

The Church's Strength and Secret

by Leonard Ravenhill

The Church's strength and secret is its anointing with the Holy Spirit, and it needs to experience a Pentecostal revival to restore its power and authority.

Duration: 1:14:35

Scripture: Exodus 14:12, Judges 16:6-7, Judges 16:15, Matthew 5:13, Matthew 10:1, John 11:43

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Samson from the Bible and uses it as a metaphor for the spiritual condition of some believers. He describes how Samson, a powerful man of God, lost his strength and authority when he allowed himself to be bound, blinded, and made to grind in captivity. The speaker emphasizes the importance of maintaining a fervent passion for God and not becoming complacent or distracted by worldly pursuits. He encourages listeners to prioritize their relationship with God and seek the riches of His presence rather than material wealth or social standing.

Transcript

Let's find the text tonight in the book of Judges, the book of Judges chapter 16. Judges chapter 16 and verse 6. And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee. There's an old translation of the scriptures in Europe, and it includes an extra word that's not in this King James version.

I like the Living Bible, the King James. And in the European version the word that is added is secret. So then the text reads, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein the secret of thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee.

This is really a question of a woman of the world to a man of God. It will be a great day, and God hates in the day, when the world asks the church, What is the secret of thy strength? I think right now the world thinks we don't have any. We're living on borrowed capital.

I think in every dimension of life that we're living in abnormal days. They're abnormal economically, they're abnormal geographically. We're living in a shrinking world and an expanding universe.

Every new airplane that flies shrinks the world. You can get from here to there quicker than we ever got there before. And when we look through the telescopes we're discovering there are things out in space

that we never dreamed about.

Recently there was a series, Cosmos, on TV. I guess a lot of you saw it. It was slanted toward evolution.

The smart young fellow there said so much he didn't know. And he passed it on very adequately, very eloquently. I really think we should remove the Statue of Liberty and put a model of a statue there of Carl Sagan.

Because he must be the oldest creature around. He was there before creation. And he saw the world put together and oh he staggered us with his statistics.

But there's only one, not one Milky Way you know. There's not one galaxy of stars. There are millions of galaxies with billions and trillions of stars in them.

And you know it was a kind of a faith-destroying thing. But before he was through I felt I wanted to get up and sing, My God How Great Thou Art. Because you see it doesn't matter whether you say there are millions or billions or quadrillions of stars.

It says in the 40th chapter of Isaiah that God knows every star by name. That's better than IBM. He knows every star by name.

It's an abnormal world. And this abnormal day demands abnormal men with abnormal messages and abnormal methods. If the Church of Jesus Christ is anything it's supernatural.

If it's not supernatural it's superficial. You know years ago a tired English preacher turned around in a swivel chair and he reached for a book blindly and he grabbed, without knowing it, the New Testament in Greek. And he began to read through the Acts of the Apostles and he got down to chapter five.

And he suddenly said this amazing thing. He said this is the Church of Jesus Christ before it became fat and short of breath by prosperity. This is the Church of Jesus Christ before it became muscle-bound by over-organization.

This is the Church of Jesus Christ where they didn't say prayers. They prayed in the Holy Ghost and there's a big difference. This is the Church of Jesus Christ where you didn't sign articles of faith.

That's easy to do. But they acted in faith which is very different. This is the Church of Jesus Christ where they didn't gather together a bunch of intellectuals to study psychosomatic medicine.

They just healed a thing. You know millions of people come to America for lots of reasons. I mean tourists.

They don't come to see the mountains because there are greater mountains elsewhere in the world. But they come to see the Grand Canyon. That's that awful gap up there in Arizona somewhere where all the strange things are.

Up in Arizona. And I remember seeing that amazing hole. Somebody said it was made because a Scotsman lost a dime and he dug until he found it.

That's not the real story but it's an amazing thing to see it. And you know when you stand on the southern rim there, there's what they call a legend on a rock and it says you're at the Grand Canyon, as if you thought it was a cavity in your tooth or something. This is the Grand Canyon.

In the distance, seven miles away, you can see the flow of the Colorado River. If you look straight down you're looking a mile deep. If you're down in the canyon the walls are a mile high on either side.

And as we stood there I thought to myself, what would a little child of a year or two years of age do if it was down in that canyon? How could it get out? It sure couldn't swim over the Colorado River, it's 345 feet wide. And it's very rapid. It couldn't scale the walls on either side, they're almost perpendicular.

What would it do? And suddenly I saw a picture of the Church of Jesus Christ. Remember this, the Church of Jesus Christ was not served up to the world on a silver platter. The Church of Jesus Christ was born in a sophisticated totalitarian world.

It was born in a world under dominion of slavery, the Roman Empire. That little child couldn't get out of that canyon. How is the Church of Jesus Christ going to get out? It's walled in on this side with the mighty power of the Greeks and all their wisdom.

It's walled in on this side with the greatest military machine in history, the Roman Empire. It's obstructed in the front by the flow of the river of monopoly the Jews thought they had on God. And yet that little bunch of people, unlearned and ignorant, with no financial backing, with no prestige, with no scholarship, that bunch of men got out of that chasm, if you like, that pit in which they were born, and they shook the world.

Isn't it amazing in the day in which we live? Why, the New York Times a while ago ran a critical article on what it called the electronic church, the media, the fellows trying to push the gospel into every home by TV and radio. And they said it's a new phenomena, we've got an electronic church. The New Testament church was not an electronic church, it was an electrifying church.

Sidney was right when he said when the Holy Ghost is in residence in a sanctuary, that is the most attractive thing in the world, because the power of the Spirit pulls people out of the world. And when the Holy Ghost is not resident, then the world pulls people out of the sanctuary. Here is a woman asking a man of God, what is the secret of your great strength? Why do you do what nobody else is doing? You know, there haven't been many men, fortunately for us, who wanted to conquer the world.

