remember that.

Why not? But doesn't it say the Spirit will bring all things to your remembrance? No it doesn't. What does it say? The Spirit will bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. You know, if I'd fed the 5,000, I'd have said, don't bother about the crumbs given to the birds.

But Jesus never wasted anything, never wasted an opportunity, never wasted even a crumb that fell from feeding the 5,000. He never wasted anything at all. And he doesn't teach us in order that we may forget things.

He teaches things, and if you're smart, and you say that they're hidden somewhere in what the smart people call the repressed complex of your subconscious, well that's all right. But I believe that they're hidden in our hearts, and the Spirit of God is able to take the thing which he has taught to us and, and revive it in the moment when I need it. Not right now, but in that moment when I need it.

When I'm in a situation, suddenly that flashes into my mind. Whether I'm on a bus, whether I'm in a plane five miles up in the sky, whether I wake up at two o'clock in the morning, drowsily, and just want to watch this. And you know, I believe if I wake up, I, I don't wake up because of little trouble or something.

I wake up because the Lord has something to say to me. And so I used to kind of want to go to sleep, and uh, but now I don't. If I wake up, I say, well now Lord, what, what have you got to say? And usually I find that the best writing, if I ever do any best writing, is somewhere between two o'clock and four o'clock in the morning.

Whatsoever he says unto you, what, what he wants you to learn, it's hidden there, and he can touch it all the spring and bring things. Now, notice what it says, the comforter which is the Holy Ghost. Now, I, I think we've kind of used that word so that some of the smart, smart modern kids, and particularly these muscle men, say what do you think I want a comforter for? Don't want somebody to pick me up, put them on the knee, and rock me to sleep.

The comforter, ah, it sounds a bit, well as my principal Chadwick used to say, and in my judgment he has one of the finest books on the Holy Spirit, which is reprinted in America now through the Christian Literature Crusade, and it's called The Way to Pentecost. I think it's as good as John Owen's book, which was written in the 1600s. But Mr. Chadwick used to say to us, remember brethren, that the, the Spirit is called a comforter, but he is not.

You know, sometimes I wish I could talk in capital letters. I, I, when I type, I can switch to capital letters. I don't type well, I type the Bible way, and you shall find that, ah, when I, when I want to emphasize anything, I, I switch the key, and I'm able to write all in capitals.

Now I can't do that talking, I, I kind of wish I could. But the Holy Spirit is not, N-O-T, big letters like this, the Holy Spirit is not a nursing mother for spiritually sick children. He's not a comforter in that sense.

The word comforter comes from two Latin words, come, which you can spell C-U-M if you like, confortis, F-O-R-T-I-S, confortis, and it means with strength. Now he doesn't come to amuse us, he doesn't give us gifts just so we can wear them like jewels round our necks. When the Holy Spirit comes, he comes not merely to strengthen me, but when I've been weak in, in, in the church, he makes me strong so the church isn't weak in that area anymore.

Now, another interpretation of that word is that he is the advocate. And we use this as we say a kind of, you're standing in a court, you need an advocate, and all, excuse me, the Holy Spirit is the advocate. That is, he's your attorney.

He comes alongside to help. Well it's nice, but it's not really true. He doesn't come alongside, he comes inside.

And he comes with strength. Now you don't have to, don't have to agree with the thing I've said, I've already made that clear to you. But sometimes I think that in the last analysis, the sign of God's blessing in the Old Testament is prosperity.

And the sign of God's blessing in the New Testament is adversity. In other words, what's your breaking point? After all, after you die, which could be five minutes from now, there are no rich people, don't let anybody fool you. The only thing anybody owns, some of you millionaires sitting here, the only thing you own is one beat of your heart, that's all.

Doesn't matter who you are, what you are, we're all in a common denominator there. But you see, we're going to have a thousand million, million, billion, trillion, quadrillion years after we die to be happy. Now I think in one area we've slipped up.

We've kind of suggested, if you get saved and filled with the Spirit, you're going to be happy. Well I've got news for you, as soon as Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, he had the worst experience he ever had in his life. He went in the wilderness and fought the devil for 40 days, 40 always being a period of probation under the divine eye, and for 40 days he had combat with Satan.

But remember this, he didn't come back on the edge of a nervous breakdown. He came back as full of the Spirit as he went into the wilderness. He returned in the power of the Spirit.

Now if you're looking for the Holy Spirit to come and fill and possess you just for fun and send you around to banquets and breakfasts, all you'll do is get too fat anyhow. But he doesn't come for that reason. His objective in coming into your life is to make you not an ornament merely, but an instrument, not something just to show, but something to use.

