

The Chronic Cripple Cured

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill's sermon explores the transformative power of faith and the Holy Spirit as exemplified in the healing of a crippled man by Peter and John.

Duration: 1:08:59

Scripture: Acts 3:1

Topics: "Healing", "Faith", "Power of the Holy Spirit"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill preaches on the miraculous healing of a crippled man by Peter and John at the temple gate, emphasizing the power of the Holy Spirit and the importance of faith over material wealth. He contrasts the early church's boldness and reliance on God with the modern church's complacency and materialism, urging believers to seek a genuine encounter with the Holy Spirit. Ravenhill highlights that true transformation comes not from riches but from the power of Jesus' name, as demonstrated in the healing of the lame man, and calls for a return to apostolic faith and action.

Transcript

Let me read some verses from the Acts of the Apostles, and the third chapter. Acts chapter 3, verse 1. Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple.

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

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. Someone has said, I think it was Dr. J.B. Phillips said, that the title of the book, the Acts of the Apostles, is really a misnomer.

It is not the Acts of the Apostles, it's really a record of some of the Acts of some of the Apostles. It is in no way a complete record. Uh, in the language of, of our day, it's, it's where the action is.

It's the book of the Holy Spirit, the others are inspired by the, the Holy Spirit for sure. But 52 times in this book the Holy Spirit is mentioned. And the Holy Spirit is the spirit of prayer, and 40 times prayer is mentioned.

As I meditated on this today, I tried to make a comparison between the Acts of the Apostles and something else. And I think, you know, if you can do it at all, you owe it to your children to take them to see the Grand Canyon. It's one of the great sights of the world.

And I think that what the Grand Canyon is in nature, the Acts of the Apostles is in the, in the New Testament. Or if you should go to the Tower of London, you'll gaze, I suppose, with admiration on the crown jewels. And it seems to me that the Acts of the Apostles is the crown jewels in the New Testament.

I remember being in, uh, northern India and, uh, going over a bridge, just to say I'd been in Nepal, walk where a few yards in the country, and we tried to look to that most majestic mountain in the world, Mount Everest, which we couldn't see in the clouds. There is a sense, again, in which the Acts of the Apostles is the, is the Mount Everest of the New Testament. You know, the, the first reaction of the world to the coming of the Spirit of God was one of playful mockery.

All they did was jerk their fingers and say, so what, they've been speaking in tongues, well, they were up in an upper room, and, uh, you know what happened, they're all drunk. You know, it's, uh, it's almost amusing, it's certainly amazing that the Church never does anything when it's sober. You've got to get men drunk before they do the reckless things.

It isn't by accident, I'm sure, that Paul says, be not drunk with, but be filled with the Spirit. Why are the two things together? Because a drunken man is reckless, he's an abandoned man. He'll try and fight somebody twice his size.

He doesn't care about, you say, you're a fool, quit singing, you're going down Main Street, he goes away totally intoxicated. And the men in the Acts of the Apostles, in my judgment, were God's intoxicated men. Usually I like, uh, I like to read some things anyhow that Dr. G. Campbell Morgan wrote.

I, I think he was a great preacher, I heard him many times too. But I looked up today to see what he said about the Acts of the Apostles, and he said that, that day of Pentecost was not to be repeated, it is not the norm of the Christian Church. Well, I beg to differ, I believe it is.

I believe it was a birthday, it was a sample day. You know, again, we read things and we forget that for 400 years there have been no prophets, no manifestation of God, 400 years of darkness without any prophetic light, 400 years of stillness without any prophetic voice, and then you suddenly have a rugged, ragged little man who happened to be a Baptist. And I often tease the Baptists that after all, they were the first people that ever preached on the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

So why don't they keep up with it right now? Because if they don't, they're not Baptists. At least they're not Bible Baptists. John says you'll marvel at this.

Why, nobody's going to church, nobody's going to the synagogue, nobody's going to the temple. Where's everybody going? Oh, there's a man down the road there. So what? Well, people say it's Elijah, come back to life.

He's a tremendous man. You know, it says of him, it says of him what it doesn't say of Jesus. It says he was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.

Well, I'm not being facetious here, but he could hardly speak in tongues that day, could he? If you have to speak in tongues to be filled with the Holy Ghost, it says he was filled with the Holy Ghost, but he didn't

speak in tongues. Now, there is a valid gift of tongues, I'm not disputing that, but I'm disputing the fact everybody has to have it to prove they're filled with the Spirit. Up comes John the Baptist.

Right after him comes Jesus. The next thing, these men in the upper room, this bunch of disciples, what an investment Jesus made in them. For three years he taught them and they still didn't believe him.

If they believed all that Jesus said, they would have been lined up that resurrection morning at the grave, waiting for him to come out of the tomb, and there wasn't one of them there. They did not believe him. And I've said very often, and it sounds facetious, but it's not, that I believe this generation of Christians were the most unbelieving believers the Lord ever had.

One day somebody's going to read the Bible and believe it, and when they do, we'll all be embarrassed. After all, this is the word of truth. Thy word, O God, is true.

Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. When he is come, he is the Spirit of truth. Truth, truth, no error in it.

Solid truth. Doesn't have to be refined and purified, it is truth. Because God is truth.

Again, Jesus is the truth, and the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Now, they didn't get into trouble for speaking in tongues, but they did get into trouble when they went to the beautiful gate of the temple, and there was a man, and did you notice what he said? He was lame from his mother's womb. He didn't have an accident the week before.

His bones were calcified. His bones were, well, had become stiff. Oh my.

J.B. Phillips says what I find forever exciting. I could say this to myself, I'll say it many times, but I never get tired of saying it, and I never get tired of getting a thrill out of it. He said that day when he read the Acts of the Apostles one morning when he was feeling a bit heavy, you know.

