

The Greatest Prayer

by Leonard Ravenhill

Jesus' supreme desire is for us to know the Father, and He prays for us to be kept in God's name, preserved from the world's influence.

Duration: 1:05:14

Scripture: Isaiah 12:3, Matthew 12:36, John 7:38, John 17:9-10, John 17:16, 1 Peter 1:8

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17. He emphasizes the need for believers to prioritize their anger and concern for things that align with God's will. The speaker also highlights the importance of living a spirit-filled life, which is characterized by fruitfulness and beauty. He mentions that the Gospel of John provides a unique perspective on Jesus' ministry, with a focus on miracles and the deeper meaning behind them. The speaker concludes by sharing a personal story of a man who experienced the joy and transformation of salvation.

Transcript

Repetition is the law of learning, and so let's briefly think again about this marvelous chapter in John 17, the high priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus. Again, this is the Lord's Prayer, and what we call the Lord's Prayer is not the Lord's Prayer, it's the Disciple's Prayer. One of the great commentators, Kaufman, said that John, in his particular interpretation of the gospel, in the fourth gospel, as we call it, the gospel recorded by John, that Kaufman, he called him the Plato of the inspired writers.

He has a different accent, and he uses what space he has to tell us what the other evangelists left out. Again, there is nothing comparable to John 17 in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. There is nothing comparable to the wonderful story of the true vine in Matthew, Mark, or Luke.

There are many omissions in what we call this fourth gospel. John doesn't say a word about the first 30 years of the Lord Jesus. He doesn't even include the virgin birth.

He doesn't say anything about demons or children. They're not connected, of course, but he doesn't say anything about demons or children. He doesn't say anything about Sadducees.

He doesn't say anything about faith. I don't think he says anything about repentance. In other words, he uses all the available space he has to say something that hasn't been said by the other evangelists.

He records eight miracles, six of them are not recorded by the other evangelists. He gives us that marvelous picture there of Jesus in the temple, when he stood before the crowd and said that what they'd seen every day, which of course was pouring out of water from a golden vessel, that that was really a type of himself, but out of him. And then remember he says that when the spirit comes into you, people say yes, when the spirit comes out of you will flow rivers up.

The Bible doesn't say that. The Bible says out of him will flow rivers of living water. And as soon as you get disobedient, you dry up.

You may have all the phrases, you may preach like fury and wave and shout. You know congregations aren't as dumb as they look. Excuse me.

Thank you. And again, it's out of him you see, not out of me. As long as you stay in subjection and obedience, there's an inflow and an outflow and an overflow.

And if you put a cup under a, under a tap and let water run in it, and then the water runs over the top, it hides the vessel. You don't see the vessel, you see the overflow. A lot of people want to strut their gifts, whatever gifts they are.

There are not nine gifts, there are about 19 altogether, if you include ministry gifts. People like to show off. This lady, oh brother you've got to give her honor.

There are more freaks and frauds and fanatics in the spirit-filled life today than ever. Now there are some wonderful saints, don't make any mistake. But wherever you get a genuine thing, you get a false thing.

I noticed the other day, a big notice, it said the uh, the the leading, I think it was a leading record right now, is the rhinestone cowboy. Well sure enough, we'll have some rhinestone evangelists before we've got much further. They'll have to copy it.

They copy everything that comes in the world. Now Jesus is, is very, very, very hard on the world. As I said yesterday, if you, if you check up in the, in the scripture, you'll find that uh, something like 140 or 50 times in the New Testament, the world is mentioned.

78 times in this particular gospel. You see the, the world and the church used to be going that way. Now they're going side by side, you can't tell the difference.

There used to be antagonism, opposition, hatred, bitterness. As I said yesterday, Jesus gives you a guarantee. Oh you know, if you get through with the spirit, it will be all joy and peace and love.

Well the man who told you that's a liar anyhow. You better believe Jesus. Do you know what he said? He said in the world he shall have tribulation.

That's a promise. And he keeps his promises you say, don't he? So in the world he shall have tribulation. Oh yeah, Ephesians, our pastor quoted it the other morning, very beautifully, and expounded it a little while for us.

Where it says there, Ephesians 5 18, be filled with the spirit. It also, the same scripture, also said be angry and sin not. Trouble with us, we get angry about things that shouldn't disturb us, and we go to sleep over things that ought to make us blazing mad.

For God, we suggest a spirit-filled life is, is all fruit and beauty. Oh there's an awful lot of fruit and beauty in it for sure. And all the, some people will emphasize, overemphasize truth, that by the hair of your head will he touch.

Have you been to Vietnam this morning? Have you been to the Gulag archipelago? Have you been in China this morning before you did your pretty hair or made your tie get straight? Or what about folk that don't have a shirt to change, or a blouse to change, and they love Jesus as much as we do? They've suffered pretty much. Maybe the reason he lets us be mollycoddled is we're not strong enough to take it anyhow. See truth must be balanced.

Well, again as I said yesterday, this, this gospel as recorded by John, that ninety-two percent of what he says is, is his own. And in my judgment it is the most majestic interpretation of the gospel. In a sense it's, it's, it's biographical as well as a commentary.

The emphasis I want to leave this morning is, let me, let me just go back where we were yesterday. When Jesus said that the one desire that he has was not to fill our heads with theology and doctrine, he says the whole purpose of my life is that you may know the Father. Now you can't trust anybody you don't know.

And if you're going to know him, you'll learn about him here, but you'll get to know him out there. You'll get the theory here, you'll get the practice out there. You'll store it up here, but it works out of here.

And Jesus said his supreme desire was that we may know the Father. You see, that was the whole strength that Jesus had. He knew his Father.

And one of the sections, you remember we said this prayer is divided in three sections, verses one to five he prays for himself, verses six to nineteen he prays for the disciples, and verses twenty to the end he prays for the world. All right, let's, uh, I want to try and wrap it all up this morning and then we change the subject tomorrow. Um, let's take from verse nine here.