Alexander the Great did it by the age he was twenty-seven, and he sat down and cried because there were no other worlds to conquer. In our day, some of you don't remember, there was a little fellow in Germany with Charlie Chaplin's moustache on his lip and one stripe on his arm, and he set out to conquer the world, and he nearly made it. And in between you had a little corpulent Corsican by the name of Napoleon.

Everywhere he went he was victorious. He subdued his enemies. One day he gathered his warlords together in his office.

He had a great map of the world, and he ran his index finger around a great country. And to those restless officers he said, attention! Look at this! He ran his finger again around the edge of that great country, and he said, look, there lies a sleeping giant. Let it sleep! Because he said, if that country wakes up and harnesses its manpower to its mineral power, that country will shake the world.

He said that before 1815, because he was defeated in 1815. On the 18th of June in 1815 he was beaten at Waterloo. And before that he says, there lies a sleeping giant.

Let it sleep! Because if that nation wakes up and harnesses its manpower to its mineral power, it will shake the world. I suggest you change the characters. And instead of seeing a map of the world, you see a map of the ages.

Instead of Napoleon pointing at something, you see the devil pointing at something. Instead of pointing at a visible thing, he points, as it were, to the invisible Church. And he says to all his demons, you see, there lies the Church of Jesus Christ.

Let it sleep! Because if the Church of Jesus ever wakens up to the resurrection power and the anointing of the Spirit, it will shake the world. When I was in school in England as a little boy, all I knew about America was Indians and cowboys. Oh, that loveliest poem by Barher Wofford.

And then one day our teacher told us a story, which is the best-known story throughout the world of all American literature, the story of Rip Van Winkle. You know, he went somewhere up by the River Hudson there, and up by the famous Bible school. He didn't go to the Bible school, but he fell asleep.

And all I remember about the story is that he went to sleep for, well, some say twenty years, some say fifty, some say a hundred. And there the teacher left the story. He fell asleep.

When he came down the hill he found some men and he argued with them. When he went up the hill there was a sign outside of the tavern, waving in the breeze, on it was painted the face of George III. That was when he went up the hill.

When he came down the hill they had erased the face of George III and painted the face of another man of English extraction, George Washington. And the point of the story is not that he slept for a hundred years or fifty years. The point of the story is that he slept through a revolution.

And I suggest to you tonight that's exactly what the Church of Jesus Christ is doing today, sweeping through the most amazing revolution in history. The foundations are being destroyed. People say to me often, do you think we're living in the last days? And I say no.

Oh, our preacher's just given us ten lectures on why we're living in the last days. Well, we're not living in the last days. The epistle to the Hebrews begins by saying, God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days, the last days were two thousand years ago.

The book of the Revelation begins by things which will shortly come to pass. And that's two thousand years ago. We're not living in the last days, we're living in the last moments of this dispensation.

We're living in what Hebrews 12 says, that everything that can be shaken will be shaken, that a kingdom that cannot be shaken may remain. Everything is going to be shaken. Just to prove that the Church of Jesus Christ is the only God-glorifying thing in the world.

The world is waiting to see again the Church anointed in the Spirit of God. This woman comes with a question, what's the secret of your great strength? And he cracks a few jokes, you know. He says, well, let me tell you, if they bind me with new ropes that were never occupied, there's no sweat on them.

Sweat is a sign of the curse. Fasten me with new ropes, he says in verse 7, and I shall be like another man. I wish he had said that, but he doesn't say that.

He says, then shall I be weak like other men. The curse of the Church of Jesus Christ today is mediocrity. There are too many of us who are too much alike.

We're satisfied to get out of Egypt, but we won't go possess our possessions in the Promised Land. We're like Lazarus, we've been called forth from the grave. I was with a group of people that don't believe in any second blessing, sanctification, baptism of the Spirit, what have you got? Well, I've got to get a shot in at them some way.

So I said one night, you may not believe in a second blessing, but Lazarus did. Lazarus did. Jesus said, Lazarus.

Do you know why he said, Lazarus, come forth? Because if he'd said, come forth, all the cemetery would have come, and it wasn't time for them to come yet. And so Jesus picked him out and said, Lazarus, come forth. And he got up, he was dead, and he came, how did he come? He came shuffling with his hands bound, and his feet, and a gag on his mouth.

And that's about like ninety-five percent of the believers are today. They gag, they're bound, they're in bondage. He was alive.

He came out of the grave, shuffling, bound. And Jesus says, loose him and let him go. And you know, the Church of Jesus Christ is bound tonight.

It's bound by tradition, it's bound by fear. It's bound because we're terrified of the cost of really true discipleship. Come on, when you look at the gap, the grand canon is no gap.

Between Matthew and Malachi there's four hundred years of religion, a form of godliness, ritualism, wonderful priests, wonderful sanctuaries, wonderful sacrifices, but no breathing of God. And then suddenly across that midnight darkness, like the flash of lightning at midnight, God sends an incandescent man. Boy, how different from the high priest.

The priest had garments of glory and beauty. He had a mitre upon his head. He had a golden circle that said, holiness unto the Lord.

And he was as dead as Pharaoh. And then God brings a little rugged man out there in the wilderness. Man, isn't it wonderful to think what God does? You talk about taking the foolish things to confound the wise.

Taking a nobody. What a change from a priest whose garments were loaded and heavy with decoration, and he trudged through the streets and everybody bowed to his excellence. And here's a rugged man out there, and he's not asking for money.

He can't have been a very good evangelist, but he wasn't asking for money. He wasn't asking for help. He had no mailing list.

Isn't it amazing how many gimmicks the Church of Jesus Christ has tonight, and yet the Holy Ghost doesn't come. Sometimes I wish I could turn the radio back and say to some of these guys always begging for more and more, listen friend, God is not looking for sponsors. You may be, but he isn't.

He's looking for slaves. He's looking for dead men. There are two kinds of people in the world only.

