

We Can Take the City

by Michael L. Brown

We can take the city by believing God's promises, taking action, and aligning our thoughts and ways with His perspective.

Duration: 1:02:19

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that God works in unexpected and seemingly foolish ways to bring about radical change. He challenges the idea that a massive advertising campaign or human efforts alone can bring about transformation. The speaker shares a personal testimony of their fire team in Holland being featured on the front page of a leading newspaper, highlighting God's ability to use ordinary people to shake nations. The sermon encourages listeners to stir themselves up, remind themselves of God's promises, and have faith in His ability to fulfill His vision for their lives.

Transcript

God, I pray again that you would give us ears to hear what your Spirit is saying. I thank you for the anointing and life of your Spirit. I thank you for this Word that you've laid on my heart.

May it come with power and with force. May it open our hearts and minds as well. May a spirit of faith rise within us.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Turn with me to Acts chapter 8. Acts chapter 8. Most of you here have known me for some years.

Some of you don't know me that well. But I want to make it clear that I am not into empty talk. I am not into American hype.

I have gone overseas many a time to minister and apologized for what Americans have done before we got there. And for sometimes big talk, big announcements, and the reality not lining up with it. I have no desire to just speak into the air and get us excited about nothing.

If God had not really been challenging me about these things and speaking to me about these things and giving me a word, I wouldn't be bringing them. So I don't want you to just hear this in terms of me trying to get you encouraged and excited. I certainly don't want you to hear it as just some visionary with empty vision speaking empty words.

To the extent this bears witness with your heart and to the extent you see this as scriptural, I urge you to embrace this. But I want to say to you today when I speak of city, I'm speaking of the greater Charlotte region as we're slightly north here. I want to say quite plainly to FIRE and to other believers in churches and communities in this region, we can take the city.

We can take the city. There can be a dynamic, radical effect of God on this city and region to the point it gets the attention of the nation. Acts chapter 8. After great persecution to the believers in Jerusalem, they scatter.

Verse 4. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said.

With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city. God came down through the preaching of the gospel in a demonstrable way.

Lives were radically changed and affected. The Samaritans who were kind of outcast and looked at as half-breed Jews by the other Jews, they received the word, and there was great joy in the city. And when you get down to verse 14, it says, When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.

There was this concept that people representing a city, a region, had received the gospel, and that's how it's described here. Samaria had received the gospel, and therefore the apostles went. There was great joy in that city.

I want to lay a foundation for you scripturally, and I want to give you a vision from the Lord in terms of what He's saying to us. First thing is this. God's plans are bigger than ours.

God's plans are bigger than ours. I want you to consider His perspective when we talk about, we can take this city, we can make an impact, we, together with other believers in this region, can see this place turn upside down for the glory of God. I want you to consider God's perspective.

That's not a troubling statement to Him. That's not one of those statements where He says, Oh, come on, you've got to be kidding, it could never happen. You just have to remember when we're talking about God and the one we serve, we're talking about the one whom before the creation of the universe, He had existed forever.

And the universe that we keep discovering, more and more and more and more of His creation in universes, within universes, and it's endless. If we had eternity to search it out, we wouldn't find the end of it. He made it.

He knows the end from the beginning. He could snap His fingers and make it all again. From His perspective, this is not some big thing.

God's plans are bigger than ours. And throughout the Word, He's constantly rebuking His people and challenging His people because of their unbelief. Oh, you of little faith, why did you doubt? I mean, even in crazy situations where it looks like a boat's going to capsize and experienced sailors think they're going to be drowned, when Jesus rebukes the storm, He says, why did you doubt? You know, walking on the water in the midst of a storm, why did you doubt? Could there be any question about it? Jesus is saying, with me

being who I am, how could you possibly doubt? When you really think of it, as much as we know about God and as much as we know the truth of His Word, unbelief is really perverse.

Unbelief really doesn't make any sense at all. It's a complete denial of everything we base our entire lives on. God's plans are bigger than ours.

When Jeremiah prays, the city of Jerusalem is about to come down in Jeremiah 32, and he prays this prayer and he confesses to God and says, God, there's nothing too hard for You. It's amazing, later on, God comes back to Jeremiah and says, is there anything too hard for me? It's easy for you to say, do you really believe that? Do we really believe all things are possible to Him who believes? Listen, to me this is a very minor thing to speak of, in terms of the stuff that we pray for, in terms of praying for the glory of God to fill the earth as the waters cover the seas, in terms of praying for the fullness of the Gentiles to come in, in terms of praying for all Israel to be saved. This is a very minor thing.

Still, I want us to look at it head on and realistically. We can take the city. In the Scriptures, Isaiah 55, where God says that His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts, that's not just a statement, that's a call for repentance in context.

In other words, change your thoughts, change your ways, and adjust to my thoughts and my ways. We would do more if we took on God's perspective. We would be more effective if we recognized what He's given us as His children, and that He's committed the work to us, and that He has great massive plans.

God's plans are bigger than ours. Number two, God has plans for cities and regions. God has plans for cities and regions.

You ever hear of the city of Jerusalem? You ever hear the exhortation in Psalm 122 and Isaiah 62 to pray unceasingly for Jerusalem, to be established as a praise in all the earth? You ever read the promises in Isaiah 2, that from Jerusalem the word of the Lord will go out to the entire world? Jesus' words in Matthew 23, that He doesn't return until Jerusalem welcomes Him back. God has plans and purposes for cities and regions. And I just want to show you this quickly going through the book of Acts.

You can just jot these references down. Acts 6-7. So the word of God spread.