I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world. Well he was there, but he's telling them the chapter has ended.

As I said yesterday, this is one of those awesome periods again, where from here on Jesus doesn't touch the world, he doesn't bother with the world. There were times when Jesus would not speak to men, when he stood before kings and kept silent. If you walk with the Lord long enough he'll shut you up.

It may take him a bit of a task, but he'll do that. He'll ask you not only to fast from food, which is fairly easy, but fast from speaking. In the middle of the Welsh revival, the young man that had the revival that stirred Wales was 22 years of age, Evan Roberts.

Sure he inherited a lot of amazing prayer, but right in the middle of that revival, when one city had been shaken and he was moving to another city, the photographers came, the press reporters came, and they wanted to see the young man. And he was a bachelor, and the lady in the house where he lived went up to his room and said there are press reporters and photographers and they all want to see you, and this is a chance to get on the front page free, you know, a million dollars worth of advertising around England. And he wrote on a piece of paper, God has told me to fast for seven days, I can't speak for anybody.

Hmm? Does God ever get to you like that? Dr. S.B. Meyer, one of the greatest preachers ever, was in London at that time, respected the great convention speaker, great speaker at Keswick Convention. And he went to see the young man that God was using in the Welsh revival. The lady again knocked to the bedroom door of young Evan Roberts and said Dr. S.B. Meyer is here.

Thank you. I said Dr. S.B. Meyer has come all the way from London to Wales to speak to you. Well, I'll be down in an hour or two.

Oh, doesn't the scripture say that you have to be courteous? Yes it does. We have to be courteous to him first. The Lord hasn't done speaking, so he said I, I can't come.

Maybe an hour or two I'll come. I think sometimes many of us want a spiritual life, God bless what I'm doing. God is not obligated to bless anything you do if it isn't in conformity with his will.

God is only, God is only obligated to bless his word, nothing else. Not our opinion of it, not our zeal for it, just his word. Now that is, that Jesus hasn't gathered very much.

After three years ministry he's only got 11 disciples, he had a drop out, and there's not much at the end of the trail. That he's praying this high priestly prayer again. Again I say of all the things Jesus did, raising the dead, knocking the devil out of people, unplugging their ears, putting sight in blind eyes, of all the things Jesus did I'd love to have heard him pray more than, more than even seeing him walk on the water, that would have given us all goose pimples.

More than seeing, pinching all those old rascals out of the church. You know, the money changers and all the rest of them. I would love to have crept up to Jesus and heard him pray.

I'd like to have slipped behind the rock when he was, when he was praying with, with sweat and blood and tears. As he says in Hebrews, with strong crying and tears. You've got to be strong to weep.

I don't mean emotional tears, when you get upset, somebody hurts you and you know, pastor's been twice to that house down the street, not one two hours. What a world we live in. Well everybody has persecution, take your share.

But uh, when it comes down to the business of really travailing and burden for the lost world, it takes strong men to weep, not weak men. The apostle Paul was, was, he was made of iron. Somebody once said to, a Sunday school teacher said, why didn't they, why didn't the lions eat Daniel? Little kid said, because he was all grit and backbone.

Well that was true of the apostle Paul too, he was all grit and backbone. Oh in weariness, in painfulness, you tie him to a whipping post and lash him 195 times. In tribulation, distress, famine, peril, nakedness, sword, in perils of the deep, in perils of mine own countrymen.

And he takes the whole bundle that would have killed a thousand people and he says, our light affliction which is but for a moment. I bet the devil got mad when he said that. The devil had done everything he could to break his body, break his spirit, break his mind, discourage him, despise him, distress him.

And he shook it all off like a water terrier shakes water off when he's been for a swim and he says, our light affliction. You expect that and that's nothing. Do you know what he said broke his heart? Not being starved in a lousy prison with filth in it.

Not being whipped at a whipping post. Not wanting to have to stand up against demon fire, he said, the thing that comes and breaks my heart is the care of the churches. The blindness of people, their pettiness.

I noticed an advert somewhere there for pampers and I thought, why in the world are they boasting about pampers are new. My pastors have had them in the church 50 years, just to pamper everybody. If you don't, there's another church down the road.

Boy, I'd write you a bill of divorce right away, I said, get to it. Go join the weaklings, go on, get off with the cripples if that's all you want. It's time you went into business in the church to raise some saints, soldiers as well as saints.

It's going to take it for the hour into which we're coming. And this is why Jesus prays like this for these disciples. He says, you're going into the world, you'll have tribulation, I won't be with you, I will have gone from you, but the comfort of the Holy Ghost, again the comforter.

Not a comforter in the sense of you nursing a sick child, the comforter. The word is a Latin word, it's two Latin words, *comfortis*, with strength. The God of power is going to indwell you on the day of Pentecost.

Not so you can have exposes and kicks and joys and sit around and clap your hands and have a wonderful time. That may be part of it. But you're going into a demon infested world, you're going into a world that's going to get worse and worse and worse.

And if you don't have the abiding of the Holy Ghost, you'll not only not make it yourself, you'll be no good to God anyhow. You know when that great ship the Andrea Doria sank a few years ago there in New York, I'd just come through that area before on the Queen Elizabeth, Mary or something. And I remember that great big hulk of a ship that was sinking and, and you know what happened? What always happens.

Some people ran for the lifeboats, some people jumped in the water and tried to rescue some other people, some people forgot everybody and tried to swim for themselves and some couldn't even make it themselves. And I think it's very much a picture of believers, either they're fighting to get everything they can or they're concerned to rescue others and else they don't have strength to go on and you feed off the pastor. All right, verse 11, now I am no more in the world but these are in the world.

I come to thee Holy Father, keep in thine own name. I like that word, it's a very precious word. Keep, preserve.

While I was with them in the world, he says, I kept them. I'm not being the world, you keep them. In my office I have a few books, a couple of thousand maybe, and I have a sign over the middle so that when any preacher comes in he has to sit there and look at my books.

