

Resurrection Road to Life

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon highlights the transformative power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and its foundational role in Christian faith.

Duration: 51:35

Scripture: Acts 26:12

Topics: "Resurrection", "Divine Purpose"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill emphasizes the transformative power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of Christianity, using the Apostle Paul's encounter on the Damascus road as a profound example of personal revelation and divine purpose. He argues that the resurrection is not just a theological concept but a living reality that empowers believers to witness and minister to others, turning them from darkness to light. Ravenhill passionately calls for the church to awaken to its mission, highlighting the urgency of sharing the gospel in a world still shrouded in spiritual blindness and darkness.

Transcript

Acts of the Apostles, the twenty-sixth chapter. Verse twelve, Whereupon as I went into Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, at Middale King, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me, and when they were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou? Lord, and he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest, but rise and stand upon my feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. That hardly sounds like an Easter morning subject, and yet the emphasis I want to put out of that amazing revelation that Paul had here is this, I have appeared unto thee. There were many wonderful resurrections of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet in its outworking it seems to me that this is the greatest revelation of all, He appeared unto me.

And if He appears unto us, we certainly would never have been the same again. The great chapter that we have read this morning is surely the, to some people the most marvellous chapter in the whole of the Word of God. Because it states, it iterates and it reiterates the fact that Jesus Christ the Son of God is risen from the dead.

As I have said before, the Apostle Paul builds a pyramid, fourteen epistles if you include Hebrews, and he builds the pyramid like that, then he turns the pyramid over, and he stands it all on one fine point, and that is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christianity stands or falls, not through the death of Jesus, that's one half of the story, the other half is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, because the scripture says, we are saved by His life. You know, Christianity could have been shattered in the first hour.

There was no need to corrupt men that were already corrupted, and make greater liars out of men who were already liars, and bribe men who had been already bribed. There's a very simple solution. Men of youths, mountains of paper and rivers of ink, to write against the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

One of the greatest was Strauss, the great German rationalist, and yet he did admit this, he said, the core of the core of Christianity, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Sir Ambrose Fleming, the great scientist, said of the resurrection, it's the best attested fact in history. Our great and wonderful friend Dr. Samuel Chadwick said, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the standard miracle of the New Testament.

The standard miracle of the Old Testament, was the children of Israel coming through the Red Sea. Whenever the children of Israel began to flag, and waver, and get discouraged, they were reminded of the miracle, the supernatural operation of God, in dividing that Red Sea, as easily as you might part your hair. But the standard miracle of the New Testament, is the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ, being raised from the dead.

In his letter to the Ephesians, and in the first chapter, and well, verse 18, we see here, this verse, to me, it breathes energy, life, power, authority. He says, that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of his glory, of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the, listen, the exceeding greatness of his power. If that isn't strength on strength, what is? The exceeding greatness of his power to us all, to believe according to the working of his mighty power, when he made the world, no, when he raised Jesus from the dead, he said.

This is the exceeding greatness of his power, that's more than bringing the world into being. Because then the world wasn't encased with sin. When he made the world, it wasn't encased with devilish power.

But Jesus Christ again is in the tomb, and there's the stone, and there's the wax, and there's the seal, and there's the soldiers, and there's the sin of the world, and there's every demon against it. And yet we see, we talk about Jesus, God being omnipotent, we talk about the super power of God. And he says that power, the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above principalities and powers.

Above this world there's a belt of iniquity. It's the authority, it's the place of Satan's power right now. The prince of the power of the air is brooding over this world, and yet Christ is above the power that broods over this world.

And yet he says that power only works, do you know how it works? By just some sovereign act of God. He says according to the power that worketh in us. And I don't believe the hold-up is in God, I don't believe the hold-up is in communist systems, the hold-up is in the church of the living God.

There's a bottleneck somewhere. There's something which is resisting the power of God's breakthrough. It is according to the power that worketh in us.

Now I say Christianity could have been shattered in the first hour, very simply how? Produce the body. Produce the body of Jesus, you think they didn't search every nick and crack in Jerusalem to find out where the body was? I think they'd already searched. I think they'd tried everywhere.

And they could not find, of course they couldn't find his body. This is the unique act. You remember when one man says, listen Jesus Christ you better watch your step here because I'll put you to death.

I don't think Jesus smiled at that, but Jesus stood back and said, no man taketh my life from me. My life will not go till the moment he said I will lay it down and I will take it up. In essence come hell or high water, come sin or demons, I will lift it up.