Those who are dead in sin, and those who are dead to sin. Ah, there's nothing on this earth, nothing in eternity like the Church of Jesus Christ, anointed with the Holy Spirit of God. What's the secret of thy great strength? And you know when you go to an art gallery, every time you see a picture of Samson, oh brother, he's got muscles like watermelons.

He's got a chest like the Rocky Mountains. He's got legs like redwood trees. You know, the average man in Israel was this height, and Saul the king of Israel was head and shoulders above everybody else in Israel, and Goliath was head and shoulders above Saul, and Samson was 15 feet high.

Now women do some silly things I know, but do you think a woman's going to ask a man 15 feet high, hey buddy, what's the secret of your strength? You may as well ask him if he takes Wheaties every day for his breakfast. I think if anything, Samson was smaller than anyone else. A poor fellow said the other day, I was sick, I had flu last Sunday, and I lay in bed there, and we have an old beaten up TV.

It doesn't show a picture, but it talks. Sometimes that helps, because what you see on TV, they're such a bunch anyhow. And there's a man saying, you know, I did have a vision of Christ.

My building is 600 feet high, and he said my vision of Christ was 900 feet high. I need a Christ bigger than my problem. That's totally ridiculous.

Samson was not 12 feet high. The Word of God says it's not by what? Not by, but by my, saith the Lord of hosts. And in case you've any doubt, it says in Hebrews 11, those amazing men and women of faith, through faith they subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness, and time would fail me to tell of David and Barak, and of Jephthah, and of Samson, who threw his muscles.

Huh? It doesn't say that in the Amplified even. Samson, who by faith, by faith, he did what nobody else could do. They locked him up in a city, and he decided to go home.

And he didn't want to wait in the gatekeeper at night, so he lifted the gates up, and everybody in the gates, and carried them up the hill and put them down. Said under his breath, you'll have a bigger job getting them back than I had getting them here anyhow. You know, men of faith can be awfully disturbing.

And then one day they tried to arrest him. He picked up the jawbone of an ass. Huh.

Doesn't God use some strange things, the jawbone of an ass? You know, it reminds me of a modernist preacher, and he was preaching and saying he didn't believe the Bible in this, and he didn't believe the Bible in the other. And he said, you know, these stories like Jonah and the whale are ridiculous. And that story about Samson slaying people with a jawbone of an ass, now that, that, I mean, God doesn't do that anymore.

And that inevitable little old lady on the front pew said he does every Sunday at our church. Well, if he asked to use a jawbone of an ass, amen. Do you know what I'm wanting? Really badly in my heart what I'm wanting.

I'm wanting God to produce a Pentecost that without Pentecost, Pentecost. Pentecost was a sample day. It wasn't abnormal, it was a normal standard for the church.

The church is back sinning today. We've lost our power, we've lost our authority. Oh yes, on our coins we put in God we trust.

We don't trust in God, forget it. If we trusted in God we wouldn't have an Air Force, we wouldn't have a Navy. You'd all be living in Cadillacs, or better still, Mercedes.

We're taxed up to our ears, why? To keep crime down. We don't have policemen outside our churches, you have them outside of taverns. The way some churches are going we'll soon need cops around, I think.

Oh, we talk so cheaply about God's sovereign power and God's omnipotence in this materialistic age. In God we trust, forget it, we don't trust in God. We believe in him, but we don't trust him.

There's a lovely story in the second book of Kings, the 19th chapter, and it says, and don't look at it, let me read it for you. It came to pass that night, one angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, one angel smote a hundred, four score, which happens to be eighty, and five thousand people. One angel killed a hundred and eighty-five thousand people one night.

That's more than were killed in the atom bomb at Hiroshima. One angel killed a hundred and eighty-five thousand people. And on the cross Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels.

And the smallest denomination of a legion is five thousand. And if he could have called twelve legions, that's sixty thousand. And sixty thousand angels, each killing a hundred and eighty-five thousand people, would have wiped the world's population out that day.

If he called them from heaven, we say we trust in God. If we do, what do we need armies and air forces for? They killed, if those sixty thousand angels each killed a hundred and eighty-five thousand people, well work it out in your calculator. It happens to be about a hundred, one thousand, one hundred and ten million people.

We should take care of a few folk, you know. No, no, no, no. We don't trust God.

We don't even trust him in the fundamental church. We don't even trust him in the Pentecostal church. Come on, let's come down to this beautiful place that I've learned to love you this weekend.

And I want to keep you on my prayer list. But tell me this, the people round about, the pastor was saying there's some inquiry, what's happening down at, what do you call it, Central Vida, is that it? Is my Spanish good? What's happening? Oh my God, I pray that just when God was in residence in the Old Testament, there was a pillar of fire over the place. And I pray there'll be a pillar of fire, holy ghost fire.

Our God is a consuming fire. And the reason the world goes to hell fire is the church has lost holy ghost fire. It's not the liberals, it's not the Catholics, it's not the Moonians, it's not the Mormons that obstruct us, it's a lack of faith, it's a lack of purity, it's a lack of vision, it's a lack of power.

What's the secret of your great strength? How do you lift the gates of the city? Nobody else does that. How do you take a jawbone of an ass and slay an army? It's like an atom bomb in the hand, nobody else does that. Two thousand men tried to arrest him, he gets rid of that bunch.

One day he catches six hundred foxes. My, he must have been able to run. And he put a faggot between the tails of two foxes and ran them in the standing corner of the Philistines and burned their crops.

You wonder if people are scratching their heads and saying, what in the world are we going to do? How do you stop this man? But you know, there's a beautiful little phrase, Oh, it is the most amazing thing in this whole wide world. You know what? You know, some people who are filled with the holy ghost, they're so

greedy, they're grasping for money and everything else. I wish they were grasping for riches of God, like they're grasping for money and social standing.