And right across the top it says eternity. In my chair where I write, right in front of me I have a file by that wall, a nice you know four or five stacked file, nice green file. And I bought some plastic, there is gold plastic letters, figures and letters.

And every morning I look at that, H-E-B, Hebrew, one one dash six, Hebrews 11 6. And then I spell it out in those gold letters, God is. If you're sure of that, you've got no worries. God is.

God is what? Well the Father says, Jesus says, I commit everything into the hands of the Father, because of what? Because God is. God is what? Because God is all he says he is. He's able to keep you from

falling, he's able to save to the uttermost, he's able to present you faultless before his Father with exceeding great joy, he's able to make all grace abound to you.

What more do you want than that? As the hymn said the other morning, what more can he say than to you he has said to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled. God is. When we were in the Bahamas a few years ago, we got some friends there and they're rather nice people.

They got yachts and homes and mansions and servants. And Martha doesn't like fishing too much. If she fishes, she always gets better fish than I get anyhow, so I'm glad when she doesn't go.

But occasionally we'll go fishing. I preached in a meeting once and I was chiding the preachers that they don't have time to pray, but they have time to fish. And one preacher says nothing wrong with fishing is there? I said no, Peter did it when he was back swimming.

But if you're on vacation, fish. If you'd rather fish than pray, you're sick. If you'd rather golf and goof than pray, you're in trouble.

But this day I happened to catch a fish. Evangelically it was about that length, actually it was about so big. It was a real nice fish.

And we took it home and the cook at the house is a, she's, she's a wizard, beautiful, colored lady. My, I sometimes think she could cook an old shoe and make it delicious. She is a cook and she served it up and, and did it all nice with parsley and trimmings, you know, it looked as though it wanted to be photographed instead of eaten, it was beautiful.

And she put it on the table and they said now cut it and give the preacher the first slice because he caught it. So they gave me the first slice of the fish. I hadn't eaten that kind of fish before and I ate it.

Did you like it? No. Did you season it? Season it. Why? She, she rubs the thing with, with all kinds of things before she cooks it.

She gets the skin off it and then she rubs it with what, I don't know, lemon and rubs it with something else and seasons it. Did you put any salt on it? Salt on it. A fish that length is about 12 years of age.

It's been living in salt water all its life. What did you want salt on for? Every time you get Morton salt, you get Morton salt from down there in the Caribbean. That's where they, they gather it out of the sea.

That, that fish has a skin about as thick as the paper on your bible and yet the salt can't get through it. Is there anything more tasteless than fish without salt? So God can put a fish in the sea in all the storm and stress and the salt never gets through that little, little bit of thin skin on it to put any salt in it. So he can keep a fish in the sea for 10 or 20, 30 years and it doesn't get any salt in it but he can't keep you in the world without getting any sin in you, eh? I have a little picture in my office and in the center there's a bit of film, an inch and a quarter by an inch and a quarter, little less, inch and eight by an inch and an eight.

It has every word of the bible on it. It was a microfilm of the bible by national cash register folks. Underneath it says that this little thing was given to brother Ravenhill.

It came from the NASA people in Houston. One of the Apollo men put it in his shirt pocket there and he walked on the moon and it says this is the first bible to go from planet earth to another planet. Now you can buy that in any shop, bible shops sell them.

Usually you can't, you can't buy mine for a hundred dollars. It's a very unique one. Give me a thousand I'll think over it.

That he carried it on the moon. Carried this bible on the moon. And then they sent me all the pictures that they shot on the stages up to the moon of the earth and all the other.

They're beautiful, oh my. And I want to thank you for paying your taxes for them. They're all colored and large and gorgeous pictures.

And one of the astronauts said that the amazing thing when we got up in space was to see the world hanging on nothing. The world just like a big orange hanging in space. And I look at that picture sometimes, you know why? Because down here is Australia.

I've been in that country many times, beautiful country, not as nice as New Zealand. And here's Australia and at the side of it's the ocean and by my logic that ocean ought to drop off. And there's a ship going past there, that ought to drop off.

And if you don't think it's difficult to get water to stick on a thing like that, try sticking out a handful of water on a bucket and see how you get on anyhow. There is the world hanging on nothing. Well Job said that.

Why do you need NASA or a boys over the Cape to prove that? In any case if they asked me I could say the millions of dollars. They don't ask me so I won't tell them. All we had to do was to make the first rocket, send it to Japan and let them copy it, we could shoot them every day.

They could make rockets for a fraction of the money that we spend on them. But again you see in his omnipotent power God hangs the world on nothing. He keeps the fish in the sea without salt getting into it.

Can he keep you without sin? As soon as you say that somebody says, oh he preaches sinless perfection. Well what do you preach, adultery? Huh? Why do you go crying on your brother's shoulder and say, I think I've got the most carnal bunch of deacons anybody's got in there. Well you've told them they've got to live in sin and sin will have dominion over them and the old man will drag them to the grave.

So what are you doing? You're reaping what you've sown. Bless you. Go do it again if you're stupid enough.

Find a gospel that's big enough to answer the sin problem. Mohammedanism doesn't have it. Sun Moon, the old clown that's come in the country, he doesn't have it.

If this book doesn't have it, there is no answer. Heresy very often is truth you push too far. I do not believe in sinless perfection, I do believe in sanctification.

And again heresy is often a truth you push it beyond what God says. As a matter of fact, John is devastating when he writes later. I enjoy reading John.

You know why? Because he's like me, except I'm worse than him. Why was he like me? Because he's very ignorant. Very ignorant.

One day he was going into church and a fellow shouted out, Hey! And he looked at him. And he said, give me some money. I know you had a big revival the other day because you had 5,000 converts, you and Peter, so you must have got a big love offering.

