

Stephen, Full of Faith and Power

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon on Stephen highlights the power of faith in the face of persecution and the importance of divine revelation.

Duration: 56:05

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 7:2, Acts 7:54-56

Topics: "Power"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the defense of Stephen, as described in Acts chapter 7. Stephen addresses the theologians of his time, emphasizing that the God of glory appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia. Despite facing hostility and pressure, Stephen remains steadfast and full of the Holy Spirit. He not only sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God, but also witnesses the glory of God. This sermon highlights Stephen's unwavering faith and the powerful presence of God in his life.

Transcript

Acts chapter 7, reading from verse 2. This is the defense of Stephen, as you know, I'm sure. Verse 2, he said, men and brethren and fathers, hearken, the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, the God of glory. It's also interpreted, our glorious God, the God who supersedes every other concept of God, is this God of ours, the God of holiness.

But notice that, that's the second verse of this 7th chapter. He's reciting this under tremendous pressure, hostility, we'll go to that in a minute. But I want to stress it again, he said, men and brethren and fathers, hearken, the God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham.

Now go further down in the same chapter, after he poured out a whole fantastic recitation of the history of Israel. He said in verse 54, when they heard these things they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth. Remember, these are the theologians of the day.

These are the men outstandingly righteous. These were men who were versed and saturated in the law of Moses and everything else. And they gnashed on him with their teeth.

But look, he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and he saw the glory of God. Do you think that when he was going through that pressure, as he begins, the God of Abraham revealed himself, he saw the glory of God in Mesopotamia. Do you think he thought that before the day was out he

would see the glory of God? He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand.

And I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Usually we jump over that. We just say that he being full of the Holy Ghost looks steadfastly into heaven and Jesus standing.

No, but there's something else he sees. He sees the glory of God. Go back a little into the chapter, verse 6, pardon me, chapter 6 and verse 8. Stephen, full of faith and of power.

Again, I remind you this is just, this is just an elder. This is not what you call an ordained minister or an apostle. A young man called me today and he was almost in tears.

He said, Mr. Raymond, I want to ask you a question. I go ahead. He said, where are the evangelists today? I've been to an evangelistic meeting.

They told stories, they sang, they twisted, they pulled, they did every conceivable thing to get somebody to come for the altar. You don't have to do that when there's true Holy Ghost conviction. When there's Holy Ghost conviction, like having the third chapter of Luke, when, when John Baptist was preaching, the soldiers cried out, what should we do? The people cried out, what should we do? The publicans cried out, what should we do? You see, people don't go to meetings night after night now to get on the conviction.

If there's conviction, they stay away. And therefore, there's going to be no revival until there's a calling to a halt of the thing that we call evangelism. But notice, remember, this man gets the appointment as the first deacon in the church with apparently unanimous call, and he's full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and he did signs and wonders and miracles.

And so in verse 8 of chapter 6, it says, Stephen, full of faith and of power, did great wonders among the people. There was certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenius and Alexandrius. This is a collation, if you like, a conglomeration of synagogues.

They've heard about one young man, he doesn't have a Bible in his hand. He isn't a rebel, he isn't stirring anything up against the nation, but he's presenting a revelation that they haven't known. They've talked, and they've, when they've had their festivals, they march up and down the temple or the synagogue, and they recite that superb chapter in Isaiah 35, that when the years come, the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame leap as a heart, the tongue of the dumb shall sing.

And here's the young guy does it. He doesn't wear the gorgeous robes of the high priest. He doesn't have a plate on his forehead that says, Holy the Son to the Lord.

He doesn't have bells and pomegranates around the skirt of his wonderful dress. He doesn't wear a linen coat. He has no outward sign at all, but he has the blessed anointing of the Holy Spirit of God.

He has that which money cannot buy, and education cannot give, and a seminary can't give you it. It's an election of God, but by the same determination. Remember, God is found of those who seek after him.

And that's the whole secret. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Well, here is this man.

All these folks from different synagogues, the Libertines, the Cyrenians, the Alexandrians, and from Cilicia a nation. Now that's a gang of people. How many days do you think they've been traveling? They didn't live around the corner.

They spread the news that there's some phenomena happening. There are some people, just a handful of deacons, Stephen one or two others. They're a threat to our system.

You know, when you become a threat to a religious system, all hell will oppose you. It doesn't matter if it's in America or anywhere else. As soon as God begins to anoint a man, immediately all hell is against him.

That dear little Englishman, I used to have a church in the town where he was born. Of course, he'd gone long before I got there, Hudson Taylor. He said one day, when God opens the window of heaven upon you, the devil will open the door of hell.

You'll be caught between the two. And as I've told you, a man's crazy that looks to be a in spiritual matters. There aren't many sheaves, there are more goats.

But they want to go their own way. So here's a holy man. Here are people who say their prayers every day.

Blessing Stephen, thank God, he healed my crippled dad. Thank God, he drove leprosy out of somebody. And day by day they were thanking God.

And all hell gets mad. And the religious system gets mad. Because here's a man, he has no big system behind him.

