

Prayer Matthew 6

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and having a secret prayer life, and encourages listeners to come to Jesus and abide in Him.

Duration: 1:02:53

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 24:27, John 1:1, John 20:31, Romans 15:4, Jude 1:3, Revelation 1:8

Topics: "Prayer Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, as mentioned in the book of Matthew, chapter six. He addresses the misconception that the Old Testament is not relevant today, which has caused upset among some people. The preacher highlights the significance of recognizing our spiritual poverty and need for God, even if we may have material wealth or social status. He references the book of Revelation to illustrate how a church that appeared rich and successful in the world's eyes was actually lacking spiritually.

Transcript

There is still an altar, from which a life cold can be taken to touch our lips, to touch us and make us clean where we're unclean, pure where we're impure, strong where we're weak, and weakness where we're too strong. We thank you for the finished work of Jesus Christ, that he, not a theology, not even scripture, but he has made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. But I don't wonder the poet George Matheson, that blind poet, said, O love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee.

I give thee back the life I owe. We bless you for the privilege of having an exchanged life. Paul remembered the time when he exchanged his life, a moment when he was crucified with Christ, and then from that moment on he said, It's not I, but Christ that liveth in me.

And he proved it. Every move of his life proved that he had an indwelling Christ. He had a spirit that could not be broken, a faith that could not be shaken, a love that would not fade away, that he could embrace whatever then shunned.

He has a strange philosophy. He says that he takes the very things that people run from. He gloried in tribulation, in necessities and reproaches.

We know a man has gone very far, very deep into God when he can say that. Not saying it to his fellow men, but say it to the eternal God. He's challenging you to lay upon him crosses that nobody else wanted to carry.

Call him to ascend heights that other people are not ascended. Call him to loneliness that other people could not endure. How we bless you for this being made real tonight.

As we think of thousands in concentration camps in Russia and elsewhere that haven't been to a meeting house for years. If they'd lived on meetings like so many people do, they'd have died ages ago. But we thank you that they've learned to feed on Jesus Christ.

They can say, He is my prophet, priest, and king who did for me salvation bring, and while I breath, I mean to sing Christ for me. I guess, Lord, they've learned with Isaac Watts to say when, sing and believe and act and practice, when mountain walls confront thy way, why sit and weep, arise and say, I can, I may, I must, I will the purpose of my God fulfill. We do not understand your ways, they're beyond our understanding.

We have every creature comfort, and yet somehow there's not much divine energy, spiritual energy. We come in the words of the psalmist tonight, Lord, and say, open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of thy law. May we leave this meeting tonight as it were a mile further up the road spiritually than when we came in.

Maybe some need to leave behind in this meeting grave clothes and rise in resurrection life and ascend into the heights Your word asks a question. If ye be risen with Christ, we have celebrated your resurrection, Lord Jesus, the time when you brought the bondage of death and the powers of, brought the gates of hell and had dominion over sin, that we might follow in your train. Don't let us be a disappointment to you.

Quicken us according to your word tonight. Save the travel of your soul in us. In Jesus name.

Look at the good book. The gospel is recorded by Matthew, sorry. Sorry, chapter, I didn't give you the chapter.

Chapter six. The good book tells us to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Now we can contend without being contentious.

On the phone today and in conversation with other people in the last two or three days, some people have been a bit upset about something that was said in a meeting. Unfortunately, it's something that's very prevalent now through a certain school in the Chicago area. I understand a well-known preacher in this town said the same thing some months ago.

And it is that the Old Testament is not relevant to today. I was brought up properly, of course. And one of the things we used to be taught as children in England was this, about the Testaments.

The new is in the old concealed and the old is by the new revealed. There is no rivalry between the Old and New Testaments. We cannot dispose of the Old Testament.

Last week twice I preached, or at least attempted to preach, on one of the most fascinating stories in the Resurrection Catalogue and that was the Emmaus journey. I just love that story. And if you remember that Jesus, on that journey, he overtook those two disciples.

They were confused, they were defeated, they were despised, they were despondent, they were dejected. Everything with a D, they were. And Jesus crept up behind them and discovered they were in that sad state.

What did he do? Well, the first thing he did was open their eyes. The next thing he did was open their understanding. Then he opened the Word of God.

Then he opened their mouths because they ran back to the city jubilant. When they started on the journey they had a gravestone on each foot and a tombstone round their necks. They were the most despised, dejected, disappointed, discredited, everything else of any men on earth.

And Jesus overtook them. That was the greatest Bible school in history. It was seven and a half furlongs from the city of Jerusalem to where they were going to Emmaus.

And that's roughly, it's less than eight miles. Now, I wasn't rich in my, I'm not rich now. When I was a young man I couldn't do what John Wesley did, I didn't have a horse.

I walked the length of England, I walked the breadth of England. 350 miles long, 200 miles wide. With a team of young men.

We hadn't enough money to buy ice cream. We slept over the hedges. We knocked at the door of churches.