After all, with these evangelists, it seemed that their creed is greed and their God is gold, so you must have got stacks of money the other day. And Peter says, and John says, silver and gold I have not. But I'll tell you what we do have, we just haven't had a little of the power of his resurrection.

And if you take my hand man, you'll jump up and run for your life. And he believed and he did and he went and he disturbed the sleep of death in the sanctuary. Everybody was amazed and they said, well a notable miracle has been done.

And then they called all the big shots together, Alexander and all the rest of them, in the third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. And what did they say? They questioned Peter and John, you couldn't blame them, they haven't stolen anybody's money, they haven't fooled anybody, they haven't made any false prophecies, they haven't been running some clowning system. All they wanted to do was demonstrate this, as I said last night, when you get Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you get the four Gospels, you get the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Acts of the Apostles the church does everything that Jesus did.

And if the church isn't doing that today, she is not the true church. Now you read that second chapter there in Hebrews, and what does it say about the Gospel? It talks about the Gospel which came by Jesus Christ and then to the Apostles and others. And it came down to us and he says, this is the Gospel with signs and wonders and divers, miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

That's what God says and you better believe it. And if it isn't happening, we better get on our bellies, on our faces and get some sackcloth and glasses and cry to Almighty God till it does happen. Because without it Christianity is not a faith, it's a philosophy.

Christianity is not a philosophy, it's a faith. It's a life. So they look down their noses at Peter and John, sure they'd shaken all Jerusalem and the synagogue and the temple and the man was having a whale of a time leaping and praising God.

And so the big shot says, ladies and gentlemen I want to tell you this, we can't dispute this great miracle, but please be advised that Peter and John are unlearned and ignorant men. That's what it says, I've got notes on it right here. They're unlearned and ignorant men.

Isn't that delicious? That's sweet to my taste. That unlearned man wrote this gorgeous Gospel, this Gospel of John. And then to show how ignorant he was, he wrote the first epistle of John and the second epistle of John and the third epistle of John.

That's four good books, all best sellers. And then to really put the capstone on and make you really know he was ignorant, he wrote the book of the Revelation that still baffles all the wise men. Isn't that nice? Wouldn't you like a baptism of ignorance like that? Right ladies, he's nodding, right so would I. Do you think the world's going to think you're smart just because you try and pursue a life of holiness? You better watch out.

If you're, if you're going to be the person God wants you to be, you might get more spiritual than your pastor and that's awfully dangerous. If you get more spiritual than the pastor you'll get fired. They find some way to get rid of you.

Jesus says that, don't worry, Jesus said it. They'll put you out of the synagogue. As I said yesterday, who tried to kill Lazarus after he was raised from the dead? The Jews? No, not as Jews.

The Romans? No, no, not. The Sadducees? No. The Pharisees? No.

Who? The high priest tried to kill him. He'd done nothing except he'd been raised from the dead. But every time they saw him, they, argh! The worms should be eating him, but Jesus touched him.

Oh you can, uh, you can be spiritual and pharisaical true enough, but on the other hand even if you're deeply spiritual and walk with God, you get plenty of enemies. I like the song we sang this morning. These English hymns are lovely aren't they? Francis Ridley Havoc, it was a lovely hymn.

Like a river glorious, hidden in the hollow of his blessed hand, never folk unfollowed. Do you believe that? Do you believe the psalmist was right when he said, my times are in thy hands? And the hymn writer says, my God I wish them there. Do you remember the last part of the verse as you sang it? They who trust him wholly, w-h-o-l-l-y, they who trust him wholly find him wholly true.

The measure of your yieldedness to God is the measure of God's yieldedness to you. If you only trust him a little, that's all you'll get. If you trust him much, you'll get much.

If you trust him wholly, entirely, you'll get all that's coming, as long as you're obedient. So he says, I pray that you'll keep them. Verse 12, while I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name, these thou gavest me.

I have kept and none of them is lost but the son of perdition. Now, verse 13, I come to thee that these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. He mentions joy three times in this chapter.

The joy, the joy. What joy? This was the darkest situation he'd ever gone in. These very men were going to fail him.

Jesus knew what was in man, therefore he knew that these men, after three years of tuition, did not believe him. Prove it, I'll prove it, because they weren't there on the resurrection morning. If they'd believed him, they'd have all been standing in line shouting, Hallelujah, here he is! When Mary got to the grave, the stone was moved.

Why? To let Jesus out? No, he was out a to let the disciples in. They couldn't have gotten in. Jesus, the stone was moved.

And Jesus is praying here. Like again, this amazing apostle is in a lousy, rotten prison with food only fit for a dog, and he writes to the Christians. He's afraid they'll get discouraged, and so he writes there in Colossians, Rejoice in the Lord.

And again, I say rejoice. They should have all been singing Hallelujah outside of his cell window, but they were all so worried and discouraged about their little selves. And here is this great man of God saying, Hey, you weak folk, get up, you, you, you sorrowful folks, sing for joy.

I sometimes feel this, I, I wish that when people come and say they want to get saved, and you tell them all the benefits of salvation, I wish you'd whisper in the other pink little ear that they have, listen, you're a soldier of Jesus Christ, and you've got no rights of your own. Hmm? I heard many a man say, Well, I've got a sweet wife, but she's rather nervous, and she can't stay in the house by herself. I'd like to come to the night of prayer, you know, but I, I wouldn't like my wife to have a breakdown, or, you know, she's

troubled.

If a window creaks, she's probably trying to get in the house. But I noticed this, when they got their draft papers, they didn't write to the government and say, Well, I'd like to fight for the country, but my wife's nervous. I can't be a soldier, unless, of course, I can come and sleep at night, come home at night and sleep.

They say, Well, sonny boy, you're going to Vietnam or somewhere, and we just couldn't get a shuttle service to get you home at night to sleep, and get you back to Vietnam for breakfast, so, uh, what are you going to do? Oh, my wife won't like it. Didn't ask you if your wife liked it. We've just got into business, it's going to fall apart.