He has no hierarchy behind him. You know, as I read this today, I thought, well, dear God, there were seven deacons, where were the other six? Are they leaving him by himself? Well, look at the pressure on him. I've read that verse to you twice, verse 9. They came, the Libertines, the Cyrenians, the Alexandrians, and the Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen.

They were not able to resist the wisdom by which he spake. What do you do with a man like that? He's an embarrassment. He has authority over demons.

He has authority over sickness. He has wisdom that's starving everybody. So naturally, he's a magnet.

He draws people. That's what the Spirit of God does. I hear preachers say, you know, my job, my job is to, uh, to, what do they say, dispense? Or my job is to introduce you to truth.

I don't think so. I think the preacher's job is to introduce you to life. You can have truth, and truth, and truth, till it's going in one ear and out of the other.

Not of a fault. But it's life the devil's afraid of. Men are not just bad, they're dead, in trespasses and in sin.

And it's an awesome thing to stand before a congregation. I'm glad I don't have to do it sometimes. This congregation is entirely different from the average church congregation.

Every row of people in a church today is death row. They're dead in trespasses and in sin. They need to be pitied as much as the folk down in the state penitentiary.

They were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, they bribed men, which said, we've heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. They not only got those rascals, look, and they stood up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, another bunch of, they were the folk that wrote out the scriptures.

They didn't print them, the scribes. I think lots of people think I'm the only scribe left. I scribble all my letters.

And so they got it. They stood up the people, and the elders, and the scribe. You see the pressure now? He's got all these people from the synagogue.

They've come hundreds and hundreds of miles, full of bitterness. Every step they go increases their hatred for this, this system. We have this to handle.

Our fathers handled a man by the name of John Baptist. Then came Jesus. We got rid of Jesus, we got rid of him, all right.

And now here's a little fellow come up. They set up false witnesses. Oh pardon me, verse 12.

They stood up the people, the elders, and the scribes. They came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council, and set up false witnesses. You see how they're piling it on? They're building, as it were, a stockade around him.

All these liars, all these cheats. Come on, if you and I are preaching the same truth, we'll get the same opposition, the same resistance, the same hindrances. The devil isn't any more kind now than he was in the beginning.

In fact, as we get nearer, that doesn't it, isn't it, Revelation says he knows his days are shorter, his days are numbered, and he's putting pressure on. And it seems the church is falling back instead of intensifying. It's getting weaker, and satanic powers are getting stronger.

Verse 13, they set up false witnesses. We've heard him speak blasphemous words against this holy place. They said he'd spoken blasphemous words in verse 11.

Verse 13, he spoke blasphemous words against this holy place. We've heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs, which Moses, boy that's a hard thing, isn't it? You know, you'll be all right, you can profess Christ, you can wear a lapel pin with some fancy wording, and you won't be an objection to anybody. But let your lifestyle change, and you will.

The immediate opposition will be in your family, most likely, the immediate family. And then the next, somebody else comes along. You see, what was it, Pilate said, but ye have a custom.

What was it, Pilate I think said, but ye have a custom. So what? So it's Easter. So Christians have bunnies and all kinds of junk.

It's Easter, it's a custom. We never saw those in England. I'm not saying it's a particularly American wickedness, but anyhow it's stupid.

They put rabbits with Easter eggs. You ever see a rabbit lay an egg? It's about the most silly thing I've ever seen in my life. But ye have a custom.

So when is, what's this other horrible thing coming up shortly? Pardon? Valentine's Day, that's an old superstition. And what's the other, oh we got over there, what's the other thing they have with the kiddies, you know, with the masks and things? Halloween. That's a satanic thing, and yet they do it in churches.

But ye have a custom, ye have a custom. Why do you send Christmas cards? You have a custom. Well, you didn't get one from me.

But we have a custom, we're tradition bound. There are certain things you do. The Roman, when I first came to America, almost every other automobile had a little plastic figure, do you remember, of Christopher on it? You don't remember that? In the 19, in the 1950s, a little plastic, Catholics had a little plastic Christopher, for safety, on the, on the, what do you call it? Dashboard, and in the back window.

When I was working in a factory, the Catholics dare not eat fish on Friday, meat on Fridays. It was a, it was a sin. Well, the Roman Catholic Church changed it.

They tell a story about a man in a remote part of the country. The priest came in and found him in a strange country, a foreign country. And the priest had introduced him to Roman Catholicism.

And the priest came in, and here it was, it was Friday, and the fellow was eating meat. And the priest said, you eating meat? It's not meat, he said. He said, it sure is.

He said, it isn't, it's fish. He said, it's not. You know very well that that's meat.

He said, no, no, it's fish. How did it become fish? He said, well, I, you came to me, you sprinkle water on me and see, you no heathen, you Christian. I sprinkle water on the fish and say, on the, on the meat and say, you no meat, you fish.

Well, it's just about as valid, but ye have a custom. Don't you think this fellow is a thorn in the flesh everywhere he went? Oh, oh boy, what if, what if Stephen comes along? He says things, he does things they'd never heard of. You know, when we do have a real Holy Ghost revival, that will happen within a week.