What's wealth? If you came in this sanctuary tonight with a million dollar ring on your finger and a Christian Dio suit that cost two thousand dollars and handmade silk shirts and all the rest, you're no more valuable than the man that comes through the door in a sackcloth. God doesn't look at the external, he doesn't look at our social standing. He looks at the heart to see if it's pure, to see if our longings are after God and after holiness.

I'm embarrassed to be a Christian these days in a church that's an embarrassment to God. I'm convinced the church of Jesus Christ embarrasses God every day. We're so void of supernatural power.

You can explain our success by clever business practices, by Madison Avenue techniques, by clever presentation on TV and all the rest of it. But where is the manifestation of supernatural power in the church of Jesus Christ? I see Samson as a type of Israel. Israel began with supernatural splendor.

God sent cereal from heaven every morning. They called it manna. He split a rock and the water followed them wherever they went.

He delivered them when their enemies were pressing behind them. Time and again the word of God says he delivered them out of their distresses. But what did they do? They did like we do.

They forgot God when they got out of trouble. He's a type of the early church. Again I say the church began in the upper room with men agonizing and it's ending in the supper room with women organizing.

We mistake rattle for revival and commotion for creation and action for entrance. Again I say that ninety-nine percent of people that went to the church today, even fundamental churches, Pentecostal churches, they did not go there to meet God. They went to hear a sermon about God today.

We didn't expect to walk out of the sanctuary breathless and say, the one who walked in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks was walking in the midst. I could feel him so near. The church is becoming almost a social club, a better elite club, a nicer club.

There's no drinking, but it's a nice place to fellowship and have a little kind of Christian fun, sanctified fun. But listen, dear friend, outside there's a world going to hell fire quicker than ever. It's gone.

And what the church has had in the last twenty-five years has not made any impression. Recently in the agape forest near where we live there's a young man preaching. He's the head of YWAM in America, North and South America, Leland, Paris.

It's about three months since he was there and he said a few days ago, I was in a meeting with a lot of distinguished preachers and the speaker was Bill Bright of Campus Crusade. And Bill Bright said, we have just made a survey from one coast of America to the other, to Christians. Listen to this awesome statistic.

He said ninety-five percent of the people that we interviewed said either I am a carnal Christian or I'm a baby in Christ. That's staggering. Ninety-five percent of professing Christians, in other words, say I'm immature.

I'm not facetious, but it's like checking with the Air Force and the Army and the fellows at sea in those great aircraft carriers, and you check them all up and say we've checked the Army, Navy, and all the

cadets and West Point, and we've discovered that ninety-five percent of them are Cub Scouts. Would you feel comfortable living in a nation that right now has one of the biggest, perhaps the biggest military machine in the world, and they're all Cub Scouts? Come on, come on, come on. Where are we spiritually tonight? Is the world asking of us individually or collectively? What's the secret of that great strength? Why at Central Veda do things happen that don't happen anywhere else? Why is God in residence there? Yes, this man took the job on of the Nassau.

Sure, he lifted the gates of the city. Sure, he pushed two thousand men away. But you see, he was very normal in one sense.

He fell in love with a girl, a girl that lived down in Timnath, and he could go that way to Timnath, he could go this way to Timnath, but you mustn't go that way to Timnath. Why? Because there's a lion in the way. Now listen, if Samson is a type of a spiritual man, and I believe he is, if Samson is a type of a spirit-anointed church, and I believe he is, then the lion in the way surely must be a type of the devil that goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

And Samson goes that way, and instead of being nervous about it, he says to his father and mother, you sit down here a minute, I've a little business to do round the corner. And the lion sees him coming and says, boy, I'm going to have a good lunch today. And the lion springs at him and he catches it by the jaws and he rips it in two as though it were a kid of the goats.

Just destroyed it. Well, I think that's wonderful. I think the more wonderful thing is this.

It says that after he destroyed that lion, he said nothing about it. Well, we'd have photographed the thing at least, wouldn't we? We'd have measured it from the first whisker on its nose to the last one on its tail, and it would be the longest, strongest, fiercest, heaviest, terriblest lion that ever lived. And we killed it.

I'm looking for a revival where no man will get the glory. Such a sovereign act of God, you can't organize revival. Revival is not organized.

It's agonized. It cannot be nationalized. It cannot be denominationalized.

It cannot be predicted. It's a sovereign act of God, but there's a preparation for that revival. I've been reading a book recently, and I want to reread it.

It's about a Lutheran pastor who, at the end of the last century, he read this word of God. He read about these fantastic things that happened in the early church. And he said, well, then, the church I'm in can't be in the apostolic succession.

You know, the Roman Catholic Church says it's in the apostolic succession. The Church of England says it's in the apostolic succession. The Baptists say they're in the apostolic succession because John Baptist was the first preacher anyhow.

And some other groups say we're in the apostolic succession. Listen, I'm not very clever, but do you know what my definition is? It's this. There's only one way to prove that you're in the apostolic succession.

Do you know what it is? Have apostolic success. I'm not concerned that you found a bit of old paper that has somebody's definition of, you know, that some old guy three, two thousand years ago came out of the upper room and he anointed somebody else who anointed somebody else, so what? The world out there,

a critical carnal world, more cynical than ever it's been. Do you know what the state of the world is? Let me give you some modern authors.

Anthony Storr says, at present we are the cruelest and most ruthless species of humanity that has ever lived. Have you been round here a hundred years ago or more? Maybe you'll be walking down the street, if there was a street, or down the path and, oh, those wicked Indians, somebody shot in the back. Savages that they are.

Now we're not savages, we're refined intellectuals. We don't take an arrow and shoot it in the back. We go drop a bomb on a city and burn the thing to a cinder.

That's education, that's science, that's progress. How kind can you be when you're so full of scientific achievement? We're the cruelest and most ruthless species in the world. Right now we're not concerned too much about détente.

