

The Invitation

by Merle Weaver

Merle Weaver's sermon emphasizes the invitation to a transformative relationship with Christ through humility and spiritual rebirth.

Duration: 1:14:52

Scripture: John 3:1

Topics: "Born Again"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker highlights the danger of becoming complacent in our understanding of God's word. He emphasizes the importance of truly digging in and seeking to understand all that God has for us. The speaker then focuses on verses 3 and 6 of John 3, painting a picture of Jesus winding down for the night when a man approaches him in the darkness. The speaker suggests that the man represents those who have organized their faith with rules and regulations, but lack a true spiritual transformation. The sermon concludes with an invitation to examine our resistance to the invitation of being born again and to seek a genuine relationship with God.

Transcript

Now, Brother Merle Weaver comes to us from Pennsylvania. He's a dear brother and very, very close friend of mine. He and his family were actually just traveling through on vacation.

And if you were here at the revival conference, you remember that Brother Merle was one of the moderators here. And when he said he was coming through on vacation, I said, well, brother, you you better get ready to preach because I want any time knowing I had the opportunity. I wanted him to share the word of God.

Brother Merle walks with God. There's no doubt about that and just lives in the joy of the Lord. And I appreciate him so much.

So let's welcome him as he just comes and shares the word of God with us. Well, greetings, everybody, in Jesus name. Bring Christian greetings from the church in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and glad to see all those everywhere that name the name of Christ and live for him.

And Paul said, we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency, the power may be of him and not of us. And truly, this is the testimony of my life. I should not be here.

I should not be able to declare the word of God in this way, but for the grace of God. And I thank him and I'm thankful already for the way Jesus has been being lifted up as the only explanation for any goodness in any of us. I didn't tell my wife I was going to do this, but just so you all know who my family is.

Can you all stand up back there? They they had trout, you may sit down. It traveled with me as we've this is our second weekend on the road and we'll be going yet another one. And and it had a lot of different stops and preaching places and things like that.

And so sometimes I'm never sure whether these things are really vacation or not. But I can say over here in in Twin Oaks, you know, you all have a very nice area. We're camping over there and just having a great time and the time is relaxing and drawing together as a family.

We've come through a very busy season. Our life lasts a while and just wanted a time to to draw together. So glad that when I was here in June, Lord put it on my heart.

That's because come on back here and spend some time camping by the lake and and praying here, praying for your town. Oswald Chambers once said, nothing's done, but it's first done through prayer. And this I've come to see very much as a reality in my life that we never accomplish anything, but we first do it in prayer.

I think with that in mind, we'll we will just do that. We'll we'll pause for a word of prayer. Before before we do that, I was down in Georgia one day at a conference and in that conference, the Lord, it's led and ordained that I had an opportunity to kind of arrange a prayer meeting and the prayer service.

And and one of the brothers that was responsible for that meeting told me that that he knew my culture and my background. And he said, you know, nobody here is really used to praying on their knees, that that's just not the most culturally acceptable thing. So I just humbly took that off of him.

But I watched when God came down in that prayer meeting and there was pastors that were used to sitting on their chairs all the time when God came down, they were flat on their face. And so Jesus said, one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. So I'm going to give each of you a chance today to do that this side of eternity.

And if you're not restricted by health or some other some other thing like that, I'm going to ask you all that can to kneel right where you're at. And we're going to bow on our knees and ask the Lord to direct us. God, our father, you who take the nothings and least things and bring to naught the things that are in the name of your holy son, Jesus, would come before you this morning asking you that you would do just that this morning, you would humble any proud flesh.

And in this token of bowing on our knees, we invite you to be Lord of this meeting, as has already been stated. But we put our necks down and we exalt the Christ, the living son of God. And we thank you, father, that one day, though he is Lord of all now, it will be manifest to all men to see and that every knee will indeed bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord today by your Holy Spirit.

We ask you to come and move among us to exalt the Christ, which is always the ministry of your spirit. And father, I pray you would touch any hearts or lives that have not yet yielded in total, absolute, unconditional surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. We commit this time to you.

I commit the sharing of the word to you, knowing that it in me that is in my flesh does not dwell one good thing, but that through Christ and his Holy Spirit, we can do all things. And father, I pray now you would anoint the words and being sent forth. And I pray that you would anoint the ears, that you would break every proud heart, break every high thing which exalt itself against the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that you would make good ground ready to receive the word to bear fruit unto life eternal.

We ask and commit and pray all these things in the worthy name of Jesus. Amen. In one of the important battles of the Civil War, there was there was a fort that was held, I believe, by Southern forces being advanced upon.

If I remember correctly, the general was Ulysses Grant. I can't remember if it was him for sure or not. But the commander in charge of that fort sent word out to the advancing army and said, what are the conditions of surrender? And the responding reply was immediate, absolute and unconditional surrender.

Please be notified. I intend to move on your fort. And this is the way Christ comes to us this morning.

Jesus said, if a man doesn't take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple. And this morning, I, by the grace of God, want to lift up Christ's claim on our life. I want to, as I prepared for this this message, as the Lord put this message on my heart, I kept hearing this word, this word of invitation.

And so that is what I endeavor by God's grace to do, to invite you to something, to invite you to something very appealing, something that's absolutely changed my life. And there's an invitation here. It's just like a wedding invitation.

And you're all invited. And I hope by God's grace to paint that invitation. But before I give that invitation, I would like to deal with some of the resistance to that invitation.

And so by God's grace, we'll do that. If you have your Bibles along, I would invite you to turn with me to John three. We're going to read verses one to eight.

And I want us to think and consider the scenario here. No doubt to all of you that have been used to going to church for most of your life, maybe you've been taught the Bible in Sunday school or Bible school or wherever. This this may well be a common passage to you.

You may think I know all about this passage. John three, sure. John three, sixteen, for God so loved the world that whosoever believes on him would not perish, but could have eternal life.

You all know these verses, but I'd like to lift these verses up for consideration once again this morning in, I hope, a fresh fashion as Lord's revealed this to me. Starting at verse one, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind blows where it listeth and now hears the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goes. So is every one that is born of the spirit.

Now, one of the degraded dangers we fall into when we've been used to hearing God's word time and time again is that we think that we understand what it means. We think that we know what it means. And so because of that reason, we don't dig in to understand all that God might have for us.

The two verses I want to really focus on this morning are verse three and verse six. But before we think about that, I'd like to paint the picture. This nightfall, wherever Jesus is staying, he's maybe turned in for the night already.

I don't know. Or maybe he's resting or maybe he's done with supper for the evening or dinner. However you say it here, he's retiring.

He's winding down. And here comes a man through the darkness. Well, they didn't have street lights in Palestine in those days.

They didn't have electric. When it got dark, it got dark. There might have been little lanterns in the window, but you can walk down the street without possibly being recognized.