We'll get a wave of persecution such as we've never had before. It's going to upset all the hierarchy. It's going to blow the top off all this fantastic, so-called charismatic stuff, which has no foundation.

We're going to get back to the living word of the living God and he'll produce a living people. And we'll shake all the foundations of hell. Verse 14, we've heard him say that this beast of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

And all that sat in the council looked steadfastly on him and saw his face as it had been the face of an angel. Do you think for a minute, immediately the illumination of the Holy Ghost came upon him? Do you think there wasn't one of them there who didn't think of a time when Moses came down from being in the presence of God and his face shone? They said he should veil his face. This past week I was reading an old, uh, I call it facsimile.

We call it a Xerox copy of a letter in June in 1734. I thought it was January. It's February.

I think that February 4th, 1734. It's a copy of a letter by Esther, what's her name? Esther Edwards, the daughter of Jonathan Edwards. And she's writing to a friend.

She's nine years of age. And she says, my daddy conversed with me sweetly about communion with the Lord as we rose on our horses through the bushes today. My mother came out of her prayer closet.

Her face was shining like the face of Moses as it is every day when she's been alone with God. What a nation we'd be if children came home from school and mothers coming out of a prayer closet with a face radiant with the presence of God. They saw the face of this young man and he wasn't intimidated with all their threats.

He wasn't scared of all the big polished guys with all the religious, uh, what do you call it? Junk on them clothes. Well, I'll tell you how I prove that. I can't read the whole thing, I wish I could.

But he goes over the sins of the nation and he's piling up antagonism against himself. Well, look now when he comes into, uh, verse 46. He says, who found favor before God and desired that the tabernacle of God and the God of Jacob, but Solomon built him a house.

How be it the most I dwelleth not in temples. What do you mean? They've just come out of the temple. They're going into the temple at a big ceremony.

And this young upstart here, this guy who has no credentials says God doesn't dwell in your big building. He dwelleth not in temples made with hands. He dwells in human personality.

God indwelt Adam before ever there was a building. And this man is destroying he's like some, uh, what do you want to iconoclast, isn't that the word? Somebody's slashing at everything he can see, destroying it because he hates it. And they're just building up their hatred more and more and more against him.

He says, I'll be God dwelleth not in temples made with hands. I set the prophet thy throne. Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool.

What house will you build me? What place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Now listen to him. You know, people tell me I'm too rough sometimes. I say, dear God, I wish it was 10 times rougher.

What about John the Baptist? He wasn't very polite, was he? Was Jesus polite? Did he call some of them white-tipped sepulchres? Was it John Baptist says you generation of vipers? It's like me going up to a minister's conference say, hey you swine. Boy, do you think they bought me the man of the year? They bought me the man to be abolished. Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised.

Boy, that put them outside the ring, didn't it? Uncircumcised. Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did. So did he.

Do you see that? He says, you're not resisting me. You're resisting the Holy Ghost. Your fathers did that.

You know, we're not ashamed or afraid of resisting the Holy Ghost anymore. I believe he's dishonored in almost every sanctuary in the country these days. It doesn't embarrass us.

We're comfortable when we should be uncomfortable. Verse 54 says, and when they heard these things they were cut to the heart and gnashed on him with their teeth. That makes you realize again what the Word of God says in Hebrews.

The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any twedged sword. Was it the day of Pentecost when Peter was speaking? They were cut to the heart. They hated him.

I'd love to see just one Sunday when every congregation leaves the sanctuary hating the preacher. Not loving him and saying, you're such a nice guy. Oh, you're so much better than the last preacher.

You're so kind. Forget it. I feel sometimes they ought to feel as though they've been on a battlefield.

The Spirit of God has been probing. When they had that revival in the 1740s under Jonathan Edwards in Northamptonshire, did you know what they said? They said when the Spirit of God came on the community, everybody walking over the street had a drawn face as though they had some sickness. They were drawn and they were bent under conviction of sin.

Day after day after day until the Holy Ghost came and relieved them. But we don't get this kind of thing anymore. They gnashed on him with their teeth.

The being full of the Holy Ghost looked up steadfastly. He didn't glance. Notice that word? What is it doing to him? Well, it says they stoned him.

I put it this way for myself. His very body, all his broken bones were making a symphony of praise to God. What's he doing? He isn't spaying.

Look, there's that brilliant young Jew by the name of Saul. I've heard that man talk about the first and greatest commandment is to love people. And here he's watching me die.

My six other deacon brothers have deserted me. What kind of holiness is this? He doesn't say, well, there's the Pharisees. There's the pocket of Sadducees.

There's the Roman soldiers. He didn't see them. He saw Jesus.

The heavens are open. Remember when the heavens opened for Jesus? When the Spirit came down upon him? I believe, you may not find it in a book, but then you have to come here to learn it. I believe when the Lord opened the skies to let the angels look down and see what they'd never seen before.

God contracted to a span. Jesus Christ, very God of very God. And the angels had seen Seraphim bow down before him.

