

# The True Vine

by Leonard Ravenhill

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*Leonard Ravenhill's sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual maturity, the necessity of repentance, and the believer's connection to Christ as the true vine for fruitful living.*

**Duration:** 1:07:15

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 15:7-17

**Topics:** "Abiding"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God has given us everything we need and has no more words to say to our generation or any other generation. He challenges listeners to live in the spirit and not be deceived about their spiritual life. The speaker also discusses the importance of remaining connected to Jesus, who is described as the true vine. He highlights the promises of bearing fruit, bearing much fruit, and bearing permanent fruit. The sermon draws from the Gospel of John, particularly the 15th chapter, which is unique to John's gospel.

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## Transcript

By biblical definition, godliness is a mystery. Nobody has dared to define for us what proportion of responsibility is ours in our spiritual development and what proportion of the responsibility for our spiritual culture is God's alone. We have three sons.

I think they're the finest three boys in the world, you might disagree, and they're all pretty smart. They don't inherit their brains from me, only their good looks, but they get their brains from my wife, I'm sure, and one of them is particularly clever. He has a very, very high IQ.

He's very modest about it. I think he has his priorities in, well, in the right order. And you know, if we could be selective, particularly as we get older, we would really prefer to be kind of super intelligent.

If you're materially poor, there could be a lot of reasons for it. If you're intellectually poor, there are maybe reasons for that. But if you're spiritually poor, that's entirely your fault.

Nobody else is, just yours. It could be plain laziness, could be that you have a pastor that doesn't know how to teach you, there are a lot of them, and there could be a whole stack of reasons why you're not spiritually mature this morning. It seems to me that the Church of Jesus today is more like a nursery than an armory.

And you don't usually tell little boys and girls in the infant classes in Sunday school to put on the whole armor of God. A little out of kilter, as you say. As we came, we drove through the country after we got off the plane from the Bahamas, and we noticed the difference in the corn crops.

I noticed some corn locally that isn't much more than knee high, but as we were traveling, we saw some that was well over our heads. Now I don't know a thing about farming, and so you can catch me out here, but it may be due to many reasons, I think. Maybe that some corn is purposely planted later than other corn.

Some of it is retarded because maybe of its environment. Maybe there hasn't been enough rain. Other things that haven't brought it to maturity.

And you know, this is true in the spiritual realm. There are so many classifications of spirituality that you can't classify them. We usually kind of divide them into two sections and say people are either spiritual or they're carnal.

But there are many, many areas of carnality. There are many, many areas of spirituality. Now I got some good news last night, which was bad news.

Some people said they didn't understand a word I said. Now that's not due to your bad English. I know you don't have much, but that's not due to your bad English, but due to, again, due to these wires literally getting crossed.

So if you can't hear this, put up your hand, and I don't know what we'll do, but at least there's no point in talking if you can't hear, and you'd have a big excuse for disobedience. And I don't want you to have any excuses for that at all. I want you all to get into trouble at the judgment seat.

I have been, for a long while, fascinated with what we call the fourth gospel. There isn't a fourth gospel, you know that I'm sure. There's only one gospel told by four different men.

Some people have said the gospel of John is the most profound and the most beautiful thing in literature. Amongst other things, the gospel of John, John has in his writing given us somewhere around about 90 percent of what he says is original. We're going to think in a little while about the 15th chapter of John.

Now the 15th chapter of John has no parallel in any shape or form in the other three gospels that we call the synoptic gospels. Some things are uniquely belonging to John. For instance, again this 15th chapter, the 17th chapter, and so forth, and so on.

He has an entirely different vocabulary from the other evangelists. I was preaching up north a few years ago, and it was in the, uh, in the, um, I was going to tell you the name of the town. I've forgotten it for the moment.

That, uh, while I was there, a famous broadcasting preacher came into the meetings. And afterwards he wrote me a letter. I, I, I think he thought he was writing an asbestos.

He really scorched me. He said he didn't like what I preached. He didn't like how I presented it.

Well he should have come and told me I would shake hands with him, because I don't like it either. I'm sure it could be done in a much better way, but he didn't like it. And he went down the line and ticked me off here, there, there, there, there.

All negative, negative, negative. But his chief argument was this, I don't like what you say because you emphasize repentance. And he said you should know that the last gospel that was written was the gospel of John.

And John does not mention repentance once in the whole of his writing, which is perfectly true. But if that man was as smart as he thought he was, he should have known that the man who wrote the fourth gospel, as we call it, is the same man in my judgment that wrote the book of the Revelation. And the last message of Jesus Christ was not the Great Commission.

The last message of Jesus Christ was not to the world, it was to the church. And his last emphasis repeatedly right through the seven churches is repent, repent, repent. John Wesley used to lay a great emphasis on the repentance of the believer.

Dr. Tozer said on occasion he went to a meeting. There was a great crowd of preachers there, it was a conference. And the Spirit of God came on the, on the assembly and he had to quit preaching.

People got down and began to cry to God. All except one man, he said, he was raised with a very strict holiness group and that poor guy didn't have anything to repent about. Everybody else did, he said, but he was in a, he was in a tough spot.

He couldn't think of anything at all, he was so immaculate. You wonder he hadn't gone to heaven right away. Now I think there are things to repent about that are not necessarily sinful.

Some things that we have done that, well like wasting time or maybe wasting money or doing some other thing. But the emphasis again of Jesus is the emphasis on repentance. Now this brother argued in his letter that I shouldn't mention repentance because it's not mentioned in the, in the gospel.

It's what the lawyer calls the argument of silence. But if you take that argument you're going to have to eliminate many, many things from the gospel as recorded by John. John doesn't talk about demons, John doesn't talk about angels, John doesn't mention children, lots of things he doesn't mention.