We slept in our sleeping bags for years. Not without getting up, but I mean, you know, for years. Some nights I felt I could go to sleep for years, I'll tell you.

One guy said one day, he's very humorous, he said, Well, I've done what Jesus did today. I said, What? What do you mean? I didn't see you doing anything. Walking on the water.

I didn't see you. He said, Wait till I take my boots off. You know, he got blisters about that size all over his feet.

He said, I've been walking on the water all day. We used to reckon the first two hours on the road we could walk eight miles. We lost a bit of speed after that.

So this immense journey was less than two hours. And Jesus came. I've often wondered why he didn't lift the veil and show them into eternity.

Why did he preach history instead of prophecy? They knew history. They most likely could recite many of the books of the Old Testament. But he never touched history.

He went, I mean, he never touched prophecy. He dealt with history. And he told them everything from Moses through the major and minor prophets.

Everything in the scriptures that spoke of Jesus. Now, if the New Testament isn't relevant, why did he do that? If the Old Testament isn't relevant, why did he do that? I'm sure they'd have been more excited to have gone back to the upper room which they went to afterwards for supper and say, you know, Jesus has lifted the veil to us. We've been seeing into eternity.

We saw a door open in heaven. Remember, John saw that on the Isle of Patmos. If I could push that door in heaven open just an inch and I'd let you see through it, you'd never backslide again.

You'd never go cold in your devotion. You'd never get discouraged. If you could just get a preview of sitting down with all the saints of all the ages, wouldn't that be wonderful? You don't seem very thrilled about it.

What did somebody say? To join above with the saints we love, that will be glory, glory. But to sit below with the saints we know, well, that's another story. Isn't it true some saints you don't really like? Come on, be honest about it.

I mean, you can tell me after you don't like me. I won't be discouraged. You know, I don't even like myself, so don't worry.

But they went down the Emmaus Road and he took the veil away. They must have been the most thrilling Bible studies that were ever held in the history of the world. But he went back and showed them right from Moses, right through the major and minor prophets up to that very moment, everything concerning himself.

I don't care what your preacher says. Let me tell you the truth. I'm not saying he doesn't.

You know, this good book is only about one thing, one person actually, and that's Jesus Christ. He is the first and the last, the Alpha, the Omega, the center, the conference, the life and the life of the Church of Jesus Christ. As I said last week, I see John and he sees Jesus.

This is a man that knew Jesus more intimately than any man had ever lived. He laid his head on the bosom of Jesus, heard that eternal heartbeat. And there he sees Jesus in his resurrection glory.

He fell at his feet as dead. As somebody said, you're better dead at the feet of Jesus than alive anywhere else anyhow. But he was stunned with the marvelous majesty of Jesus Christ.

Three chapters further on in Revelation, he's standing at the door knocking and the church doesn't even recognize him. I make a guess that Jesus hasn't been in some of your churches in the last 12 months. He's still at the door.

He wouldn't be comfortable if he came in. We think we're orthodox when we're dead. The church has to move back into the resurrection life of Jesus Christ or this generation is going to go to hell quicker than any generation has ever lived.

We've tried everything from child evangelism to campus crusades. Twenty years ago, campus crusades were going to sweep the country. A friend of mine gave what? She told us one day after a break that she'd given a quarter of a million dollars to them.

I'm not throwing stones. I'm saying they haven't done it. Full gospel businessmen are going to do it.

They haven't done it. We keep shuffling our theological cards. And what we knew is a new revelation of God.

These men dragging their feet on their mares' throats, suddenly they get delivered and they go back with wings on their feet instead of weights. I was reading 1 Corinthians 10 verse 11 today. Remember? I'll just quote it quickly here.

1 Corinthians 10. The chapter is all about the children of Israel. It's a kind of a condensed history.

Then verse 11 says, Now all these things which happened unto them were in samples and they are written for our admonition or our profit upon whom the ends of the world are come. The whole history, what do you call the first five books of the Bible? Do you know the name? Pentateuch. If you were able to read Hebrew, the book of Psalms is in five books.

So the first five books of the Bible. What is the book of Psalms? It's a rehashing of the children of Israel's journey from Egypt unto the place where they got deliverance. Restating it all.

We need to know that we upon whom the ends of the world are come. And it's all given for that very reason it says here. Come on.

If the Old Testament isn't relevant to today, why did God Almighty give us the epistle to the Hebrews? It's a recounting of every step of the children of Israel. They came out of Egypt. We're supposed to come out of the world.

They got delivered from the bondage of Pharaoh. We're supposed to get delivered from the bondage of the devil. They hesitated to go into the promised land.

The trouble with the church tonight, you're going to find all the answers tonight. The trouble with the church is she has halted somewhere between Easter and the upper room. Somewhere between Easter and the upper room, the church has camped.

Now let me tell you what I want to tell you. Matthew chapter 6. It's about prayer. A young lady thrilled my heart last week.

Going out, she told me that a friend of hers had told her to come and see me. So she came for a few minutes. She said, Mr. Ramiel, three months ago when I came to this meeting, I did not know a thing about prayer.