I'll never forget, well in fact let me say this, one of the greatest privileges I've had, and I met many of the greatest preachers in the world, and preached in many of the greatest pulpits in the world, which doesn't make me a saint to do for me, but one of the greatest privileges I had ever was to share the study of one who I thought was America's greatest preacher for the last 30 years at least, Dr. Tozer. And I used to slip into his office very often, and one day I went in and he was a very, he was one of these you know sparkling personalities, these boys that come up you know, a big white tie and a smile this and oh I'm here you know, you should have been in my last crusade, oh we had a marvelous time, packed the place out and we had 5,000 helium, it tells you everything except the love offering. But Dr. Tozer wasn't like that, he was a kind of a negative personality, narrow-shouldered.

He wrote a book called *The Pursuit of God*, and you know an experience of God that costs nothing, is worth nothing, and it does nothing. Tozer was in that little office up there in Chicago, the office wouldn't be more than 12 feet by 12 I'm sure, and he was there 25 years before he produced that book. It was the essence of all the teaching of the Spirit for 25 years.

Now other little guys want to go around borrow somebody else's sermon. I was in a place not long ago where a lady said to the preacher as he went out, you know that was a marvelous sermon, you know Spurgeon couldn't have preached better than that. Well sure he couldn't, he stole it from Spurgeon.

But you've got lots of preachers, they're not preachers really, all they do is borrow books and buy sermon outlines from Zondervan's and go somewhere and pick a bunch of Mr. Somebody's sermons up and somebody else, and all they do is change the text. They've got more thieves in the pulpit than in jail. But Tozer never did this, Tozer did all his own studying, all his own pondering, all his own digging.

And that day when I went in his office he just switched on his chair and he said, you know Len, God isn't concerned whether you're happy or not. Well I kind of thought for a moment, I said he's not, he said no, no, no, no. God doesn't care whether you live in a palace or a pigsty.

He's not a bit concerned where you live, how you live yet. But you see what God is trying to do between here and the grave is bring you and me to maturity. He's trying to get you ready, I believe, for a place in the millennium and then a place in the ages and ages and ages of his kingdom which is everlasting,

everlasting, everlasting.

And he doesn't care whether you go through hell from here to the grave to get you there. Now you'll find a lot of people that'll preach more smoothly, particularly about the spirit. Oh boy, all you do is clap your hands and have a lot of fun and say, boy is it great to be filled with the spirit.

Now if you're filled with the Holy Ghost and the devil doesn't know you're around, you didn't get what the Bible wanted you to get. This is the roughest experience there is. This is making yourself a candidate that God can take you and do with you just what you like and you don't squeal.

You see, I know a man in England that lived in a gorgeous mansion, this was just before the automobiles came in, he had carriages, horses, everything. One day he was telling the Lord, Lord I, oh I'm so glad, I'm so glad you love me and I love you Lord my Jesus, I love thee. For thee all the follies, you know, and this sort of sentimental stuff we sing at communion so very often, you know, we're the whole realm of nature man.

Well most people are liars in church because they won't even struggle to get there Wednesday night. Never. Give them the whole realm of nature, they won't give them a bit of the bank balance.

So how are you going to believe them anyhow? And the Lord says you love me so much. Yes Lord, there's nothing, oh why do you say, sell your mansion, get rid of your servants, sell your carriages, sell your horses, and go down, live down in the center of the slum area in Manchester. Well you can't go around anything like that, because if you get, try and get around it, you know what the Lord will do? He'll take you back, you see lots of people are trying to find a new axe head and you have to go back to the place where you lost the axe head.

Oh well the Lord will let me off here and I'll learn something. You won't learn anything up there, you'll just stultify and become weak and ineffective until you go back to the place where God demands this obedience here, because you were promised obedience on any level. Now let's get this straight too, you know you could grow more, not just because I'm here, forget that.

But let me tell you this, the other night I happened to preach a message on the cross. There's a lot of seminarians in, doctors, professors, what have you got. One man came up almost in tears, he nearly pulled my hand off, he said Brother Ramiel I learned more tonight in just that one meeting, because I preach for an hour and fifteen minutes admittedly, but he said I learned more tonight in this one message than four years in seminary.

Why? Well the Spirit revealed, now here's another thing, I was on the hormone, a lady was having a birthday and somebody in the house said well how old are you? She said I'm approaching thirty-seven and I nearly said from which side, but she said I'm approaching thirty-seven, but I'm only fifteen years old spiritually. Oh I said, will you explain that to me? Explain what? Well you're thirty-seven or thereabouts, you're fifteen spiritually, how do you figure that out? Oh I've got it marked in my bible here, I was saved on such a date as twenty-five past nine, oh I said that you mean fifteen years ago. Well I'm fifteen years, oh no no no, you may not be fifteen months old.

I've seen people who've been saved for twenty years that aren't twenty months old, and I've seen people who've been saved only twenty months who are twenty years old in the Spirit. See it's not a case of years, the rungs on the ladder to maturity are the rungs of obedience and submission. Now the Holy Spirit will

bring all things to our remembrance, and this is essential then that we get these things tucked away not merely in our minds but again down in our hearts.