So again keep this in mind that 90 percent of what John has given to us is John's. It is not, again borrowed like apparently some of the other evangelists borrowed from each other. This is entirely different and it seems to me that the whole of this marvelous book is Katsu for us.

In the very first verse of the first chapter, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. In the beginning, eternity. The word was with God, equality.

The word was God, deity. Now Jesus is more than divine. If you're really born again in the spirit of God you're divine, but you're not deity.

We are made partakers of the divine nature. The miracle of miracles on God's side is that, as Wesley in one of his hymns says, God was contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man. And the reason that the world will not accept the virgin birth, that as some people call it the immaculate conception, and it's different really because they think the Virgin Mary had no sin either, but the virgin birth they won't accept it because you can't explain it scientifically.

You can't explain it with a test tube. You can't explain it on any grounds at all outside of divine revelation. As I've said very often before, I'm not clever and so I don't have any problem with the virgin birth.

My simple reduction is this, that if God made the first Adam without a mother he could make the last Adam without a father. Just as simple as that. Profoundly simple.

Simply profound. There's this thing we've got to really adjust ourselves to in our Christian life, and this is that God doesn't owe any explanations to anybody. You can't question a thing he does either on the international level or on the individual level.

He has prerogatives, he's going to use them. He doesn't have to explain what he's doing or why he's doing it. It's his, it's his sovereign right to do it.

If he's put you in a jam this morning, well accept it from him. It's easy to sing in a congregation, is it, where he leads me out with a follower. You get a bit sniffly and have to rub the tears off your nose or somewhere.

And when you come to where, though he lead me through the garden and you think, well yes he won't take anybody else in this assembly except me, but Lord I'll go through with it. And tomorrow when as soon as you see the gates of the garden you back off. It's a great thing in my judgment to realize this, that whatever God is doing in your life and mine, he isn't doing it to please me.

He isn't doing it to make me more acceptable in my community or to make me a better Christian. God is working for eternity in your life. Again he doesn't owe us any explanation.

The man that merely wants forgiveness for his sins and to escape hellfire is toying with Christianity. God has infinitely more in that. The purpose of God is to bring me, to bring you into conformity, where to be transformed that we may be conformed to the image of his Son.

I was thinking as we drove up the road there this morning, the prayer of Esau, bless me, even me. Or as an old song we used to sing in England, while on others thou art not. Pass me not, O gentle Saviour.

Isn't that the hymn? Blessing others, O bless me. Now that's the prayer of a spiritual child. That's a prayer of immaturity.

Sometimes we pray that life may be easy. We should only pray that God may get more glory. If he makes it ten times rougher than it is now, I should be able to rejoice in it, because again if he's going to get more glory out of my life, well then that's what he wants and that's what I want.

I'm sure there comes a time in the life of an individual when we quit saying Lord bless me, and we change the prayer to something like this, Lord make me a blessing. Again there's all the difference in the world. Now I do think this, that very often in our, particularly the fever that gets all the evangelists, poor things.

You've got to prove your ministry by how many people come to the altar. It doesn't matter how you get them. They'll soon be giving green stamps to get them there.

But we put pressure this way and we put pressure that way and then manipulate and I'm only, I was in a meeting just the other night where the evangelist said, now I don't believe in long altar calls. Well I'm glad he didn't because it took 12 minutes when he finished preaching. There are no altar calls in the New Testament.

Altar calls belong to the evangelist, but you don't have altar calls in revival. The church becomes an altar. One of the best accounts in my judgment of the spiritual history of the Methodist church was written by Abel Stevens.

I bought three big old volumes of this a while ago. And as I kind of flicked through the pages I'd been amazed at the manifestations of the power of the Spirit of God where people would be out. If the altar call was called at nine o'clock they were still seeking and praying and traveling at one o'clock, two o'clock in the morning.

Some of you must have read a book by Gilchrist Lawson, *The Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians*, and in that he says this, and he says it, I'm only quoting it, he says that the aftermath of a revival conducted by Charles G. Finney showed that 70% of the converts were standing years after they had made what you like to call perhaps a decision for Christ. But in Mr. Moody's case only 40% of them stood. Moody had a 60% backsliding rate among his converts and the other man only had 30%, half of that.

Moody had an altar call, Finney did not. It is true that he says that after a period of preaching that he he opened what he called the anxious seat. And he operated that way that he said that after he had preached he would say to people now you're free to go home, but if you're really distressed about your spiritual life I suggest you stay behind, and this they did.

It seems to me that we've given too much for too little in our evangelism, too much of a package deal. We don't dare to tell people, particularly young people, to read as we say the fine prints. As I said last night we guarantee them salvation, we guarantee them a mansion over the hilltop, and they're going to rule over five cities, and everything's going to be laid on pretty good.

But if you read the context of the 15th chapter of John, you'll discover there are some rather difficult, thorny things in there. If you and I are really born again, well as the hymn writer says, is this vile world a friend to grace to help me unto God? Or, the guarantee of Jesus in the world he shall have tribulation, or as he says in the 20th verse of the 15th of John, remember. That's a good thing to remember too.

When it says remember, we should remember. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also.

If they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. It goes on to speak of hatred. Now this 15th chapter of John, if you're familiar with the Bible at all, you know it has something to do with, with the vine.

And I always say to people, and there's some repetition here, because repetition is the law of learning anyhow. And if uh, if you want to study the 15th chapter of John, I suggest that you read the 15th chapter of Ezekiel before you read the 15th chapter of John. Because in the first five verses of Ezekiel 15, it describes the vine.