In three months, she said, my life has just sought. I get so much into eternity, into the heavenly places sometimes. She says, every time I get really into the presence of God, I feel pressure on my chest and on my back.

I said, well, don't ask him to take it away. Maybe that's his way to get his grip on you. She said, I've suddenly wakened up to the wonder of a prayer life.

I don't know how old she was. I wouldn't dare guess her age anyhow. Let me guess, say she was 20.

I'm glad she found it then and not when she's 80. You've heard me say before, and I'll say it again, I never judge a man by his eloquence. I judge him by his Bible knowledge.

No man, your pastor or anybody else, is greater than his prayer life. He may be the head of your religious corporation. He may be the head of your denomination.

He may be the head of your Bible. No man is greater than his prayer life. One of the great ecstasies of my life was to pray, just the two of us, with Dr. Tozer.

At times I was almost afraid to open my eyes, lest there was a deity there or an angel or somebody. It wasn't something he affected. You knew that when he prayed, he glided right out from where he was into the presence of the eternal God.

Just like you see when those little air jets take off like that. Why did he pray like that? Because he lived like that. Will you understand if you don't think it out? Prayer is not something we do.

Prayer is something we are. Remember the word of Jesus? The first call he made was, come unto me. The second call he made was, follow me.

The third call he made was, abide with me. Come to me and I will make you. With some effort and a bit of skill, some Bible school might turn you out as a preacher.

Schools can make preachers after their own brand. But only God can make prophets. Only God can make messengers.

Matthew chapter 6, verse 1 says, in the King James Version of course, Take ye that ye do not your arms before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Verse 3, but when you do your arms, verse 4, that thine arms may be in secret. The marginal reference for arms there is righteousness.

Don't strut your righteousness. I'll tell you one thing. Nobody ever struts in prayer.

Prayer is a language of the poor. The self-sufficient don't need to pray. The self-satisfied don't want to pray.

The self-righteous cannot pray. Don't blame the devil for obstructions in your prayer life if you're sabotaging your own prayer life. Prayer is the most demanding thing.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands, that's in his relationship with the world. And a pure heart, that's his relationship to God. Verse 6 says, but when thou prayest, enter into thy closet.

When thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which is in secret shall reward thee openly. Now if you read the version in Luke 11, that obviously Luke gives, he begins by saying this, that some disciples came to Jesus and said, Lord, teach us to pray. I'm going to skip over that and say this.

I get men ask me, can I come and spend two or three days with you? No, no, no, no. I don't have the time. I want you to teach me to pray.

Prayer is not taught, it's caught. It's something that you latch onto in the secret place, and once you get that union, you're not going to let hell or earth or anybody separate you from it. How many times a psalmist and others say, I cried unto the Lord.

They didn't give a marvellous oration. There's an old poem, part of it says this, What am I? An infant crying in the night. An infant crying for a light with no language but a cry.

Those maternal instincts of women are marvellous. A baby comes in the home, how wonderful, till two o'clock in the morning, forget it. Mary, where were you? He was crying.

He was? What's wrong with him? Oh, his diaper needed changing. Well, good night. Mary, you were up an hour ago.

Is he crying again? Need his diaper changed? No, he was frightened. How do you know? Well, he was in the dark when I put the light on, he stopped crying. A bit later, Mary, what's wrong with him? We got a bad model here.

He cries because he's uncomfortable, he cries because he's in the dark. What was this? He needed feeding. Wouldn't it be marvellous if a two week old baby said, Ma'am, I'm hungry.

She wouldn't run to the baby, she'd run out of the house as fast as she could. She'd think he was some doll that they put a battery in or something. What am I? An infant crying in the night.

An infant crying for a light. It doesn't say he wants a light, it doesn't say he wants feeding, it doesn't say I need my diaper changed. But the mother knows with a maternal instinct the cry of the child in pain, the cry of the child in hunger, the cry of the child when it's afraid.

David says, I cried unto the Lord. What did he cry? Bow down thine ear and hear me, I'm poor and needy. How can you be poor and needy? You live in a mansion.

How can you be poor and needy? You have a standing army. How can you be poor and needy? You own all this territory. You're the idol of the crowd.

You're the top of the list. You hit the top of the charts with the new psalm. He wrote the greatest psalm.

But I'm poor. You will never persuade a spiritual man that he's rich outside of the things of God. Thinking back over that book of Revelation, the third chapter there, where the Lord says to a church, remember the church that exported clothing was advised by God to buy clothes.

I mean the city. The city that exported eyesalve is told to buy eyesalve that she may see. The city that had the greatest bank in the world at that time was told, come on, you buy from me gold.

Everything they boasted in, God said it's rubbish, it's nonsense. Thou sayest I'm rich and increased in goods. Look at our exports.

Look at our bank. Look at the people here through the eyesalve we export. You say we're rich.

Socially we're rich. Materially we're rich. In everything you're rich.