Again God is wanting to bring us to maturity and you, you, you, you, you, every one of us here this morning, irrespective of age, class, anything else, even intellect, you this morning are just as spiritual as you want to be. Can't blame the devil, your mother-in-law, or anybody. You are as spiritual as you want to be.

No man that ever lived had a bigger bible than you have. When I used to hear Campbell Morgan I used to think, now I wish I could get a bible like his, he gets so much out of it. Then I discovered it was just like mine, just a plain King James, sleepy Elizabethan English bible.

Why did he get so much out of it? Because he labored over the Word of God, that's why. You have a whole bible, you have a whole Savior, you have a whole, the Holy Spirit who wrote the book and inspired the book and makes known the book and knows the mysteries of the book, and it's he who is going to bring all things to our remembrance. It's he who, if we're going to learn at all, surely is going to be our teacher.

Now, I said we'd do a little digging anyhow. In the 15th chapter of John, you know what it's about, I am the true vine and my father is the husbandman. Now the best background to John 15 is Ezekiel 15.

And there in Ezekiel 15, in the first few verses you have what I think is the background to this marvelous chapter of John 15. Ezekiel 15, the word of the Lord came unto me saying, some of man, what is the vine tree more than any tree or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Now, shall wood be taken thereof or shall wood be taken from the vine to do any work or will men make a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon? Behold it is cast into the fire for fuel. The fire devours both the ends of it and the midst of it is burned.

Is it meat for any work? Behold, when it is whole, it was meat for no work. How much less shall it be meat yet for any work when the fire is devoured and it is burned? Now when he's saying that, he's saying this, that he never used the wood of the vine for anything at all. I was in a conference in Canada a few years ago, and there was a missionary there who had been in Saudi Arabia for about 40 years.

He had the most amazing display of souvenirs that I have ever seen. He had a sword given to him by the king of Saudi Arabia. He had many, many marvelous things.

He had a camel, big beautiful camel, and it looks as though it was made out of a kind of glass. It had lovely streaks in it, lovely veins in the wood, and I said to him, that's a very wonderful thing. He said, well it was carved by one of the finest men in the East.

And I said, well it looks beautiful. What kind of wood is it? Oh it's made of wood of the olive tree. Well I said, what about this thing over here? Now this isn't made of the same wood, this is red.

And he said, well that came from a branch of a cedar of Lebanon. Fine. All right, what about this thing over here? This is different, it's not like that red wood, it's not like that olive, this is entirely different.

Oh he said, that's myrtle wood. The myrtle tree only grows in Israel and America. I don't know whether that proves you're one of the lost tribes, but anyhow, that's really true.

It only grows there and it grows in this country. And the wood was very different, it was very beautiful. And then I said to him, look you've been in the Middle East and you must have seen millions of vines.

He said, sure I've seen them all my life. Well here's something made of myrtle wood, there's something made of a cedar of Lebanon, there's something made out of an olive tree. Did you ever see anything made out of the wood of the vine? And then he smiled, he said, no and you know I've never even thought of that in my life.

Because the Bible says in the 15th chapter of Ezekiel, you don't take the wood of the vine. That's not why you produce the vine, it's no good for wood. You produce a vine only for one thing and that is that it may bear fruit.

Now wouldn't you think the logic of John 15 would be this, I am the vine and ye are the grapes? That would be logical, wouldn't it? Why didn't it say I am the vine and ye are the grapes? I don't know that we're ever likened to grapes at all. Well as I see it, you see grapes, they're about one of the most fruitful, beautiful fruits that we have, most useful I meant. Because you see if the grapes are not ripe you can still use them, you can make vinegar out of them.

And when they're ripe you can eat them. And if they get overripe you can dry them and make resins out of them. There's no waste in them.

So if the scripture said I am the vine and ye are the grapes, we might get a little conceited and think well we're useful at all times, in all places and so forth and so on. But this is not what the scripture says. The word of God likens us to salt.

And if a salt has lost its savor it's not good for a single thing. You know if you take salt that has lost its savor and put it on your garden it will make a garden that's bad, worse. There's not a thing you can do with salt that has lost its savor.

There's not a thing you can do with a church or with a believer that has really lost his or her savor. Now lots of questions have been asked here. Why did the Lord use this figure, I am the vine and ye are the branches? Let's first of all notice this, that he doesn't say I am the vine.

What does he say? He says I am the true vine. Or the Greek would turn it around, I am the vine the true. Now this is a little word that John loves very much.

He not only says I am the true vine, but he says of Jesus I am the true bread which came from heaven. I'm not only the light of the world, I am the true light. Now you've got a lot of unique things about this very very wonderful gospel of John.

Somebody has called it the most profound book ever written. And you know we're living in a day when all the slant is on education both outside of the church and in it. You have to man of the academy, seminary, and distinctions and letters and degrees and all the rest of it, at least to suit certain people.