And if détente went through, all they're doing, they're not suggesting we abolish war, they're trying to find what degree to roast us at. That's all they're doing. If Russia will use smaller bombs, we'll use smaller bombs.

If you promise not to kill more than a million people, we won't kill more than a million people. Modern life is a hell. It is becoming more and more obvious that it is not starvation or microbes or cancer, but man himself who is the greatest danger to mankind.

The dance of death, the dance of violence goes round about us, on round about us endlessly, says Paul Tournier. And another man whose name I don't know said the world is a theater of the absurd. You see, when the storms don't cry out, and when the preachers don't cry out, God has to touch men in the world outside to let us see the absurd situation in which we live.

This Lutheran preacher said the glory of God has departed. I say again there's one reason we don't have a Holy Ghost revival. And I don't mean a good meeting.

I mean the descent of God on an area where the lights don't work in the sanctuary for months, where meetings last 24 hours a day. Mrs. Goffault says about the meetings in China in the great Shantung revival there, it was awesome to go into the meeting house because people would stand and praise God for six or seven hours without sitting down. And all the praise of God's people was shattering.

And you'd go another day and people would pray five or six or seven hours, hundreds and hundreds all praying at the same time. And the agony was like the waves of the sea that roared. Sometimes it was like a clap of thunder when people were anointed in the spirit praying.

And then she said some day she would go and you'd be there for hours and hours and hours. And nobody would sing and nobody would speak. And God was there.

You see, there are two kinds of stillness. A stillness that kills and a stillness that creates. And she said the most awesome thing was not the majestic singing, it was not the awesome prayer, it was the stillness of God in the sanctuary.

And then there would be an outburst of confession. It would last for hours. People who had hidden sin in their lives, men that you thought were ideal men would confess that years back they'd been living in

adultery, or they'd stolen money, or they'd done some other thing.

Oh, when revival comes the sewers open up and all the corruption that's been hindering God comes out. And revival begins in the sanctuary amongst God's people. Revival is a divine invasion of God's people.

Evangelism is those people illuminated and cleansed and freed and going out and saying, I don't care what's in your life, God is able to set you free from it. Somebody came to this Lutheran minister and said, well why don't you perform what Jesus said, go into all the world, preach the gospel, heal the sick, cleanse the leper, raise the dead. There's a girl down the road there and she's in a bad state of demon possession.

And he went. And God mercifully answered his prayer, the girl was delivered. And before long it became noise abroad that this man had a kind of real deliverance ministry.

And one day they called him up a mountainside and said, there's a girl there, you'll not get healed. She must have a demon in hell inside of her. He went up and prayed.

If I remember correctly he knelt eight hours, eight hours at the side of that bed. He had someone else in the room so that nobody could say there were wrong things going on. And all the girl did was tear her flesh and pull her hair and make herself naked.

And foam would come out of her mouth and she'd use every obscenity. You'd think that she had the vocabulary from hell itself. And her face was livid and her eyes were like lamps.

And she cursed and raved and cursed God and cursed the Holy Ghost and cursed people. And he would come out of that room wringing wet and tired and the devil would say, there you are. If I remember correctly he went and knelt at the side of that bed eight hours every day for ten months.

One day he said, I felt a special anointing of the Spirit. And I knew this was the day. And he stood over that girl as he'd done before and the devil mocked and said, you're going to say the same things.

It's only a recitation, it's only a scripture, it's only words. But he said, I felt that divine authority. And he stood over that girl and said, in the name of the Christ of God who died, who led captive and he captive and gave gifts unto men, in the power of the blood of Jesus, rise and be delivered.

And the girl's face changed like that. Instead of livid red and flaming eyes, she was normal. And she talked about the peace and the joy and the rest that she had.

There was an old warehouse. This is an old warehouse, I understand, in the middle of the city. I think the city was called Bliss.

When the German government heard about it, they said, well, all right, we want to help this preacher. The Kaiser gave him a donation, the government gave a donation. And in those days when you couldn't flip across the Atlantic in six or seven hours, you had to go in a boat that took two or three weeks, an old slow boat.

They put people in America in straitjackets and took them across the Atlantic. And he had a house of derelict humanity. If we don't heal the sick, we send them to psychiatrists.

This is a very serious situation. Jesus didn't do that, did he? That's why I say I'm longing to see a Pentecost that will have Pentecost. Listen, the fire's got to fall somewhere, Pastor Joe.

Why doesn't it fall here? Sign 2 Before this generation falls into the abyss, I say Samson is a type of the church, militant against the power of the devil. And do you know what the greatest honor in the world is? You know, I made up my mind years ago I wouldn't let anybody, I won't let anybody flatter me. And I won't let anybody flatten me either.

I don't care a hill of beans what you think about my preaching, whether it's good or bad, better than most, worse than most, I don't care about that. All I have to do is deliver it the way I know. But I still got an ambition.

I remember walking through Westminster Abbey, there's a great disc on the wall, and you have the profile of two of the most amazing brothers that ever lived, Charles Wesley and John Wesley. Charles Wesley's hymns have been sung all over the world today. Jesus, lover of my soul, and love divine, all love excelling.

And John Wesley, he got booted out of the Church of England. Do you know, the last 600 sermons he preached, he only preached six inside of a building? He was as ordained as Archbishop of Canterbury. But they wouldn't let him in because he had a strange message about being born again of the Spirit of God, being radically changed, becoming a new creation.

And there in Westminster Abbey they have his profile. Well Brother Abner, do you want your picture there? No. Is there a hall of fame for preachers? I don't know, and I couldn't care less, and I wouldn't want to be in it anyhow.

I'm very particular about the company I keep. You say, well, you're getting old. I'm getting old.

Don't say I'm old. I'm only 64, 74, which is 64. Missed it there by ten miles.

75 this year, that's all right. Still lots of energy. I've got an ambition.