I will raise up myself from the dead. You see this is a unique thing. No, no, no, you say he raised up, he raised up Lazarus from the dead, he raised up Jairus' daughter, no, no, no, no, no, listen, they were all raised up by someone else else's power.

He was raised up by his own power. They all died again, he didn't die again, hallelujah. Death hath no more dominion over him.

Not only did they die again, but when they rose from the grave they came out in the grave clothes. He didn't do that, hallelujah. He didn't take the winding sheath and unwind it, he slipped out of it just like a caterpillar comes out of a cocoon and it becomes a butterfly.

They saw the clothes and the napkin lying by itself. Why? Because Jesus was always tidy, I hope you are, but Jesus was always tidy. And he folded his napkin always the same way, like my daddy did.

We didn't have these paper napkins when we were at home. We had linen napkins and after dinner we, we would take our napkins. I didn't always fold mine right I'm sure, but my father used to fold his exactly with the initial at the top so you knew Walter Ravenhill sat there, he put his napkin there at the side of his plate.

And Jesus shows order here. He doesn't need anybody to, how do you liberate, how do you liberate resurrection life? He has dominion over everything, even the clothes he gets out of them. Lazarus came out shuffling, he was alive, but he was still bound hand and foot like most Christians.

They're alive but bound, bound by tradition, bound by fear, bound by theological precepts. Jesus Christ here, the Son of God, comes forth in great power. I like the statement I just made, I've quoted there, I think I've quoted it every resurrection morning for 40 years.

Today he rose and left the dead and Satan's empire fell. The only people that have got over the shock are the Christians. The devil hasn't because he's still fighting.

We're the ones that somehow can take this super miracle of miracles and just walk away from it as though it's nothing in the world. There is nothing to equal this in any religion in the world. Brother this is the unique

thing about Christianity and Paul he's not afraid to gamble on this.

He predicts or predicates everything on the resurrection. Listen, listen to this, I'll read it for you and gulp over it if you like. But he says, if Christ is not risen, number one, our preaching is vain.

Well that's a terrible thing. Number two, your faith is vain. Number three, we're false witnesses.

Number four, if Christ died, if the dead raise not, then it's Christ not raised. And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain. Oh that's bad, but this is worse.

If Christ is not risen, we're still in our sins. If Christ is not risen, then all who fall asleep in Christ have perished. But oh, that lovely verse again.

My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought. Now I'm glad Jesus didn't do half a job. He did a complete job.

He took our sins and our sin in his body on the tree. And Paul has this amazing encounter on the Damascus road. The first thing Jesus did was say to him, rise and stand upon my feet.

Well isn't that what he does to everybody, put us on our feet if we really get into a relationship with him. On that Damascus road, you remember that Paul was going down there and he had a thing in his pocket which, a coat they called a toga. And in it he carried credentials, the death sentence of the early church.

It was signed and validated that he had authority to put to death everybody who named the name of Jesus. Isn't that ironic? No it's beautiful. That the man who was going to put Christianity to death became the most superb example of the grace of God.

He's going down down the Damascus road breathing out threatenings. He's going to leave a trail of blood. He's going to be a modern Hitler and leave a bloody trail of massacre.

Why Jesus was hardly out of his mother's womb before Herod designed to put him to death. You find the same thing in the life of Moses. But Moses was hardly born when they ordered a massacre.

You know there's nothing that's really born alive that the devil doesn't hate. I don't care whether it's a fellowship. I don't care whether it's a person.

If it's designed for the glory of God and it has the birthmarks of being really mighty in God. He's going to be after it. He's going to pursue it.

He's going to try and put it to death. And so there the apostle Paul just as Herod was going to kill the early church. The apostle Paul was going to kill the pardon me as Herod was going to kill the infant Christ.

Saul was going to kill the infant church. You know I I make mistakes. I guess you didn't know that.

But I do sometimes. And I've often said you know that that Jesus never appeared to anybody on the Damascus pardon me. He never appeared to anybody outside of the inner circle.

He appeared to his disciples. He appeared on the Emmaus road. He appeared to the twelve.

He appeared to the woman there at the sepulcher. But he never went to anyone ungodly. Except one.

I think this kind of staggered the apostle Paul for the rest of his life. He says he appeared to me. I can almost hear him saying under his breath my God, my God, my God.