And you don't know. You see, the reason that they didn't recognize Jesus as a son of God like John did was because while they said they could see, you know, God said to them, you're blind. They said we're rich.

He said you're poor. They said we wear the best clothing in the world. He said you're naked.

He contradicted every claim that they made. I'm wondering if, think of it, when you go home. I'm wondering if Jesus Christ isn't standing at the door of some of our modern charismatic and Pentecostal churches.

We're so rich. We're so self-satisfied. We've got so much stuff.

God Almighty says, well, stew in it. Hide in it if you want. What is the outworking of it? Nothing.

One of the great men in World War II was Montgomery, Field Marshal Montgomery. You may remember he beat Rommel in the deserts of Africa. His grandfather was a bishop in the Church of Ireland.

And he wrote a hymn on prayer. Part of the hymn says, All earthly things with earth will fade away. But prayer grasps eternity.

Do you ever pray and feel that you've got hold of the horns of the altar? Bow down thine ear and hear me. I'm poor and needy. This poor man cried.

He repeats, repeats, repeats. You see, nobody is wealthy in the presence of the living God. Neither materially nor spiritually.

Oh, if only I was weak. Well, if you're waiting to be weak, forget it. Strong, I mean, forget it.

He uses weak things. He uses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. He takes the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are, that no flesh shall draw in his presence.

Isn't it about time the church wakened up to realize, with all the organizing she's done, that God Almighty doesn't look at organizing. He only looks at agonizing. It doesn't matter what the esteem of the world is, or the congregation is, in the sight of thy denomination.

God doesn't look that way. When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, verse 6. And when thou hast shut the door, isn't that nice, to shut the door? It's an interesting study to read about doors being shut. Remember when the virgins went in, the door was shut.

Notice they were not harlots. They were virgins. You go to some churches, oh, everybody in the church is going up there to be part of the bride.

Don't believe it for a minute, that's not true. You may make it to the wedding, but there's only one bride. I'm not going to get sidetracked there, I'd like to, but I won't.

But they hammered on the door, the Lord opened to us. And what did he say? He said, I know you not. Matthew 7, a bunch of people, oh, we're the greatest revival team in the world.

We've just cast out demons, healed the sick, raised the dead, done every miracle. Devils are afraid of us, men are afraid of us, everybody's afraid. We have such power.

And what did the Lord say? He said, depart from me, I never knew you. Notice what he said, he didn't say, I don't know your ministry. He knew their ministry, but they were using his name to build up their ministry, like so many TV boys are.

And when you get to the government seat, some little old washerwoman that lives scrubbing clothes somewhere in the hills of, where? Anywhere. In the States, she's going to be up at the front. Some of these big TV lords and dukes of the kingdom of God, I've never ragged to cover them.

He takes the weak things, he takes the things that are not. In that day, the last shall be first and the first shall be last. You may not like it, but that's God's way.

You know, you can pray, but you can't give God advice. I gave him it for years and he shut me up. So I don't try it anymore.

When our prayers close the door and close your ears, close your thinking, and pray to thy father, which is in secret, and he shall reward thee openly. Verse 9, let's jump to it. After this manner, therefore pray ye, Our Father.

Now that was new. I don't remember God, Abraham ever called God Father or David, did they? Once again, not my father, but Our Father. You know, when you read this wonderful reading through, there's not a pronoun in the first person singular in the whole prayer.

Look at verse 12, Forgive us our, there you are, not me and my, forgive us our debts. Verse 13, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. You know, this wonderful preaching here, not mine, I mean in the book here, when you come to really summarize the whole thing, it abolishes all our cares and all our fears.

The reason we have fears and cares is we have never observed the truth of this marvelous prayer. God said, pardon me, Jesus said, I cannot call the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, before whom cherubim bow down, looking on his blinding glory through their wings to filter his brilliance, covering their feet because they're embarrassed that he would see all their faults. He says, I can call the one who made the heavens and the earth.

The high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, I can call him my father. Why are we such poverty in our Christian living? Because there's such a small concept of God, that's why. He's my father.

Dear old principal, at the little school I went to in England, loved an old Methodist hymn, God is the refuge of his saints when storms of sharp distress invade. Ere we can offer our complaint, behold him present with his aid. Let mountains from their seats be hurled down to the deeps and buried there.

Convulsions shake the solid earth. Our faith shall never yield to fear. My mother used to tell us when we were children, if you worry, you do not trust.

If you trust, you do not worry. Why should I have such repose in a world that's falling apart for the simple reason that God is working everything after the counsel of his own will? Beyond my understanding, it's beyond my reasoning, it doesn't have to act as I've said too often, God does not offer me or you, or all, you or me, any explanation. Not a single explanation is due to me from God.

I rest in his faithfulness, our father which art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. He doesn't advise them to pray for saints, not even to Abraham, though later you remember some of them said we have Abraham to our father.

But he says the high and lofty one who inherited eternity is your father, who is in heaven. And the first part of this petition, notice, is not to the one who's praying, it's for God, thy kingdom come. You know, some people won't touch the book of Matthews to say it's written to the Jews.