And it says there that the vine isn't good for anything at all except to produce fruit. You don't buy furniture made of the wood of the vine. You don't buy anything that I know of, not even a pair of candlesticks made of the wood of the vine.

I talked with a missionary who'd been in the, in the Middle East for 40 years. And he had all kinds of wonderful curios. He had the most amazing display that I have ever seen.

He had a beautiful dagger in a, in a lovely scabbard that had all kinds of wonderful little things on the outside. It was given to him to king, from the, by the king of Arabia. And he had other things in different kinds of wood.

Myrtle wood and redwood. Well a kind of redwood, actually cedar of Lebanon, which looks very much like the wood from the redwood tree. And he had something, a camel that was made out of an olive tree.

And I, I'm, I'm quite ignorant in this area, but I could tell that one kind of wood was very different from the other. I can tell the difference between coal and salt, in case you don't know. I can tell coal, I can tell salt, I can tell redwood, and I can tell, say, ordinary pine.

And I looked at these various things made out of different kinds of wood. And then I said to him, now did you ever see anything made of the wood of the vine? He said no, but, and now you mention it, I, I, I never thought of it before. I've seen vines growing by the million out there in the east, but I never thought of anything except, of course, the one thing that you get from the vine.

And the one thing you get from the vine, obviously, at least a great vine, is great. Now Jesus here says to his disciples, I am the vine, you the branches. And sometimes I hear an interpretation of this as though Jesus is over here, he's the vine, and we're over there, the branches.

Now you can't exist like that. Jesus is not only the vine, he is the branch too. I wouldn't like to think that I have to try to get to my automobile if my body somehow could be dismembered, and my legs stayed on the chair here, and I tried to get over there.

I, I have to be a complete unit. And Jesus Christ is the vine, and he is the branch in the vine, in the truest sense of the word. There are three promises made in this chapter.

In the second verse, there is a promise that we shall bear fruit. In the eighth verse, that we shall bear much fruit. And in the sixteenth verse, that we shall bear permanent fruit.

Our fruit shall remain. Now Jesus says, I am the vine. No, he says, I am the true vine.

That's a little word that this man loves very much. He doesn't say that Jesus is the light of the world, he says he is the true light. He doesn't merely say he is the bread of life, he says he is the true bread.

He doesn't merely say he is the vine, he is the true vine. Or as the Greek would say, the vine the truth. And my father is the husbandman.

What does a man produce, or labor so hard with his, with his vines for? Well again, if the grape vines, he's after one thing, that he may produce a bunch of luscious, beautiful grapes. And as far as the, what do you call him, a farmer, or whatever he is, who owns the vineyard. The master of the vineyard is only concerned that he may produce grapes.

Wouldn't you think that logically the scripture would say this, I am the vine and you're the grapes? Doesn't say that. He says, I am the vine, you're the branches. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.

There's many a branch on a vine and it has no fruit on it at all. For various reasons, it could be disease, maybe it wasn't pruned properly. But you see, the branch cannot bear fruit of itself.

We're not the grapes. If you say that we're the grapes, then of course again, you take the figure of the vineyard and the man that produces the grapes, that's all he's concerned about. And if you're in the Niagara Falls area, you'll see trucks coming down the road, as we saw trucks the other day coming through Florida with, I just wondered how many thousands and thousands of oranges were in each truck.

Great big long things piled up, you could see the oranges. I was hoping some might roll off, but they didn't. Those oranges look very tempting inside of that truck.

You go up the other area, you'll find that the grapes, by the million, are just stacked up there in those trucks. As far as this man is concerned, when he's produced the grapes, when the vine has been trimmed, and when he's got that luscious fruit, there you are, he's done with it. But that's not true in the case of the husbandman, the divine husbandman.

I think, I'm not quite sure, but I think it was the man that wrote one of the most popular books of daily readings, Oswald Chambers, who used to say very often in his prayer, make me broken bread and poured out wine. Now this is really coming to maturity. It's one thing to be a lovely bunch of grapes, if you want to keep the figure that the Christian is, or the fruits in his life, shall we say, like that bunch of grapes.

They're very attractive, they're very luscious, they're very delicious to partake of. But when this man has finished with his vineyard and cast all his grapes into the truck, and they go up somewhere, they don't go on exhibition. They go to be pounded, they go to be put under pressure, they go that out of them every bit of life may be squeezed out of them, in order that they may produce the wine.

Or as the Bible says about corn, thinking of corn here as oats, and as we do in England anyhow, you scoop wheat. You have to take it and put it there in the mill, and you have to grind it. And not only that, but as though the pressure isn't enough to be put between two millstones and grind it into powder.

And then it has to go into the furnace. Or before that, my mother used to take it and knead it, and pound it, and push it around, and then put it by the fire, and she would say it would rise after she put yeast in it, and then she would take it and put it in an oven. Well you can almost see that parallel in the life of the Lord Jesus.

He was pounded, he was bruised, he went into the heat of Gethsemane. And you know we offer the victorious life something like a luscious bunch of grapes, and say you know the Lord wants you to be very beautiful, and very sweet, and very appetizing, and very attractive. That's only one side of the picture.

I've said very often that I do not believe that faith is a key that opens every door. If faith could do anything, as some people say, well you know God can do anything. I don't doubt that, but I'm quite sure he won't.

But I've said if you believe that faith can do anything, I suggest you take a plane and go over to England, and a bunch of you get around the grave of John Wesley, and take a week of fasting, and prayer, and sleeplessness, and agonizing intercession, and tell God that you believe he can do anything. He can even raise those dusty bones of John Wesley, and bring him back, because we need him so much. Or go over there into New England, and find the grave of David Brainerd, a new young people.