Maybe you never have days like that. Well, he did, and he turned on his swivel chair, and he reached for a book and opened it like that. It happened to be the Greek version of the New Testament, and it opened up at the Acts of the Apostles.

He began to read, and suddenly the thing exploded. Why? He looked at the church that he was part of, which happens to be the stately church of England. He thought of all the bishops and the great men there, and then he read this exciting record, this thing that God has established permanently for the church.

And as he did, he said this, this is the church of Jesus Christ before it became fat, and short of breath, by prosperity. This is the church before it became muscle-bound by over-organization. This is the church where they didn't gather together a group of intellectuals to study psychosomatic medicine, but they healed the sick.

This is the church where they did not recite their articles of faith, they acted in faith. This is the church, he says, where they didn't say prayers, they prayed in the Holy Ghost. I like that word there in Jude, where it says, praying in the Holy Ghost.

When we were kids in England, we used to sing a hymn, I often say my prayers, but do I ever pray? That little boy went into church with his daddy, and daddy bowed his head like this, and stayed, you know, like that, and when he finished, little fella said, what did you say, dad? And he didn't know. Because that's a

custom, you just bow your head, and stick your head in your hands, and whether you say anything or not, it doesn't make any difference, you see. But all the difference when they prayed, ah, there's all the difference in the world, when they had prayed, it says the place was shaken.

Now the details here are very interesting, it says that Peter and John went up to the temple at the ninth hour. It was the ninth hour that Jesus cried out in his agony. It was the ninth hour when a man rounded up some men to do a job, and he hadn't finished it, and on the ninth hour he went out and gathered more.

In other words, it was a crisis hour. What's this man doing at the beautiful gate of the temple? Do you know what it says? It gives you his age a bit later on. But it says they carried him daily, they carried him from his home to the temple, from the temple back home at night, they did that every day in the year, 365 days.

How many times is that? Well, twice 350 would be 700, there's another, so 730 times a year, for 10 years is 7,300, for 30 years is 21,900, what, about 22,000 times. He was carried, but he was never cured. He was helped, but he was never healed.

He went to the beautiful gate of the temple, can you imagine the Pharisees going in and taking a piece of gold out of the pockets and seeing it got in the sunlight and dropping it very ostentatiously in his little tin can? And somebody else comes along and gives him something else, and he says, oh, here's Peter and John, the most big evangelists, boy, they had 5,000 people saved yesterday, boy, they got a big love offering, and he says, hey, back sheets, give us some money. I know you've got it. You know, what you should do is write to your favorite radio preacher and ask him if he'll send you his tape on this text, silver and gold, I have not.

But anyhow, he said, silver and gold, I have not. What did he ask for? He asked for arms. Phonetically, it sounds like these arms, doesn't it? That's what a little girl thought in Sunday school, she said, why did he ask for arms when he needed legs? Well, it's like the rest of us, we pray about a lot of things we don't need and we don't ask for the things we do need.

Here is a man at the beautiful gate of the temple. Do you know what he is? He's a type of the world. He was crippled from his birth, out of his mother's womb, he was paralyzed.

An organized religion did nothing for him, and the high priest did nothing for him, and the festival days did nothing for him, and the feast of Pentecost had done nothing for him until this time. He'd maybe seen it celebrated 25 years when thousands of pilgrims came into the city. And they say, what is the feast? Oh, it's Passover.

What is the feast? It's the feast of tabernacles. What is the feast? Pentecost. But there's a difference.

Maybe he'd seen those men going into the upper room. You know, it's interesting, isn't it, that God never works with majorities. I was praying with Herb today, and it came to me as we prayed, you know, that God didn't say, look, I'll never pour out the Holy Ghost until every church member's there, because Jesus had been seen a 500 brethren at once in his resurrection, hadn't he? 300 major of them didn't turn up to the greatest manifestation of God maybe ever upon a community.

Surely it was. They were all gone fishing or a little bit of business or something to do or find some socks for the baby or do something. And when it came to it, they didn't even bother to go to the upper room.

Now, I guess if they'd known that was going to be the most fantastic day in church history, they would have got there. But they didn't go. And he said, well, I'll pour my Spirit out on the 120 that were there.

And the Spirit was poured out. And Peter and John went out in the power of the Spirit of God. What did they do? They got into trouble for preaching what? For preaching Jesus.

That's what they got into trouble for. And for preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead and they had all power and all authority. And you see what he's saying in a subtle way is this, that everything that you have is totally illegal.

God has washed out centuries, millenniums of stuff that you have. Your temple, God's written bankrupt over it. Your systems of religion, God isn't interested in them.

He's ended everything and it all begins anew in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All the Old Testament prophecies ended in the womb of the Virgin Mary and all the New Testament prophecies started when Jesus began to walk. And the poor dumb world outside there thinks it's got rid of Jesus.

It's got another headache coming. It hasn't even met him yet. It thinks that God isn't going to interfere in the affairs of men.

He certainly is, in a number of ways and not the least, the bloodiest battle in history, the battle of Armageddon. But Peter goes along with John. They were opposite characters.

John is poetic and quiet. Peter's impulsive. God impaired them that.

They went to the temple at the hour of prayer. I've often wondered why they went because they didn't believe a word that the temple folk believed and the temple folk didn't believe a word they believed but they stuck at it till they threw them out anyhow. And as they go into the temple, this poor crippled withered man looks up expecting to receive something and then you remember what Peter says.

Peter says, look on us. Boy, it's great when he can say that. But do you know when the crowd came round and said, nobody ever did anything like this.

Peter says, well, don't look on us. Oh, that's the very opposite of what I radio. Do you know who got healed in my program? Would you like a picture of this? Do you know so-and-so? Do you know what Jesus said? Somewhere in, is it the 6th of John? Somewhere there.

He says, do you know the reason God doesn't bless you and honor you because you honor one another? That's right. You're forever seeking a pat on the back. You're forever waiting to get graded a little bit higher in your group or your society and God says, forget it.