I was going to destroy everything he had. Isn't this love so amazing, so divine. That he takes a man with a death sentence to the church and breathing out threatenings.

And he says that's the very man I want. God does strange things. Aren't you glad he doesn't have a committee.

We'd all give him our marvelous advice and mess him up. When he wanted to shake the Roman church what did he do? Find a brilliant theologian outside. No he found a man right dead in the centre that knew every answer.

He found a wonderful Luther. When he wanted to shake the church of England which was dead and decaying in deism. What did he do? He found a man right from the centre by the name of John Wesley.

Time and again he's found a man. Why one of the startling things I learned not too long ago is one of those Manson men. One of the worst men with Manson got marvelously saved in jail.

And he's the assistant chaplain in jail now. The man that went running with blood. Doped and drunk and devilish.

And God reaches down into a hell hole like a jail that's full of filth and every despicable thing you can. It's still true what's said by the prophet in the first of Samuel. He lifts the beggar from the dunghill and makes him a prince unto God.

He took a swearing blaspheming tinker that was going down the road staggering and in those days women made their bread you know and they put the bread by the fire and they were sitting in the sunshine. And one of them began to talk about being born again and poor old drunken immoral debauched little fellow went past. And he listened.

And when he heard them he thought that's a strange thing that a man can be born again. It wasn't a mighty sermon that moved Bunyan it was a testimony of two women. And John Bunyan was redeemed by the grace of God.

We're just celebrating the 300th anniversary of his book which has been published more than any other book in history apart from the Bible itself. You see this man is all excited about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's unique it's startling.

He's standing here before a heathen king. A gripper. The first king of Israel was Saul the last king was a gripper a Jew.

He knew all the answers. Paul says to him a king a gripper do you understand this and before he can answer he says I know that you understand otherwise you have no excuse. And he says in the third verse why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead.

You see the resurrection is not just a part of my theology the resurrection is a person. Again Jesus says let's go to the grave and raise your brother and Martha says well I know my brother is going to rise at the last day. I believe in the resurrection I'm fundamental.

I wonder she didn't fall in a faint. When he looked at her and he said I am the resurrection isn't that beautiful. That's why I laugh when that old bachelor he's been sick this week that old bachelor in Rome says that he has the keys he's a liar he doesn't.

Jesus says I am he that liveth and you see with all the testimony that you have there the most effective witness is the man himself and he stands at the end of the line in revelation and he says listen I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forever more and I have the keys of death and of hell. The Pope hasn't got them they have some old plastic things somebody gave him but the real golden keys of death and of hell Jesus Christ has them. Why because he rose and he led captivity captive and he gave gifts unto men.

Oh that we could explore what Lowry calls the possibilities of grace. Oh that again the church had it's apostles and prophets and evangelists and teachers and every other gift you like. But we need these ministry gifts right now to shake a sleepy indolent careless church.

The house of God needs to become more magnetic and more magnetic than any other place on God's earth. And sure it would be if he had all his way and if he had his resurrection power. You see this man believes in the resurrection why because he'd been raised from the dead.

You say not yet not when he stood before it oh yes he had. You hath he quickened to a dead in trespasses. He wasn't a bad man he was a dead man.

There's many a man who's not bad he's more sense than to dissipate his body and ruin his brain and take some stinking vile drugs. He's a good man but he's not a born again man. He's not a bad man he's a dead man.

You remember what Jesus says he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me he is brother Joe. Not he's going to do he has passed from death unto life. So this man knows there are three deaths dead in trespasses and in sin.

A death which I may have to have or you may have to have when we pass. Ah but there's another death there is another death. We don't preach about it hardly.

The word of God says there is a second death. You see hell is God's eternal graveyard for those who are dead in trespasses and in sin and unrepentant and rebellious. Death is the cessation of life death is separation.

And the apostle here says you know what this amazing Christ the son of God he's already raised me from the dead. Do you think there ever was a conversion like this? I don't. Jesus says rise and stand upon my feet for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose to make thee a minister and only God in heaven can do that.

You can send somebody to Bible school you can train them through seminary but if God hasn't called them they're in bad shape. Wasn't it the word of Jesus when he said to those disciples here you follow me and I will make you. And he says to this man listen don't just look at what you've got listen it's not what the clay has it's what the potter can do with that clay.

And therefore he says I have appeared unto thee to make thee a minister and a witness. There's many a minister who isn't a witness and there's many a witness who isn't a minister. But unless the miracle has

worked in us we've no right to declare what God can do.