It's the folk that usually say, of course, and Mark you, when you hear somebody say the Old Testament isn't for today, do you know what? He's got every liberal preacher in America behind him. He says the Old Testament isn't for today. He's got every Jehovah's Witness behind him.

They say that the teaching doesn't start till it comes to Matthew, and as you know, they call all their places where they gather kingdom halls. I'm afraid they won't be anywhere near the kingdom when it comes about. My first and foremost interest is not in myself.

The only thing I can petition in this wonderful prayer is give me this day my, give us, again it's collective, our daily bread. The first thing I have to have a total focus is that my sole desire for living, my only reason for living, is to see the kingdom of God come and set all the rotten systems in the world. Then we'll know peace till the Prince of Peace comes.

These disciples, oh I can't tell you how they said it. The trouble with Prince, there's no atmosphere in it, is there? There's no emotion in it. I don't think they went on and said, hey, Lord, teach us to pray.

I imagine they said something like this, Lord, Lord, teach us to pray. They said as John taught his disciples, but I don't know a prayer that John prayed or taught. I do know this, it was inadequate, otherwise they'd never ask for more teaching.

There is no record I know of in scripture, correct me afterwards if I'm wrong, I could be. I do not remember a record of Jesus ever praying with his disciples. He prayed for them, but not with them.

I've told you before, when I went to hear Dr. Toth for the first time, to preach in his church for a week, it was awesome. I said to his leading deacon, I can't wait till prayer meeting night to hear Dr. Toth pray. He said, by the way, he doesn't come to prayer meetings.

He said, what? He doesn't come to prayer meetings. Why not? The people got up a petition to the elders, asking him to stay away from prayer meetings. Because they said when they went to a prayer meeting there would be silence.

Nobody dare pray until he prayed. And after he prayed, nobody dare pray because he had prayed. He got so far into eternity when he prayed.

Don't you think it was like that with the Lord Jesus Christ? Lord, teach us, give us that contact with the throne. Help us to come with confidence like helpless children and say, God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, the source of all life and joy and power and authority, teach us to pray. Come to these dumb lips.

Come to these stormy hearts. Come to these blind eyes. Teach us.

Take us by the hand like a mother takes a child. If I could have had one experience in the life of Jesus, it would be when he prayed. I prefer that to seeing him raise the dead, or see him walking on the water, or see him astounding the Pharisees and Sadducees.

I would have liked supremely and only to hear Jesus pray. It must have been awesome. It might have been dreadful even.

Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Verse 14, If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you forgive not men that... You can't pray with a grudge in your heart.

If you have a grudge in your heart, you may as well forget all about it. You sabotage your prayer before you open your lips. Prayer is the simplest form of speech, Montgomery said, that infant lips can try.

Prayer, the sublimest strains that reach the majesty on high. O thou by whom we come to God, the life, the truth, the way, the path of prayer thyself hath taught. Lord, teach us how to pray.

But you can't do it with one sitting. I've prayed with some of the greatest preachers in the world, and I found out their poverty, their need. I've prayed with some simple coal miners in Wales, and boy, they carried me to eternity in less than five minutes.

It's not something academic. It's not something even just because we know the Word of God. It's not a competition in words, or as I say sometimes, we try to paint stained glass windows with words, but we don't impress God.

In the first part of this wonderful reading, remember, he emphasizes arms. In verse 16, he says, Moreover, when ye fast, you know what we've done? We've switched some words. Notice it says, when ye fast, not if ye fast.

You go down to John's epistle, the first epistle in chapter 3, and it says there, if we sin, that we put the when to when we sin. Sin is not normal to the life. People say, well, sin is normal.

Well, if sinning is normal, then Adam was not normal, because he didn't sin. Then how many times did he sin before he got thrown out of the garden? A hundred thousand? Once. Out.

Again, Jesus found a dirty woman. What did he say to her? Go sin less? No, go and sin no more. A man called me the other way, from Lindale.

Went to a certain church there, I won't mention it. It does have a spire, but anyhow. He said, Mr. Rainer, I'm glad at the end of the day to go to the Lord and tell him all my sins.

I said, you are. Aren't you? I said, no. If all you do is sin and repent every day, you may as well be a Catholic or be a Mohammedan.

Christianity is not a sinning religion, it's a victorious religion. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth. 1 John 3 says, 1 John 3. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth.

It's in the present continuous sense they tell her in the Greek. It means this, that once you plunge into the blood of Christ, as long as you stay there by obedience, you'll be kept pure. It's only when you step out of that.

You can't walk in the light and walk in darkness at the same time. It's like this nonsense of being carnal Christians. They're not carnal.

If you're carnal, you're dead. Forget your preacher. Listen to what Romans say.

To be carnally minded is death. There are no degrees in death. You can't get dead and dead and dead and deader.

Though some churches I've been, I thought every night I went it got deader and deader and deader. There are degrees of life. A little baby in its mother's arms, and you see a big athlete, oh, he's got a medal, he went to the Olympics.