Jesus says, I seek no honor of men. He certainly didn't. Yes, condescending religion threw him some money.

I think that man had been carried on his back till he knew every crack in the buildings going down. He watched the swallows come and said, it's summer. He knew every season of the year as they carried him every morning and back at night.

Some kind people, here and thousands of times, carried but not cured, helped but not healed. Are you going to solve the problem of this man? Well, there were two cleansed, committed, consecrated,

concerned Christians that did it. Not a committee meeting, just a couple of fellows.

Again, that God had cleansed and they were consecrated and they were concerned. He didn't say, get up. He saw him and he reached down and he touched him.

You know, I guess that when he touched him he thought Peter had about 10,000 volts in him. Hmm? The resurrection life of Jesus was in him. He says, listen you poor, bound, helpless man, silver and gold we have none.

Oh, that's a nice comment on the previous chapter because they'd all shared all their wealth. What have they done with it? You know, this New Testament church was something if you lied, you died. Man, if that happened in our churches, we'd have mass funerals every Sunday.

In the early church, if you lied, you died. Wouldn't that be great going to church? I addressed a lot of Pentecostal ministers and I loved them. And it was at the banquet.

And I said, you have a truly Pentecostal? Yes, yes, amen, amen. I said, well, truly Pentecostal is Acts 2 and 3. You know, they went to church every day, prayed every day, broke bread every day, people were saved every day. You have a church like that? No, no.

They don't have a Pentecostal church, that's all. You may have the nearest thing to it, but this is what it really is. Did you ever start a Sunday morning service by singing, saying, we're not going to sing the second stanza? Jack, did you do something? He says, yeah, Pastor, Brother Jack, I did it, praise the Lord.

And he said, you lied to the Holy Ghost, carry him out. And they had long meetings then because it says in that fifth chapter, his wife came three hours later. Heavens, if he came to our churches three hours later, they'd be locked and barred and the preacher would be on his way to Canada to preach a night service or something.

She didn't expect the meeting to be locked up when she came three hours after. It was just getting going, the kind of meeting I like. And they were really rolling.

And the preacher says, oh, Sister Sapphira, did you do so and so? And she says, yeah, Brother, we did, my husband and I did it. And he says, you lied to the Holy Ghost, carry her out. And I said to the Pentecostal preachers, did you ever start a Sunday morning service like that? It's exciting.

Boy, you'll get attention after that. Nobody will sleep. They'll be worried you're going to catch somebody out.

You know, now that's as much Pentecostal as healing the sick. You know, we say, my, I wish God would come in Pentecostal. Do you know what would happen if God came in Pentecostal power? The true pastors of the country would be in jail in three weeks because we'd be interfering with people's civil rights.

Heavens, you can't even tell church what your children want to do. Did you notice what they said the other day on TV? A school in western Texas has a sign up to the teenagers. If your parents are hassling you, call this number for help.

Post it in a school. You're not going to be able to do what you like with your children before long. Up in North, they're fighting, I forget the state just now, where if a father or mother tell you to take the garbage out and you don't want to, and they insist, you call this number and we'll tell your parents what to do.

Huh? The land of the free and the home of the brave. Well, in God's name, what happens in Russia if this happens in freedom? We're losing it, but we're not too bothered about it. Oh, my, my, my.

You see, the law by God is a jealous God. If my heart cries for anything, it cries to see apostolic piety, apostolic purity, apostolic power, that there's no bargain price. Why did Peter say, such as I have, give I unto thee? He had no purse.

He had no prestige. He had no place in the community. These were the outcasts.

Peter and John, oh, yeah, they're the fellas that went with that guy that got crucified, you know, that Jesus fella. Ah, no need to worry. But, boy, they soon changed the tune when they came out of the upper room.

It was a very different story. This man has been watched, observed by maybe millions of people through all the feasts year and year after. Do you think it didn't spread like wildfire that that man, you see what, what happened? Well, one minute he's laying.

The next minute he's leaping. Who did it? How did it happen? Peter and John look down and Peter says, silver and gold, I don't have it. But, I'll tell you what, I do have something.

You know, it reminded me of this word. I think it's a thrilling word of the apostle. Do you ever get goose pimples when you read the scriptures? Are you too sophisticated? I get them.

Paul says in one Corinthians, pardon me, two Corinthians, six, ten, he says, this is my situation. I'm sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. I'm poor, yet making many rich.

I have nothing, and yet I possess all things. As soon as a church becomes rich materially, she becomes poor spiritually. It seems to be an unwritten law.

Peter says, silver and gold, we have none. But, I'll tell you, we've got something more. After all, maybe that guy had a bank balance.

I remember years ago, we used to have a man stood in a certain town in England. It was a seaside town called Blackpool. He was always miserable and poor, and he held his little tin can.

But, he was missing for three weeks and nobody bothered too much. Somebody else was in his place. The next year, he was missing again.

Somebody checked up on him. He'd gone to Switzerland for his vacation. He'd rented his begging position.

He owned about five good houses in the community. You couldn't blame him. He worked on their pigeon.

You know, when they made the Christmas gifts, oh, that little man that stands outside, well, I better give him ten bucks. I give him ten a year. Well, that's not bad if you have 50,000 people giving you ten a year.

You know, like your radio man says, I'm not asking you for ten dollars, I'm only asking you for one. Well, when he's got five million people listening, that's not too bad either, is it? Oh, what a difference in the early church. They had nothing.

They had no prestige. They had no standing. They had nothing that they could put their names on.

And yet, Paul says, we're poor, but we make many rich. I was thinking about what Jesus said in, wasn't it, the 10th of John when he said, he said, I'm the good shepherd. And the good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep.

Now it seems the sheep have to lay down their lives for the shepherd the way they teach it these days. Peter's not concerned about anything except the condition of the man, and he knows that he has received that anointing from God. And he stretches forth the hand, and immediately he touched the man.