They'd never seen God in flesh and blood walking around. Perfect man, perfect obedience, perfect submission, willing to go through the whole gamut from the incarnation to the resurrection. But they looked down and angels, I'm sure, were staggered when they saw the Son of God there on earth.

So the heavens were open so they could look down. Now the heavens are open so this man can look up. Where did this happen? The heavens open.

Dare I say this respectfully and gently to you? Don't pray for the heavens to open. Really, I want you to, and I don't want you to. Where did the heavens open for Jesus? When he started on his ministry, which is going to be blood and suffering the whole way.

When did it open here? When he'd ended his ministry. When does the heaven open? I think it opened for Moses at the burning bush. You can think of other people in history.

When was the form of the fourth scene? When the three Hebrew children were in the fire. No, a fire that was heated seven times hotter. All hell said we can't let these men live.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have got to be destroyed. And as they walked up and down in the furnace, it was a heathen king said, I see the form of a fourth like unto the Son of God. When? When the fire was stoked up.

Well, are you a candidate now for an open heaven? What did the fire do? It did them a lot of good. It says they came out of the fire and the hair of their head wasn't even singed. What did it do? Well, they went in bound hand and foot.

What did the fire do? It burned off the fetters the world put on them. And the only way that God can get fetters off some of us is put us in the furnace and get them burned off. Sitting in a chair won't make you holy.

Reading a Bible won't make you holy or me holy. We've got to work out our own salvation. And God may put me in the furnace and leave you out.

And I say, I'm not going to say, Lord, I'm looking at my dear friends there, my dear Indian friends. I'm a good brother here. I have to keep looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher.

If you look outside, you'll be disturbed. If you look inside, you'll be disappointed. If you look ahead, you'll be discouraged.

The only place to look is, as it says again in Hebrews 12 and 2, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. So every man when he gets there into the tightest, roughest spot, the greatest revelation ever given to a human being was given where? On a devil's island called Patmos, where they dumped every incorrigible character. Every, the vilest of the vilest.

It was what you used to call, what do you call it in America? Alcatraz? It was the Alcatraz where everybody in Asia Minor, they put all their junk there. They put the most immoral, incorrigible, cruel, wicked, carnal, vile people all dumped together. It was a cesspool of iniquity.

And God Almighty put to man by the name of John, a man who had a marvelous ministry in Ephesus, a man who was to write, wrote a gospel and three epistles. But here is in the darkest, hardest, hottest, vilest place where God sees a million miles away. And what does he do? He takes the veil away for eternity, from eternity.

And he sees, it's the fourth chapter of Revelation, he sees the door open in heaven. What did he see? He saw more than any other man had ever lived apart from Jesus Christ himself. But he saw it when he'd lost all his civil rights, his religious rights, his family rights.

He's in splendid isolation if you like. No, he moves up and down all he heard, all his cursing and impurity and uncleanness. And yet in the midst of it, as Paul says on another occasion, there were saints in Caesar's household and that was next door to hell.

And yet, people living a sanctified life. The only way God could get through to your family was to purge you and cleanse you and transform you. That even when your lips are silent, your personality radiates something which is not of this world.

And yet we shrink from it, don't we? I was reading that chapter, you know I love so much, Hebrews 11, even today, or at two o'clock this morning I guess. Many of them chose to suffer affliction, not accepting

deliverance. Dear God, we pray for it, don't we? Lord take this, please take this thing away, it hurts me so much.

People think I'm funny, people think you've left me and I'm under pressure, I'm under this. Wait a minute. Live with eternity's values in view.

It's all going to reverse. I did read this morning, at two o'clock, I read Madame Guillaume's wonderful little poem. A little bird am I shut off from fields of air, content within this cage to lie, since God has placed me here, well pleased a prisoner to be, because my God it pleases thee.

And then she says, God bowed my wings, because I flew too high in other directions. And so she spells ten years. I guess this room's about 30 feet wide.

They put in the Bastille, if ever you're in, if ever you're in Washington, go into Mount Vernon, isn't it? Washington's house. When you come out of the kitchen, you come around the corner, go up the staircase, look to the left. There's a block, it looks like something like clay, and it actually is a copy of the Bastille.

Of course the roof is off, it just shows the outside. The walls were 30 feet thick, they put her in there. They took everything from her, a Bible, everything else, and it was there where God revealed himself to her.

And so you read her book, she has about four or five, the deeper experiences of famous Christians is one thing, the deeper experiences of Madam Gein is something else. But it was there where she lost everything. She lost her husband, she lost her wealth, she had carriages and horses, and she lost her big estate, she lost her servants, she lost her carriages, her husband died, uh I think one of her, two of her children died.

And she was considered the most beautiful woman in the world. Princes came and begged on their knees, please marry me, please marry me. Some of the wealthiest men in the world, and they said she was a beautiful woman.

Her face looked as though it was enamel, it was so gorgeous. Do you know what she did? I don't know if you ladies pray to be beautiful, I won't pass any remarks about that. But she prayed, Lord disfigure me, Lord disfigure me.

So what happened? She got smallpox, and it made big holes in her face all over the place. And her nose began to go, uh, I don't know whether it went red or black or what. And he used to put leeches on, you know, to suck out the bad blood.