What is it? To be known as a great preacher, to be known as a great author. Oh, I used to think I'd like to write a good book and now my books are translated in about ten languages. They've sold millions and I haven't made a penny out of them.

It all goes to mission. Well Brother Abner, what's your ambition? I'll tell you what it is. I'd like my name in letters about us.

Oh, this isn't much of a wall. Twice as high as that. Letters 15 feet high.

L-E-O-N-A-R-D Ravenhill. I'm saying that in case you need to want to try to check. Big letters, Leonard Ravenhill.

Where? On top of the Empire State Building? No. No. I want my name in big capital letters in a place you spell H-E-L-L.

Hell. You mean that? Sure I do. Remember the men that said one day we'll cast demons out of this person? And they tried to cast demons out and demons have a little bit of self-respect.

And they jumped out and beat the preachers up. And then they said this amazing thing, Jesus we know and Paul we know. That's the greatest covenant in the world to be known in hell.

Preacher, if you're not known in hell you're not worth a hill of beans. You say I've got degrees. You can have 32 and still be frozen.

Isn't this what it's all about? Isn't this the conflict that's on right now? We're not fighting flesh and blood. We're not fighting communism, Romanism, Mormonism and otherisms. We're fighting mysterious powers in the heavenlies.

And I'd like to see in this church that you had a prayer meeting 24 hours a day, every day and every night. Because it's costly to have the anointing of God. Surely Samson is a type of Israel in the beginning.

Surely he's a type of the early church. And I believe that the church of Jesus Christ tonight is a terrible disappointment to Jesus. I say again, I think it's an embarrassment.

I don't think it's worth his agony in hell, in the garden of Gethsemane, in his suffering and being deserted by his father and all the other things that were involved. For the church are weak and effeminate today. We're not a thorn in the side of the world, never mind a thorn in the side of the devil.

We've got people always casting out demons. You know, I believe the devil enjoys that. He likes us to chase demons, because while we're chasing demons we're leaving him alone.

I think one of the most awesome scriptures is, the word that Jesus gave, I give you power over all the power of the enemy. You know, I think the trouble with the church today is, speaking generally, the church is so predictable. I was in one big fashionable church and the preacher said to me, just before I preached, he said, take your liberty.

That's a dangerous thing to tell me to do, but anyhow. He said, take your liberty. He said, you know, the Spirit has his way in this church.

I said, he does. He said, he sure does. I said, well why did you mimeograph his program last Wednesday in the church office? They got service start at eleven, the choir will come in, you stand up and sing, you do this, you sit down, you stand up, you sit down, it's like doing your calisthenics to music.

And the offering will be taken and you've got to be through by twelve o'clock. What's the secret of your great strength? Fasten me with new ropes, he gets out. Fasten me with green whip, he gets out.

Pin my hair to a beam, and he shakes it and nearly pulls the house down. Do you know why? Do you know why this man was successful? He was successful because he was obedient. One of the greatest old hymns, oh with a lot of new hymns, one of the greatest old hymns in my judgment is trust and obey, for there's no other way.

And if you don't trust and obey, you'll rust and decay anyhow. So you better trust and obey. There is no other way.

He was a Nazirite, and a Nazirite had a vow. He could not drink wine, a sign of worldly pleasure. He could not touch anything dead, a sign of worldly people who are dead in trespasses and in sin.

He had to wear his hair in a roll at the back of his neck and bear reproach for being sissified, effeminate and weak. And whatever he kept his vows, Samson was more than conqueror. And that's where God expects the church to live, always more than conqueror.

But he didn't tell me the truth. The green whip didn't keep you in bondage, the ropes didn't keep you in bondage, pegging your hair in a beam didn't keep you in bondage. What is the secret of thy great strength? And then he came with that devastating weapon people have, women have.

You don't love me. Boy, that could get you a fur coat any weekend, couldn't it? You don't love me. He says, listen, I do love you.

The reason is this, that I've never broke my vows to Nazareth. There's never been a razor on my head, and as quick as that she knew. But listen, no man backslides by one act.

Each time the ropes were on him she said, the Philistines be upon thee, and he ignored it. The Philistines be upon thee, he ignored it. The Philistines be upon thee, he ignored it.

And then she said, darling, you know, you keep tearing lions up and lifting buildings up, you're going to get awfully tired. Why don't you take a little nap? Just kneel down and put your head on my lap. You know, if it stayed on his knees, it'd never have got on hers.

All our backsliding begins in the devotional place. We get weak in our devotion, we get weak in our prayer. And she snipped the locks off his hair.

And then she said, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And then you've got one of the most awesome texts in the scripture. He says, I will go out as at other times, and he knew not that the Spirit of God had departed from him.

And you know, in many churches, even Pentecostal churches, we're keeping up the motions, we're keeping up the action, and we go out and say, there wasn't much there really today. No, no, no, no. We try and present and make ourselves believe the Spirit is brooding when he's not there.

He wished not that the Spirit of God had departed from him. In Cornell University some years ago, they did a very simple experiment. They had an ordinary gas stove like you may have, and they put a dishpan there, and they boiled the water.

And they put a dishpan here of cold water. And in the dishpan of hot water they threw a frog. And man, he no sooner got in that boiling water than, boy, did he scream and yell and kick and try to get out.

He knew he'd die if he stayed there. In the dishpan of cold water they put a frog, and they put the light on underneath, and they turned it up just as little as they could. And every five minutes they turned it up, turned it up, turned it up, turned it up.

The water got hotter and hotter and hotter, and the frog adjusted to it. He adjusted to it, and he died. Would you tell me what you adjusted to that crippled your prayer life? If you'd been thrown into it you'd have backed off like the frog and said, no, this is not my natural habitat, but the serpent's wiser than that.

And he gradually chilled your zeal for the Word of God. He gradually dragged you down in your prayer life. Your vision got blurred.