And this is why Paul is so confident. You see you can bring in any exhibit of twisted, dwarfed, perverted morality and he says well that's not difficult for God to do. And you say why not? Well he says I once had an encounter with a man called Jesus and at that time I happened to be the chief of sinners.

We'd have thought he was the best model man in the world. He's a super edition of Nicodemus almost. He's a scholar and a gentleman.

Impeccable morality. A great mind. A Pharisee of a Pharisee.

He was a Pharisee his father was a Pharisee. He inherited many great things. And yet he says I'm the chief of sinners.

Because I rebelled against the son of God. That's why. The greatest sin is not drunkenness and immorality, sexual immorality, bad as they are.

The greatest thing is to rebel against God. And he says I rebelled against him but he loved me and he gave himself for me. I've appeared unto thee to be a minister and a witness both of the things which thou hast seen and of those things in which I will appear unto thee.

You know that kind of sense in my mind going a thousand different ways. Here is a man he isn't in an ecclesiastical building. I think he was thrown from his horse.

He was never going to do that long journey. Walking would be impossible. And God pitched him off that horse.

Threw him down in the brush. And he says I've appeared that you may be a minister and a witness only of the things which thou hast seen. Well he'd just seen Jesus Christ.

I have appeared unto thee. This vision never dimmed. Somewhere there or when he was back there in the wilderness for three and a half years.

I believe that Paul entered into a marriage contract with Jesus. And he never got divorced. I believe he became a love slave and he never deviated.

However big the burden however hard the burdens were. Man this man's life is a pageant of triumph. It's a pageant of misery in one sense.

He spends more time in prisons than palaces. He's persecuted his brethren. He's persecuted he says I'm persecuted, persecuted.

He doesn't say whimpering. He says he rejoiced joyfully. He says everything that Satan has he's tried out on me and he hasn't won yet.

And then if you think he hasn't got a sense of humor he says well I've tribulation, distress, famine, peril, nakedness, sword, imperils of the deep, imperils of mine own countrymen. And he says and anything else the devil wants to bring okay. And I want to tell you I write it off.

If this isn't humor what in the world is? When the devil is exhausted and put every burden and tried to break his body and break his spirit. He just stands back and says you know our light affliction which is but

for a moment. Light affliction for a moment.

Man you've been in misery ever since you were saved almost. You spent 36 hours in the deep without any lunch, without a cup of coffee or anything. Hanging on a piece of wood 36 hours in the Mediterranean think of it.

You took your shirt off. They not only took your, you not only lost your shirt, you lost the skin off your back. They ploughed your back like a field.

And weariness and painfulness and fastings and hardship. And then his revival party broke up. They said well we knew it was a bit strange but you know this man seems to have more fanaticism than faith anyhow.

And we're not putting up with it. So everybody left him. That's a blessed thing.

That's a blessed thing. A man wrote me this week and he said you know I'm getting more and more doors open for ministry and I thought brother you must be failing. John Wesley preached 600 sermons.

The last 600 he preached. He preached the 30,000 I think. But out of the last 600 he preached, he preached only 6 inside of a building.

He preached the others in the street. Nobody wanted him. And the apostle Paul was ostracised and victimised and penalised.

A night and a day in the deep. His back is ploughed. He's tied to a whipping post.

He receives 49, what 40 stripes save one. 5 times. 5 fours is what? That's 200 minus 5 because it was 5 39s.

Well that's pretty rough going. I'd settle for 9 any time. Rather than 39.

And he knows the agony. He knows the brutality of it. And it happens and it happens and it happens.

And he says Lord Jesus I ask you one day I could fill up the sufferings of Christ. I told you I wanted to be like you. And everybody deserted you and everybody failed you.

Demas has forsaken me loving this present world. Somebody else has gone my way. But he says so sweetly.

You know and everybody else failed me. The Lord stood by me. Isn't that lovely? Oh you nod your head now.

So will I. But wait till it starts happening. And you lose everything and feel you've lost your shirt. And then you lose the skin off your back.

I don't read anybody send him a letter to jail while he was there. Or send him even a sack of food. And yet you can't get him to whimper or to whine.

Why? Well he says you see Jesus says to me you preach those things which you've seen. Now you've seen me. And again a statement I love.

I said often to myself never mind to you. A man with an experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument. I met him.