And then she said, please don't do that, leave them. And little by little her face went the very opposite way, she was disfigured. And she argued with God, please take away my external beauty, and add my spiritual beauty.

I don't care what it costs. It's easy to sing, we nearly sang it tonight, let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. But it's something Gabriel sprinkles on you while you're sleeping.

Forget it, you're not going to wake up, you know, some morning you wake up and think of a halo, then you remember it's a curling pin you left in your hair. You're not going to wake up with a halo around your head, or wings on your back. And all God is doing is seeking our dross to consume, and our gold to refine.

You've heard me cry, and I have cried many times, I don't want to die immature. I don't want God to say, you could have, if you use a figure, you could come to heaven 10 feet tall, worth 10 billion dollars spiritually, and you're coming here five feet tall, and you're almost worth nothing. You see, we're trading for heavenly things.

Oh, you can't buy anything from God, well read the good old King James, it says, I counsel thee to buy of me, gold tried in the fire, and white raiment. How do we buy? By obedience. It's easy to sing, perfect submission, all is at rest, but is it? My dear wife, a lady came to see my dear wife this week, and she said, she talked about rebellion, having rebellion.

Well, there should be no rebellion in the Christian, all is at rest. I settled down to what God's will is, whatever it may be. Trying to think of the author, I think it was Wesley, wrote, upon God's will I lay me down, as child upon its mother's breast.

No, it was Madame Guillen. No silken couch, no softest bed, could ever give me such sweet rest. Thy beautiful grand will, my God, with triumph, now I make it mine.

And she's sleeping on a wooden floor, in a prison cell. No silken couch, no softest bed, could ever give me such sweet rest. What was I saying in the last verse, is what? Upon God's will I lay me down, as child upon its mother's breast.

No silken couch, no softest bed, could ever give me such sweet rest. Thy beautiful grand will, my God, with triumph, now I make it mine, and faith shall cry a joyous yes. God doesn't have to explain anything to you that he's doing, you've to faith to trust him in it.

It's easy to sing, and I love that precious hymn, I trace the rainbow through the rain. Originally it was, I climb the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain. Anyhow, all these experiences, he looked up steadfastly to heaven, it wasn't a casual glance.

He's standing there, he's ignoring all the other things. I believe with all my heart, that as he looked up there steadfastly, and he saw Jesus standing, but the scripture says he's sitting. But one old preacher said, when Jesus saw this young man murdered, his bones were crushed little by little, and he could say, forgive them father, they know not what they do.

It was echoing the word of Jesus, that Jesus he said, was so excited, he jumped from his throne, and put his hand down, ready to reach him coming up. But he sees Jesus standing, he sees into the glory of heaven, behold I see the heavens open, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Then they crowd with a loud voice, and stop their rays, and run upon him with one accord.

And they cast him out of the city, and that's in itself, was being defiled. Like Jesus was put outside of the city, and this young man is rejoicing. They think they're humiliating him, boy his heart's bursting with joy.

I'm getting the same treatment Jesus got. They threw him out of the city, they put him to death. Everybody came against him, and called him a malefactor, and a troublemaker.

And yet he has that strength. Let me just turn to one thing that I found very interesting. I tell you, if you get up at two o'clock in the morning, it's much easier to listen.

Look in Acts chapter one, please, just for a couple of minutes. Acts chapter one, verse one. The former treatise I've made of Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day which he was taken up.

Mark that. Acts one, chapter, verse two. Now, turn over, or on the same page maybe in your Bible, to verse nine.

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of sight. Verse eleven. Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up to him? This same Jesus which is taken up.

Now go over to verse twenty-four. And they prayed and said, Lord thou which knowest the hearts of all men. Is it twenty? No, twenty-two, sorry.

Beginning from the baptism of John, until the same day he was taken up from us. Four times, four times it says taken up, taken up, taken up. We've got to keep our eyes there.

He's taken up. What does this man see? Jesus. If you go to the Hebrews twelve, and is it, is it twelve-two? In Hebrews twelve-two, isn't it where it says looking unto Jesus? Well here this man is actually doing that.

He's looking unto Jesus. I see Jesus standing. What's he doing? Remember the whole crowd there, the whole crowd.

Pharisees, Sadducees, high priests, other priests. They believe they've got, they've done away with Jesus. And here he is testifying to the death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

With broken bones and bleeding face. Ribs crushed maybe, legs crushed, arms crushed. And then he's glorifying, I see Jesus.

And can you imagine, do you wonder, they were gnashing their teeth. They say we killed Jesus, we put him to death. We, nobody's ever seen him since they had a few fanatics.

And yet he sees the Christ, the Redeemer, looking unto Jesus. We need to look to Jesus in the crib, Jesus on the cross, and Jesus on the coronation. I talked with a man today, had a wonderful conversation with a man I've admired for years, and he's been going through a horrendous experience.

And he told me last Friday, two weeks ago today, he got his church together and he said, now tonight we're going to go in different groups, twos and threes, little families, in different parts of the church, and you have two hours with God by yourself. Do some heart searching. And he said they went all over the church, and after the two hours, they played on the piano, and the people got together again.