You know after Peter and John did that marvelous miracle in the third chapter of Acts, they were hauled up before the big shots of the day and when they couldn't get beyond it they said well a notable miracle has been done. This man's been crouching at the temple for 40 years and we can't get by it. But look this is what you've got to do now.

Now forget about the miracle and forget about this man Peter and this man John because they're unlearned and ignorant. Oh that's hard to put up with isn't it, even when you're sanctified. Ignorant, unlearned.

You don't know much. I know as much as her anyhow. Well anyhow, this is something that's really, we're unlearned and ignorant.

Well you know one of those unlearned men by the name of Peter he wrote two epistles. Two of the best fellows of all the ages and I think the first epistle of Peter is the most practical epistle. I might speak on it one day.

The most practical epistle, the first chapter of the first epistle is the most practical of all the epistles. Peter wrote two epistles. John the other ignorant man wrote this profound book and then he wrote one, two, three epistles.

That makes four. And then just to show how ignorant he was he wrote the book of the revelation that still baffles all the wise men. So if you're a candidate for God's ignorance instead of man's wisdom you might come up with something.

But if you're still hunting around for a lot of distinctions and labels and degrees and whatnot you may just pass like a ship in the night. You see there is a wisdom which is from above and God never shares it with the worldly. There is a gift of wisdom.

Jesus Christ has made unto us wisdom. There is a wisdom in this realm that has nothing to do with wisdom in that realm. But again John has a different accent.

Do you know that 92 percent of what John says in his gospel is just John's. He doesn't borrow it like the Matthew, Mark and Luke. We call those the synoptic gospels and we call this the autoptic gospel because this is like autobiography.

This is something that's going on around here around this man and around the Lord Jesus. The others borrow each from the other but John doesn't. 92 percent of what he says is new.

After all neither Matthew, Mark or Luke have anything to correspond with John 15 does he? And if you've got water to the knees here you've got waters to swim in when you get to the 17th chapter, that profound chapter which is of course the Lord's prayer. And the prayer we call the Lord's prayer is of course a disciple's prayer. Teach us to pray the Lord's prayer.

Jesus prayed and nobody else can pray in that sense. So 92 percent of this gospel is John's. Now what is John doing? Do you remember the first chapter and the first verse? In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

What's he doing? Well in the beginning is eternity, the Word was with God, equality and the Word was God, deity. Now he's got the whole book compressed into that one verse. He's establishing the deity of the Lord Jesus.

You get a corresponding idea in the first verse of the first chapter of Matthew in which he says the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Why does he mention those two? Because he's about to do something. The business of Matthew is to establish the kingship of the Lord

Jesus Christ.

And so he relates Jesus here, the son of David, that relates him to the throne and he is the son of Abraham. And that connects him with the altar. Now here you've got, let's look at them here, what have you got? Let's go right to the beginning of the book, the whole book.

You've got Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. What's the next book? Good, smart. Right, what does the fifth book do? The fifth book is a recap of those four books.

Now you've got the book of Psalms. How many books in the book of Psalms? No, no, no, those are chapters, those are Psalms, true enough. How many books? Five, good, good.

Now the orthodox view is that the Bible has 66 books. Now 66 isn't a biblical number, but the book of Psalms is not one book, it's five books. So you have to add four to 66, that makes 70.

70 is a biblical number. 70 elders in the Old Testament, 70 went out preaching in the New Testament. Now Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

The fifth book is a recap of the other four. Now I'm not going to do all the work for you and make you lazy, you dig for yourself. But you'll find there are five books in the book of Psalms and the fifth book is a recap of what happened in the first four.

So it's the same pattern that you have with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, a recap of the other four, five books of Psalms, the fifth a recap of the other four, and then you have Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and then you have the Acts of the Apostles. What's the Acts of the Apostles? It's a recap of the other four books. It's the Church doing everything that Jesus did, isn't it? Right.

So now then, Matthew sets forth Jesus as a king. Mark's emphasis is to show Jesus as a servant. Luke's emphasis is to show Jesus as being, can I put it this way, a solid man, as much as John is going to be showing being solid God.

Again, in the beginning was the word, eternity. The word was with God, equality. The word was God, deity.

So John is showing us the Lord Jesus Christ as very God of very God. But wait a minute, we missed one out. What about Luke? Matthew shows him as a king.

Mark shows him as a servant. Luke shows him as what? Man, totally dependent on God. Now, if you want to read the prayer life of Jesus, all you have to do is read through the epistle of the gospel of Luke.

In every crisis in the life of Jesus, Luke adds one word, prayer. The others miss it out. Luke doesn't.

Well, Jesus was standing in the Jordan when the Holy Ghost descended upon him. The Spirit descended on him. When? Pardon? When he came upon the water.

Right, but what was he doing? Repent. Right. Why don't the others mention it? They don't have to mention it.