I saw Jesus face to face. You saw him on the cross. You saw him on some other road.

I met him face to face on that Damascus road. And he says go preach the things which you've seen. And not only the things that you've seen he says that those in which I will appear unto thee.

By that gives a lot of room for imagination doesn't it? The things that will appear unto thee. You know I was going to say that means that when he was caught up in the third heaven and he had a revelation that may be equal or surpassed even the revelation John had. And then I thought no I won't be telling you the truth.

Those were not the things because immediately he saw that glory the Lord said you never open your mouth about it. So it couldn't be the things he was going to see in that revelation. That particular revelation when he was caught up into the third heaven.

But it should it must have been the unfolding of the mysteries of the grace of God. All right delivering from thee from the Gentiles. Unto whom now I send thee to open their eyes.

This is the work of the ministry. To open their eyes. To turn them from darkness to light.

From the power of Satan unto God. That they may receive forgiveness of sins. And an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Now there's a program for you. I think every preacher ought to read this I think it ought to be compulsory reading in Bible schools and seminaries. This is what the ministry is.

First you have to be delivered from people whether they're good or bad. Whether they like you or they don't. You've just got to deliver that which God has given unto you.

And be delivered from the people. And the Gentiles who are their enemies to whom now I send thee. And this is my work now.

Your work is to open their eyes. To turn them from darkness to light. And from the power of Satan unto God.

Now hear it. Where is he? Right now he's in front of Agrippa. In the twenty-fourth chapter he's in front of Felix another king.

Now look if a man is in chains made of solid gold is he still a captive? I'm told that gold is heavier even than gold is. iron. It is the heaviest metal.

And here is a man sitting in splendor. As in the case of Felix he's sitting with all his retinue of servants and all the distinguished company. And yet you see Paul sees through that facade.

He sees through all the glitter. He sees through the gold. He sees through all the show as it were.

And he sees a man on a throne with a crown but he's crippled. He's crippled. He's crippled.

He's destitute of God. He has a temporary kingdom but he's ruled. He's not a ruler.

He's ruled by the powers of darkness. The same is here when he stands before a gripper. You see nobody, nobody in my judgment has ever had the vision the Apostle Paul had.

I like this little poem. It's difficult to get but if you see it, buy it. It's worth a hundred dollars.

It's worth a thousand to me. It's Saint Paul written by F. W. H. Myers. And he gives you an idea of this man.

Once God has bound him to himself. Let me use the words of Jesus. Come.

And I'll put my yoke upon you. And then we walk step by step. I'll carry the load and you carry the load.

I'll give my burden and I'll share your burden. I'll give you my vision. I'll give you my passion.

I'll give you my power. And F. W. Myers has Paul saying this about his preaching. Oft when the word is on me to deliver, lifts the illusion and the truth lies bare.

Desert or throng, the city or the river melts in a lucid paradise of air. Now look, he's looking at a gripper here. Or he turns and he looks to the Gentiles.

Or he looks at the Greeks lost in their wisdom. The Jews lost in their religion. Other people lost in their power.

The Romans. And he says, only like souls I see the folk there under. Bound, who should conquer.

Slaves who should be kings. Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder. Sadly contented with a show of things.

Then he says, with a rush the intolerable craving shivers throughout me like a thunder roll. All to save these. To perish for their saving.

To die for their life. Be offered for them all. Therefore, O Lord, I will not fail or falter.

Nay, but I ask it. Nay, but I desire. Lay on my lips thine embers of the altar.

Seal with the sting and furnish with the fire. Give me a voice, a cry and a complaining. O let my sound be stormier in their ears.

Throat that would shout, that cannot stay for straining. Eyes that would weep, that cannot stay for tears. Quick, in a moment, infinite, forever.

Self that would send an arousal better than I pray. Give me a grace upon the faint endeavour. Souls for my hire.

And Pentecost today, whoso hath felt the spirit of the highest cannot confound, nor doubt him, nor deny. Yea, with one voice, O world, but thou denyest. Stand thou on that side, for on his side am I. He never got confused on which side he was.

I can't find in all his writings one single trace of his back sliding. He sees men bound, he must get them free. He sees men diseased in sin, they must be healed.

They are lost, they must be found. When I think of this man, a veteran may be right at this time, or at least a little later. But when I, at least in the case of the poem, it's speaking of his maturity.