And here comes this teacher of the Jews and he knocks on the door and he says, I want to talk to Jesus. Now, you know, if you've read the Gospels, you know what the religious leaders were doing with Jesus. You know how comfortable they felt with his ministry.

But this man was a very wise man. He does what did what many few, few of the leaders did in that day. And maybe today, sometimes few leaders do is he dealt with reality.

And here was this man. He said, no man can do the miracles you're doing. No man can have the anointed life that you have, except he comes from God.

It could not be possible. I know that. I'm being honest.

I would like to do what some of my contemporaries are doing. They're saying it to the devil. But I know better than that.

I know no man could be living the life you're living. I know no man would have the ministry you have, except he came from God. But there's a problem, Jesus.

You don't fit our box. You don't look like what we think a godly man should look like. You don't look.

You're not in the form that we would expect you to come. You're breaking our rules. You're breaking our box.

We can't have this. We don't know what to do with it. Can you help me to understand, Jesus? Now, what would we do today? What would we likely do? Jesus could have just reached his arm out and gave him a hug, and patted him, and comforted him, and helped him to come along.

But he didn't. He looked him straight in the eye. And he said, except you're born again, you can't even see this kingdom.

Now, we've made a great mistake in American Christianity. Because you can go into any major city of America, in most small towns, and you can see churches all over them. You can see the steeples pointing to the sky.

You can see the stained glass windows or whatever, however else they're made. And we think this is the church. This is not the church.

These are buildings where, hopefully, the church assembles and meets. They're church buildings, not the church. We go to church.

I don't know how many times I've been in the assembly of the believers, and somebody gets up front and says, isn't it great to be in the house of God this morning? I have one question. Where were you all week? Did he not say he came to live in temples not made with hands? Now, I'm all right with calling this church in a church building. That's okay.

But we've got to go a little deeper. And Jesus, what happens, what gets us in trouble is then we see the organization. We have the committees.

We have whatever else. Maybe we have a mission board. Or the setting I come from, the background, it was a very strong church structure.

Hierarchical, so many setting, steps down. You had your bishops and your ministers and your deacons. And you had conferences come together, and they made decisions, and they were binding upon all the churches.

In fact, the one setting I was part of, they owned the buildings. And they had the power. This is the church.

No, it is not the church. It is organization. It is order.

It is things that may be great utility to the church if held under its feet, but it's a terrible master. And Nicodemus could understand all of this. He was in the flesh.

He had not been born of the Spirit, but he couldn't understand Jesus. And Jesus was saying, my kingdom is not of this world. You can't just look at it and say, here's a church.

I would venture to guess this morning, I know there's some here this morning that have been born of the Spirit. I hope many of you have been born of the Spirit. But I would venture to guess it's very likely there's people here today that have never been born of the Spirit.

They may have been church members for many years. They may be just fresh church members. They may think that by getting baptized, by joining the church rule, whatever it is, that now they're part of the kingdom.

But Jesus said, it's not an order you can see with your eyes. That is not the way my kingdom functions. If it was, we would all be apostates, because the Roman Catholic Church, which claims to be the only true church, because they hold the succession, they have the order.

And they say, we have authority. We can write it the way we want it. We can say it the way we want it.

And you better listen. But Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world. And none of us today, I don't think, are part of the Roman Catholic Church.

I make no apologies. It's an apostate system. It's walked away from Jesus.

It's under another Lord. I'm not saying there's no believers there. But by and large, there's another Lord.

There's homage given to another organization that holds power. And we know better than that. The Reformation has come along and said the just should live by faith.

We know it's not, somebody said this morning, about what you do. You're not going to earn salvation. We got that far, praise God.

But have we been enlightened to see that Jesus' kingdom is a spiritual kingdom? It is not of this world. Else would my servants fight. Now let's just dissect that thing a little bit.

Jesus is saying, if my kingdom was of this world, we would all organize, and we would get our guns, and we would go against the opposition. This is what we would do. And this is, by the way, what the Roman Catholic Church did during much of the Dark Ages.

They ruled over kingdoms. They held power. They said, if you don't listen to us, we will mow you down.

But today, we know, here we live in America. A foundational principle of America is the freedom of religion. And we thank God for that.

We thank God that we can practice our faith and walk our faith before Him in freedom to believe. And we believe that it should be voluntary. You should be part of the church by choice and things like that.

And I thank God for that. Those are great things that have come down to us, things that 1,000 years ago men would have died for, had they even expressed the belief. And we take it for granted.

And that's all good. But we still run in danger, because our family is part of the church, and we expect the children to be part of the church. And one generation follows another, and this is the church.

And we have our nice order. We have all our things. It looks great.

And I'm not against any of that. Our children ought to be part of the church. That's great.

But Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world. Nicodemus, here's what you don't understand. That which is of the flesh is flesh, and that which is of the spirit is spirit.

Marvel not that I said to you, you must be born again, except you be born in the spirit. You'll never even see this. It is altogether possible for somebody to be raised in the church from little on up and think they understand the church, and never have with their eyes been enlightened to understand the spiritual kingdom.

This morning, I would never be here had this not happened to me. I was raised in a setting that would have shunned you all, that said, they're not us. This is our box.

They don't fit our box. And this is sin. This is sin against the body.

This is sin against Christ himself. But we didn't know that. We were the church.

We were it. And in the same way as any other setting might do, we knew what the church looked like it. We were it.

You joined it. You were part of it. And it functioned this way.

It had the minutes. It had procedures. This is how you do this.

And this all gets decided this way. It was all slotted so nice and comfortable. One problem.

God wasn't in charge. I mean, it all started so good. It started with men that had a vision for their families.

It started with men who didn't want to go out to the world. And they saw their surroundings. They saw the setting they were in, drifting out to sea.

And they said, we don't want that. We want something better for our families. That was all good.

But it is altogether possible to have a good heart and to walk in the flesh, to execute it. It's altogether possible to have right desires, but to do wrong things, to get to those ends. The means is not justified by the end.

The journey is very important to the Lord of how we get there. And these men organized this all up, in my understanding, right from the get-go, with tools of the flesh. They made a list of rules.

You do it this way. You don't do it that way. You do it this way.

You don't do it that way. And they boxed it and slotted it. And it all looked right.

One problem, I happen to know there was people part of that that had never been born in the spirit. And there was vice and immorality and sin going on behind closed doors. And we are it.

We are not it. This was Jesus' message to Nicodemus. That's what I want to bring to light in this passage.

Jesus said in verse 3, except the man. You know, here in the, I guess you call this all the Bible belt, kind of maybe working towards the west side. Everybody, this gets to be a cliché.