Luke is showing us that Jesus here, as a man, is so dependent on himself. And he is praying when he comes up, when the baptism comes on him. Now, go to the end of the story.

He's crucified. And Luke says, while he was crucified, what was he doing? Saul went in. Paul would have been saying, hey buddy, you're going to hell fire, why don't you repent? And this, why don't you wake up, you're going to hell fire.

Isn't it amazing Jesus didn't testify on the cross? You know, some of us kill ourselves trying to get one person, and they've written us off long ago, you're dead, forget it. The best thing you could do with some folk you've been chasing a year, is leave them alone a year. Give them over to Satan.

Oh, that's not a very loving attitude, is it? Well, I didn't write the Bible, in case you don't know, and that's what the Bible says. Amen. My dear wife and I were in a conference about three years ago, and I mentioned that, and the lady's face was up, she was a salvationist, she said, hallelujah.

Everybody looked around, you know. What did we say hallelujah for that for? She said, Brother Amiel, just a year ago, somebody we'd been toiling with, and praying with, and struggling with, and doing everything we could to get them to the Lord, I said to my husband one day, let's give them over to Satan, let Satan talk to them for a year. And when people in the church and she talks about being filled with the Spirit, and the Spirit is the Spirit of love, and that's the kind of thing you do.

Well, you can't be smarter than God, you'd better wake up to that fact. Some of you have been trying, but you can't be. And she said, you know, just this, I think was it this past week, she said, or this past month, that man really came into a new relationship with God.

Oh, he's been through hell this past year. He's been struggling and tormented, he's doubted, he almost was tempted to commit suicide, and people say, you'd better have a night of prayer for him, you know, you're thought if he commits suicide, it won't be my fault at all, the Lord told me, commit him to the devil, let the devil handle him for a while. And so we let, and you know, he came out of it all right.

You never know what freedom's like till you've been in jail, really. And he'd been in jail, Satan had him bound. Oh, Jesus wasn't testifying on the cross, no, no, he prayed.

So he prayed at the beginning, when the baptism came upon him, he prayed there in the last aspect of his life, when he was dying on the cross. It so happens that Luke reminds us that Jesus one day decided to take twelve disciples, didn't he? And other evangelists recall the fact that he chose twelve disciples. Do you know what Luke says? That before he chose the twelve, he spent a whole night in prayer.

No, we don't do that, do we? We go to a promise box or something and spin our finger around and get a promise out of it. Then you have the audacity to say, I got a promise from the Lord. You didn't, you got it from Moody Press, they made it.

Oh, we don't do like Jesus did. The Son of God needed a whole night before he made a major decision in his life. And then he recalls, of course, the transfiguration, that glorious, wonderful experience that Jesus had.

But Luke says that it was while he was praying he was transfigured. I'm going to talk about prayer, or at least try to tonight, and tell you some things that I think are pretty amazing. But if you want to transform personality, you can't get it by coming to the altar and getting the baptism in one shot.

After all, Peter had a marvelous experience in the upper room, and he had a pure heart, which we don't emphasize. The emphasis on the baptism these days is power. God's emphasis is purity.

As a matter of fact, he's concerned about holiness. He makes you go through hell to prove what kind of a God he is. But you can be as holy as anybody has ever lived on this earth, and have the worst harm, and they're broken down on a mobile, and maybe no job.

God, you see, when you get to heaven, you're not, if you go straight to heaven out of your million dollar home, or out of your super Cadillac or something, they won't even know you have it. You come to church with mink, and diamonds, and everything, the Lord never sees them. He looks straight through to your heart.

You may be in rags on the inside. Or you go to a banquet, they go study. You don't know whether you're going to a banquet now, with the holy people, or you're going to a film show.

I went to, we went to one some years ago, and good night. The skirts and the women were poured into the dresses, and you never saw such a sight you had in your life. I wouldn't have known it was a banquet.

I wouldn't have known it was a religious outfit. I either thought I was going to a preview of a movie show. You see, we've got a kind of idea that if, you know, this good old book says the Lord looketh not on the wife.

Oh, but upon? Oh, you'd think it was the other way, wouldn't you? Oh, you, of course, you'd put something a bit better than that on, wouldn't you? I mean, and notice the, your shoes are a bit rubbed there. You know, there'll be a lot of millionaires there, nice old people, and other people. This is the World Bank.

I mean, it's ten dollars, you know. Go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in, if they have ten dollars. But, oh brother, there's a lot of wonderful stuff going on, and don't we strut and show our stuff, huh? You know, I don't go to banquets or breakfasts anymore.

I gave them up when I became a man and put away childish things. You'd think Almighty God was interested in where we live, or how we live, or what clothes we have. As I said the other day, there's no status symbols to a spirit-filled person.

That's the status symbol, to be filled with God. Everything from there is downhill. And God isn't concerned to make you and me happy.