Should certainly read his life, because he died at the ripe old age of 28. And tell God we need this man to come back again. The man with the most extravagant interpretation of faith would never dare to do anything like that at all.

If faith could do anything, we wouldn't have any martyrs in the Church of God. And it's easy to take one side of the calendar as it were, and say well look here is Hebrews 11, and in Hebrews 11 these amazing men and women of faith. Look what they did, they subdued kingdoms, and wrought righteousness, and obtained promises, and stopped the mouths of lies.

What a fantastic catalog. And again I remind you to remind myself this morning, that nobody in Hebrews 11 ever had a Bible. You sit down and chew that over for a while.

As I said last night, it doesn't matter if the world goes on another hundred million years. God has no PS to add to this book. He's given us all that he can ever give us.

God hasn't another word to say to our generation, or any other generation. And if men and women in pre-Christian days could have such faith that they could subdue kingdoms, and stop the mouths of lies, and do all the things that they did. Then I wonder what you and I really ought to be doing.

You know unless we really live in the spirit, it's desperately easy to get cheated about our spiritual life. You take me down the road and show me a church, and you say you know that man a few years ago only had 40 members, and now he has 3,000. So what? My hair won't stand up.

You try and tell me it's because he's more spiritual than the other man at this end of the road, who had 50 people 10 years ago, and only has 65 tonight. Today that wouldn't raise my hair either. You can't judge spirituality by results of that kind.

If you could get to the inside of that man up there, and really get close to him, he might admit to you that he thinks he's the greatest failure that is within a hundred miles radius of where he's living. He may be a bit smarter, he may have a better personality, it could be a radio program or something. This cursed, and I choose that word, this cursed thing of popularity.

I'm a very popular evangelist. Well you better sit down and ask yourself why Jesus wasn't popular. Possibly you're selling him at bargain basement prices.

You're offering a Christianity without a cross. You're offering a Christianity that again means escaping hellfire, and all your dirty sins are forgiven, and from here out God lays it all on, lays it all on, and boy it's a great joy ride from here to eternity. This is not how the scripture reveals it.

You see the center really of this study, and in the 15th of John, is again comes down to what's basic, and what is the greatest ministry in the whole world, and that is the ministry of prayer. Because after Jesus has been talking about pruning, and refining, and all the things that the husbandman does, then he switches over and he says that you know you can ask anything of the Lord. And he says if you keep my commandments you shall abide in my love, verse 10, even as I have kept my father's commandment, and abide in his love.

And verse 16, ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit. Now that's the only ordination that we really need. It doesn't matter how you ordain a man, you don't necessarily give him any unction.

You can't transmit super spirituality because you give him a degree, and give him a little scroll that says he's an R.E.V., a title that I don't like because it really belongs to God, holy and reverend is his name. And I don't think you and I have a right to share it. In England we always do this, but I think the Spurgeon said the name pastor is a far better word.

But he says I have ordained you, and I've ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. And whatsoever ye shall ask the father in my name, he shall give it unto you. Now that again is, in my judgment, is considering the fact that we have come to the place where God has

done his pruning, and his refining, and his correcting in our lives, and we've come at least to some degree of spiritual maturity.

It certainly is not true to say that God will send a bulldozer, and clear, pull down the hills, and fill in the valleys, and make the crooked places straight. I've heard preachers, I've heard evangelists say, you know after I got saved, man it's been wonderful, everything's been taken care of, a bigger home, a bigger car, I've more income, and everything's really, you know, everything's really going wonderful. Man it really is wonderful.

Well I'm going to say this, I don't believe I've got anything to do with your spirituality at all. If it has, well what's God doing for the Christians in Russia this morning, and what is he doing for the Christians in China this morning? I'm almost prepared to say, though I've not quite finalized this, but I think in the Old Testament, the sign of God's blessing in the Old Testament is prosperity, and the sign of God's blessing in the New Testament is adversity. What's your breaking point? What load can you carry? Oh forget how much people like your preaching, or your singing, or some other contortions you may do on the plus.

Tell me this, are you so lost in him? Are you so one with him? Are you so abiding with him, that that God can whisper his secret into your heart, and ask you to to carry a burden he can't ask the other fellow up the street to carry? I think sometimes we ask God to do things for us, and when he starts to do them the first thing we do is break down, and begin to wonder why, or begin to cry. Sometimes I think the very hymns that we sing are very dangerous hymns. Dr. Tozzi used to say that not only should Christians not paralyze, we shouldn't sing them, but he said most of us do.

You know like when we sing, when I survey the wondrous cross, were the whole realm of nature mine. Oh it's a nice atmosphere, the sinners have all left now, and it's just the last few minutes of Sunday morning, and there's a sweet atmosphere, and all the choice saints are gathered round the table, and we're the elect of God, and we sing were the whole realm of nature mine. It were an offering far too small, or as Isaac Watts originally said, a present far too small.

But you know we we do there what we have done with so many other hymns, we've amputated them. I don't know a hymn book, yes I do, thinking back for a moment, pulling that word back. I know two hymn books only that give the fifth verse.

I know three, I think of another one now. One I helped to compile, the old, old, old, old Baptist hymn book, and a modern hymn book which is maybe the best hymn book of all, written by, produced by the Pentecostals. I, I, I tell them sometimes, I wonder why it's been so blessed, because they stole all the hymns anyhow, from the Methodists, and the Salvation Army, and the Baptists, but it's a remarkable hymn book of nearly a thousand hymns.