He said, I went by myself, and in that two hours, he said, it happened twice before in my life, in periods of years. And he said, I can hardly describe it. He said, Jesus, I was kneeling there looking up, and the hands of Jesus came through the clouds with nail prints in them.

He showed him his hands, and then he says, I gazed on him, and suddenly the hands disappeared, and I saw, I could not see his face. I could see him from his mouth downward, and I saw him in his suffering, in his agony, and it completely transformed my life. He said, Jesus appeared to me as sure as I've seen anything.

Well, whether you see it visualizing it like that's another thing, but we need to pray and see him, he's exalted now. As I've told you before, 95% of preaching in America or England last week, last Sunday, was about a man who lived 2,000 years ago. 95% left.

Out of the 5%, 3% is about the Jesus that may come this week. According to some of them, I don't believe that. The other 2%, it's where he is now.

We're missing where he is now. He's living to make intercession. He's living to push back the powers of darkness.

He's living to release an anointing on our eyes we've never known. Release a fire and a passion in our being we've never known. Now, this young man said to me today, Mr. Raymond, our evangelism doesn't do anything.

People come to the front, they say a little prayer, and off they go. We have another revival in the church, the same people come forward and go back again, but there's no maturity. There's nobody rising in the strength and power of God.

He'd just begun to read *The Whole Armor of God* by Godel. He said, I've got through 20 pages. My goodness, he said, this is a fantastic book.

I said, you'll be a fantastic man if you read it and get right through it to the end of the year. It'll take him this year to get through it anyhow, if he reads it properly. But you see, this man isn't looking here, he isn't looking there.

He isn't trying to bring up a cripple down and shade it to say, oh, I hope those other six brothers of mine come. Those men that were filled with the Holy Ghost when I was filled with the Holy Ghost, he isn't looking for deliverance on the level. Where are we looking today? If you keep your eyes on Jesus, you won't worry about the stock market, you won't worry about Israel.

There may be some indication, but we have to keep looking to him. He's our center and our circumference. He's the alpha, he's the omega, he's the beginning and he's the end.

We've got to get to the place where we can really say with Charles Wesley, thou all Christ art all I want, and God take me at the word. As I've said to you, the only time you can say Christ is all I need is when Christ is all you have, when you've nothing else to rely on. Or as Henry Wright says in his hymn, *Abide With Me*, when other helpers fail and comforts flee.

You see, God is a jealous God. You have a right to say if you believe it, you're part of the bride of Christ. But remember, a husband very jealous of the bride.

But the bride today, her eyes are looking here, her eyes are looking there. Where is the church that's Christ-centered? It's Christ at the beginning and Christ at the ending. I despair more and more of big churches.

I believe we're going to end up as the church began. Remember, the first 300 years of Christianity, a Christian could not own his own home, and a fellowship could not own their own building. They went from house to house breaking bread.

That may have to come back. Very likely it will. God is more jealous for his church than I know.

He's more concerned to get a church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. A church that's cleansed in the blood and obedient to all the revelation that God has given to her. And so here's this young man dying.

But Lord, this isn't right. I mean, this young man is unique. There's only seven of them in the whole world.

Only seven of them in the whole church. Surely Lord, you're going to spare him. He might write the epistles better than Paul writing to the Romans.

You know, we can think all kinds of things. But more and more, I hold on to this brother David. This last week or two, what God seemed to say to me, God is his own interpreter.

He'll interpret it as he likes. It may baffle me. I may get bruised.

I may get bloody in the battle. So what? If I keep looking unto Jesus, if I see him, there's nothing he can do. He's died.

He's redeemed us. He's reconciled us to God. And he's at the right hand of the Father.

And he says to us, all things are yours. That flattens me. How in God's name dare I read I'm heir of God and adjoined heir to be heir of God? Staggers me.

To be adjoined heir with Jesus Christ? He's lifted me into the inner circle, as it were, of eternity. He's given me this book as my guide book. As Spurgeon said, it's a book of promises already signed in the blood of Jesus.

Just take them and cash them. But here's this young man. He has no complaints.

He counts it all joy when he falls into divers temptations. Again, for a second, just going to Hebrews, I read it. Those people in Hebrews, a starvation point.

That word got old on me. I don't know all it means. David, you better find out and tell me when you see me again.

It says they were destitute and afflicted. Do you know what that means? They hadn't food. They hadn't the ordinary things of life.

They were destitute. And yet they suffered. They'd rather go with Jesus destitute than live at banqueting houses with other people.

And God, if we'll allow him, he'll do the stripping and then he'll clothe us. He'll drive us into splendid isolation until we cleave on him more than ever we've done before. And if we don't do it, he'll catch you around the bend, brother.

He's going to get you somewhere, so we better submit now. Because all he's seeking again is my dross to consume and my goat to refine. Surely I'm not going to have to wait till I'm on my deathbed.

I've been on my deathbed. I don't know how many times. My precious wife knows me through the night in hospital.

I don't know how many times. Dying, dying, dying. As I told you, she told me one night.