If He is, He's not doing much for His children in Russia and China this morning, is He? Hmm? You think He's got it rough? Some of you have read the book, I'm sure, by Brother Andrew, God Smugly. You read that book? I'm sure you have. Wonderful book.

I think I gave him the title for that book in my office in New York one day. I said, you're God Smugly. He had just come back from China.

He'd been trying to reach Watchman Nee. Couldn't see him. Watchman Nee has lived in a room 11 feet long.

Do you know how long that is? 11 feet long from the end of the platform there to about there, a little less than that, about there. A room 11 feet long and 4 feet wide for 20 years. Hmm? And you're going to build another apartment on the house, huh? Excuse me.

11 feet long and 4 feet wide. Been brainwashed. One of God's choicest saints in the world.

Doesn't ride in a Cadillac, doesn't have any money, doesn't go to a smorgasbord, doesn't go to any banquets, in case you don't know. Could you last it out? Could I last it out? Do you think you have that spiritual fortitude to stick in a hole like that and not break down? You know, he's a puzzle that they've brainwashed him 10,000 times and he doesn't crack. Why doesn't he? Well, some people would say he isn't filled with the spirit, he doesn't speak in tongues, he hasn't this, he hasn't the other.

But I know a lot of folk who have all the other stuff that will crack within 12 hours. They crack within 12 hours. You know, we'd better look out.

They're boasting testimony. Maybe we're getting them into trouble in this country. If the economy collapses, we might be in bread lines.

I wonder if we'll have what it takes to stand there. Hmm? I wonder if we'll be as happy there as we are around the breakfast there. Who do you think we sat with at the breakfast? Oh, it was worth it.

It was a long way to Houston, but you know, it costs so much in the plane and so much for the tea. But it's worth it we sat with John and Mary Jones, you know, 55 oil wells and a home in California and something else, and they have a yacht and they have something else. Isn't it amazing every time you rub off something, when you go and get some vicarious blessing and feel so superior when you come home.

And they gave us their car, and they're going to write to us at Christmas. Now, don't put any stars on your crown. You see, the Lord is concerned to get us right down to reality, and he can't get many people there these days.

Oh no, sir. Oh no, no, no. It's rather amazing.

I thought of it, I don't know, I think it was in the night. Isn't it strange that lots of these kids, and I think that the protests are very valid. I don't like the way they protest, but what they're protesting about is valid in many areas.

But isn't it amazing that many of these kids, many of them brought up in affluence. When we were at Teen Challenge, we used to meet kids there who'd ridden around in Jaguar XK120s and Ferraris and hot-bellied automobiles and fooled around with the prettiest girls in the country and had enough, more money to spend than I earn in a week, wage nearly. You know, when I talked with those kids, I found very many of them so empty.

And isn't it strange that these kids, and we've given them everything. You know, the greatest disease in America today is boredom, bored to death. Isn't it strange these kids are going to meditation, and because we've lost the glory of God, we're trying to soup everything up more and more, more fervor, more energy, more the, you know, get girls on, have a Holy Ghost show on TV or something.

Just, we're trying to win the world, that's the only way. There's nothing more supernatural about girls wiggling and boys clapping their hands on a so-called godly TV show than a fly sticking to the ceiling. The kids are turning from all the materialism.

They're sick to death of it all, and they're meditating, and they're not turning to God, they're turning to gurus. A lot of the rich kids say, oh it's contemplation, it's quiet, I want to get in the forest and be quiet. We have a boy studying in New York right now, well he's teaching at the university there, and he and his wife, they, whenever they get a chance, they pack, put a pack on their backs, and away they go.

Get on a bus and glide in the country, and, and live under the trees, they have sleeping bags, and say it's lovely to get by a splashing stream, and hear the birds sing, and get away from, you know, you know, well sure it is. Recently, sixty percent of the population of the famous city voted to get back into the country if they could. You see, we've been working everything out, we, we've been so desirous to get the crowd on any level by anything.

As I said the other day, you never have to advertise a fire. Get the fire of the Holy Ghost, you couldn't have an empty church if you tried. Now, if you run it on specials, converted cowboys, or broken down TV stars, and, you know, a fellow was once a great ball player, but he got rheumatism, so he got saved and started being an evangelist.

And so, if you run a church like that, well, you're going to have severe competition every time you open the newspaper. Oh, look what they've got across the river there at such and such a church. Boy, I didn't know he was around.

You know, that fellow like me, Shin, Shin, what a great man he is. Gee, just to show you how full of God and power he is. What do you think of men coming out of the upper room and doing a silly, stupid thing like that, eh? Well, a lot of you are laughing at yourselves.

You went and heard them and you, you, you ticked up a big love offering for them. Nearly everywhere I go, I, we, we were in a church the other week, and we got, and it was a Southern Baptist church, we got four to five hundred people every night. And you know, the normal course is, the preacher usually says, Reg, you know, we've had the biggest crowd we've ever had, but I'm sorry, this is the smallest love offering I've had in five years.