And Isaac Watts' last verse, to when I surveyed a wondrous cross is this, his dying crimson, his dying crimson like a robe, spread o'er his body on the tree, Then am I dead to all the globe, and all the globe is dead to me. So maybe it's as well we don't sing it, because we'd be lying half of us anyhow if we sang it. Then am I dead to all the globe, and all the globe is dead to me.

Really? Were the whole realm of nature mine, it were an offering. Well why don't you go to prayer meeting Wednesday nights, and why are there some other areas where you back off? It's so easy to get carried on a wave of emotion. You know sometimes we sing a hymn like, draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord.

And the Lord says, well all right I'll do, I'll take you up on that. And then something breaks down here, and something breaks down there, and somebody over there doesn't treat you right, and these people over here have asked you. The last ten times that they gathered a few people around to play dominoes or something, you've been every time, and this time they didn't.

And now I wonder why. I wonder why she got hurt. I wonder why they didn't invite us.

I mean we're as good as anybody, we're as spiritual as any, but they didn't. Well, well all the Lord was doing was answering your prayer, you said draw me nearer. And the only way he can draw you nearer to him is to draw you further off from other people.

But oh as soon as he does that, then I want to back off and say, but now Lord I don't want to lose any of my popularity in the church. After all I'm the head of the sowing league, not sowing seeds, sowing shirts for missionaries or something. And not only that, but usually I do sing the main solo at Christmas in the choir.

And the Lord says, well you don't need this, you've grown up, and you don't need that, and you want to come nearer to me. And so the only thing I can do, if I'm going to clothe you, I'll have to strip you. If I'm going to draw you nearer, I'll have to pull you further away from them.

If I'm going to fill you, I'll have to empty you. If I'm going to lift you up, I'll have to cast you down, because Bible logic is natural logic in reverse. Do you want to really become mature in God? Well there's only one way to do it, that is lose your life and you'll find it.

As long as you keep it, you'll lose it. Wasn't it Wesley who said, what I kept I lost, and what I gave away I have, which is true. Now most of you won't agree with this, you'll ignore it.

You want to be a popular evangelist, you want to be a nice guy, you want to be, and you'll nod your head right here, and tomorrow when you get a challenge on next week, you want to back off. Bonhoeffer, I don't agree with a lot that he said. In his later years I'm not too sure he was quite sane, but I don't think if I'd been shut up for years under Nazi torture and brainwashing, I not, wouldn't be too sane either.

But in his first popular book over here, *The Cost of Discipleship*, I think it's about the third chapter in which he talks about cheap grace, what a disgrace it is. He's very very belligerent against our modern concept of Christianity, that all we do is have a sinning and repenting business. That is not Christianity.

It may be Romanism, but it's not Christianity. Christianity is victory over sin and self. And by the grace of God and the indwelling spirit, they're able to to tread the narrow path that he calls me to.

Now my father is the husbandman. Your father is the husbandman. And I do, I say again, God does not have to explain anything to anybody at all.

And I'm very very often challenged. I, at one time I used to go hear all the famous preachers in England. We had a forum there.

And Tuesday lunchtime they used to bring preachers from Scotland, from London, Dr. Sangster from the Methodist, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Dr. Farmer from where, Oxford, Dr. Black from Scotland, and a host of other great brilliant preachers. C.S. Lewis, I remember hearing him there. And you know one, one time I was fascinated with the, the different emphasis, the different ways there are, the different interpretations,

the different presentations of the same truth from a different angle.

Very very fascinating. I'm not too interested in that anymore. I'm interested now in seeing how God brings men and women into, into maturity in the spiritual life.

I'm amazed what some burden some people can carry and not break under them. You know a lot of our so-called success will go down the drain when we, when we stand at the judgment seat. As your famous old preacher, I preached one week with him and enjoyed him immensely.

Old Vance Havner that many of you have read of, read his articles, maybe heard him preach. And in his way that I couldn't imitate, he, he says, you know, with that twinkle in his eye and that slow beautiful southern drawl that he has, he says, you know, not until, not until God opens his who's who will we know who's who in the Christian life. My, when God opens that big book, God's who's who, we won't know.

Some of the tall men are, they'll be so small you'll need a microscope to find them nearly. Or if you want it biblically, some of the first will be last and the last will be first. Just the other day I read about a man who had been challenged.

He said by the greatest challenge of his life he met three blind men, all beautiful Christians. And they didn't go around moping and groping and, and asking for pity and looking for shoulders to weep on. He said I found one of them, each of them had said this, look I'm going to be blind all my life unless God works a miracle.

And I expect to live a good way. Many years they were in the midstream of life. And he said I, I, I found one of them.

And of all the things he was doing, he was, he was working on a Spanish-Italian dictionary in Braille. Translating English into Spanish and Italian into a, a Braille book so that he could read other books in Braille amongst the Italians, that the Italian language and so forth. Another one had overcome his handicap in some other way, but he said that the, the, the man that amazed me most was a man who was not only blind, but he was lying on the bed, paralyzed as well from the waist downwards.

And I discovered that he was reviewing spiritual books for a, for a very famous company. Another one had given his life to prayer. And he said they were the most radiant men I think I've ever met.

Oh they, they kind of looked in your direction to follow your voice and figure you were sitting there, and maybe were trying to size you up in some way. But, but despite these serious handicaps. Oh I remember a, a fellow in Scotland some years ago that began to realize that Christian life isn't all apple pie a la mode.

That when I get down the road there, somewhere the Lord is going to challenge me to take up my cross. Oh it's easy to sing it again isn't it? Is there a cross for, for him and no cross for me? But it's when he lays the cross on me. Or, or at least he challenges me to take up the cross.