His ankle bones received strength. Do you think he could contain himself? Man, he ran down the corridor of that church, and it was a church. When Alexander Janus was the great high priest, they were bringing the water from the pool of Siloam, which you remember they poured it out on the great day of the feast.

For six days they poured it out, and he missed. There was a funnel down which they poured it, and he missed it, and it went on the ground. And there was a stampede.

There was a riot in the sanctuary. Do you know that 6,000 people were injured? That gives you an idea of the size of the temple. Their platform, this church wouldn't make a platform for that church.

You see the size of it? You see the number of people that went to it? And yet, the collective spiritual wealth of those people couldn't touch the man. At the beautiful gate, they had all the theology, they had all the terminology. They put their hands together piously and said, the Lord, he is God.

There is only one God, the true God. All other gods are gods of heathens. Ours is the true God.

But he was as powerless as this desk. I'm not suggesting just that miracles in themselves, physical miracles of the third lantern, not at all. They're very wonderful, they're very beautiful, and I've just seen about every one of them from opening the eyes of the blind to cripples and what have you, God, everything, but the dead.

But I've seen churches where that existed and you'd as much carnality as anywhere else anyhow. The great power is this, that we have power as Jesus, as Paul says right into the Ephesians, you hath equipped unto a dead in trespasses and in sins. But you see, those are means to an end.

What did this do? Or did they say, well, I think we ought to put them on the city council. I think these kind of men should be allowed to immediately get a license to preach. I think next time we have a festival we'll have them on the, up with the high priest, Caiaphas, and the rest, and let them give their testimony.

They didn't do that. What did they do? Who turned on them? The people? No, the people were amazed and followed them. Who turned on them? The religious men of the day turned on them.

Jesus raised up who? He raised up Lazarus from the dead. Who turned on Lazarus? The people? No, the elders turned on him. Well, you'll find the same thing in the next chapter, in this very chapter, that the, the whole of the temple was stirred and everybody else was upset about it.

What happened? Well, it says at the beginning of the fourth chapter they spake unto the people and the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees. That's a bunch. Do you know they had an army guarding the temple? And the temple police came to the men of God.

Why? They had no swords. They weren't raising insurrection, they were raising hell. And they said, well we can't put up with this, well you'll put up with the death long enough.

And so they gathered all the celebrities together. And it says in the, as you know the story that when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, oh my, that just, I feel like leaping 15 feet. Two little guys here up against the vast combined system of the Jews, all the processions they ever had through the city never stood like one man getting up and leaping and praising God and everybody says, well what happened? He said, I'll tell you what happened.

The man that you crucified, the Lord Jesus Christ, boy did he give them both barrels. He gave them both barrels twice over. I guess he got double revolvers or something.

He shot them, shot them, hacked them, defeated. You thought you got rid of the Lord of Glory, why don't you stand on your tiptoes and try and blow the sun up? Why, you think you've done with the Lord of Glory? You've not started with him yet. And you ask us what the key is.

I'll tell you what the key is. His name, through faith in his name, hath made this man whole whom ye now seek. And all that disturbs him.

I tell you, it's like I quoted today, I think, to another brother I think that came to see me today, a pastor, and I said to him, well brother, here it is. Hudson Taylor was right when he said, if God opens the windows of heaven on you, the devil will open the door of hell and you'll be caught between the two. Sure, everybody was coming, thousands of people were coming to see what happened.

And immediately they all got angry. They were going to get rid of their religious phylacteries and people weren't going to come to them when there was life and joy and excitement. It says, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John.

Yes, I said it before, let me say it again, the church began in the upper room with a bunch of men agonizing. And she's ending in the supper room with a bunch of women organizing. Hmm? The church began, it was supernatural and the church that isn't supernatural is superficial anyhow.

Oh, we got lost in statistics and numbers and how far we're going and how many churches we have and how many this and how many the other. That doesn't scare the devil. Peter and John had the power, they had the anointing of the Holy Spirit of God.

And when they saw the boldness, you see the church then had boldness, now she's coldness. The church then was an expanding church, now she's almost an expiring church. The distinctive features of this church to me were they had fire and faith and fruit.

And they were all so obvious. Are you going to shut this man up? Are you going to stop this from spreading? We've got, we've got a fire, a prairie fire on our hands. And they discovered all the waters of doubt and all the waters of unbelief and all the skepticism and all the cynicism and all the ridicule, couldn't put it out.

He was leaping and praising God. And they were blazing mad about it. And so they thought if they threatened these men, you know the worst thing you can do about a preacher is to look down your nose and say, you know what I think, I think he's a nice guy, but you know what, don't spread this, don't mention it to anybody that I've told you.

You know, he doesn't even have a degree. That's what they said. You say prove it, well I'll tell you, I can prove it.

They said, look, we've got to admit that that man has been tied up, he's got calcified limbs and we had to lift him and carry him and now the man's jumping around like a schoolgirl full of ecstasy and he's leaping and praising God. But, well, yes, we'll even put it in a big bracket and say it's a notable miracle. But, listen, those men that did it are unlearned and ignorant.

Oh boy, that hardly paid him in. They were unlearned and ignorant. Just about the most pitiful character you could ever see.

In fact, if you got a bit nearer this one, you'd say, you used to be a fisherman? Yes. Oh, you smell the fish on me? And you reckon you're a bishop now? Well, I don't know about a bishop, I'm the anointed of God. You are? Well, this is all going to pass.

I mean, you know what's going to happen in a few years? You'll be running back here to the, to the temple asking for admission again and will you restore my name to the church roll? One boy said, you might as well have it on a sausage roll, but anyhow. Ah, that's all right. What happened? Have you forgotten what happened? That man who was told to smell the fish? Do you know what he did? The ignorant? He went down, he sat down one night and the Holy Ghost that came upon him when he touched the man with a crippled body, the same Holy Ghost came on him.