And there's a doctor beside of me and he said, oh, he said, cover him up. He said he'd be dead in a few minutes, three or four minutes, he said. And I had my hands like this.

You know, that's the only way to die, looking pious. So I was lying like this. I knocked the sheet.

I said, mean me? Oh, he said, are you listening? I said, sure I'm listening. You're talking about me. And I said, I want to tell you something.

When I jumped out that third story window coming through there, the Lord whispered something to me. I shall not die but live. Four o'clock that morning, Dr. Tozer was at the end of my bed, paler as this sheet, holding on the bottom of the bed.

He said, Brother Len, I don't understand this. I don't understand this. I said, let me tell you something, doctor.

I said, when I came out of that window, as soon as I got out, a sheet of flame came out about 30 feet long. And I was down on the ground, broken, up in all kinds of breaks. I said, as I, before I hit the ground, the Lord gave me the promise, I shall not die but live.

And I knew I was covered with, I was covered with blood and soot and everything. And I said, the promise I got since I came into this bed is this, as for God, his ways are perfect. And I didn't get it, so you know the message then.

Yeah, I was sure. I was going to Australia, New Zealand, India. Boy, I was going to have a tremendous ministry.

So I get knocked out for two years. Best two years of my life. I learned more about God.

I learned more about patience. Martha gave, God gave Martha supreme patience. For almost two years, I couldn't even walk, get out of bed, anything.

And yet, God began to minister in areas that I'd never, never dreamed I needed. You know, I was a five-year-old preacher. Everybody knew me.

Oh, doors were open. Good Lord. All this in heaven too.

And then you lay down there, nurse come. One, I'll just say, one thing, one nurse came every morning between midnight and one o'clock. She'd say, Reverend, oh yeah, I know what you've come for.

Do you know what? She broke more needles in me than ever any doctor in history. She'd stick that in the, I said, that's the bone again. Oh, I broke a needle again.

Thank you. I said you did last night. Every night she broke needles.

In fact, I was needled about the whole thing. But you see, I think sometimes we get mixed up. I read something this week talking about people suffering and it's terrible.

I know it is. I know some young men have died in Russia today for Christ. I know they've died in Afghanistan.

I know they've died in China. I know they've died by the hundreds, maybe in Ethiopia. But it doesn't say if we suffer for him.

It says if we suffer with him. Suffering for him is awesome, but suffering with him. Paul said his ambition was to fill up the sufferings of Christ.

So, okay, run it down quickly. He says weariness, painfulness, fastings, perils of the deep, perils of robbers, perils of mine own countrymen. And he goes through the whole list.

And then he goes a bottom line. And what's the bottom line? The bottom line, he says, is the biggest and heaviest of all. Not physical pain, but the burden of the church.

What is that phrase he uses? What's he saying? The care of all the churches. He's crushed with the feebleness of the church. He's crushed with the church.

He's so retarded. I wonder what the Lord actually thinks. Do you think he could tell us? Whisper into our hearts sometime when you're alone, reading the word, and suddenly he says, I'll show you what the church is in my eyes tonight in America and England.

I'll show you all the unappropriated promises of God. As I told you last week, was it? And I called it to a brother over today on the, on the phone. A long distance call.

I said, I only said something that troubled him. I said, listen, I've been turning over for two weeks what Jesus said about this church. Not what the critics say, what Jesus said about this church.

We say it's a Laodicean period. What does he say? He says it's wretched and naked and blind and poor and miserable. Are you telling me Jesus Christ is coming for a naked bride? Forget it.

A blind bride? A smelling bride? A bride that's neglected every conceivable thing? Is he coming for that? He's not coming to rescue a, he's not coming for a crippled old woman that's staggering. He's coming for a bride, pure and healthy and clean. So there has to be a last minute revival.

He can't come for the church tonight. The hindrance is not communism and Mormonism and humanism. Forget all the excuses the preachers have.

The obstruction to Jesus coming tonight is a filthy church. A blind church. And I don't care what you say, I've got God's word to stand on.

Therefore I'm going to hang in. Dear Lord, I've prayed for a revival for 60 years. A world famous preacher wrote me this year and this week and thanked me for some things.

Didn't make any difference. I live to God. I don't live to those guys.

I'm looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher. We're not through. The world hasn't seen the glory of God.

Stephen sees the glory of God. He sees the Christ. He sees sin under his feet.

He sees death under his feet. He sees disease under his feet. Christ has conquered whatever Adam brought in.

The first Adam, the last Adam has got the answer to it. And the world is dying out there until we move into the place where God can trust us. Where we're pure in heart.

We don't want to build a church merely. We don't want to gather as a nice group. We want to see hell shake.

We want to see the foundations of hell broken. Had a letter yesterday from Dave Wilkinson. He'd written it himself.

Very nice. And he says, well Len, God is moving up here. Keep praying.

He says, at least we've seen one abortion clinic closed down. We've seen at least one pornographic shop closed in this area. And people are getting saved almost every week.

And that day God is working wonders. He said, keep hanging in there. God's going to work.