And, and deny myself so many things and the other guy's getting away with it. I mean if the Lord would only put him over his knee and beat him up a bit, and not ask me to do so much and let him get by. But there again you don't start looking sideways, you say this is what he has asked me to do.

And I remember this man he, he wrote a very, very fine book. He told us about the, the measure of grace that God could give. The boundless resources of God.

That we're dealing with infinity, infinity. And he really laid it off. You know he hardly got that book off the press before his whole life broke up.

Problems in his home, problems in his church, problems in his body, problems financially. Everything that he told other people they could get victory in began to come in like, like the waves of the sea. They didn't come in one at a time.

They came in falling over each other as, as in the case of Job. No sooner somebody comes in and says hey Job I want to tell you that all your crops have been taken. And he says well that's bad.

And the other says oh I got worse news than that. I want to tell you that the, the, the house caved in and you've got fourteen funerals to go to tomorrow. And somebody else comes in and says well I got news for you.

And troubles, troubles, troubles mounted up. Now I don't know whether it's really correct to say this but I kind of figure it is that, that as I remember it not very long after that, that experience that man died and they could find no real physiological problem. It was suggested that maybe he had some secret grief and he died of a broken heart.

You see he had given advice here and advice there and direction to somebody else and told somebody else how they could be disciplined and take up their cross and follow him. But oh when it comes down, right down to where I live there's something entirely different about it. Now God's going to cut something off in your life and he's going to come with his picketers and snip something off there.

And if you want to bear fruit and bear much fruit and bear permanent fruit then there's a process that in the eye of the master after all I'm, I'm very happy about this that God isn't capricious and God isn't moody. And God doesn't experiment on me so he can find out. All he does is not prove me to him so much as prove me to myself.

My father is the husbandman. I couldn't guess what the Lord might do in your life if you ask him. That's, that's, that's, that's totally beyond me.

But this I do know that in the Christian life the secret of abounding is abiding. If ye abide, abide, abide, abide. Read the chapter and see how many times that comes.

Eight times in this chapter John talks about fruit bearing. Nine times in the chapter he talks about abiding. Ten times in the chapter he talks about his father.

You see it's conditional. You can talk as you like in my judgment about the sovereignty of God in which I think I believe and to a degree understand. But a great deal depends on you.

You remember in the 27th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, Paul had a revelation. There stood by me an angel of God this night whose I am and whom I serve and he has given me a message. You think the ship's going to break up and everybody perish? I've got news for you.

Nobody is going to perish on this ship. Ah but he added a clause, if they abide. If they abide.

You throw yourself out of God's will you're in for trouble. You have to abide in the revelation that he has given to you. It may not be the revelation to that man but after all God isn't making that man, he's making you.

After all when we get to heaven we're not all going to have the same type of crown, we're not all going to be the same personalities. I used to wonder and wonder and wonder why it says in the book of the Revelation God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes and in another chapter it says there are no tears. Well how can he wipe tears away that aren't there? And at least for myself I found the answer.

It may not satisfy you but that in my judgment this is the answer. That the time when he wipes away the tears we'll be at the judgment seat of Christ. Oh my that's going to be a day isn't it.

I think I mentioned before let me mention it again anyhow. One of the great writers in England a few years ago was a man by the name of G.H. Lange. He was, some of you must have read books by Eric Sauer, S-A-U-E-R, if you haven't you should read them.

And he translated all Eric Sauer's works out of the German. He was really some man. He was the only man I've ever heard of that really literally took Jesus at his word, if you'll pardon that, in this sense anyhow.

That if he was asked to go on a mission and preach, even if they sent to Germany for him, he would never carry a purse or script because the Bible says you're not to do it. Thirty years ago an American businessman wrote a very wonderful book, at least I thought it was wonderful. He wrote the life of Jesus under this title, The Man Nobody Knows.

And then he wrote another book that became a bestseller called The Book Nobody Knows. And I've sometimes been tempted to write a book on the life nobody lives. I think it'd be pretty easy.

I mean you don't have a million in the bank but I guess you're a little tucked away. Even though the book does say take no thought for tomorrow. Oh we've all got props we can lean on here and there and you go down the line.

That's not good preaching. No it's as the old lady said, that's not preaching, that's meddling. That's getting a bit too close to be comfortable sometimes.

Yeah there are things in the Word of God that we back off from, that this man didn't. He literally took the book, he says all right God has told me to go. And even when he was 70 years of age he would walk down through England.

Now England isn't very big. I've walked through England myself, every inch of the way on my feet. It's not far, it's about 400 miles, but you get tired after the first 200.

And you do get hungry and you do have to go to bed. We slept in fields. We knock at the door of a pastor's home and ask him not for a bed, could we sleep in the church? And we slept on the floor.

I used to sleep in the pulpit very often, it was about the softest place. And we used to go around and just preach that way. This man would walk to the coast when he was 70 years of age and then walk through France into Germany.

Carry neither purse nor script. He has some very wonderful books if you can find them, they're mostly out of print right now. But he came up with an interpretation that put him out of circulation through all the big conference.

He'd been going to conferences for about 40 years. And suddenly everybody cancelled his invitation, wrote him off, left him alone. Do you know why? Because he said, is it in Matthew 9 where it talks about

weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? Well most people invited to the wedding weren't they? And they didn't have wedding garments and they were pitched out.

And we say that's hell. He said nothing of the kind. That's the believer.

That's the believer who died in disobedience. And he says this is not, this doesn't suggest at all that this is an eternal condition. I'm giving you his interpretation, you do as you like with it.

But he says this is a temporary judgment. The best way I can think of it is this, that if it were night time. And that building there was well illuminated.