Do you know what he did? He wrote a book. In fact, he wrote two volumes. I've got them right here.

I got them, I always carry them around. This ignorant fisherman, I like him, he wrote the first epistle to Peter and he wrote the second epistle. Now that's not bad for a guy that never went to school, is it? And then John.

Oh, well of course he's worse than them. Poor John. He wrote the most beautiful thing ever written in English prose.

The gospel according to this man. You know what I like about these fellas is this, they never collected any royalties on the books but boy, they're going to get them one day. One day they'll get some royalties when they get to heaven.

Even if the Living Bible did mess them up. But anyhow, they're going to get the royalties. And you know what John did? That ignorant John that gave us the best interpretation of the gospel, then he wrote a first epistle and then he wrote a second epistle and then he wrote a third epistle.

Now that's four books. All best sellers. And you know what he did just to rub our noses, oh boy, how nasty can he get? You know what he did just to rub our noses in the grass? This ignorant man, he wrote the book of the Revelation that battles all wise men.

My, I wish the Lord had sanctified me with that kind of wisdom. I wish the Lord had baptized me with a spirit like that that I could write a book like the gospel as John wrote it, first epistle, second epistle, third epistle, Revelation! Ah, yes, yes, but what is it? If God opens the windows of heaven, the devil opens the door of hell? Oh, Peter and John didn't sleep that night much, I guess. I guess they sat on the edge of the bed and said, hey, you know what, old boy, you remember Jesus said it would be like this one day, isn't it great? Don't you feel on top of the world, Peter? And he says, I sure do, man, this is great.

I don't know what we'll do tomorrow. It's going to be great, you know, it's going to get better and better. And Satan says, well, if I do, I'll break your neck, that's what I'll do, I'll break your heart.

Sure, he wrote the Revelation, do you know how he wrote it? He wrote it in the Alcatraz. He wrote it on the penal colony of the world. He wrote it where they put all the vilest, rottenest men that came out of the sewers of hell on a little island called the Isle of Patmos that was a gathering of all the corruption of the world.

And right in the middle of it, I like to think somebody went to Ephesus one day and said, I heard so much about your famous preacher, John, and I am quite excited. I brought my notebook, I'm going to take all the notes on his message. And I'm sorry he isn't here.

Where is he? Well, can you just see that peak over there out in the sea, that little island? It's called Patmos. He's there. Oh, I didn't know that.

Yeah, he's a, the Romans cast him away and that's where he is, suffering penalty. He's getting an old man. Do you think I could get there? Well, if you hire that man, he might take you for five dollars and he got in the rowing boat and went over and John was sitting at the side of the sea gazing into eternity and the man comes up and says, John, I didn't think you'd be in the Isle of Patmos.

He said, I'm not. He says, aren't you in the Isle of Patmos? He says, no, but I'm in the spirit. Isn't that lovely? Isn't it amazing that the devil can wall you in but he can't roof you in? Romans 8, won't you separate us from the, you can separate me from my family, from my church, from my Bible, from every friend I've got.

You cannot separate me from God. No, he's not in the Isle of Patmos. He's in the spirit.

You say, poor man, he sits there and they take him a piece of bread every day and a cup of water and that's all he's had. Brother, forget it. Yesterday he was at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

All he has is a little bit of land he walks around because all those men are sex perverts and liars and thieves that are the dirtiest, rottenest, vilest bunch the world has ever seen and he's been living with them. He says, you forget it brother. Yesterday he said, I would, you say, I didn't go to church, I was the only person there and the Holy Ghost did the preaching and you know what the choir did? There were 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands, that's a hundred million plus and every one of them sang for me yesterday and there were 144,000 with hearts in their hands.

Well, you go back to your backslidden church and enjoy it but I'm staying here, I'm in the spirit. Hmm? Oh, I thought God gave his best if you became distinctive and a traveler and a famous person and you got invited to big conferences. I remember once somebody said to me, brother, you'll have to preach next time.

I see you're listed with a lot of great preachers. That must be difficult. I said, no it's not, don't worry me a hell of being.

Well, I'll tell you, they're all great men. After Jesus said, how did you get on? I said, they were all great men. I told you.

I said, after two days every one of them grated on me. There wasn't one of them had anything more refreshing than a mouthful of sand. Stuff they'd recite.

I said to Martha when we were at Teen Challenge one night, let's, let's, let's go down to our friend, uh, didn't have, yes, no, no, he wasn't at the church that night, I mean, uh, Steve Norford was away. He had a famous preacher there, one of the top five evangelists. He stood there and recited what I'd heard him recite about fifteen years ago.

He never missed a word and it was as flat as you had. And I never felt more sick in my life. And as soon as we sang the hymn, I said, sweetie, let's get up.

And that man ran to the church, hey Len, I want to talk to you. Say, he says, isn't it terrible? When I was here ten years ago, this place was jammed to the rafters. Nobody here tonight.

Well, I thought, well, there'll be two less tomorrow night and I can assure you of that. Think I'm going to come and risk my neck coming on a subway and that way you can get murdered. We'd eight people murdered in two weeks on that subway and the district for which we went, when we went to town.

Dead, lifeless. No, no, there's a mystery in godliness, isn't there? The biblical definition is that great is the mystery of godliness. God gives his choices to the loneliest.

The great old saint that, well, he didn't write the hymn, The Sons of Time are Sinking, it's one of the greatest hymns ever written, I think. I have a copy at home there with 27 stanzas in it. The Sons of Time are Sinking, the Dawn of Heaven Breaks.

He has a mysterious verse later on, The bride eyes not her garments but her dear bridegroom's face. I don't know where he was, I've never seen that happen, but anyhow, eventually it will, I suppose. But do you know what happened? Do you know where he wrote, where that hymn was written, really? It was written out of the letters that he wrote, in a lousy tower that stands on a rock off the coast of Scotland, and the waves beat on it like thunder.