Born again, born again, all these things. I've stopped using those words so freely, because everybody's born again these days, it seems. Ask somebody, have you been born from above? Have you been born of the spirit? Do you have this overcoming, life-giving grace of Jesus in your life? And maybe it all starts sounding a little different.

We all think we signed a little card. We joined the prayer. Whatever we did, we walked out.

We raised our hand, depending on your persuasion or way of doing things. And now we're born again. That makes somebody about as saved as my dog.

It's not about a decision. It's about a relationship. What we want to talk this morning about is the difference between the natural and the spiritual.

That's what we want to talk about. And we can do all these things in the natural. There was a great preacher.

I don't remember which one it was. But one day at night, he had a vision. He saw the devil down on the corner preaching the gospel.

He thought, why is the devil preaching the gospel? That's strange. He walked up to him. What are you doing preaching the gospel? He said, because I know there's nothing that hinders the gospel and helps my kingdom more than unanointed preaching.

And this man was shocked. And he went back, and he sought the Lord to be filled with his spirit every time he opened his mouth to declare the words of life. And it's possible to preach the gospel.

It's possible to teach Sunday school. It's possible to lead worship. It's possible to build a church.

It's possible to be a pastor and do it all in the flesh. That is altogether possible. You can do that with the natural mind.

There are people who've gone through Bible school and through seminary who have never been born from above. They understood. One day, I had sitting on my porch in front of our house a man who could teach Sunday school.

He could walk circles around people. He had incredible theology. His doctrine was basically correct.

But he was one problem. He was a drug addict. Nothing against drug addicts, except he wasn't born again.

He was serving something else than Jesus. He had no power of the spirit in his life and his family. It was all saying, oh, we think he's a Christian.

I said, how can you? Where's the fruit? I don't think he thought he was a Christian when he really stopped all the noise and got everything quiet and asked the hard questions. When he got on, it's like Nicodemus. I think he knew.

You know, when tragedy, near tragedy, strikes in all our life, flashes before our life in an instant, that moment we know the answer that got drowned out in all the noise. This is why, because spirit is reality. Sometimes we think spirit is like ether or air.

It's just abstract. This is not true. Did not the eternal spirit speak into being the world in six days? The natural is subject to the spiritual.

It is by faith that we connect to that greater reality. And this is what we want to look at. The how these two relate side by side.

Atheism has denied, in this country, you go to a national park and you go to any government institution thing. Atheism has taken over our education systems and things like that. And this is so many hundred million years ago.

And all these things, it's just all evolved. It denies the spiritual reality. It says it must have happened by natural.

And if it's happened by natural, this is how long it took. And they may be right. I don't know how right they are or not.

I haven't invested a lot of time. They may be right. If it happened naturally, that may be right.

But it didn't. And this is what has happened. We've denied.

We've tried to prove everything by science, not realizing that subsequent to all these laws of nature, subsequent and right alongside, it is altogether possible there is a whole other world that is not seen, which we know exists, number one, by the Bible. But you don't need to convince the voodoo doctor in Haiti by the Bible that there's a spiritual world. He knows that already.

You don't need to convince the rising generation who's involved in Wicca and all this other stuff. They know there's something else. There's power they're tapping into.

There's all kinds of Eastern mystic thought things going on. There's power. Even, I'm sorry, I hope I don't offend anybody.

But yes, I hope I do. I hope you go get in the Word and find out all this meditation and yoga and hypnosis. There's tying into power that's going on.

Are we asking questions or are we swallowing it blindly? Are we going down with a ship or are we getting on the lifeboat? You're going to see this. This isn't just for that dark room downtown where you've got to pay so much to go in anymore. This is becoming part of our medical institutions.

They're using this stuff. Did you know there's hospitals today that instead of anesthesia are using hypnosis? What are we doing? I hope we're not. But where I come from, this is really rampant.

I come from a people that naturally maybe suspicion the big institutions. And so they run like amazing to these quack doctors. And anything that works, the end justifies the means.

And it's bringing a whole generation. It's brought a whole generation captive. And then they start getting depressed.

Wonder why? They start having all kinds of nightmares and all this junk that starts going on. When you open yourself up to this other world that you can't see, it does have results. And so then to fix it, we start popping pills.

We start pushing drugs, trying to deaden and control and drown this stuff when what we ought to do is get real, like Nicodemus did, and ask the hard questions. What about this other world that exists? Well, I don't want to focus this morning on the power of the enemy or lies. That's not my heart at all.

It's just a reference. But atheism says it doesn't exist. It denies spiritual reality at all.

But in the 1600s, we came along with a little improvement on that. Little improvement in quotes, of course. And it was something called deism.

And deism said, there is a God that ought to be revered and worshipped. But he does not interfere, influence, or change the affairs of men. Kind of like a big giant clock wound up and left go.

That's how this whole universe works. Yes, there's a God. We should worship him.

But again, denying spiritual reality. And saying, yes, it exists somewhere. But it has little to no impact on our world.

Then the 18 along came the agnostics. And they said, yeah, sure, there may be a God. But there's no way you can know.

There might be one, but there's no way I can know. I'll tell you why they didn't know. It's because they never met him.

This isn't about history, friends. This isn't about something happened 2,000 years ago that we should give a mental assent to. I believe that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again.

That's great. The devils also believe in tremble. But he is risen.

And he lives. And he is alive today, and he will meet you in person. How can you do that? Because there is spirit.

There is flesh, and there is spirit. And if you will encounter the living risen spirit of the risen Christ, it will change you. OK, we move on to the 1800s and 1900s.

Along came liberalism and modernism. And they said that, yes, Jesus actually did exist. We're getting a little closer here.

I just say we're getting more dangerous. They said he was a good man. Good set of ethics.

We can all pattern our life on him. Great man to follow. But he was a man.

And he was only a man. He did not die, was not died dead, and rose again. They again deny the power.

Deny, and you know what? I don't care whether you're an atheist, a Gnostic, or a liberalist. You're just as lost if you haven't met Jesus. It doesn't make any difference to me.

In fact, I think I'd rather have you be an atheist. Because at least then, you're not mixed up in this gray muddle. And denying, saying there is a Jesus, but denying his blood and his power.

And this is not about theology. I'm not here talking about how redemption works, or how the blood works, and all those things. That would be great to do.

I'd be glad to do that. But I'm talking about spiritual reality. And if we deny this spiritual reality, we deny Christ.

And he said those that deny him will deny us. So he will deny them. We'll take it just a little step further.

Now it's going to smarten a little, friends. It comes home to us. It's so easy to point out there, those atheists, they're really bad.

And those deists, and those Gnostics, those modern liberalists. We're conservative. We believe the Bible.

And we can dump it. But what about this thing of denying the power? OK, all across Christianity, most conservative, even in the most conservative and orthodox settings, either by doctrine or life, they deny the spiritual power and reality. Let's turn to 1 Timothy 3.5. I'm sorry.