Why? Because when I preach, I hurt people. I won't lie, I won't comfort them, I'm not trying to be popular, don't care if anybody likes me or not. The Lord never told me to be liked.

Jesus was one of the most hated men that ever lived, as well as one of the most loved men. I said in a meeting in Dallas, at Garland, wasn't it? Garland, where we were preaching on John 7 out of interest. Son of man, the son of God, my father, my father, my father, my father, again establishing what he said in that first verse, equality and eternity.

I am the true man and my father is the husbandman. All right, notice what it said, my father is the husbandman. Now, what's the secret of abounding in the Christian life? Well, it's in this verse, that's all.

The secret of abounding is abiding. Abide in him and you'll abound. Well, uh, what's the secret of communion? If we abide, we'll abound.

If we have union, we'll have communion. Now, this doesn't sound right, does it? Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, taketh away. Right.

Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it. Purgeth what? The branch that bears the fruit. Oh, I thought once I started bearing the fruit of the Spirit, the Lord would kind of leave me alone and not touch it.

Oh no, because you're bearing fruit, he puts the scissors in here and he puts the knife in there and he starts cutting. Oh, oh, I thought kind of, you know, kind of, you just went from here and everything, I'm going to kind of escalate it. And I said to the angel, well, take me up a bit higher today, you know, I'm pressing on the upward way.

I used to be, but let's take the escalator. I want to go a bit easier. And the Lord said, just a minute, just a minute, they, uh, I need to do a bit of pruning here.

My father is the, and the branch that bears the fruit gets the knife. Now, if, if, uh, if your life is fruit bearing, then this is a sign that God is going to come and bring that knife into your life. You see, as I said a few minutes ago, Peter went to the upper room.

Sure he did. And he got filled with the Holy Ghost. Right.

And that cleansed his heart, but it didn't correct his head. Because a bit further down the road, the Lord says to him, now Peter, come and look at me. He says, not so.

Not so, I'm not touching anything unto you. Oh, you're not. Oh, I see.

You see, I think a lot of people have got terribly upset. And, and, and it's part of the evangelist's fault too, and the preacher's. Because we kind of suggest that all you have to do is just get filled with God, and here I'm, it's as easy as that.

Nonsense. If I were to say to you now, thinking of it logically, I know your answer. If I had a glass of water here, filled right to the very brim, and I held up that glass of water, and I said, look, there's a glass of water, and it's filled right to the very brim, isn't it? Yeah.

Now, can I fill that glass of water again? Can I fill it without emptying it? And logically you'll say, no. Well, you can. I can fill that glass of water, and fill it right to the very brim, and I can still fill it without emptying it.

Do you know what I'd do? I'd drop just one drop of dye in it, and what else? It was water. Now you'd say, I say, what does it fill with? You say, fill with red water. Put it this way.

Supposing you pushed everything out of this room with a Now I say, can you fill this room with anything else, without taking the sand out? And you say, no. It looks on the surface, logically, you can only fill a thing once, at one time, with one thing. Now you can fill this room with about six or seven different things all at once.

You see, we suggest you come and get through with the Holy Ghost. That's the answer. Oh, no, no, no.

Oh, there's growth in grace, there's tribulations and distresses, there are processes. You have a baby, and other things being equal, you hope it's a normal baby, lovely little thing there, sparkling and shining and laughing, and got no hair and no teeth, and then you say it's like its father. I think that's true.

But apart from that, as a baby, it's a perfect baby, isn't it? It's a perfect baby, sure. It's a lovely little laughing thing, playing with its toes, got bright little eyes, and it smiles, and it coos, and it does. It's a perfect baby.

You may find that child at seven a perfect little boy, you may find him at fifteen a perfect athlete, and he goes on in degrees of perfection. Now, by the same token, how can you fill what's full? Well, first of all, you can be filled with the Holy Ghost. Nearly every preacher cites Peter as being the best example.

I don't think Peter is the best example at all. Sure, Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost. But I think the early church set all its ambition on a young man that died maybe before he was twenty years of age, a young fellow by the name of Stephen.

What was he filled with? He was filled with the Holy Ghost. He was filled with power. He was filled with wisdom.

He was filled with grace, so that when they saw him, they could say nothing against him. His life was filled, filled, filled. Now I say you can fill this room six, seven different ways all at once, can't you? Sure.

We could fill it with people, pack it with people, right, number one. Number two, it must be full of air, otherwise we couldn't breathe. Number three, it's full of light, otherwise we couldn't see.

Number four, the people begin to sing and shout and pray, so it's filled with noise. Number four, some lady might walk through with a very pungent perfume on and everybody says, oh that's good, isn't that lovely? And the agent lady says yes, and you say that's really lovely. Now it's full of people, it's full of noise, it's full of light, it could be full of heat, and it could be full of perfume, and maybe you find six other different ways.