But you know, when I see a man with passion and fervour like that, I have to, I have to level that great apostle Paul. And I have to bring a little American that died at 28 years of age, burned his life out for the Indians. And David Brainerd says, does it matter how I live? Does it matter where I live if men are lost? If this book is right? Can I conserve my life? Can I withhold anything? Can I withdraw anything? Can I try and moderate it? Let others do it if they will.

I cannot do it. And Paul says, there is a passion in me. I forget who wrote the verse for the moment, but he says, all for a passionate passion for souls.

All for a pity that yearns. All for a love that loves unto death. All for a fire that burns.

All for a prayer power that prevails to pour itself out for the lost. Victorious prayer in the conqueror's name. All for a Pentecost.

I admire Paul. I admire his pedigree. I admire his morality.

I admire his scholarship. But most of all, I admire and I covet the fervor, the fire, and the faith that this precious man had. Let me get to this for a few minutes here.

He says, your business then is to go forward to all people, high, low, rich, poor, known or unknown. He says, your job is to open their eyes. Well, we don't see people blind usually do we? We say, that man's smart.

She's smart. And yet every man outside of the grace of God is blind. They're blind to eternal truth.

Well, what are dangers? Well, if a man is blind, he can get nearer to the precipice. And he's only one step to go and you snatch him away from there. The danger is that world out there has no idea that it's walking to a precipice of eternal darkness.

Paul doesn't see men in their slavery merely. He sees them in their spiritual misery. He doesn't see them merely bound now.

He says, they're going to be bound for eternity. They're not blind now. They're going to be blind for eternity as it were.

The man who is blind doesn't know how near to the edge of the precipice he is. It was said of the greatest perhaps evangelist that England ever had, of a man that really set fire to the nation before John Wesley and that was Whitefield. He was in a meeting and people would go hear him because of his oratory.

He had a beautiful musical voice. He was drawing crowds here by the thousands when he was still 22 years of age. The strange thing is, you see, he was born in a tavern and God took him right from the tavern and he mixed with all the society and semi-royalty of England.

And John Wesley was born in semi-royalty and God took him to the coal miners. Isn't God strange ways? He took the man that was used to spitting and swearing and setting with ladies with the lovely silks and gold and trimmings and he took John Wesley from scholarship and took him down to the roughest, toughest men in the country at that time. But these great meetings were attended by great people too for

Whitfield.

And on one occasion he was preaching and Lord Chesterfield was in the meeting. Whitfield with his dramatic oratory and he didn't try to be dramatic. The fire kindled out of him.

He had the urgency of eternity when he preached. And he was describing a man who is a sinner that he is blind. And he is going to the edge of the abyss.

And he set him off from one point and he kept stopping and stopping and he said now he is only a yard and then he falls thousands of feet. Now he is going to fall into eternity. He is like the man who is going to fall into eternity.

And Whitfield went on and he said now that blind man is moving and he has got to the edge. And Lord Chesterfield forgot his manners. He jumped up and he said my God is fallen.

That's preaching for you. One night he drew his bow and arrow by imagination. I'll shoot God's arrows into your heart and he shot one.

He said here it comes. This is the word of God. And he brought his fist forward and the whole congregation ducked down because they thought there was an arrow coming.

Oh you expect that. You say that's drama in the, that's drama on the theatre, on the stage. Shouldn't it be less real in the sanctuary? I'd stand on my head if I thought people would get saved.

Somebody said one day to Mr. dear old Samuel Chadwick he'd been over here and he'd heard Billy Sunday. Now Mr. Chadwick because he was old when I heard him he was over 70 anyhow. And he used to stand behind the desk and hardly move his hands.

Tremendous saint. And somebody said did you hear Billy Sunday while in America? He said yes. Isn't he a fireball? Yes he is.

Isn't he dramatic? Super dramatic. Yeah he held a watch in his hand and said to the congregation only 60 seconds and you're all in eternity. And he talked and he got it to 5 and then to 10 and then to 5 and 4 he said and when this when this clock strikes you're lost forever.

And he had a big old Ingersoll watch he got them for a dollar then. He said now it's 10 seconds, 9, 8 you're going to eternity, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. And he threw it to the wall of the sanctuary and it smashed in a thousand pieces. And he closed the meeting.

One man said that wakened me up. That made me realise there'll come a moment when time has finished, eternity begins. Well what do you think about the preaching then of Billy Sunday? Isn't it dramatic? Super dramatic.