They didn't ask you that. They said, We've a right to draft you where we like. All right, Jesus has a right to do the same.

People say, You know, I would have gone to the mission field, I never got a call. You didn't have to have a call, he commanded you to go, your call is to stay at home. If you claim the promise he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire, he wasn't talking to you anyhow.

No, you say, But he was really in the, in the larger dimension. All right, then he was also telling you, go into all the world and preach the gospel. Who are you to start chopping it up, this is for us, and that isn't for us, and this is.

We were, we were in the house a while ago, I started teaching on Hebrews, and the lady said to me, We never teach Hebrews in our church. You don't? No, no, the pastor says it's very obvious, people are stupid, which they can't read, that the epistle to the Hebrews is to the Hebrews. They were Jews, so you can't teach it.

Oh, is that why, yeah, yeah. Are you Romans? Romans? They're American. Oh, well you can't read the epistle to the Romans, it wasn't written to you.

Are you Ephesians? Are you Colossians? If you start that process of elimination, all you have is the Amen at the end of Revelation. Hebrews is to the Jews, so is the most used chapter in the Bible in America and the other country every Sunday. Who did Jesus say you must be born again to? Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

Well what's he got to do with you? Sure logic can be cruel. But you see, immediately I become a child of God by faith. I have no rights of my own, I have no rights of my own.

But you have to guard your reputation, it'll take you all your life to do it and break your heart. Best thing to do is get rid of your reputation. You see, reputation is what people think you are, and character is what God knows you are.

And all you have to be worried about is character, not reputation. Jesus made himself of no reputation. Everybody's clamoring, people get filled with the Spirit, and right over the weekend they want to take the church over and baptize everybody into what they got.

They don't know a hill of beans, at the end of two weeks they break the church. One of the great proofs to me of spirituality is you have a teachable spirit. You may not always like the way it's served up, except

when I do it, but apart from that.

You may not always weigh that, and you may differ in certain points. If you're looking for somebody that hits every nail on the head exactly as you do, what's the good of having that kind of teaching? Provocation is a legitimate Christian exercise. I like to provoke people to good works.

Sometimes I provoke them to anger. I don't mean to, but I do, and I'd rather do that than do nothing. Anyhow, some of you haven't been shaken up for years.

The most comfortable hour you have is in church Sunday morning. Boy, isn't this relaxing. I think of the scripture that says, we shall not all sleep.

I even have my joy. Oh, I like that. I like that.

The same joy that characterized the life of Jesus. When they tried to push him over the precipice, he still kept his joy. When the world fell apart and every disciple was going to fail him, he was still dominated with joy.

Yes, it does say in the 12th chapter of Isaiah, with joy shall he draw water from the wells of salvation. It's Peter, isn't it, that talks about having a joy unspeakable. There's a joy unspeakable.

There's a joy so deep that you can't even explain it, you can only experience it. We had a great Nazarene preacher in England, an old man being the biggest drunken liar, thief in the British army. He got saved, he was the most joyful man I ever met.

Now you talk about hitting heights of rapture and praise and adoration. There is nobody in the New Testament, however spirit-filled they were, that ever hit the heights of the psalmist. Their greatest expression, sometimes I sing.

I sing to myself, I'm too kind to sing to others. I have a fantastic voice. Inside it gets spoiled coming out, but inside I sing.

And I like the psalm that says, lift up your head so ye gates and be lifted up the everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in. My, that's wonderful. The psalmist was it said, he has put a new song in my heart, even praise unto God.

I'm sure, I don't know that, yes Jesus did sing, there's one record, he sang going into Gethsemane, he sang a psalm. And again I say there's no high appeal in the praise anywhere in the Word of God than in the psalms. You read some of those phrases, you get them, and meditate on them.

They're majestic. And Jesus had a joy that was unspeakable, and he had a song. And this old dirty rascal that had been saved, he'd been pitched out of the British army, they sent him up home, tied him up in a jacket, in a straight jacket from India years back.

I'm talking now about when I was a young man and he was a very old man. But he was the most delightful man, the most, the only thing he was so embarrassing. Could you believe he got blessed on a streetcar? You do all your shouting in church don't you? You sing and show off and raise your hands and want to prophesy or speak.

You ever do that in the home and there's nobody there to applaud you and give you any credit for it? I'm sitting on a streetcar with John Thatcher, just as quiet as could be, dignified English people, and the streetcar has a seat right down that side and right down this side. And suddenly John bursts out, I've got a blood-red, snow-white, sky-blue, oh boy. Oh brother, did he praise the Lord.

I've got a blood-red, sky-blue experience, and as happy as a lark, and as free as an eagle, and it's sunshine and smiles, and strawberries and cream, and people looking like this over the newspapers. And old John went on and they were, must have got a lunatic. That wasn't so bad, I had to sleep with him in a big old bed.

Two o'clock in the morning he'd jab me in the ribs, he says, come on let's praise him. I said, it's two o'clock, doesn't matter, he doesn't say you can't come at two o'clock, let's praise him. He had a night shirt like a wedding dress, it fit round his neck and it was about two yards long behind, and he gets up and he's going round, I said, there are people in the next bed, it doesn't matter, they can join in the next room if they want, that's all right he said.

Oh, you should have heard that old boy, and he meant it, it wasn't a put-on thing, he meant it. That's why I loved him, if he got blessed in a shop, he got blessed in a shop. He didn't say, holy ghost don't boil over now because it's embarrassing.

I mean here I am, right in the middle of a shop, it would be terrible. Boy, he let it rip. Yeah, I'll tell you how he let it rip too.

He was preaching in London and God said to him, listen you've been telling me such a lot of stuff this morning. You were praying there and saying, if ever I love thee Lord Jesus, this now. You really love me? Yes, I do.