I meant 2 Timothy 3.5. I read it down wrong. 2 Timothy 3.5. I don't care whether it's Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, non-denominational, interdenominational. It doesn't make any difference to me.

But if we have a form of godliness and deny the power thereof, what does Paul say we should do with folks like that? Turn away. Isn't that kind of harsh, Paul? What are you saying, Paul? Aren't you being kind of unloving? Look, he's not saying we're not supposed to love people like that. He's saying don't link arms with them.

Don't say we're one and the same. Have your eyes enlightened that you can see this spiritual kingdom and say, he's my brother. He's my brother.

I'm not sure about him. And I know he denies the power. In love, maybe we'll confront that person.

Maybe we'll pray for him. I think we better pray for him first. But we're not to be linking arms and saying, we're all just one happy family.

Now today, it's even the Protestants and the Roman Catholics. And we're all together. And after a while, it's the Muslims and the Hindus, too, right away.

And they're all different faces saying, God, it's not true. It's not about religion. It's not about man's religion.

It's about Jesus Christ. And I don't mind if one day I'm so politically incorrect that they want to throw me in jail because I'm a hate monger. I don't mind that.

That doesn't bother me at all. What bothers me is if somebody denies my Jesus. If somebody says, we're all different paths to the same God, then Jesus didn't need to come.

It's just about history. It's about the evolution of religion and how it all shaped up. Yeah, Jesus was a good person to follow.

It's not about a living, risen person that's alive today that I have to relate to. If when we pray, the only person that's changed is ourselves, and what I mean by that is we're encouraged by some prayers, but they don't have valor, and they don't change life, then we need to start asking questions. 1 Corinthians 2, 4, and 5, Paul said to the Corinthian church, he said, I'm going to read those verses.

He said, in my speech and preaching, it was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in a demonstration of the Spirit and power. Now, I don't know what that looks like. But I don't think Paul had just the greatest polished sermon.

But I do think when Paul preached conviction fell. I do think when Paul preached, is this OK? People got healed? He didn't focus on healing. Paul never preached healing.

I don't see anywhere in any of Paul's epistles that that was his gospel. He preached Christ. And some of these things happen.

And that's how it ought to be today when somebody starts focusing on all these other things. What happens? It eclipses Christ. We must preach Christ.

But when we preach Christ, let's make sure it's Him. Not the doctrine of Christ, not a teaching about Christ, but Christ. And there is a difference.

It's possible to teach about Christ. It's possible to have a historical reference. We can even get a little emotional and paint the crucifixion.

I'm not against looking at the suffering of Christ. That's great. But we can do all that and never have the Spirit.

We must preach Him and Him crucified. And then what's the result? He said that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. And I'm going to ask you a question this morning.

Does your faith stand in your wisdom or in the power of God? Let's be real. We'll come back to that a little more later on. John 8, 29, Jesus said, I do always those things that please the Father.

So we want to see what pleases the Father. One of the things we can do is look at Jesus' life. Let me ask you, is what made Jesus popular in His day? Was it His theology and His great teaching? Is that what it was? Did the religious greats in His day come to Him and say, wow, you've got it stacked? No.

Do you know who came to Him? The people who didn't know anything. In fact, what did the religious leaders say? This cursed people which doesn't know the law come after Him. Now, I'm glad for Jesus.

Jesus was the source of all true theology, if you will. But that wasn't what marked Him. What marked Him, He was a friend of sinners and He had power.

He touched people's lives. He changed them. He healed people.

He ministered to people. He ministered wisdom. And even Peter would say, who else can we go? You have the words of eternal life.

This was a fisherman. That's like a garbage collector in our society. Somebody, you know, well, couldn't find a better job, right? This was not somebody in a five-star Hilton.

This was not an airline pilot saying these words. This was the bottom rung. But He said, I can't go anywhere else.

You have the words of eternal life. And what a beautiful declaration. Because Jesus' words were alive.

They were spirit, okay? They were spoken, I suppose, in the language of the day. I think it was Greek. They were spoken.

Those words were spoken. But it was not the words alone. It was the spirit with them.

He had authority. That's why the people would say, this fellow does not teach like everybody else we know teaches. With so many words, and it sounds so great.

But His words hit the mark. It penetrated. That's why Paul would say, Jesus, the words of God are alive and powerful.

And sharper than any two-edged sword. Piercing the dividing thunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and the discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. You know, it's not the atheists, not the modernists, not the other denominations, not even the other churches in our circles, not even the other people gathered here this morning, the person next to you, next to me.

You know, there's one thing I always fear when we get together, is that we come with umbrellas. Not literally, of course. But that we're always shedding the word and saying, that's good for him, and my spouse needs this and that needs that.

Let's just take that thing and have it yanked in the wind of the spirit, so that it's folded the other way, and instead of shedding it off, it scoops it all down to me. And this morning, I want us each, by the power of God and the grace of God, to look at our life. Can we be honest? Let's don't say, who's that crazy guy from PA up there? What's he saying? Let's look at what the word of God says, and let's do like Nicodemus.

And even if it doesn't fit our box, and even if we don't like it, we're a little uncomfortable, let's go to Jesus and say, what about my life? I want to know now. I don't want to wait till I get to eternity to find out. I don't want to find out that that little prayer prayed back there wasn't real, and didn't save my soul.

Look, I'm all for getting saved, don't get me wrong. I'm all for praying the sinner's prayer. We must all come in at the straight gate.

But let's know that we were born from above, and not just went through the motions. It is possible. What I'm saying here is there's spiritual reality.

And is the spiritual reality this morning, that you have been born with a fresh life? Or is it just some intellectual statement you went through? That's what I want to know. Because Jesus said, or Paul said in Romans, Accept a man, have the Spirit of God, he is none of his. That means it doesn't matter what you prayed, what you said all your life, if you don't have God's Spirit living inside of you, and know it for sure, you're none of his.

Is this morning, individually, you're my life. Is it a demonstration of power to those around us? Can you look at your life and you say, can you answer affirmatively and say, Yes it is, I know it is. If not, let's just put a question mark.

We don't need to say, check yes or no yet. Let's just put a question mark there and say, I'm not sure. I'm not sure I can honestly answer that question and say my life is a demonstration of power.

Let's put a question mark instead of just going on through the motions. Next one. Am I living my life today so that it demands evidence of the supernatural and the spiritual? All that is around us, Paul says in Romans, makes an unbeliever guilty before God because they could see through creation, even his eternal power in God, and they could see those things.

Why? Because there is natural evidence that points to a supernatural. Everything around us, okay? There's evidence by what God did that there is a spiritual and a supernatural. Now, let's bring that down to our lives.