Different degrees of life. Different degrees of strength. No degrees in death.

Isn't it false that Ephesians says, You hath he quickened who were lame? Doesn't it say that? You hath he quickened who were sick? Don't look so intelligent. Come on. What did it say? You hath he quickened who

were? Dead.

You see, we preach to people and we shoot over their heads sometimes because we preach as though we're saying everybody here is secretly an adulterer, secretly stealing money from his boss. He's a liar. He's this, he's that and the other.

The first argument God has with a man is not that he's bad. There are degrees of badness. I don't believe the first argument God has with any man on earth is that he's bad.

His first argument is he's dead. And a man can't move when he's dead. God has to make the first move to him.

He can't talk when he's dead. He can't move when he's dead. You and I were totally helpless.

God made the first move toward us. We used to sing a hymn. We haven't sung it in a long time.

Marvellous Grace of Our Loving God. Have you ever used to sing that? No, you don't remember. You're tired, dear.

Marvellous Grace of Our Loving God. Grace that exceeds our guilt and our sin. Oh, my, that's wonderful.

When ye fast, not if ye fast, when ye fast. Let me tell you the decline. The decline in the spiritual life.

Do you know when it begins? When you've been on a mountaintop experience obeying God, the first step down is you cease to fast. And the second step is you cease to pray. And the third is we cease to give alms in the way that God has called us to do it.

Except that we hang on to tithing. Because some churches, you know, preach as though if you die and you didn't pay last week's tithe, Peter will hold you up at the gates for it anyhow. So you better pay up your tithing.

Oh, they preach it's not by works. But, boy, don't they emphasise works in your church? Tithing, tithing, tithing, tithing. There's no tithing in the New Testament.

They gave out of their abundance. The most prosperous group I know in England have no tithing. They give out of their abundance.

They have a good business deal. They don't say we give God 10%. Look, oh, I give God a tenth.

You don't. You don't give him a thing. That's his income tax.

The offering is on top of that. What God is crediting with you in eternity is not the tenth you give. It's what you give over the tenth.

The tenth is his by law. An Old Testament law if you want to keep it. Oh, that didn't go over too well, so let me skip on.

Verse 19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth. Next verse.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. What? Aren't we all going to be the same in heaven? Not on your life. The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day, wrote Cowper in the days of John

Wesley.

The dying thief will go to heaven, but he won't be part of the bride because he hasn't developed the spiritual character. Do you think John Wesley, who for 35 years disciplined his life, lived on the poverty level almost, made a fortune, built churches, built orphanages, printed Bibles, printed hymn books, for 53 years kept his body under control, everything else under control. He's only going to have the same reward as the man that died on the cross, the dying thief.

You say, are we saved by works? No, but we're rewarded by them. We won't all have the same. Do you think I expect the same reward as the Apostle Paul? Dear God, no.

People these days lay distress on what I suffered for the Lord Jesus. I think you'll get some reward for it. I don't believe it's the crux of the matter.

The thing is not suffering for him, the thing is suffering with him. When I go down the street and I see everything as he sees it. I see corruption as he sees it.

I see false religion as he sees it. Do you think Jesus walked down the street smiling when he saw the temple that was once so majestic, the priests had to come out and say, we can't minister for the glory of God. Come on, tell me the last time you went to your big fancy church, or a little church, and you had to stop the service.

The glory of God was so majestic you couldn't breathe hardly. Most of our meetings are as exciting as a Tupperware meeting. I'm not talking about solid excitement.

I'm not talking of miracles for the sake of it. The greatest miracle is the presence of God. When you tiptoe out and you've met him in his glory and majesty and you've seen that with all you have, in your cleanness looks unclean, like even Job said, that he felt he was unclean.

Peter had been with him in stupendous miracles. One day he came there and he said, depart from me, I'm a sinful man of God. I'll tell you, if you live in the blazing light of Isaiah 6, you'll never get proud.

You'll never get self-satisfied. You'll never get contented. Young preachers write to me and say this, that and the other about my books or my ministry or my text.

I say, listen, I feel less confident now than I did 50 years ago. Side 2 Lay out for yourself no treasure on earth. I don't know if you remember a few years ago there was an amazing article in Reader's Digest.

We used to take it then. We don't take it these days. A man was in some bazaar somewhere in the Orient and he saw a man with a, like a tree and he had lots of necklaces hanging on it.

He said, I'd like that green one. How much is that? Well, he said, it's rather unique, I think. Notice how the beads are made.

I think the clasp is gold, various things. And he gave him some money for it. The man brought it home and gave it to his little child in England.

The child was playing with it and it broke. So he grabbed all the pieces together, all the beads, put them in a little sack and he went to the jeweler's shop. And he said, could you thread these beads for me, please? There are, whatever it was, about 75 or 80 of them.

Well, it's rather tedious. I could do it. Come back in a couple of days.

He went back. The man said, where did you get this? I bought it in a bazaar when I was somewhere in the Orient. Somebody suggested it might be real jade.