You kept up giving your offerings and saying to the pastor, you're the best preacher in town. And you put your tithes in there regularly. But oh, that winsome presence of the Spirit of God, that authority you used to have, that passion, that fervor, the tears you used to have are gone.

At the bottom of my notepaper I have a saying God gave me a few years ago. Are the things you are living for worth Christ dying for? Now I could have rolled all this story into a few simple phrases. I could have said these people captured this Superman of God.

And what did they do? The first thing they did was bind him. The second thing they did was blind him. The third thing they did was grind him.

You see, when they got him they put his eyesight out, and then they took him in the basement, and then they put him there on a treadmill, and they made him grind out the corn that he destroyed when he set fire to their crops. Are you going to suggest that man goes round day after day, day after day? Are you going to suggest the groaning of his spirit wasn't louder than the groaning of that machine? Are you going to suggest that those eyes never spilled with tears? Are you going to suggest he didn't wake up at night and remember the time when armies would fear from him? When he could tear a lion? When he could lift a building? When he did the supernatural acts of God, and now he's a slave? Are you suggesting he had no misery, no memories? I read this book and I want to cry and say, my God, why do I live in this century? That's such artificial Christianity. We try to dress it up and make it acceptable.

We try to make it theatrical, and the world outside laughs at us. I'm sick to death of listening to men who sit on paper thrones with little plastic crowns they've made for themselves, denying the Word of God. The world outside is not waiting for a new definition of Christianity, it is waiting for a new demonstration of Christianity.

And God is looking in America for a womb in which he can conceive it, pastor. And normally, until all these modern gadgets came, women used to go to the valley of the shadow of death to bring forth life. It's the most costly, painful thing in the world for a woman to bring a child into the world.

And do you know what we're looking for in this day? We're looking for a painless Pentecost. Pentecost in the New Testament was married to poverty, persecution, and prisons. And today we're trying to marry Pentecost to prosperity, personalities, and popularity.

It won't work. It won't work. We can only have revival one way, and that's God's way.

OK, let's have a man, he's in prison, he's fettered, he's thinking of past glory. And suddenly he hears footsteps, and he turns and says, Hey, who's there? And someone says, I'm just a boy. What kind of a boy? I'm a Philistine.

What are you doing down here? I've come to take you to the temple of Dagon. Dagon was a fish god, half fish and half man. Oh, that must have come into the heart of Samson just as though you'd take my dagger and stuck it right through his heart.

One boy is going to take me captive into the temple of a strange god. Why? A while ago two thousand men tried and they couldn't capture me. And now one boy is going to do it.

And he says to the boy, Now while you take me in, be careful. And if you read the scripture carefully, it says in the gallery there were three thousand men, all the women and children below, maybe ten thousand people in the building. And Samson says, Be careful now.

I think there are some steps. Yes, sir, I'll take you up the steps. I think there are some pillars.

Yes, there are pillars. Put me between the pillars. Now I said the other night, and I say again that no man is greater than his prayer life.

And that goes for Samson, though we never emphasize it. When Samson found he was a captive, when he heard the enemies of God were laughing and saying, Where is the god of Elijah? Where is the god that does the miraculous? Where is the god that delivered Israel? He felt how much he'd failed and embarrassed God by his failure. And he prayed.

What did he pray? He prayed one of the most remarkable prayers he'd ever prayed, and I've never heard anyone preach on it. He prayed one of the most daring prayers ever prayed. This is his prayer, Lord strengthen me just once.

Did he mean it? Yes, he did. Why? Because he said, Strengthen me, O once, O God, that I may be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson said, Even if I die with the Philistines.

Listen, if you live the next twelve months as you've lived the last twelve months, do you think you'll be known in hell? I want the glory of God on my life even if I die. I'd rather live the next six months in the anointing of the Spirit than live six years without the anointing of the Spirit. Strengthen me just once, he says, even if I die.

I say sometimes that God does not answer prayer. He answers desperate prayer. And he comes so easily to God.

In our language, this man has his back to the wall. All the enemies of God are laughing. Like the Mormons laughed at us last year and said, We've won more people to Mormonism from the evangelicals than the evangelicals have won from the Mormons into their groups.

In the last twenty-three years in England, the mother of the Salvation Army Revival, the mother of the Wesleyan Revival, the mother of the Methodist Revival, in the last twenty-three years in England they have built three hundred mosques, Mohammedan mosques. When we left there in 1958 there wasn't one. There are three hundred and fifty mosques in England today.

And at the same time that they built their three hundred and fifty mosques, the Church of England closed six hundred and fifty of its churches in the nation. Oh, let's forget the economy for a while. The need of America is a visitation of the Holy Ghost, a divine intervention, a people who are prepared to say, Give me, Lord, I want one more anointing on my life, even if I die.

And God answered this prayer. He pushed the pillars out and the house came down. And this blessed book says that in the final moments of his life, Samson killed more in his dying than in his living.

And that's why I believe there's going to be a Holy Ghost revival that's going to shake the world. God is not willing that any should perish. There are more lost people in the world at this moment than any period in history.

And what the Church has at this moment is not adequate for the situation. We're like Samson looking back at our past record. Again, the Methodist Revival, the Salvation Army Revival.

What happened at Azusa Street? What happened a few years ago when a fellow came to tell us, you know, about what had happened in the South Seas there. And now what's happening in northeast India in

the Nagaland Revival, which is a repetition of the Acts of the Apostles. Daniel says in his blessed book there that in the last days, when wicked men do wickedly, the people that do know their Bibles shall be strong and do exploits.

Does it say that? No, it doesn't. No, it doesn't. We're stuffed with Bible knowledge.

We've never had more people with Bible knowledge. But the Scripture says in the last days when wicked men do wickedly, the people that do know their God. And again, there's all the difference in the world between the knowing the Word of God and the God of the Word.

The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. Samson killed more in his dying than in his living. I believe the next super outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God is going to be greater than all the revivals, not just any revival in history, but all the revivals in history put together.