Does our life, and as we go through life, maybe washing dishes, maybe taking kids to school, maybe earning a living, whatever it is, all the motions we go through, does it demand evidence of a spiritual and a supernatural? Let's ask that question. And how can we know? Not because we say the words, praise the Lord and amen and hallelujah, that doesn't cut it. In fact, that sometimes turns people off.

I'm talking about evidence that demands a verdict. Okay. In the scriptures, the natural was always subject to the spiritual.

2 Corinthians 13, verse 5. I'm just going to turn there quickly. Paul says, to examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith and prove your own selves. Now, I don't know your culture well.

I don't know your church setting real well. I'm learning to know some of those things. But I've come to the conclusion that there's no temptation taken us, but such as is coming to man.

What faces us is probably what faces you, just packaged a little different. And have you ever heard the mindset or the thought that goes like this? Don't question them, you might unsettle them. Have you ever heard that? I tell you that is a very dangerous thing to do because, let me ask you a question.

If the living God of heaven, the same spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead, the same spirit that in six days created this world, comes into mortal beings, do you think they're going to know it? Come on! What are we trying not to unsettle? Are we trying to send people to hell? Don't ask any questions. Look, I have yet to find somebody. I know there's people who have been born in the spirit that, you know, sometimes it gets quiet.

It's not real active. And maybe they walk after the flesh for a season. And they ought to be concerned because they ought to get right with God.

But there's people like that. But that's okay to examine that too. But I have yet to find a man that's full of God, that's living his life to have been for God.

His life of prayer, a life being poured out for God, that struggles with knowing whether he's God's or not. How can it be? And so what happens, we want to make people comfortable where they're at. And I've seen this happen when people come at an altar call or something.

They come down and somebody's weeping their heart out. They've been convicted of God. And somebody else is there just trying to comfort them.

You just mind God in these things. Maybe there's a time for that. But we've got to be careful.

Let's realize how costly sin is. It cost Jesus his life. He paid the price of our sin.

And if somebody sees their sin, maybe they never saw it before. Maybe there's fresh revelation of their sin and they're weeping it out. That is a sweet, sweet sound to our Jesus.

He loves to hear when people put their face on the ground and say, You are Lord. Who for the joy that was sent before him endured the cross and despised the shame. What was the joy? Was it not us? Was it not when us wicked, sinful people would bow down our faces and say, You are Lord, and live for Him? My, that brings joy to Jesus.

That's what he wants. He wants a spotless pride. And Paul says, examine yourself.

See whether you be in this faith. I don't care if you're a preacher, a deacon, a church member, somebody who's supposedly walked with the Lord 30 years. Look at the fruit.

Just go back and inspect the fruit and be real. Be honest. There's nothing to lose.

Nothing to lose. I must say that if Paul was in the churches of America today, I'm afraid he wouldn't be very popular. He would probably run out of town sometimes.

I guess he was run out of town, but not how much has changed. I think that's how it is. Paul asking people to examine their salvation, whether it's authentic or not, would not be very popular.

It's not good for the church rule to preach a message like that sometimes. But Paul wanted to know one thing. He wanted to know whether his people he was preaching to, whether they were in Christ.

That's what he wanted to know. He wanted to know when he laid down his life, he didn't have any question. He said, I've fought a good fight.

I've finished a race. There is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give not to me only, but to them also, all that love is appearing. And that's all he wanted to know.

He just wanted to know that Christ was in them of the truth. Here's what I would suggest, just a little side point, when somebody's struggling with assurance of salvation. Rather than getting them to open the front of their Bible and pointing them to a prayer, they pray and say, did you mean it when you prayed it? Were you sincere? Instead, let's say, okay, why are you struggling with assurance of salvation? Let's look at the fruit.

Let's look at the evidence. Is there evidence of salvation? And there's no evidence? Then, you know, what's the solution to get in? Is the solution to stay in? Is the solution to keep going? We kneel down, confess our own selves and our own sin, and confess Him as Lord. And if we slip away and go cold, it's the same solution to come back.

It's the same either way. But let's be real. And when sin is mortified, when we... See, I want to be careful not to get ahead of myself, but in the 40s and 50s here in this country, there's something happened to the definition of grace.

In fact, today, if you preach biblical grace, there's people that have grown up in that era that will think you're not preaching grace. Grace, to me, is the most dear subject of the Bible. It is a very precious subject.

But it has been so corrupted in this land. In the 40s and 50s, grace used to mean power and favor with God so that I can live a holy, righteous life, spotless and unbelievable in this present evil world. The grace of God to me, delivering from me my sin.

You shall call His name Yeshua because He shall save His people from their sin. Not in their sin, not from their guilt, but deliverance. What kind of Jesus is this that just saves us to be rotten sinners all our lives? I know we have the flesh to deal with, and I know there's struggles.

But this... Did Paul not say we're more than conquerors through the blood of Him that has loved us? What kind of more than conqueror is it that walks around like this all the time? Oh, I slipped and fell today and I had a bad day again. We'll have bad days. But that's why we need grace.

So we don't have bad days. That's why we need to cry out for more grace. Does He not say, but He giveth more grace? So in the 40s and 50s along came this idea of grace.

Today, when you say to have grace with somebody, it has so been defined that it means to have patience with them. Right? Or just have a little grace with them. Have a little patience.

This idea came along that grace is patient, overlooking. Now God was no longer the empowering Savior, delivering men from their sin, but the overlooking unjust judge looking the other way and forgetting it. And somehow, in the end, just letting everybody slide in no matter how they lived anyhow.

And this... When this happened in the churches and in the Bible schools and seminaries of the day, there were front line soldiers out on the mission field that started writing home. Writing to the institution. This is what they said.

Send us no more of your students schooled in cheap grace. They are useless to us. These men had put their necks on the line.

They had left their families. Or maybe took their families with them. However it was.

They went out there and they hazarded it all for the cause of Christ because the grace of God had appeared to them. Because it had empowered them. Not because they kind of got whipped into this thing that we got to do something.

But because God's call came down on them. Many of them gave their lives. They were on the front lines of the mission field.

And here come these... And they were preaching the gospel that challenges sin, that confronts sin. They were preaching that gospel. Along come these softies from back home.

Saying, just pray this little prayer and you got a free ticket to glory. Can you see why they wrote that back? They build a church with blood, sweat and tears. It was not them.

Of course not. It was not their works earning anything. But they had laid down their life.

Even like we read in the Bible. Paul laying down his life. So that Christ could be formed in them.

Not a little bit of washing away of guilt. Christ formed in them. What greater joy to a missionary.

But to lay down his life. Maybe lose a couple of children on the mission field. Whatever.

Lose his own life. But he gets to see in glory people that Christ was formed in. Of a truth.

He gets to see a culture's change. Not church people go up and we all keep on living like we ever did. But he gets to see culture's change.