Yeah. So, it's fairly valuable. No.

Not fairly valuable. Uniquely valuable. Why? Come here.

He took a magnifying glass. He said, you see these beads? There are actually 78 of them. A string of beads.

What are they worth? Oh, a benzo buys them, maybe a quarter of a million dollars, maybe. What? I bought them for three dollars in the Orient. Look here.

Well, it's only a string of beads. No, it's not. What is it? He said it's a love letter from Napoleon to Josephine.

On every bead, there's a different word. He's declaring his love. What a gorgeous woman she is.

She's the only woman in the world like this. And he's pouring out his love. This thing is worth a king's ransom.

I wonder how many people have passed it in that bazaar. I don't want it. My wife's got enough baubles and stuff without taking any more.

She needs to get rid of a lot. That's a goodwill store. So what's the good of taking some more? The one man bought it and discovered.

It reminds you of the man, surely in the Scripture, that went over a field and he stumbled and he found there was a pot of gold. He went and bought the field. Do you know one day God's going to get this blessed book and reveal it to us and say, look, I gave you a love letter.

You didn't read it too often. You didn't have hold it in your embrace. You didn't weep over it much.

You read it as though it were a newspaper. I opened to you the possibilities of grace. Again, listen you young guys.

No man that ever lived ever had the bigger Bible than I have. You can have Finney, Wesley, Booth, the foundation of the great missionary societies, Gilmore of Mongolia, Judson of Burma, Carey of India, CT study in Africa, Cambridge 7 in India, only had this book. Spurgeon said of the Bible, it's a checkbook signed in the blood of Christ.

And God just asked you to go by faith and cash those checks at the counter. Dear Lord, don't you think some of us are going to be a bit embarrassed when we get there? To that awesome judgment seat? Because this God is my Father. Verse 25, I'm going to rush over this now.

But let me say again, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. How do you do that? By obedience. We won't all wear the same garments in eternity.

We won't all have the same crowns in eternity. There are at least five crowns. There's a martyr's crown.

Anybody want one? There's a crown of righteousness. There are five distinct crowns. We won't all be the same.

We'll have distinctions. One star differs from another star in glory. Not just in the sky when you look up and see twinkling stars and planets.

Do you think I expect to have the same eminence in eternity that William Booth had? Or the blessed Apostle Paul? John Wesley said the holiest man that ever lived from the days of the Apostle Paul was a man by the name of John Fletcher. I happen to have a copy of his life at home. The book is called Wesley's Designated Successor.

Wesley said the great Methodist church now is moving over the earth. I could only die comfortably if I could hand the reins of the Methodist church over to John Fletcher. He is the most holy man this world has ever seen since the Apostle Paul.

Well, he didn't miss it by much. John Wesley stood at the grave of that young man. And John Wesley was living about thirty years after he buried the man that he wanted to give the leadership to.

At the grave, someone said Mr. Wesley, don't worry now. You know, life's very short. You're getting old and you'll soon be up there in eternity with him.

He said, friend, John Fletcher will be so near to the throne. This is Wesley, mark it. One of the greatest men and holiest men that lived.

He says he'll be so near to the throne I shall only see the glory of Jesus reflected in the face of that man. I'll be amongst the least of all saints. Wonderful testimony.

Here's a cure for your anxiety. Verse 25 I say unto you take no thought for your life. What you shall eat or what you shall drink nor yet for your body what you shall put on He's not life more than meat and the body than raiment.

Turn over the page or maybe on the same page as above. Verse 31 Take no thought saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or wherewithal shall we be clothed for after all these things do the Gentiles or unbelievers seek. You're heavenly far farther north what you need of all these things.

What things? All the things in the chapter. Read it. It's a fascinating chapter.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God which is the emphasis of the first petition remember in the prayer and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. Wherefore take no thought for the morrow. You say I have to take thought for tomorrow.

I've got a family. I've got a refrigerator. I've got my refrigerator full of food.

I've got a closet full of clothes. I don't need to take anxious any thought but that's not the word. The Greek word says take no anxious thought for tomorrow.

Don't be worried about the visible. Don't be worried about the perishable. You and I are supposed to be living on a stage above this world.

We see it. We're in it. We're not of it.

We're not moved around with its changing tides like other people are. For one reason and that is we have a father in heaven. Your father in heaven north what things ye of need of.

What a blessing he doesn't leave it to me. Again, would we choose the hard places? We pray sometimes asking God to take things out of our lives he put there so he'd prove our characters. He doesn't want to move them out of the way.

He wants me to give me strength to get over those things. He wants me again to be more than conqueror according to Romans 8 37 more than conqueror through him that loved us. Every day I pray.

I think not only of countries I've been in but the different priests that they had there. I remember in Thailand getting up early one gorgeous morning and walking down the road the priest was already going down to the sanctuary and people were coming to the door with little bowls of rice to give to him and he had a man with a sack pouring it all in to give to the temple gods. Went to another country they had flags flying in the breeze and they said those those represent prayers which have blown away there to the invisible God somewhere in the sky.