It was a lonely, cold place, the food was bad, and there was old Samuel Rutherford, and you know what he said amongst other things? He said, You know, this Christian life, it were a well-spent journey, though seven deaths lay between. And he finishes every verse of that stanza, and glory, glory, dwelleth in Emmanuel's land. You see, he's already had a foretaste of glory divine.

And Peter and John here, oh, they've got over their back sliding. There's no evidence anywhere that they deteriorated after the Upper Room experience. They came out, and God put a fire in them.

You know, Peter did, he did like everybody else, he warmed himself at somebody else's fire until he got the fire. And once he got the fire, he never warmed himself at anybody else's fire. And God is a consuming fire.

God is love, yes He is, but God is fire. And the symbol of the church is not a cross, the cross is pagan. The symbol of the church of Jesus Christ is a tongue of fire, it sat upon each of them.

And there's a sound from heaven as on a rushing mighty wind. I don't believe there's a wind, but there's a sound like it, like a thousand roaring freight trains going past. And immediately, for me that was the birthday of the church, the New Testament church, there was a church in the wilderness.

And you find these unlearned, unlettered, unusual, unwanted men. You talk about having your back to the wall, where could they go? There's only one way you can go back to the wall, that's forward. They'd lost

everything.

Silver and gold, we have none. Prestige, we have none. But don't you try to suggest power, we have none.

We've got power. He promised that Jesus received power, the Holy Ghost coming upon him. And they needed that power.

They needed moral power to stand up against government. They needed physical power to stand up against torture. They needed intellectual power to write the things they wrote.

They needed spiritual power to cast out demons. They weren't in a game, they were in a battle. Immediately they received endurance of power from on high.

They stepped out into a hostile world and they never, never, never failed. They didn't get every revival as quick as that. They didn't get every blessing as quick as that.

I was reading what an English critic said quite recently. He said, The Church of Jesus Christ, I do not go to it, he said, but I make my observation. He's talking about England anywhere and it must be true everywhere.

He says, The Church of Jesus Christ at this moment is in an irreversible decline. She's going out and she doesn't make any attempt, he says, to reconcile herself, and these are his words, to the awesome beauty and the thrilling terror of the gospel. Isn't that a definition for an ungodly man? She's not seeking to recover the awesome beauty and the thrilling terror.

Oh, I just said to God today, Lord, our little place isn't much after all these walls were once a barn and I don't know what this junk was here, they made a very good job of it. There's not much to it. As I said last week, it's not like Solomon's temple that was plastered with gold and it's not like a filthy stable covered with dung and urine that Jesus was born in, it's somewhere between.

But my only desire for it is that it will be filled with God. But every time we leave it we'll say, surely God is in this place. And having an encounter with God we'll be able to go out to a world that's crippled.

We'll be able to go out in the power of the Spirit of God, not with our shoulders back in the kind of holy swagger, but that God may entrust us poor things that we are with an anointing of the Spirit that will take us out to a crippled world and see it transformed by the power of God. Sure we'll meet opposition. The early church was a beautiful thing.

It sure had its setbacks, it had its disasters. If you'd gone to the early church somebody would have pointed a finger and said, you see that young man there? He's not twenty years of age. He's going to be a greater man than Moses, greater than the prophets.

That man, old man, you ever hear him pray? We should hear him pray. You know, when there's a blockage in this church, we don't know the way out. We call on him because he has a spirit of wisdom.

His name happened to be Stephen. And I'm sure the early church thought he thought, and he thought, thought, well that crack gets deeper and deeper. If it's business, there's another crack there.

If it's something that one crack hits, and you know what? It's been like that the way we've learned the Word of God. There are some truths, and they weren't the best truths very often. We've got them in our

minds.

Think of this. If I mentioned to you about Sodom, and you don't know what the Bible says. The Bible says the sin of Sodom was pride, and fullness of bread, and then they went down, deteriorated.

And the preacher usually says, you see, God's anger, it only lasts so long. And God sent fire. Let me say this.

I believe tonight the world is going to hell fire because the church has lost Holy Ghost fire. All right. God sent the fire of judgment on Sodom because of their sin, yes, partly.

But there are two sides to a coin. Do you know what the other side was? Because there were not ten righteous men in the two cities, that's right. God says, if I find ten, five in Sodom, and five in Gomorrah, you will find ten righteous men in Sodom and Gomorrah.

And you'll find ten righteous men in Sodom and you'll find ten righteous men in Sodom and you'll find ten righteous Oh, what a story. He began where? In Ur of the Chaldees. He was nameless, homeless, lifeless, childless, moneyless, positionless, possessionless.

What did he do? He became a multimillionaire, possibly far richer, even than Abraham. He became the mayor of city. He became a judge because he sat in the gate.

You see where he starts down here with nothing, nobody. You see how he climbs up and up and up and up and has exceeding wealth. Do you know where he ended? He ended where he began.

He ended in a cave, wifeless, not childless, but his sons-in-laws were not there, sons-in-laws. He ended up moneyless, positionless, possessionless, powerless. Oh, the sin of Sodom vexed his righteous soul every day.

Aye, it could vex yours and you sit in a rocking chair all your life. That doesn't make it romantic. It's like a better standard maybe than the world has.

But it perished because God said if I could find ten righteous. Do you ever think that God one day is going to say to Gabriel now, that Gabriel I don't, do you know how many millions of people, billions we have here. He says let's run a film, let's run a playback.

Let the people see what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah. When, when God replays the whole of history, isn't it going to be interesting? Hmm? We'll discover some days we were about one step away from revival and something discouraged us or something got us down and we go on to a sideline. We got within touching distance of some supernatural manifestation and we disobeyed God and dissipated the power that was there.