You lifted me out of a horrible pit? All right. There's a factory down the street, and he was always dressed immaculately, being a soldier, you could see your face in his shoes, his trousers were creased, he wore beautiful linen and ties, and the Lord said, you get on your hands and knees and walk round the front of that factory where the men are smoking and spitting and telling lies and all the other junk. Right at half past twelve in the dinner hour, there'll be hundreds of men lined up, and you stay on your knees and give them your testimony.

How you're the biggest wreck in the British army and God saved you. And I've heard him say many times, you know folk, I fought men, I think he'd actually kill the men, and I fought in wars, and I've been in many foreign countries, and I've done a lot of things. The hardest thing I ever had to do was get on my hands and knees to prove to God, because he demanded it of me.

And he walked round that factory, and he knelt there, and he started up his old theme, I've got a blood red, snow white, sky blue experience, and he went on to say he was the biggest liar, the biggest drunkard, they turned him out of the army. He'd had delirium tremens three times and so forth and so on. And the bell rang, and all the men went back.

There was a man there, his name was Briggs too, six feet two. Many of you have read Streams in the Desert by Mrs. Calman. Mrs. Calman said he was the finest evangelist they ever had in China.

He had revivals in China. This is the man that was saved as a result of the eccentric old friend of mine. He went back in the factory, and men were saying, wasn't he a nice looking man? Boy religion can send you

daft can't it? Send you crazy.

And Briggs said, I'll tell you what, when a man has the guts to kneel in a London gutter, and they were dirty gutters then, there was horse manure blowing around, and they were wet, and when he got up his beautiful trousers were all dirty and soggy. And his shoes were all rubbed at the toes because he'd walked right round the gutter. Briggs got saved the night he went to hear him preach, and became an outstanding missionary.

I preached once with Dr. Hines. He founded the great Nazarene hospital, one of the finest in Africa at Bremersdorf. He has every degree he could get for tropical medicines in America or England.

He got saved one night in a meeting that John Thatcher, that didn't know a difference between a Greek root and a rhubarb root, but he got saved in his meeting. And it all began when little John was in a hospital full of the devil, and acting up. And every time a preacher came in, the nurse would say, don't talk to that man in bed 21, he's an idiot, he's mad, we have to time him.

A little woman went in one day with some scriptures, and the nurse told her the same, and she looked at this strange man in bed, fiery eyes, horrible looking man, and the dear little soul waited till the nurse went out of the room. There were about 30 men in that, in that hospital ward, and she waited till the woman went out, and she went up to him, she said, this is, this is a scripture, this is a bible, and listen, I want to tell you something. It says here, if you confess your sin and tell God you're sorry, he'll forgive your sin, make you a Christian, take you to heaven.

Isn't that wonderful? Yeah. Oh, the nurse is coming, I'll leave it for you. And off she went.

You talk about a chain reaction. Did anybody ever tell you that there's an oak tree in an acorn? If they did, they were silly. There isn't an oak tree in an acorn, there's a forest in it.

A man goes and spreads the gospel, has great revivals in China through this broken old drunken life. Uh-huh. A man builds a super hospital there for thousands of people and has miracles of healing in central Africa out of this derelict old preacher, which all came out of a little nervous woman that gave him a scripture one morning.

And when he went to bed, at least before he went to sleep, hey, that woman said, if you put your hands together and say, Jesus, I'm a sinner, save me, he'll do it. Okay, Jesus, I'm a sinner, maybe the worst you ever had, but I'm a sinner, save me. And he said, the fellow sleep like that.

And he woke up in the morning and they shifted all the bells out of heaven and put them in his heart, they were all ringing. And he heard somebody say hallelujah, didn't know what it meant, whether it was Japanese or Chinese, but it felt good anyhow. So he woke up about six o'clock in a military hospital, he says hallelujah, and all the guys say, oh, they got a little bed, clothes and head.

A nurse was coming in, he said, nurse, nurse, Mr. Thatcher, what do you want? I want my trousers, going home, going home. Oh, I should have told you this. When he woke up, he said, well, I must be saying because the burden's gone, I feel new, I'm a different man.

And he said, he just reached for that New Testament and he opened it like that and read it. Do you know what it said? The prayer of faith shall save the sick. My word, he said, this is from God.

I never knew there's a God like this. He said, last night I just said, Lord, save me and he saved me. So all I do now is say, Lord, heal me.

He said, Lord, last night I said, save me and you saved me, because I'm not the man I was last night. Now, Lord, heal me. Thank you.

Isn't it a blessing he hadn't been to Bible school. It's no offense to have any unbelief. He thought God meant it.

So he read it and believed it. Two things you should do with this Bible, you know. Believe it and behave it.

Everybody does the first part, not many do the second. John said, bring me my trousers. The nurse said, you can't have them.

I said, John, if, if, if younger brought them, what would you do? He'd gone home in my nightshirt, he said. Would you have walked through the streets of Perth? Sure, sure, sure, sure. It was that heavy flannel.

It would have had to rest on the way home anyhow. Big thick army flannel shirt, two yards behind. He'd have been a picture, wouldn't he? But he's the kind of guy that would have done it.

Finally, they brought the doctor of the hospital, they brought the matron of the hospital, they made him sign his own release and told him to go home and not eat any solids for six months, because his body was in such a bad condition. He'd been drinking liquids only for six weeks. And going home, he fiddled in his pocket and just as you call a dollar a buck, he found a sixpence, which in our English vulgar, vulgar language we call a And he went in the shop and the lady said, oh, I thought you were in hospital.

He said, I was. You know what? Jesus saved me last night and healed me this morning. Isn't that great? Yes.

What do you want? He said, anything, anything you can give me. I've eaten nothing for, I'm hollow, my legs are hollow. Could you give me something? And you know they make a triangle thing they call a bannock there.

It's about that size and it's about that thick. And when they're they're lovely. When they're a day old, you could pave the backyard with them.

And she had a flower bag full of them, there were 20 of them. And without a drop of water or coffee or tea or butter or anything on them, he sat on the step of the shop and he says, I scoffed a lot. That's pretty good going, isn't it? He ate 20 of those bannocks, enough to kill anybody.