One great last act of mercy before he comes in flaming fire. It's so easy to say to people, relax and be raptured. Jesus is coming.

Ah, but we're careful not to say what it says in Thessalonians, that when he comes down from the sky he's coming in flaming judgment to take judgment on those who reject God. And the Church is a buffer between those situations. The last single thing.

Jesus is coming for a what? It begins with B. Coming for a what? Not a widow. He's not coming for a broken down Church like we have today. He's coming for a pure Church.

A Church that has no selfish ambition. A Church that isn't just wanting to build its own little kingdom or denomination. A Church which is totally madly in love, intoxicated with him.

I'm through with this. A few years ago my dear wife and I were in a certain place and I was asked to take part in a wedding. Well I said I'd take part in the wedding, sure enough.

And as we stood at the altar waiting for the bride to come, I knew she'd be spectacular. Her daddy is a multimillionaire. She's the only child.

She inherits everything. They have at least two mansions. They had a beautiful yacht.

And when this girl came in at the door, my did she look beautiful. You know she had that blush that these girls have. And gorgeous, gorgeous, gorgeous wedding dress.

And as she came down the aisle it was just as all the Lord said to me, look at the bride. And then this thought came to me, I've seen so many brides. Tall ones, small ones, fat ones, thin ones, wise ones otherwise.

And she's walking down the aisle in all her beauty. And the bridegroom kind of half turned his head like that and smiled. Ah here she comes.

Isn't she beautiful. Isn't she richly endowed. Oh my what a girl.

And again I said to myself I've seen all kinds of brides. Tall ones, small ones, fat ones, thin ones, rich ones, poor ones. But I've never seen a dirty bride.

I've never seen a bride who got a sandwich just before she was coming to church and said I'm so hungry. And coming down the fella put the brakes on and the mustard was running down one side you know. And down the other side oh mercy, mercy, tomato juice.

And then she spilled the coffee on her dress and she takes the flowers and tries to cover the whole mess up. And he wonders what's wrong with her standing like this all covered up. No he sees it and says oh mercy.

He's coming for a pure bride. The thing that obstructs revival is filthiness in the church of God. Our individual pride, our individual pettiness, our individual laziness, our individual covetousness.

After all I do give fifty bucks a week to the church. Let the pastor take the sweat. No, no, no, no.

We're all made a kingdom of priests unto God. The Holy Ghost didn't fall on one man. He fell on about a hundred and twenty.

We're trying to run the church financially. No, no, no that won't do. I long to see this glory come back on the church.

I long to see people who daringly say, not just come to an altar week after week for a kind of a repair job, but come and say Lord I'm prepared to die. Die to my ambitions, die to my own plan, die to my self-seeking. Let me die, but give me the anointing.

I finished preaching the, not this message, but same text, but not the same message some years ago in Chicago. The auditorium held about two thousand five hundred. And when I finished I sat down.

The pastor came and he snatched the microphone from the stand and he said good night everybody. I'm not coming to the door. Good night.

Come back to the meetings tomorrow. And he's a big husky man and he threw the microphone down and he fell full length. The mic was still on and I heard him saying, Oh God, strengthen me just once.

Give me one more chance. I've made so many vows. I've made so many starts.

And I've never gone through with them. Just give me one more chance. Even if I die.

Ah yes, meetings are very solemn. Maybe, I don't know, maybe it doesn't mean much to you. It's just Sunday night, let's sleep in church.

It doesn't mean that to me. You see God has something more than a videotape. He's got us all pictured.

He's got everybody here who's in this meeting tonight. He knows every position that we stand in or we don't stand in. And one day this service is going to be replayed in eternity.

And I suggest to you in all seriousness right now that angels are looking on into this meeting and demons are looking on in this meeting. And the world outside is waiting to see what this meeting will produce. It can be just like every other meeting and you go back to work tomorrow and say there wasn't much to it.

But I'll tell you what. I'll tell you what. If you come to a place where you die to self and self-seeking and self-interest and self-pity and self-glory and all your self-made can and say God I don't care what you do so long as you anoint me with the Holy Ghost and make me part of a living fire here in this sanctuary.

It's costly. You can't find where some men that followed Jesus were saved as we say. I don't know where some of the twelve apostles started but I can tell you where they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

There's a marker where they were all filled with the Holy Ghost in the upper room. When the children of Israel crossed out of Egypt what happened? They sang a hymn and it went away on the breeze. But when they crossed Jordan they made a pile of stones a permanent record.

And I have found people who can't really clearly remember when they were saved. I've never met a person who didn't know when they really went to the cross. Not to go to the cross but on the cross and said Lord I want to die and then rise in resurrection life.

This is the most critical hour in America's history and we're part of the game. And God is looking for honest people who say I want to be cleansed of all my pride and all my inward bondage and all my selfishness and all my bad temper and all my corruption. I want to be alive in God.

I want to pray in the Holy Ghost. I want the world outside to take knowledge that God has come and restored in his glory the former glory the church had. I'm convinced the fire is going to fall somewhere sometime.

I'd like to see God do that tonight. Could you pray Samson's prayer honestly? You can't do it of course if you're fooling with the world. If you're still drinking, if you're still fooling around.

You still find more joy with ungodly people. He had to keep his vows clear. Could not drink wine, a sign of worldly pleasure.

Are you more fascinated with worldly pleasure? Do you know what I find this? That the more joy we have in the Holy Ghost the less entertainment we need. And if the joy of the Holy Ghost isn't there brother you need entertainment 24 hours a day. And the more you walk with him you don't care if his friends let you down.

You're living above that poor level. Oh God he's wanting to find some people he can fill with his spirit from the top of their head to their feet. Where he can anoint them and control them and direct them and speak through them.

He wants to restore the glory of the church to people who won't tamper with it and make it a gilded thing that they can get money out of them or project their own personality but want Christ to be glorified. Let's pray.

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