Because people of the life giving power of God has changed lives. This is the gospel. The gospel that changes lives.

Not that makes men comfortable in their sin. The problem is we live so natural. That we cannot be sure of anything spiritual.

When we don't live in the reality of spirit. No wonder we struggle with assurance. Maybe we even have been saved.

But we're walking in the flesh. And we live so natural. That we can't be sure of anything spiritual.

If you're honest. If you have walked with the Lord. You know what happens when you let the prayer times dwindle.

You let the times seek the Lord's face. After a while you're trying to find your way. And it all becomes obscure.

I'm not sure which way to go. I can't see clearly. What's the solution? Get some self-help books.

Study Andrew Carnegie. No. Get on your knees.

And get tuned into the spiritual. Don't study men who didn't know anything about the spirits. Get on your knees.

If you need to study some men. I recommend Paul and the Bible. That's a good one.

But if you need to study. Study men who did that. Who were on their knees.

Men like Spurgeon who would spend hours praying. If you need to study that. But I recommend more than study.

Because that has such a tendency to educate our mind. I believe in study. It's good.

But make sure it's a trailer. Not the engine. Get on your knees.

And let faith be the engine. Faith that's fueled by the faith of the Son of God. When you live that life.

Then all these other things come in order. The other week. There was a friend of mine.

He came from another state. He's an elder there in the church. A pastor.

And his church is going through a real struggle. And he came to me and just poured out his heart. And shared a lot of things.

And as he shared. I heard some things about one of the other leadership team. He wasn't casting stones.

He was just saying. How do I walk this? And I looked at him. And I can still see the look on his face.

But I said. Have you ever considered that this pastor may not be born again? He was shocked that I would ask that question. But I was just as shocked with what he said next.

He said. Well, he does struggle with assurance of salvation. I don't know whether he's born again or not.

It's not my job to tell. It is my job to ask him to look at the evidence. Look at the fruit.

And see if it's real. If he's not born again. Then I know one thing.

He's not full of the Holy Ghost. Let me ask you a question. I don't know what's politically correct language here.

It doesn't matter to me. I'm going to use the language that's in this book. And that's correct enough for me.

But when they asked for seven men for the Holy Ghost to ordain deacons. Did they know who they were? Could they find them? Yes, they could. They knew who these men were for the Holy Ghost.

And was the whole church for the Holy Ghost? No. Because Peter and James and John. I don't remember.

They had to specify. This is what we want. It is true.

Not everybody's at the same place in their walk. Not everybody is saturated with the living presence of God like they are. But you want to answer the question? Settle it once and for all about whether you're in or out? Go to Jesus and seek him to be saturated with his very presence.

One of my favorite verses is. And it seems like this chews well in any circle. No matter what you call it.

But Paul writing to the Ephesians in chapter 3 verse 17 says. His prayer for them was that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. That you being rooted and grounded in love.

May be able to comprehend with all the saints. What is the breadth and length and depth and height of Christ's love. And to know the love of Christ personally.

Which path is knowledge. And that. Why? Why does he want them to know the love of Christ personally by faith? Because you will be filled with all the fullness of God.

You will be saturated with his presence. Every word in the New Testament save one. That talks about being full of spirit.

Has the word saturated like a sponge. What do you do to make a sponge wet most times? You put it in. And it's dripping.

It's soaking. And if you leave it out in the air for a long while. Sometimes it kind of dries up.

It leaks out. Needs a fresh dip. Acts 4. Right after Pentecost.

I believe in the second work of grace. I believe in third and fourth and fifth and however many more works of grace. I'm not here to put it in a box.

I don't think we should. But these same people that God had poured out the Holy Ghost on and saturated them in his presence. They're needing some boldness.

Because they might take off their heads. That does require some boldness, you know. And they're saying.

What do they do? They're saying saturate us with this presence. In such a way that we'll do things like an intoxicated man would do things he normally wouldn't do. We will be so full of you.

That we will go out and speak boldly. Like Peter. This man who 50 days before was denying Jesus Christ.

Saying I don't know him. Now he's full of Holy Ghost. And he says.

You did it. You killed him. The very men that did it.

He was saying that to. That's a pretty dangerous thing to do. 50 days after they killed him.

He didn't care. And neither should we. And.

But the thing is. If we try to do this in the flesh. It'll never come out right.

We're going to try. Say more spiritual things. Try to be more spiritual.

Forget it. Connect with the spring. Connect with the vine.

Connect with the living reality of who Jesus is in his very person. And have him in you of a truth. You will be full of God.

When you know his love. And when he has encaptured your soul. I'd like to talk.

Just a brief moment. About the ultra-orthodox Jews in Brooklyn, New York. You might say.

Now wait a minute. What does that have to do with grace? What does that have to do with being full of Jesus? I'll tell you what it has to do. These people live seemingly godly lives.

Without Jesus. I've been there. It marvels me at what they can do in the flesh.

It makes us look. It's all flesh. It doesn't mean anything.

We shouldn't compare ourselves among ourselves. But it makes our flesh look sloppy. They have really nice pretty religious flesh.

But you know what? They're blinded and they're lost. They think they're doing the will of God. Just like those men that nailed Jesus up to the cross.

I'm not here to talk about the ultra-orthodox Jews. Though I have a heart to see them come to Christ too. But I'm here to talk about us.

It is possible, just like they build their synagogues in the flesh, for us to build our churches in the flesh. It is possible. Do you know that in some of these ultra-orthodox settings, they start school at three years old? And by the time they're five, they're going to school six days a week from seven in the morning till ten or eleven at night.

Six days a week. How about it, children? Want to change schedules? And they do this till they're 21. And just schooling and schooling in the law and writings of the rabbis and all kinds of things.

And they found, the reason they do this, they found out if they beat their natural mind and beat it with all this information, they can subjugate it. They can make it happen. Do we try to do that in our churches sometimes? Do we ever try to do those things? Oh, we don't go to that extreme.

We know we'd never do that. Forget it. I'm out.

I want to watch TV and sports and whatever else. We want to pamper our flesh. They've learned not to even pamper their flesh.

They've learned to deny themselves. What beautiful material guy would humble them? That's why he got a pole one day, I guess. I don't know.

But that's not the point. The point is to expose the Jew in each of us. The natural Jew.

Paul says he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is one inwardly, who has a circumcised heart. In each one of us lies a possibility. This is my greatest fear, what I share this morning.

I'm pouring out my soul to you. I'm pouring out my very heart. My greatest fear is because God's Spirit is speaking to you, and you know you've got to do something.

You can't just sit there. It wouldn't be right that you go out there and try to do it. I'm going to have more devotions, more prayer time, and come and join the Jews.

I'm not against prayer time and devotions. We need that. We need time in His presence.

But don't think you're going to do it. Think that you can do it, and that's why you must seek His face. That's why you must seek His presence.