And when he got home, his landlady said, oh, I wish you hadn't come. I don't know how to take care of you, you're going to die. Die? Well, I can't afford to give you all the things.

Listen, he said, do you know what I've got in there? Yeah, I think you've got a sore stomach. Sore stomach? Man, he said, I got 20 bannocks in there. You don't mean that.

Huh? I said that to say this. Do you wonder the man was great, full of great gratitude? He'd been rescued from hell. You see, some of us were never far in the pits.

We don't really know too much about salvation. It cleaned us up a little bit, made us a little bit nicer. We read, uh, streams in the desert or squirts in the wilderness or something every morning, and, and we feel so nice after it.

You couldn't keep that man quiet if you tried. I tell you more than once, on a streetcar, he made me wish the bottom had gone. I thought I was a good spirit-filled preacher, but when he got cracking in the streetcar and everybody's like, ooh, ooh, ooh.

When he won't let you sleep because he gets blessed and says, come on now, now don't get back in bed. Let's sing it again. Ten thousand thanks, ten thousand thanks, we'll praise him o'er and o'er.

And for the life with him to live, ten thousand, come on, now you're getting in bed, get out, come on, sing it again. But I'll tell you what, wherever that man went, it was tremendous blessing. You could see that man was pure gold.

There was nothing artificial, there was nothing put on, he didn't rehearse, he didn't, he didn't try to impress. He was so impressive he didn't even have to try. He was so spiritual he didn't even have to wear a badge to let you know who he was.

Well you know, in a different dimension, Jesus had joy. Do you know what his joy was? Do you know what the joy of God is? Number one, to do God's will, to do God's will. Go labour on, spend and be spent, thy joy to do the master's will.

It is the way the master went, should not the servant tread it still. Toil on and in thy toil rejoice, for toil comes rest, for exile home. Soon shalt thou hear the bridegroom's voice, the midnight peal, behold I come.

He did the will of his father. He begins this very chapter with the most delightful thing imaginable. He says, father I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

John Wesley died at 88. The young man that first stirred my heart about America and broke my spirit, was a young man that died at the ripe old age of 28. David Brainerd died at 28, burned his life out for God.

Does God reward you for the length of years? If he does he's not a just God. If you get a bigger reward because you serve God, but Wesley served God 60 years more than David Brainerd, then Brainerd was handicapped. No he wasn't.

He'll have as big a reward as John Wesley. Why? Because he did God's will. He did the job that God gave him to do.

Everybody has criticized this marvelous young man Evans, over the Welsh revival, because he only had revival in 1904 and 5. It stirred the whole nation and then he went out of the picture and he didn't minister after that. Lived to be about 70 years of age and for 50 years did nothing. And people criticized him.

But he did more in those two years under God than those men doing 50 anyhow. He had a revival that cleansed the nation, closed the taverns, closed the dance halls. Nobody does that today.

You go in a lot of hullabaloo, put a personality up, get every Tom, Dick and Harry, backslidden or otherwise, to come and support your platform. Have a big big shin dig and get a few converts and shout about it. And the hell halls down there are as bad as ever.

People near us, we live outside of San Anton and they talk about what blessing there are in the churches. But more and more we're getting strip joints. They're total naked dancing now at night.

They've got beyond the place where the strip girls do it. In France nobody goes to see the strippers now. They go to see the homosexuals.

Stripping's got down. There's a saturation point on everything. And this again is a reason why if ever we prayed in our lives we ought to pray now.

I've said it before, I'll say it in this church, I've said it in all kinds of churches around the world, that no church is greater than its prayer life. Don't care how big your missionary budget is. After your prayer life the proof of the church is how many people you send out to foreign fields, or send out into full-time work for God.

Now it doesn't mean everybody has to quit the job, I'm not thinking that. But the supreme task of your life is not to live in a better house, wear better clothes, be a nicer person, be more acceptable. It's to know deep, deep down in your heart you're doing God's will.

You hear an awful lot these days about Northern Ireland. I preach there a lot and there's a town called Porterdown. There's a little lady there, she's not much to look at, heaven knows.

She was in the back row when everything was given out, features and everything else, but she is a saint. And in Walthorn, Northern Ireland, a friend told me it was over not too long ago, he said Len, you know that little woman in Porterdown? People still line up at her door at five o'clock in the morning for prayer. Nobody's ever written a book about her.

She won't let you photograph her. She doesn't ask for the front page of Decision magazine. She doesn't run after the big evangelist.

She doesn't collect autographs in the Bible. She doesn't have to chase to every meeting to get kicks. She's learned to pray.

And every morning at five o'clock that little woman goes as she's already been in the secret place and thought, knock at the door. And they knock at the door maybe till 12 o'clock and they line up in the street. Pentecostal people don't go to the past as often.

They go to her. Presbyterians go to her. Methodists go to her.

Salvationists go to her. Baptists go to her. You know, I think that's greatness.

Used to chase Miss Kuhlman. I know Miss Kuhlman. I preached a series of sermons for her in the Carnegie Hall.

Took a Bible class very often. Preached for her on Sunday sometimes. She's a very fine woman, but she had a different display.

This little woman's heading away. Dear old Van Tavenner says, it's going to be wonderful when God begins to read his who's who. Huh? God's who's who.

People say sometimes to me, are you in who's who? And I say, well who's who? I won't want to be in with that who's who anymore. I want to be in your zoo. What a human rating.

As I said this morning again and finish, you see reputation is what people think about you. Character is what God knows about you. As I said before, if you, if you voted me the, the greatest Christian in the world, I know there's no hope.

But if you did, the Lord wouldn't say, well my, my, my. I hadn't noticed that. I've been so busy holding the world up and Ravenel is the greatest saint.

Hey, I got your name down here son. I'll rub it out. You're right at the top there.