It can be filled all at once. Now you notice how many times, if you haven't done this, take a, um, take a concordance or something and notice how many times the apostle prays for people who are filled to be filled. They're filled with the but that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will.

Now there are some of you here this morning, I don't question, filled with the Holy Ghost, but you're wondering which way to go, right or left or center or back or forward, and somebody says go up, somebody says go down, somebody says go right, somebody goes left, and you say oh boy what am I going to do, these are all smart people, forget them all, and just get along with him that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will. Now you have a part of the word again, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, but what do you get in the fifth chapter? You have Ananias and Sapphira. Well I can't prove they were in the upper room, but on the other hand you can't disprove that they were either, so it's a 50-50 choice.

Maybe they were in the upper room, maybe the Holy Ghost came, maybe they'd done miracles, I don't know, but now the apostle says what? He says why has Satan filled our heart? Well that's rather starving isn't it? I've seen men who are blazed for God, been marvellous revivalists and teachers, backslide, become undone and become some of the loathsome, most loathsome men you could ever find. Now we didn't get far, did we, in the 15th of John? Anyhow here's the secret, if you're going to look back, can I just say this, supposing this were a tap here, and I bring a glass, I take my glass and I turn the tap on, there's a reservoir there with billions of gallons of water, and if I stay here until I die holding that, I won't exhaust that supply. Well that supply is typical of the Spirit of God, inexhaustible.

Here is my little vessel, my heart, I come and ask him to cleanse it, and then I put myself in the line of God's blessing, to be filled with the Spirit of God. Now here is the flow, out of out of him shall flow, it's not out of me shall flow rivers of living water, it's out of him when he comes and indwells, because if I get out of God's will, boy I can dry up like that. So it can't be out of me, it's out of him indwelling me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water, because he's indwelling me.

Now I put myself in the place of obedience, and I ask God to fill, and God fills. Here comes the inflow, well if you get an inflow and it goes over the top, you're going to get what? You're going to get an overflow, and if you get an overflow, you're going to get an outflow. Now look here's a lovely thing about it, you try it, you take a cup or a vessel and put it under a tap, turn the water on, and once that vessel is filled and there's an overflow, you don't see the vessel, all you see is the overflow.

And you know if you and I are really filled with God, you're not stutting around saying, you know I got filled, I used to be a Presbyterian or something, but now I'm filled with the Holy Ghost. I mean you know, you haven't seen anything like me around for years have you? And they say no, and we hope we don't again. You see we try to put something over as though I am something, I am something.

No no no, you stay under the inflow. Other words, you abide, you'll abound. If there's an inflow, there's an overflow, there's an outflow.

If there's an inflow, you won't want to be seen at all, because there isn't one gift or ministry of the Spirit that God will give to you to exalt you. You see right now, God isn't even exalting His Church. Jesus came, the prophets came and exalted the Father, the Son came and exalted the Father, the Holy Spirit came and He exalted the Son, the Church comes to exalt the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

But God isn't exalting His Church now. You can sing all you like about a mansion over the hilltop and music coming in from impeccable angels from world without end, but you know you and I have got just one very very serious obstruction before we make it, and that's the judgment seat of Christ for every sinner and for every believer. Now that's going to be tough.

To quote Tozer as I finish, Tozer used to say, Brother Ravner, I don't think many men will stand tall at the judgment seat. You see God has given us a whole book to explore, and most of us haven't got out of Acts or we haven't got out of Ephesians, so we stick in about one book. Lowry, 20 odd years ago, spoke about the possibilities of grace.

Nobody ever measured them. Now here we are in waters, where are we? Some of us just got the soles of our feet wet. I heard Campbell Morgan, after he'd written 50 books on the Bible, say he didn't know much about it.

Now a fellow comes from Bible school with a trumpet under one arm and a diploma under the other. He's got nothing to learn, just trying to find a church worthy of him. But the man who knows the most knows the least.

I confess I don't feel I know my ABC spiritually. When I read some of the profound works, when I find what some of these men and women of God have done, when I find out I've shied off, I say as I began, you this morning are as spiritual as you want to be. You've got the prop in your own hand.

Your Bible will never fly into your hand any more than the newspaper. If you want the newspaper, you pick it up. If you want the Bible, you forget it and pick this up.

If you want to watch TV, it won't turn itself on. You'll have to do it. If you want to waste your time, you'll have to do it.

You're a responsible person, you're an entity. So let's keep this in mind. Growth in grace is not according to a number of years.

If you obey God and stay in this school six months, you could be 50 years old by the time you leave. And you could stay here six years and only be five months old. So it's up to you.

Again, it's whatsoever he said unto you, do it. Abide. Abide.

And if you abide, you'll abide. Three promises. Verse two, we'll bear fruit.

Verse eight, not only a promise of fruit. Verse eight, plenty of fruit. And verse, twice eight, 16.

Verse 16, permanence in fruit bearing, your fruit shall remain. Thank you.

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