You've demonstrated quite well enough you can't do it. Why are you going to try harder to demonstrate better you can't do it? Seek Him, and He will give you grace, and He will give you the power to overcome. And then there's one huge dividing line that happens, and it's the word J-O-Y, joy.

When we try to do it, we start getting these long faces on, and we look over here at Brother Fred, and over here at Sister Pam, and whoever they are, I don't know, you know, whatever our friends are, and we say, they aren't living like me. They're really in the flesh. I've got it here.

I'm making it happen. And we get critical. We get all those things.

No joy. That's what's wrong with Christianity. But when we seek Him for grace, we are so thankful.

We are so excited. I get to live for Jesus' day. I get another chance to deal with all these distractions with thanksgiving.

Did not He say, in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God and Christ Jesus concerning you? Always, for all things, giving thanks. Practice that one for one week. Giving thanks for every last thing that comes into your life.

Look at how you can be thankful in this situation. I don't think Brian will mind. If he does, it will give him a chance to exercise grace.

We stopped. Brian's are gone, and he left. He said you can stop in either house.

We set up ten. Their particular neighborhood has a lot of dogs. Not just theirs.

They have dogs, but the whole neighborhood. You know, we have a nice sized little family there. We try to settle all down.

You can imagine, when there are six little ones in a tent, and everybody is just starting to rest down. This went on for most of the night. The worst one was the little nine month old, because she wouldn't settle quick again.

She couldn't be explained to why this didn't matter. But I told my wife, and I wish we could have even walked better, but God did give us grace. I said God never gives dogs, but he gives grace.

What an opportunity. I thank God. I'm so glad Brian gave us a chance to practice some grace.

To be thankful in this. You know what I'm thinking? I'll tell you what I'm thinking. I'm made of the same stuff everybody else is.

I'm thinking on Sunday morning, I got to preach here. And I'm not getting rest. And tomorrow, I know already that we're probably going to have to move camp to another area.

I'm going to have to do all this. And I'm starting to think those things. And I just say, I'm going to walk.

I'm just going to walk in grace with my family. If the Lord wants me to have time to prepare, then fine. I'd be grateful.

If he wants to give me a message when I walk up the steps here, fine too. That's okay. Hold it like this.

And joy and grace flows. I was, Brian stopped in last night. He can know whether I was, whether I was down with my head down.

And I couldn't get stopped. I finally had to yank myself out of his truck so I could leave and go home. I was just so excited about Jesus.

I wasn't there, oh man, I had a bad night last night. Now look, it's not about me. Every one of us has this grace.

We can walk through this time. And we will sometimes be tired in this mortal body. That's okay.

That's okay. But we don't need to be depressed, discouraged, down in the mouth, long face. What this book teaches is true.

We ought to be the happiest, joyfulest people on the earth. And why is it so many times, especially in the church, people walking around like, and all this? I'll tell you why. It's because they haven't experienced this book, or aren't experiencing it.

I'm going to say one more thing about this joy. Let no man deceive himself, Paul says. And this is a good word to us, not to deceive ourselves.

If you have joy, it's going to show. There's going to be a sparkle in your eye. There's going to be a smile on your face.

And it's not going to be pasted on either. Oh, I hate that. You walk up to somebody and go, Oh, I hate that.

And you know they aren't any happier. Just stop the front. Just scowl at me.

I know you, or whatever. I'd rather be, let's be real. And we're so good at it, because that's what you do on Sunday mornings.

God bless you. So good to meet you. How was your week? Oh, I'm just rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord.

Are you really? What did you tell your husband on the way here? It didn't sound like rejoicing, if you weren't walking in grace. Okay. Eyes, mouth, face.

Those three things. Don't go around and judge others now. That's not what it's for.

It's for you. Good look in the mirror. You'd be surprised, just looking at your own eyes, whether there's joy there or not.

Let's get real. Let's not be, let's not, let's not be deceiving ourselves. And then, not beat up on ourselves.

Oh my, I can never get to that. I'll never beat that. You can.

That's a lie. And the reason you're saying those words, is because you don't want to deal with your flesh. When we humble ourselves, what does He do? He lifts us up.

God resists the proud, but who does He give grace to? The humble. Humble ourselves. Say, I don't have joy like a shit.

I know, back there, I encountered Jesus. He changed my life. And now this last while, I've allowed the cares of being a mom, or the bother of earning a living, I've allowed it to saddle me down.

And I'm not in joy like I ought to be. I need you, Jesus. I can't change this.

You know, there's times, last, I talked about the dogs the other night, and that was a good illustration, because I availed myself of the grace, for the most part. But there's been times, that I've been so unthankful about something, and His Spirit convicts me, and says, you're not thankful. I try to be thankful, and you can't be thankful.

Like, you're trying to think thankful thoughts, but you're not getting anywhere. You know, you're still pretty bent out of shape, about what happened. What do you do then? Cry out to Jesus, and say, I am not thankful.

I know you want me to be thankful, and I can't make me thankful, but you make me thankful, because I can't do it. Do you know He answers that prayer? May not always, sometimes you might have to keep crying out, but He'll answer that prayer. Make me thankful, and my, all of a sudden, you feel this song coming up, and you start singing? Where did that come from? And all of a sudden, you can see the bright side of the thing.

You see, oh, He had a plan here, and I was missing it. I'd like to just close with a couple, a couple other words here. Let's not make the mistake, of looking back there.

If back there was real, and we're walking in it, there'll be fruit today. I heard a dear preacher friend of mine once say, do you know what's a lot more important than the birth certificate? The vital signs. Let's don't look for the birth certificate.

If there's vital signs there was a birth, don't doubt it. But just because there's a birth certificate, doesn't mean that there's vital signs, especially if it might be a fake one. Maybe somebody ran a copy off, and just put a different name in or something.

Let's make sure, here the natural and the spiritual break down a little, but it's still a good thing. Let's make sure, that the living life of Christ is in our life. Do you think, that we're going to effectively win the world, any other way? Do you think Barnstall's going to be interested, in what you have to offer, if you don't have joy? Probably not.

Hebrews 4 tells us, let's labor to enter into his rest. This morning here's another little test for each of us. Are we uptight about stuff? Are we stressed out? The fellow came up here, and talked about what happened in the finances.

Now I don't know, but I can guess if I was on the finance committee, I could rub the back of my neck, and it'd be a little tight. We don't need to do that. We can give it all up.

Is our identity in these things? It could be anything. Or, you know, whatever it is. Are we always going from one thing to the next? Wearing, wearing, wearing.

Stress. Are we radiant and joyful, and at rest in Him? You know what? The devil will never, will see to it, we never have a shortage of things to worry about. Did you know that? You'll never run out.