Well I knew that 60 years ago. I'm still believing that God is going to do something that will, as I say, a Pentecost that will out Pentecost, Pentecost. There's no time for another denomination to be born.

I want to see God do something that no man dare stick his rotten name on it. It's just going to be Christ's church that everybody will know. Because there's something about us not of this world.

They looked at Stephen. He wasn't carrying a big whacking Bible. He didn't have one.

He didn't have a lapel pin. He had the radiant glory of Jesus Christ on him. The same glory that Jesus had on the Mount of Transfiguration.

The same glory that Moses had when he'd been in communion with God. And I covet this more and more. I don't want anything else.

People keep calling us, can we buy you this? Can you buy that? No thank you. Enough clothes to last me till I go to glory. You've got some food in the house.

You've got the other things. So what? All these ideas are so false. Our values are so false.

So stupid. God's greatest saints never appear on TV. They shut away in some little farm.

They shut off somewhere else. Some country like our brother comes from. Some of those marvelous saints of God.

I'll tell you, we're going to be embarrassed when we get there. He takes the things that are not to bring the not the things that are. You see these purists, that's the high priest.

He's in direct succession from Aaron. And this other priest is somebody else. And here they come and they're applauding each other.

You know in England the Roman Catholics say that they're in direct line from Peter. The Church of England say they're in direct line from Peter. The Methodists say they're in direct line from, I don't know who, John Wesleyan.

He was in direct line from Peter because he was Church of England. They're all claiming, they're all claiming what I want to say, apostolic succession. I got the answer to that.

Boy it took me years to find it. You know there's one proof of apostolic succession. You know what it is? Apostolic success.

Go home and tell your charismatic friends that. The only thing is when God Almighty can honor it. I do not believe this book is out of date.

I believe God still wants to fill men with the Holy Ghost. Control them until everything else is subdued. That Christ isn't just first in their life, he's all in all.

All for Jesus, all for Jesus. All my being's ransomed powers. All my thoughts and words and doings.

All my days and all my hours. Worldlings prize their gems of beauty. Cling to gilded toys of dust.

Boast of wealth and fame and pleasure. Only Jesus will I trust. Only Jesus.

Only Jesus. Only Jesus will I trust. Oh what wonder, how amazing.

Do you ever get old of this? I quoted it Tuesday night and you got it in that thing I gave you. Oh what wonder, how amazing. Jesus, that Jesus that Stephen saw.

Glorious King of Kings. Deigns to call me his beloved. Lets me rest beneath his wings.

How can I ever care in the world? If he's in supreme control. If he's the same yesterday and forever. If he isn't concerned about politics.

If he isn't concerned about bank balances going up and down. If he's concerned about denominations. He's concerned only about the church being so lame and limping and lousy.

He wants her to be pure and assert her rights and get out in the world and manifest his holiness. In business or in your street or wherever you are. What was the name of that boy I mentioned? Jeff Tyler.

Do you remember Jeff Tyler? Anybody remember Jeff Tyler? Apart from, you do. Was it, was it YYML? Pardon? Yeah, well do you know where he is now? Did you call me today? Oh somebody else called me. Well anyhow, that precious fellow used to come in here.

He's lying in hospital in New York tonight with what is it? Spinal meningitis. His heart stopped beating twice today. They got it revived and they called and asked that we pray tonight.

He's a precious fellow. Where is he from? Where's his home? New Jersey. Anyhow he's requested our prayers tonight.

These other pastors request our prayers and it's our business to pray one for the other. You know God will burden us up to the capacity we're willing to carry. He's just waiting.

He won't, he won't force us to do it. We've only one little hour for watching with the master. Eternal years to walk with him in white.

Eternal years, eternal, eternal hours to walk with him in white. Just one little hour of life and it's over. My concern is that we all come to maturity.

That day by day we see him in his glory. Ascended with dominion, with authority, with power and delegating it. Saying whatsoever ye ask and really asking his name he'll give it to us.

But remember that's in John 15 and that's the people he's been pruning. He's pruned them of every superfluous thing. He's taken away everything that may think, they may think is even essential.

But he takes it away. In order that he may bring forth more fruit. Verse 2 you have a promise of fruit.

Verse 8, plenty of fruit. Verse 8, 16, 16 permanence in fruit bearing. And that's what he's after in us.

The wise master builder and the wise husbandman that does the pruning. And here you have it. Read that story over and over and get all the beauty out of it and see the hostile crowd around him.

And you can't intimidate him with anything. He's seen, heard other people being stoned. He doesn't worry him.

He's looking unto Jesus. He's forgetting the religious system and every other thing. Okay let's go to prayer for a while.

And please somebody pray for this dear brother lying in hospital tonight. In a very critical condition. Let's pray for the precious Indians, all the different groups of them that are around the country.

And others that God may lay on your heart. It's getting terribly late on God's clock. There's not much time left.

I want to see this awesome visitation of God. I'm sure it will stagger us. We'll wonder where we've been all our lives.

I think when the Holy Ghost really comes, we'll suddenly realize we've been dead most of our lives anyhow. So let's pray for a little season. It's quite early.

It's only nine.

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