Sensation? Yes. Well what did you think of the sensational preaching and dear calm? Mr Chadwick said gentlemen. I will be twice as sensational if I could be half as successful.

I thought it was a wonderful tribute to a man who hardly ever raised a finger and seldom raised his voice. In other words Paul says listen I'm willing to be all things to all men. If the only way I can reach some terrible rotten sinner well Lord send me to jail for a year to get that man saved.

If I have to go bound in chains. You know you can never hold a man like Paul down. The silly bible pardon me, the silly comments at the top of the bible say, Paul before Felix.

It wasn't Paul before Felix. It was Felix before Paul. It wasn't Paul before Agrippa.

He hardly gets going. He turns and he says listen King Agrippa he raised his hand to him and he says hey I want to tell you something. You know you can destroy the body so what? Do you know what? I've already had resurrection life.

I was dead in trespasses and in sin. I'm alive. And if you kill me I'll still be alive.

And not only that I'm coming to pick up the drapery a bit later. I'm going to pick up the old body and the bones. And have a body like to his glorious body.

Yeah Paul is quite sure of his ground here. He knows in whom he has believed. He's persuaded that he's able to keep that which he has committed unto him.

He's willing to be in deaths after he says. So what? The more deaths you get in the more you wonder about the resurrection. Maybe that's why we don't think about it so much.

He says I'm always in death. In perils of the deep, perils of others. What of? I'm in deaths aft.

But he says I know this the resurrection life of Jesus quickens this mortal body even now. So Felix finds himself before Paul. And Agrippa finds the whole thing's turned round.

And before he's through it says you know Felix trembled. Oh I guess anybody trembled. Here Paul preached.

Particularly with three-pointed sermon like this. He preached what? Of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come. Well they're not very popular even these days never mind that day.

You can preach on heaven and love and blessing. But you preach on sin and righteousness and judgment and you're going to get a lot of evil backing off. In this chapter he works on Agrippa till poor Agrippa is terrified.

And he says Paul I think you should go to lunch because you've almost persuaded me to be a Christian. Now look at here. So he dismisses the congregation because he's got so near to making a decision himself.

He's weighing what it would mean. In the next chapter it says that Paul is on board ship. When he was determined that we should sail into Italy they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners.

See nobody else is worth mentioning. Even in the ship's log it says we've got this prize man by the name of Paul and a bunch of other criminals. That's all.

That's all there is to Paul and certain other prisoners. Well if there isn't a funny wonderful story here there isn't one anywhere because after all he got on that boarder. He got on board the ship as a prisoner and he ended up as the pilot.

They handed the whole ship over to him. You couldn't keep a man like Paul down. The devil couldn't so men couldn't.

Agrippa couldn't. Kings couldn't. That resurrection life in him burst forth every time.

And he says I want you to realize this. My dear friend that only the infinite mercy of God can open your eyes. But he may open your eyes through preaching.

And you'll see how near the precipice you are and you're almost going to go over. And God in his infinite mercy rescued me. Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be.

Let that grace Lord like a fetter bind my yielding heart to thee prone to wonder. No I don't like that. I don't like that.

I'm not like that. I'm prone to get closer. I don't want to get away from God.

You tell me how to get a bit nearer I'll take your advice. I don't want to wonder from him. As I say go home and sing that to your wife.

Prone to wonder wife I'll feel it. She'll say who's the other woman? Who's fascinating you that you don't want me? No no no. Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be.

Let that grace Lord like a fetter bind my yielding heart to thee. Thine I am oh Lord forever to thy service set apart. Suffer me to leave thee never.

Set thy seal upon my heart. Come everyday and stamp me afresh and say son I love you. Daughter I love you.

Open their eyes. Open their eyes to the infinite mercy of God. I'm sure blind people must have fear.

They have to wait. They hear the traffic rushing they give a sign for somebody. But when our eyes are open we have no fear.

That's what the word of God says. Perfect love casteth out fear. And there is no fear in love.

True love has no fear. So the blind man is in danger of going over the precipice. The blind man is in fear.

I'll tell you another thing the blind man could be walking by a diamond necklace the police are looking for with a million dollar reward and he could go and even put his foot on it and crush it and not know the treasure was there. Isn't it awesome that people in this world pursue every other thing and yet with all their wisdom and smartness they're forever seeking where did we come from? Monkeys or what have you got? Listen where you came from for the moment does not matter it's where you're going that matters. The government won't give us a million dollars to research evangelism.