I could stand here and look in and say oh I see there's Jimmy Robertson there, and there's my good friend Conrad Murrell, and there's somebody else. I could stand in the dark and see everybody and pick them out. But if they looked in the darkness they couldn't see a single person.

And some people are going to be looking in through the window of the many mansions and seeing the marriage supper. And seeing Abraham and Isaac and the great saint, and they're temporarily barred from coming in because they were disobedient along some lines. And there's weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, there's anguish because they've missed the very thing that God wanted them amongst other things to enjoy.

Now you can disagree with that. Most preachers would because it hurts. We like a far more sloppy evangelism than that.

We're going to get into heaven. And when some of you get there the first thing Peter will do when you go in he'll kneel down and say my I feel so unworthy at the sight of you. I never had a church with 500 members.

It must be great to be a successful evangelist. I never traveled far. What's it like to go on a jet? Won't Peter have a lot of questions to ask you? Won't you have a lot to ask him? You see this discipline so much of it is my responsibility as well as the Lord coming with the scissors and nipping this off and correcting me here and pruning me there.

I have and I don't think modern evangelism gets this too much. Mr. Finney was a great great man for arguing the human will must enter into this thing. You have to will to do God's will.

He doesn't pick you up and carry you. He doesn't send an angel or an archangel to transport you from here to a higher elevation of spirituality. No sir.

Your will must enter into it. I say again as I began you this morning are just as spiritual as you want to be. All of us could have known much more of the Word of God if we'd read less of books and certainly less of many newspapers.

There are some things you can't recall. The water that goes under the bridge, the arrow you shot in the air, the word that you've spoken, the time that you've lost. You can't pull any of those back at you may be as rich as creases.

God works everything after the counsel of his own will. Are you in a tight spot this morning? Don't you really think you should resign that church you're in? It's never been tougher has it? I mean such a bunch of carnal Christians and they won't go on with God and you're really stuck huh? Well that's a good place to

be in really. As I said last night the Lord brought the children of Israel to repudiate.

Well as soon as they started off on their journey they'd hardly got away from from bondage and then the Lord took them down a narrow path and when they looked they said oh the mountains are up there and the mountains are up there. Oh look behind us. Our enemies are coming and look in front of us.

There's a great barrier of water. This can't be God's leading. Moses has missed it somewhere.

We should have turned on the highway up there you know. That super way would have been. We're in trouble.

We're in serious serious trouble. If they don't hack us to death from behind we'll all get drowned if we go forward. No they were right in the very center of the will of God.

He's promised even that he'll make all his mountains away. Sure it's easy to say in a nice warm atmosphere this morning. Oh I know the promises brother Ramiel he said he'll never leave me nor forsake me.

Well why did you squeal the last time you got in a tight spot? As I said last night he says go stand on that rock and I will be with thee. Well do we need anything more than that? My father is the husband not Michael the Archangel not Gabriel. They might I don't know they might make mistakes but he never makes a mistake.

If he cut this thing off if he destroyed that thing if he's put this barrier here he's going to get glorious victory out of my life somewhere if only I stay put and I obey him. There are times sure enough the Bible says you say it's Old Testament all right. It says that in a multitude of counselors there is safety.

But the Apostle Paul says when I came to a certain issue I conferred not with flesh and blood. You see if God has given you a revelation and he's given you a promise you can put it back on God time after time. If somebody else gave you it.

If somebody else opened the door and you went through well you're at everybody's mercy. But if you followed the light if you followed the word that God gave to you you've got all the claims that you want on God. And he's got all the resources.

And again he's not just working in order that he may make me a more efficient preacher or make you a good missionary or something else. I'm quite sure that God is working and this is the only way I can Christian life. When I see the harassment of some people when I see the problems.

I heard a man say just not many days ago you know I came into a new relationship with the Lord. Oh I've never never never enjoyed the fullness of the Spirit. Everything since I since I abandoned everything to God you know it seems everything I've wanted for 25 years in ministry has suddenly come my way.

I've always wanted to be free of my church. And just the other week I resigned and he said I thought the whole church would be up in arms and they all accepted it. I think that was a bit of a shock to him.

But anyhow he resigned his church. I've always wanted to feel free financially and my wife has a very good position even if I don't earn anything. And you know I thought when we got the children married to nice husbands and wives and I could say oh yes he's my son-in-law he's a very fine fellow.

And yes she's my daughter-in-law oh yeah yeah yeah yeah you know. Amazing how all your in-laws are the finest breed. But anyhow she's the finest girl.

Oh she sings better anybody you get on record or anything you know. And he he's gonna be the outstanding may become a bishop in his section. They're all very wonderful.

Side two. A missionary but somehow he got fouled up and he left her with three children. He's living with another woman and has a family by this other woman.

This woman is one of the saintest women that I have ever met. I think my wife would agree. She is a choice marvelous woman.

And she struggles with three children. And her mother her own mother has been helping her financially. And then the other week she said you know it's a bit of a silly business me helping to maintain.

I'm gonna cut this off. She'd been telling God only a few hours before that Lord I don't understand why I'm in this situation. I don't understand why my husband's run away and I don't understand why this is and now I don't understand why my mother won't give me any support.

And the more I pray instead of the instead of the way getting smoother it seems to get rougher. Instead of the burden getting lighter it seems to get heavier. Instead of things getting straightened out it's a more crooked way.

Instead of having more friendship somehow they seem to be dropping off. But she said with the tears running down her face you know what the Lord has never been more precious in all the years that I've served him than he is right now. Somehow he seems to have said come in a bit closer and he gets his arms around me and he whispers his secret.