Sure the early church suffered. They took their prime, beautiful young man Stephen. They gnashed on him with their teeth.

God gives the best to those who take the biggest load. He gave the book of the Revelation to the man who sat on the isle of Patmos. What does the scripture say Jesus is doing now? He's sitting at the right hand of the Father.

Well do you know what? Jesus was so excited when Stephen laid down his life and, and said let them kill me like they did my master and he prayed as his master did, lay not this sin to their charge, that Jesus got so excited he jumped up to receive him, the scripture says. Doesn't it say that? Stephen says that. I see Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father.

I suggest to you Jesus says there you are, that's what I wanted to see. I wanted to see a young man as sold out to God as that and this young man, he should have lived another 60 years and had children and grandchildren and here he is, he says Lord I'm delighted that I can shed my blood if you shed yours. I won't leave that lady's sin to, have mercy on them.

You know what I think the angels look round and nudge each other and say hey see what Jesus is doing? He's standing up there looking over the parapets and see the smile on his face? Man Jesus is excited about something and he says come up son, come up. It's a rough way to go isn't it? We won't get stoned to death, at least we hope not, but if you do I'll cheer for you. And you cheer for me eh? Oh it can come to that don't you worry the way things are going.

Oh yes silly, 10 years from now America won't be the America it is today. You, you just better watch out. You precious people living in southern South America and get an apartment because we might be coming down to live with you.

It'll be safer down there than it is up here anyhow. I see where somebody said recently to a missionary aren't you, aren't you terrified to live in Africa in the jungle? He said no I'm terrified to live in New York. He said I never got mugged in a forest yet and I've been to a forest at night on a missionary journey and he said I've come home there'll be wild beasts and snakes and strange people but he said nobody ever laid a finger on me.

I went down the street in New York somebody clouted my head and snatched my purse. Those are the benefits of civilization because he had an electric light when he got home. The early church was what? Poor yet very rich.

The church today is what? Rich but very poor. The early church was what? It was an expanding church. They went everywhere.

I like what it says. It was a continuing church because they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and breaking of bread. It was a painful church.

Ours is a painless church. It says in the early church they were all amazed. In our churches they're all amused.

Their emphasis was holiness. Our emphasis is happiness. Their emphasis was lay down your life.

Ours is give you a tithe. He's got it made. What a difference.

Their church was noted for its boldness and ours for its coldness. Their church was apostolic. Ours is almost apostate.

Theirs had the anointing of the spirit. We're rich and increased in goods and it seems we've need of nothing. And God says thou art naked and wretched and blind and poor and miserable.

Peter and John looked on him and they said look not on us. I like that. I think that's why God continued to bless them.

They took no credits. It didn't sound out of any reports how many people were reaching, how much we're doing. It was all give all the glory to Jesus.

He loved us and he gave himself for us. We have nothing these days and we possess all things. Now it seems to me we possess all things and we've nothing.

You know there's one great joy about having nothing. You know what it is? You can't lose anything. If you've nothing you can't lose anything can you? If you have no opinion of yourself nobody will ever insult you.

There's nothing to insult. Come on. The devil's smart but he can't hit nothing.

How can he hit nothing? He can't do that. And Jesus says you know how the devil gets mad with me? He says the prince of this world cometh and he findeth nothing in me. And then the scripture says as he was so are we in this world.

The joy of having nothing? You can't lose anything. The joy of being broken? Nobody else can break you. The joy of being dead? Nobody can kill you.

You see if you sit on the floor you can't fall very easily can you? If you have no pride in you nobody will ever ever ever upset you. They may say you're the ugliest woman in town. Now do you know they don't believe it? But anyhow whether they do or not and they say you know I don't think much to her.

So what? I remember dear old Shellhammer said one day he's a great soul from this country and he came to England and I enjoyed him. He was a his name was Shellhammer. They said he shelled sinners and hammered the devil.

Well he was quite a preacher. And he said I was in a meeting the other night and a man came to me and he said you know what brother I don't like your preaching. And he went down and he said hey come here I want to shake hands with you.

Shake hands with me? Why? He said I don't like it either. Now you can't do much with a guy that's side with you like that can you? It makes you more mad. He said I don't like it.

It should be a lot better than it is. The joy in having nothing? You can't lose anything. The joy of being dead? Nobody can kill you.

If you're being crucified with him you won't carry a hill of beans what people say. Poor people anyhow. If a man were dead on the floor then you could yell at him say anything you like.

Do you think he's going to move? If that man was a miser and you started dropping gold coins and said hey buddy these are solid gold you know they're all twenty dollar pieces and now they're bringing about uh some of them if you put a little rim around them they're bringing four hundred dollars each you know. Listen here I'm talking to you. Do you think he's going to stretch out his cold fingers and snatch at it? No he's dead.

He's unresponsive. A great joy in having nothing. A great peril in having nothing.

Man hammers at the door at night. What do you want down there? He says hey come on you told me that if I was ever in trouble to come. He says well come on I've got a friend come at midnight and I'm nothing to set before him.

Ah that's a different story. The high priest goes past. Could he give him anything? Not on your life.

Or he could give him compassion. He could give him a good morning. He could give him a dollar.

He could give him some gold. The guy's got sacks of it. You're not meeting the need that I have.

Peter John. Hi Peter John. I've seen you come to this temple many times.

Are you going to give me something? I know there's a big share out yesterday. I heard everybody got five thousand dollars in your church. You shared it all out.

And Peter says yes and I unloaded it an hour after. Silver and gold I have none but I've got something. I've got the very thing you need.

Isn't it amazing how people will pursue money? In England a few years ago a newspaper offered a good reward for the best definition of money. And the prize winner was this. It will get you anywhere except heaven and buy you anything except happiness.

That's pretty good. Notice this girl now what they call her. I've forgotten this country western singer that's at the top of the totem pole right now.

And she says I was married at 13. I had five babies by the time I was 18. We were poor and then I found I could sing and now I'm worth five million dollars.