They give us a million dollars for any other crazy thing nearly. But when our eyes are open we see there at the side of us there's a treasure above all treasures. It's called in the scripture the pearl of greatest price.

You remember one day a man went over a field and he had no idea of buying it. He was taking a shortcut I think to somebody's house and he stumbled. Oh there.

My I didn't see that. His eyes weren't open. And he found it through contact with his foot.

And then he goes around to a fellow and says hey you want to sell that field? He said I've been thinking of it. What do you want for it? So and so. He bought it right away.

Why? He didn't want the field. He wanted the treasure in the pot. Oh there may be a lot of things that come with my redemption that my I might feel I don't really need or really want but brother I'll tell you what I need the treasure.

I need the pearl of greatest price. I need my eyes open to realize again not only I'm a child of God by faith but again as Laury says to explore the possibilities of grace. To open their eyes.

To turn them from darkness to light. It's an awesome thing and it's a tragic thing that this morning two thousand years after Jesus came the light of the world. There are areas of the world now with millions of people that do not have one single light.

One flickering testimony of the gospel of the grace of God. And as I said to the students the other morning remember this generation of Christians is I S ten feet high. This generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of lost people.

We're not responsible for Wesley's day. We're not responsible for ten years. We are the bridge between yesterday and tomorrow.

There are millions who sit in darkness. Plagued in darkness. To turn them from darkness.

What is darkness? Well Isaiah says darkness is the habitation of cruelty. I remember preaching up in the heart of Papua New Guinea to three different tribes so it made a long meeting. You say a sentence which was interpreted which was interpreted which was interpreted.

And when the meeting was open over the door was open and it was a pitch black night. There's no illumination because nobody has light. And the stars were not out.

And these little fellows black fellows began running off in three directions. Come here a minute said the missionary listen. And as they went I heard them making strange noise.

Why did they do that? They're afraid of the dark. They're afraid of evil spirits. They run as fast.

I said they're running. Yes sir. Some of those fellows came to our Olympic games they shatter all records.

They run. They flee. I think one reason why those coloured fellows from Africa it's instinctive with them to run from wild animals.

Lions, tigers, no tigers in Africa but lions and leopards and other things they're so huge and their life and their limbs are long. And as in Papua there was a boy who went for the mail every morning. Nearly twenty miles to the mail.

He ran on the spine of the hill and he ran back with a pack on his back. He ran over thirty miles. And when he came home he'd say to the boys hey how about a game of soccer? Boy he could run.

The darkness. The habitase. Everything thrives in the darkness.

You go to a restaurant now and you need somebody to lead you when you go in if you go at night. I hate those kind of halls anyhow. They think it's wonderful to be in the dark.

Don't want you to know whose wife you've got. So you can't see what you're eating. It may be leftovers from somebody else's plate.

How do you know it isn't? But they serve it up. And it's dark. And people like their nightclubs.

Isn't it true? Nightclubs because there's night there. Isn't it significant that Broadway is Broadway. It's a Broadway that leadeth to destruction.

Darkness is the place of cruelty. The wild beasts come out at night. There's more danger in the darkness.

The word of God says that men love darkness rather than light. Why? Because their deeds are evil. Think of that blackout they had just out just some months ago.

Last year wasn't it in Brooklyn and what was it they stole? A billion dollars worth of stuff. But they didn't do that the first time because they didn't know if the lights would come on. But this time we announced to them there's going to be no lights for 12 hours and thanks for the information we'll go robbing.

Let's steal everything we can. Pontiac dealer said he lost 52 new automobiles in a few hours. They broke the windows and drove 52 new automobiles away.

I think it was David Wilkerson said the next day down in Brooklyn it was like Christmas Day. Kids were riding, openly riding bicycles Daddy stole. Openly taking a TV from one hand.

Well we got two last night. We'll bring you one. They were having a celebration in the street.

I think he called it the Devil's Christmas. People love in the darkness. They murder and they rape and they do all their devilish work in the darkness.

But oh when light comes what a difference. We're living on a hangover. We're living in America and England.

We're living in the heritage of godly people right now. They left us light. We prefer darkness.

Blow out the Ten Commandments. Who in the world cares? You can still run society can't you? Well you can't. No society can exist if it doesn't keep the Ten Commandments anyhow.

I could stay here I mustn't. Darkness with all its terrors, with all its dangers. Oh you can talk as you like about darkness.

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