You're number one saint in the world. And then a couple of years after, because I did something you didn't like, you rub my name off and forget it. You think the Lord, you see, you could change everybody's opinion in the world about me, but you couldn't change God's opinion.

The only person who can change God's opinion about me is me. Huh? That should come to you. Whether the pastor likes you or he doesn't like you, as long as you're doing God's will.

The holiest man that ever lived. And they said he cast out devils because he's the devil himself. And our dear pastor reminded me, I, I, I just delighted in that because it reminded me of what I've been saying the other week.

We talk about being filled, you know what happened when they were filled with the Holy Ghost and they came out of it. Well tell me, tell me, come on I'm listening. What did happen? There were a hundred and twenty went in the upper room.

Can you trace the lives of any of them? You can't trace the lives of more than three or four of them. What happened to the others? Did it just become sanctified mothers and godly fathers that raised their children? I'm not interested in listening to preachers whose kids have gone to the devil. I talked with a boy in the, in the, in the drainage of New York when I was living with, working for Teen Challenge, working with Dave Wilkerson.

I walked in the place one night where we, we looked after these folk and this kid came in, big barrel-chested boy. And I said would you take coffee? Yeah. Want a donut? Yeah.

What kind? Plains. Took cup and saucer and the donut to him. And before I sat down, he started like this.

There was a certain man named Nicodemus, ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said, Master, good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life? I said, hold it, hold it, you know all the answers. Sure.

Ah. Where do you come from? Just got off a boat in the dock. Came in from Australia.

Where's your home? Don't have one. No parents? These, these are his exact words as a Lord Bear's Witness. He said, yeah, my daddy's a missionary.

He's in Africa chasing niggers so they won't go to hell. But his family's going. I'm going.

My sister's going. He, he, he dumped me in a, in a school when I was five years of age and said, sonny be good, I'll send you some spending money and I'll be back in five years when we have furlough. And he came back and saw us a little while and he went to raise money to support him in Africa.

And before he got on the boat, he bought me a new suit and a pair of shoes and he said, be a good boy till I come back, see you in five years. And he came back when I was 10. He came back when I was 15.

The last time he came he said, son, you're doing something I don't like. He said, I said, dad, you're doing an awful lot I don't like. As a matter of fact, I don't have a daddy and mommy.

Amazing how many people get filled with the Spirit and suddenly get a call to start traveling. Much easier than get a wrestling at home with a bunch of rebel kids, isn't it? Hmm? You think it's all glamour? Nothing on your life. These such distorted views of what greatness is.

When God who's who is read, do you know what the book says, I wouldn't dare say, God says some of the last will be first and some of the boys at the head of the parade right now that beg your money with their tears every Sunday morning on the big t-boat back. So they can live in quarter million dollar homes and and say everything my wife wears of course is pure gold and genuine jewels. These are diamonds, yes, out of somebody's tithes and offerings.

When God opens the books, let me suggest that for the next week only perhaps, you'll do it maybe after you get a nice piece of paper, put it right over that vanity mirror you have and write on it eternity. Go to bed in the light of eternity, get up in the light of eternity, speak over the phone in the light of eternity. It might change a bit of conversation.

Pray in the light of eternity, prepare your sermons in the light of eternity. Now Jesus says, I pray that you'll keep them. And then he says, I'm going up there to the right hand of the Father and I'll be praying for you.

People say that to me and I sometimes wonder if they remember, but I know Jesus does. And he says, I pray not that you'll take them out of the world, that will be easy, keep them in the world. He prays not for our transportation, for our preservation.

He prays for our sanctification, sanctify them through thy truth. He prays for our jubilation because he says they may have my joy. He prays for their unification.

Ah now you're getting to it. We've all got to be one. You know it doesn't matter whether you believe in the virgin birth or not.

Doesn't matter whether you believe the Virgin Mary died to save you as much as Jesus. You just put your arms around anybody these days, as long as they're not communists. And we'll have a big shindig that you can call by any name you like.

I expect it has no scriptural foundation. Well you said Jesus says that we may be one. Sure he did.

What kind of a one? Who was he talking to? He said, Father that they may be one as you and I are one. It was vertical not horizontal. You're to be one with him.

Didn't the brother get us to sing, breathe on me breath of God two nights ago. And Hatch says in that hymn, until with thee I will, one will. Two streams coming down the side of a mountain spoke to me one day.

God's will, my will, and suddenly to become one. And you can't tell the one from the other. God wants me to be one with him.

No rebellion. He can ask what he likes, when he likes. And I say yes.

The last simple thing. A friend said to me one day, I've read many stories of heroism. I think perhaps the greatest was about a French king who was in debt to a man in his court, a man had done something for him.

And he said listen I want, I want to do something for you. And he took a sheet of paper, and he just signed in the, in the corner of it, give him whatever he asks. And he signed his name Louis the 15th or whoever it was.

He said now go use it. Supposing he'd filled it in and said give me your kingdom, what would he have done? You know the Christian life is? I'll tell you. It's process, crisis, process, crisis, process, crisis, except it's not on the level, it's all uphill.

It's progress, and then the crisis. And you say oh I've got it made here, there's nothing beyond here. And you settle down on a plateau, and the Lord says get going.

And the next thing is Mary Jane gives up on you. She says I can't come and pray with you. Oh Lord I need her.

No you don't, you need the Lord. You've been leaning on her long enough. Well I've been doing so and so, and the Lord says give it up.

Well Lord that's my supply. No he says I'm your supply. If you trust him wholly, you'll find him wholly true.

So the Christian life is, is not just this way. It's progress and crisis, process, crisis. It is in the life of Jesus.

It is in the life of all of us. Isn't it wonderful to know that he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Great to be in the school of God.

He never makes any mistakes. He never has to correct anything he's done. He's never lost a battle.

Phew. But a God like that, we ought to turn the world upside down. But before he turns it upside down, he'll have to turn us inside out.

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