You know nobody has laid the plan out for salvation and the plan for life for the Christian like the word of God. This is why the devil tries to drive us away from the word. What the devil fears most of all I'm convinced of this is that you and I get really intimate with God.

He's more than a beneficial father that hands me out blessings. He's more than a rescue station when I'm in trouble. I don't use him as a convenience.

He isn't running a convenience store to hand me out everything I need. He's trying to develop my character for eternity. Again one star differs from another star in glory.

Again we look back in eternity many of us and wish we'd just had enough courage to ask God not to give us burdens equal to our strength but give us strength equal to the burdens. I often pray. I don't know how you pray.

I pray in my own simple way but often I pray Lord lay some burden on me that nobody else wants. I don't care what it costs. I don't care about the loneliness.

I don't care about the grief. I don't care about the sleeplessness. I don't care about the criticism.

I want to know that in this life I'm getting the very best from God which is nonsense in the eyes of the world and nonsense in the eyes of the people in your church. I thank God for experiences with men that were not famous. Two that traveled on a team I had that were just princes in prayer.

There were about six of us on that team walking the length. We didn't have five dollars between a lot of us. We lived most meals on a slice of bread and a half of a tomato.

Sometimes a little bit of bully beef. I learned more in the time I spent with those three men than I learned before or since. We'd come in from a street meeting at midnight when we'd maybe been stoned or water thrown on us or something.

We'd just get a cup of cocoa and we'd go a slice of bread maybe half a tomato. Say well boys after midnight let's go pray. And Harry Toff they'd call me Skipper instead of Captain Skipper.

I think we should pray. I knew what that meant. We all pray.

If one suffers you all suffer. If one prays we all pray. And we'd go down to pray.

That young man himself would sometimes pray four or five times minutes or an hour without stopping. We wore a thick blue wool shirt and I'd tie something like this and I'd look at the end of prayer and see that man just exhausted. I can remember some of his petitions.

I can remember his intimacy with God. When he finished the other man who was totally blind maybe the greatest intercessor I ever met. We had a meeting in a church in London just outside of London and I had to go back into the city on the train.

We had breakfast. Very frugal breakfast. I said to this young Welshman Glen I have to go down into the city I'll be back this afternoon.

I left him at ten o'clock in the morning kneeling by a wooden chair on a wooden floor and when I went back at three in the afternoon he was still pulling his heart out. Yes he went to the Bible School of Wales intimately taught with the what was the man right Rhys Howells one of the great intercessors of our day. Have you read his book Rhys Howells Intercessory You need to buy all you fellows.

Rub your nose in the dust and you're good. You see a man with a praying ministry never struts. You never see his picture on the face of your church magazine.

All the others want that. He doesn't. He lives with God.

He's intimate with God. He has a love relationship with God. He talks with God.

God talks with him. Everything is dust after that. He knows the heart of God.

He knows the mind of God. One of these times I think we'll say now next time we come there's going to be no quitting at nine o'clock or half past we're going to pray as long as God wants us to pray till midnight or one or two in the morning. We should do that.

Once you do that once we soar into the heavenlies I was in a prayer meeting last Saturday night where I felt such a wonderful touch of God. There was some real, I felt concise, intelligent praying. So remind me brother Dale I'll put you on charge of reminding me next time we come to say that next time we come we're not going to finish at nine o'clock we're just going to pray.

I still pray Lord teach me to pray. There's no vocabulary. Prayer is not a vocabulary.

Prayer is a spirit. Prayer is a disposition. Prayer is a life.

I forgot that book I was going to bring it tonight. You need to call at the house and I'll let you have it. Teach me to pray.

You can pray a more forceful prayer without opening your lips very often than you can with your lips. And if you had a voice like a bull it wouldn't move a gun. When something's kindled inside you know that there's something creative.

You don't have to go to Bible school to learn to pray. And how do you pray? By doing it. By basing your the Word of God as a foundation for your prayer.

Praying first and foremost for the Kingdom of God. But the Kingdom of God will come first in your own heart if it isn't there. And then there'll be another.

There's no hope for our generation if we don't get a move of the Spirit of God. You may as well consign your children to death. I've got no children now.

Young children. But I've got grandchildren. Just as precious.

I think of them day by day. There's nobody going to change this world unless we have a divine intervention. God comes and stops society in its tracks.

That's the only way. Forget my needs. Forget what I want.

And I pray earnestly, zealously, only Thy Kingdom can. To uproot every other kingdom. Financial kingdom.

Kingdom of the cults. Kingdoms of heathendom. There's no power enough to do that.

It's only divine power. We're going to pray for a little while now. I want you to pray.

Even if you only pray, pray maybe with tears. Lord, teach me to pray. Start me on a prayer course tonight.

Start me on a new route of prayer. Something I've never known in my life before. If you pray, he'll do it.

Thank you. So let's pray for a season. Thank you.

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