And you know prayer is so marvelous now. I can really take my burden and I can leave it there. I don't bring it back I just leave it at his feet.

And I looked at that little woman and I thought of the man who found everything easy and he has a bigger home and a bigger income and all his burdens have gone. He doesn't have to look after a bunch of stupid sheep or goats even as far as I know. Everything is going easy.

Income's better. Life is better. Home's better.

He's no burden with his children. They've got husband and wives to take care of and everything's so smooth. And this is the spiritual life.

To him yes. On the law of averages no. No.

As the old hymn says. All that God wants to do in your life and mine however he does it. If he heats the furnace seven times hotter it's all right.

He didn't say he'll take us out of trouble. He says at the end of Psalm 119. And you know it's amazing how many Psalms we know in the first verse and we don't know the last one.

Ah we know the first verse. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord he is my.

All right. All right. All right.

What does it say at the end. I will be with him in trouble. Lord I want you to be seen in my life.

All right boys. Heat the furnace up seven more times. Oh well Lord just a minute.

If you're going to change the temperature I'd better think this over. Let's say one thing and finish here. Here the.

In England we still in many homes, most homes anyhow. We still have the old coal fires. You have to get up in the morning and.

I remember when I used to get up there and on the inside of the window straight the frost off to see what was happening outside. And you have to get up and light the fire. Now you don't do that.

You have it nice and lazy. You have a thing on the wall. You put it up don't you.

And you say well what do you want it up Mary. And she says put it at 75. And so you push the little gadget up and there it has a nice steady atmosphere.

You get up in the morning and the house is as warm as it was when you went to bed. You've got a nice thermostat taking care of everything. If Johnny comes in and opens the door and it's 75 below outside which it could be in Western Canada.

And it's 75 on the inside as soon as you open that door that that that blast doesn't do anything much really. Except make that furnace pipe back to maintain a 75 degrees. Now you don't have a thermostat outside of the window do you.

You have a thermometer. Must be a bit rough on thermometers these days when they're in the sun. Somewhere around a hundred degrees.

Put one out there today and see what happens. You see the mercury go up. Oh that red thing goes up.

90, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100. But let the sun do it. Wasn't it wasn't it yesterday.

Yeah yesterday in of all things. Well it was 94 degrees here. Of all things in Denver yesterday.

Northern part of Colorado rather. It was 29 degrees. I think I'd take that rather than 95.

So when you're inside you have a thermostat and the thermostat controls the atmosphere. When you're outside you've got a poor thermometer and it's helpless. The sun can beat on it and scoot it up.

The frost can come and cast it down. Poor thing doesn't know where it is. Up and down, up and down.

You know I think that's just about a picture of many of our Christian lives. Some of us we've got a thermostat built in. We've got the power by the Spirit of God to maintain what Wesley called I want an even strong desire.

I want a calmly fervent view. Not something erratic. I don't change when I get under pressure, when it's cold or when it's hot and so forth.

I'm not irregular or uncertain and nobody knows where I am. But because I have the fire of His Spirit, because I have the indwelling of His Spirit, I'm able to maintain in the midst of adversity and calamity and even tragedy. My spiritual equilibrium, a spiritual balance, a spiritual healthiness.

My if our temperatures of our bodies change like the temperature outside we'd really be in trouble. You take a man's temperature at the North Pole. I was up with in the Eskimo country a few years ago.

That's really something. You take the temperature of an Eskimo. It's the same as a man who's living on the equator.

Our bodies are so marvellously built. Somehow we don't think of it this way spiritually do we? We think we're justified in being erratic and uncertain and undependable. We think we have to be beaten by every temptation and mastered by some kind of secret sin.

Just a few weeks ago we took a week off to go for a rest to another island and we did a bit of fishing. And I really enjoyed it. I caught the biggest fish I've ever caught in my life and the biggest one that's been caught in that area for years.

I was quite happy. I don't know how to catch fish. It was real luck as you would say.

But I enjoyed the relaxation. I enjoyed the quietness. I enjoyed the stillness.

And I thought as we were on that boat of the wonderful ways of God. I looked at the fish that I'd pulled out of the sea. In the home where we're living now we have a cook.

And we only live with some friends and they have cook servants and they have a cook. And she is I say the finest cook I think that I have ever. Well I've never eaten anything more delicious than the food that she prepares.

And she cooked this fish that I happened to have caught. And you know it was really delicious. She really knows how to cook fish.

Special way to skin it. I don't know what she puts on it. Lime or lemon she rubs in it before she cooks it.

And she's all kinds of native ways. Oh that was really something. But you know the thing that struck me about it was this.

It needed some salt. Isn't that strange? I don't know how old that fish was. I know it was 52 inches long.

It weighed about 30 pounds. And it was delicious to eat. But it had been living for years in the sea.

But the sea never got into it. The salt never got into it. Is there anything more tasteless than fish that doesn't have salt.

A meal that doesn't have salt. And that fish had been living and swimming in water that if you if you put your finger in and lick it. Boy you really spit out it.

The salt is destroyed. You know if God can keep a fish in the sea for 10 years or 20 years however long. Or a turtle that lives there a hundred years.

And he can keep that thing in that atmosphere. And he can keep it without any penetration. I believe that through the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son.

You and I ought to be able to live in a dirty world like this without without sin. Not that it's impossible to sin. But it's possible not to sin.

We'll never get beyond the place where we can't sin. But we can be in a place where we don't want to sin. And we don't have to sin.

Because the Master has come. And he's done his pruning. And he's done his cleansing.

And he's done his indwelling. And he wants to make us exhibitions of his redemptive work. Not five minutes after we die.

But maybe 50 years before we do it. Or five years. Thank you.

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