When I finish a concert at night I get in a bus a hundred and seventy four a hundred and seventy four thousand dollars. It's fitted up like a mobile palace and I'm driven overnight to my next uh place where I have to perform. I have the mansion I live in.

I have five million dollars. I have one of the finest buses in the world but I have not found happiness yet. Let me say this and quit.

I don't really want to but I will. But anyhow I went to a meeting a while ago and somebody told me about this lady and she came in and I looked at her. You know that lady had the most charming legs I've ever seen.

Boy when she walked down home what legs. What legs. What was outstanding.

Well I'll tell you she looked as though she'd got about 10 golf balls down each stocking. She lumped as big as that all up her stockings around here. She's a fairly long skirt.

But they were all lumped hanging like this. She she was a farm girl up in Wisconsin and she went down to South America. Two governments put a price on her head.

I've forgotten her name for the moment but Sophie. Sophie Muller. That's right.

Not Sophie Lauren. Sophie Muller. And you know I heard that unless she stood up to speak somebody said she's raised up nearly 200 churches on her own.

And a man across the aisle said you're wrong brother she's raised over 300 now. She learned the way to teach the Indians English. She had a little portable board.

She had to hire a man to go up areas off the off the Amazon River onto the tributaries here tributaries there. And she'd go at night in the moonlight. And she said when she got to some as they were going down the river you know you can hear the splash.

It's so still. And somebody wouldn't. And as they came around the bend she said you see all the natives run run go in the doors.

Shut the doors of these little strange little houses they had. They thought it was the priest coming. And the women weren't safe.

And the liquor wasn't safe. And somebody watch out again. They'd all come out.

She set a board up and taught them about Jesus. To hear a tale of the things she did. She did it so triumphantly.

She wasn't she wasn't coming out with any fancy stuff. You know I'm a great hero for doing this. She did say she went through one river where the tide or something had gone out and it was she rolled a skirt up over her knees and she walked up to her knees in mud and she said I have to lift one leg up and lift the other out.

I got through as best I could but the tunnel was halfway through and my pack fell off my back and I didn't reach for it because I'd never got up. So she finished the other half mile in the mud and then she said one of the men back and he struggled and finally got it. And she said to the man well you you we'll make camp here.

We're going down to a village and they went down to this village to see if it was all right. Yeah it'd be all right you can come tonight. And they got back late in the afternoon and there's a man with a cook pot and he was talking to another native and she said as I went something went plop plop plop.

Oh soup again. And she said I I thought I wonder what kind of soup this guy. She said look around the tree and just as this man threw something in the head of the snake came up in the soup.

Oh no. Oh no I I've had almost. Not not snake soup this time.

Well if you don't take it you'll offend them. That's nice to say isn't it when you've got neighbours in. You just sit there with snake soup.

Would you do it? They say would you like the head of the tail? Would you like a couple of eyes out of the snake? What would you like? What's your choice? You know as I listened to that woman I thought my. These big boys send me some money. We want to get on another station.

Another station? I'd like to take them to the station. It'll be the bus station. Rather they've been on so many stations.

If you only give us a bit more money we'll get on more Do you know many of them are on 10 times as many stations as they were on 10 years ago and they don't do a bit more good than they did there. You set your dial suddenly on and they say we're reaching 5 million people. We're reaching 10 million people.

Or Robert's reaching 15 million. Rex Humbard reaches 50. Well I've got news for you.

It's the same 10 million people everybody listens to. They're not different groups. We're not evangelizing the world.

No sirree we're not. There are more lost people in the world at this point of history than there'll ever be. And the only way to get them evangelized.

Every true revival has done two things. One it's changed the moral climate of a community. Two it's thrust forth laborers into the harvest.

Every revival has done that. I don't know why God blessed the Salvation Army. I wouldn't.

But then I'm not the Lord. See the Lord told you to go out and baptize all the believers. He told us to have communion and the Salvation Army never had communion from the day they started till this day.

They never baptized a single believer but they're one of the biggest revivals in history. It isn't correct theology in itself which brings revival. It's obedience to the light you have and up to the light they had they went out and did the will of God and they put on their banner blood and fire.

He should baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire. And in the upper room these men experienced it. And the poor timid shaking Peter that ran away when a girl puts her finger up puts his finger up to a nation and says ye crucify the Lord of glory.

What a transformation. Poor weak volatile changeable Peter becomes as substantial as solid as a rock. And they met not only the man at the gate of the temple but they went out just a bunch about 120 and ultimately turned the world upside down.

And this same experience can be ours to the degree God wants it to give. I'm not saying God will make you a Peter if you say well I'm failing and weak and helpless. I'm sure he'll purify you.

I'm sure he'll work a miracle in your life. It doesn't mean you make an apostle or one of the great leaders of the world. But he'll get you into the position he wants you in and me into the position he wants me in.

When I subject myself to the working of the spirit. They spent 10 days while arguing I don't think they argued. I don't think Peter was saying Thomas you're doubting that's why not the blessing's not coming.

And I don't think he said well Peter you know it's your fault really. They were all humbled and broken before God. You see people say you know what would happen if we got filled with the Holy Spirit we'd all be of one accord.

Well I've got news for you. They were all of one accord in one place before the Holy Ghost came. That's why he came.

There was unity of the spirit and a bond of peace. And God is waiting for us to submit ourselves and humble ourselves and seek his face and get this anointing. That a poor broken crippled world outside may know that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.

And not only seated in heaven but he's living in us and working in us and working for us. Father we're grateful tonight for this privilege of pausing on the dusty road of life to listen to your word. We think again

of these blessed men your word says that the world took knowledge of them they had been with Jesus.

May we so live and submit ourselves in obedience to thee that they'll say the same thing about us. These are people who live for and with Jesus Christ and we'll give you praise in his name.

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