Just like you can give thanks at everything, you never run out of things to worry about, and be stressed out. Jesus said, or Paul, or whoever wrote Hebrews said, labor to enter into rest. Jesus said, Matthew 11, 28-30.

We'll turn there and read those verses. Matthew 11, 28-30. Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Verse 27 says, that no man knoweth the Son, but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. We need a revelation of Christ.

We need an encounter with the living risen Christ, to His present tense alive. He's very interested in what's happening here, right at this moment. He's interested in each of our lives.

And we can encounter Him, by His Spirit. I'd like to tell you, just a little bit yet, a story of my life. Matthew 5, 6 says, Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, because they'll be filled.

And Revelation 3, 20 says, that the Father wants to, He's knocking on the door, and the Father will come. He and the Father, and they will sup with Him, and meet with Him, and be with Him. I, as a young man, accepted the Lord as my Savior, believed on Him for forgiveness of sins, experienced a measure of peace and freedom.

But when I was 19, I went to some meetings, and there was a man there preaching. He's preaching on this verse, Matthew 5, 6. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. And when I heard this man speak, about a personal relationship with Jesus, walking with Him, talking with Him, casting every care on Him, just throughout our day, talking to Him, talking with Him about the loss, talking with Him about so many things, all our problems, casting all our care upon Him.

I listened to that and said, I didn't even know that was possible. I didn't even know it existed. But I want it.

But I want it. But in the setting I was in there, it was kind of a mixed religious setting, different denominations, and the people down there at the altar didn't look like what I look like. They didn't look like what I thought they should look like.

And in my proud heart I said, I ain't going down there to join them. I got out to my vehicle, and the Lord just reached back and whopped me a good one. And said, you had a chance to receive that which your soul longs for.

And you and your proudness turned the other way. And I just dropped. I dropped like a shot.

And I repented. I gave it all up to Him. And He came into me and sat with me.

And look, I was raised in a setting, you never raised your hands. You never said amen. You could have got marked for that.

The whole way home I was talking out loud to Jesus. I couldn't stop. I got home out back behind my parents' place there, and I'm just lifting my hands to the sky.

Nobody had to teach me to do those things. I became enlivened just like that. I didn't go through a course on how to raise your hand.

Why? Because the living God of heaven had come into me, and He changed me. I was so concerned about the things of this world, so concerned about my job, so concerned. All you had to do was look at my checkbook.

Any person could have looked at my checkbook and said, yes, I see you love the world. It's quite evident. That's what your money goes for.

That's what your time goes for. That's who I was. It was when He came in and filled me that I changed, and I have not looked back.

I must say He had a lot of work to do since, and still does. But He changed my allegiance. Has He changed your allegiance? Do you love the things of the world? Do you love this present world? Do you look like this world? Do you talk like this world? Do you sound like this world? Are you this world? Or have you been changed to a heavenly kingdom? That's the question that I have for you here yet.

A couple of closing questions. Is daily communion a reality? Do you know what it is to have your heart so full that it seems it will burst? Are you living by faith, and consequently walking out of sync with the natural world around you? Do you have experiences like Jeremiah and the disciples on the road to Emmaus that said, Our heart burned within us. Do you know what that's like? Do you know what it's so like to have the love of God well up in your heart that you feel like it's going to break? Maybe you find this longing in your heart this morning, but like me, you're not sure if you want to pay the price.

Gerard de Toy, the preacher, often says, You know what it's going to cost you? It's going to cost you absolutely everything, but it will cost you more to miss it. Meditate on that one a little. Can we stop playing games this morning and be honest and real? The results are for eternity.

This is not a game. This is not... The results are for keeps. It's very important.

As I've often said, If people knew what I know, they would choose what I have chosen. But the God of this present world has blinded their eyes, so they cannot receive this gospel. I'd like to close here in prayer.

And if God's speaking to you, I'm not asking you to do anything. If you want to come down here and pray, that's fine. If you want to pray right where you're at, that's fine.

If you want to go home and think about it and count the costs, Jesus told some people to do that. That's okay. But let's not play games, and let's in the quietness of this moment take this Word and examine our life, examine where we are at, and see if we're in this faith.

Father God in heaven, I thank you for this morning. I thank you for this opportunity. I thank you for your Word.

The entrance of your Word gives life. And Father, I have no doubt that you've spoken to some hearts this morning, that you want it to be lowered up. You're knocking on their door.

Maybe it's an area that has not been surrendered. Maybe it's a whole life that has not been surrendered. But you're saying, I love you.

I invite you to come after me. But if you don't come after me, how can you be my disciple? And Father, in the quietness of this moment, I just pray like Nicodemus, even though it doesn't fit whatever we've been thinking, that we would be real, we would just be real before God, before you, and ask those hard questions, where am I at with Jesus? Do I have this overcoming grace in my life? And if not, if we've never been saved, that we would cry out to you, that I want what that fellow has. I want to walk close with Jesus.

Or if we have been walking, but have grown cold, that we would go back and surrender afresh and ask for your fresh oil to fill our vessel. Speak to our hearts now. We ask all these things in Jesus' name.

Father, you have spoken, Lord God. You certainly have spoken to my heart, oh God. And I thank you for that.

God, I pray for everyone, Lord, who heard you speaking to them this morning. That just as our brother said, Lord, whether you would have us just to wait here in quietness when others leave, or go somewhere to be alone with you, or even respond publicly with a testimony. Just ask, Lord Jesus, that you would lead us.

God, I thank you that in your presence is the fullness of joy. And if that joy is not there, then something is wrong. Something is blocking the flow, the infilling of your Spirit.

I pray, God, you would reveal to us, each and every one of us, what that is. That we may walk in the fullness of your joy. In the purity and the power of your presence.

God, that as our brother preached, Lord, we would get real. Oh, God, make us real. Make us genuine before you, Lord.

You know our hearts already. Help us to walk in truth. In the reality of your presence.

Jesus, I ask that you be Lord of your church here. That you make every one of us real, Lord. And as we've heard, we can't do this on our own.

It's absolutely impossible. Many of us have tried. I've tried.

And failed. We need your Spirit. We need you to fill us afresh.

And thank you, Lord, that you will fill the hungry and the thirsty. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. And as we heard, Lord, would you make us willing? Would you even put within our heart, Lord, this fervent desire for you? This hunger for you? Make us willing to be willing.

To be filled with all the fullness of God. Filled with all the fullness of your grace. Of your love.

Of your joy. Of your very presence. Lord, I commit myself and my brothers and sisters into your hands.

Right now by faith. And I ask you, Lord, to burn these words in our hearts so that they're not snatched away. In Jesus' name we thank you and we give you all the glory and honor and praise.

In Jesus' name, Amen. You're invited to stay. If you'd like to pray, everybody's invited to stay and eat.
We're going to have a meal back here.

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