The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6-7. If it's alive, it grows.

Something is alive, it's growing either in numbers or in strength or in wisdom or in maturity, but if it's alive, it grows. By Acts 21, they can talk about millions of believers, thousands, tens of thousands of Jewish believers in the city. We read Acts 8. Take a look at Acts chapter 9. Acts 9-32.

As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years. Aeneas, Peter, said to him, Jesus Christ heals you.

Get up and take care of your mat. Immediately Aeneas got up. All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

A miracle happens, and there's a mass turning in a region. And then it goes on with Joppa and the raising of Tabitha from the dead. And look at what it says in verse 42.

This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. Acts 18. Paul gets to Corinth.

What does God say to him? Acts 18 verse 9. One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision. Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking.

Do not be silent for I am with you. And no one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city. Many people.

Many people who belong to me. Many people I'm working on that I'm going to bring to myself. I have many people in this city.

Don't back down. So Paul stayed for a year and a half, which was a long time for him, teaching them the Word of God. Acts 19.

Seven Jewish men try to drive out a demon from someone in the name of Yeshua, but they don't know him. They get beaten up severely. People start to revere the Word of the Lord.

Before that, Acts 19 and 11, God did extraordinary miracles through Paul. So even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured, and the evil spirits left them. Obviously, people hearing about this, they want to try to do the same things in Jesus' name.

And when they can't, and the demons say, We know Jesus, and we know about Paul, but who are you? The name of Jesus is held in high honor. Verse 17. When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear.

The name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly.

When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to 50,000 drachmas. For those of you who don't know drachmas, a drachma, according to the note in my Bible says, was a silver coin worth about a day's wages. You say, Well, brother, you're the biblical scholar.

Why don't you just tell us what it means? Because I never paid attention to coins and those things, so I use the note here in the Bible. In this way, the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. God moving in a city, in a region, something happening, getting attention, turning hearts, and there's a massive effect.

Take a look at a few other references. Go back to Acts 16. As God's working in Philippi and people are getting saved, and now a demon is driven out of a girl and it has a key effect.

Look what's written in Acts 16.20. The owners of this slave girl used to be a fortune teller. Demons driven out of her. She can't tell fortunes.

They can't make money. They get upset. They bring Paul and Silas before the magistrates.

Verse 20, they said, These men are Jews and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice. Look in chapter 19, verse 29. As a result of idol worshippers getting saved, it hurts the idol business.

Remember, good business for the kingdom of God means bad business for the kingdom of hell. If God's really moving in an area, if God's really moving in a nation, and the church is rising, it should have an effect on the business of the kingdom of hell. Acts 19.29. Soon the whole city was in an uproar.

It's often been said that when the apostles came into a city, they had either revival or riot or both. And look at Acts 21. Acts 21.

As Paul comes into the city, there's an uproar. City of Jerusalem, verse 30. The whole city was aroused.

Whole city was aroused. End of verse 31. The whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar.

I'm talking about King Jesus getting attention, and the devil getting stirred, and the devil stirring opposition, and people being touched, and lives being changed. God moving in a city and doing something. God moving in a region.

Happened throughout the world. It's happened throughout history. One of my favorite examples is from the ministry of Charles Finney in Rochester.

Rochester, New York. 1830. I just want to read a few paragraphs from his account.

Maybe some of you have never heard this. We talk about this in fire school in the revival history class. But I want to read a little bit more.

1830. Leaving New York, I spent a few weeks in Whitestown. And as was common, being pressed to go in many directions.

Finney was born in 1792, died in 1875. So he's in the height of his early revival ministry here. But among others, an urgent invitation was received from the Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, of which Mr. Parker had been pastor, to go there and supply them for a season.

I inquired into the circumstances and found that on several accounts, it was a very unpromising field of labor. There were but three Presbyterian churches in Rochester. The third church that extended the invitation had no minister, and religion was in a low state.

The second church, or, quote, the brick church, as it was called, had a pastor, an excellent man, but in regard to his preaching, there was considerable division in the church. And he was restive and about to leave. There was a controversy existing between an elder of the third church and the pastor of the first church that was about to be tried before the presbytery.

This and other matters had aroused unchristian feeling to some extent in both churches, and altogether it seemed a forbidding field of labor at that time. The friends of Rochester were exceedingly anxious to have me go there, I mean the members of the third church. Being left without a pastor, they felt as if there was great danger that they would be scattered and perhaps annihilated as a church, unless something could be done to revive religion among them.

Not a promising situation. With these pressing invitations before me, I felt, as I often have done, greatly perplexed. I remained at my father-in-law's and considered the subject until I felt that I must take hold and work somewhere.

So they'd get together with praying friends, they'd discuss the issue, and they all agreed, everyone agreed, they were unanimous in the opinion that Rochester was too uninviting a field of labor to be put at all in competition with New York or Philadelphia and some other fields to which I was then invited. They were firm in the conviction that I should go east from Utica and not west, etc. So he agrees, that's the direction he's going, he's not heading to Rochester.

But after I retired to my lodging, the question was presented to my mind under a different aspect. Something seemed to question me. What are the reasons that deter you from going to Rochester? I could readily enumerate them, but then the question returned, ah, but are these good reasons? Certainly you are needed at Rochester all the more because of these difficulties.

Do you shun the field because there are so many things that need to be corrected? Because there is so much that is wrong? But if all was right, you would not be needed. Just to interject something, there was a leader in the assemblies of God some years ago when God started to deal with him about revival. And he was preaching at one particular church, and it was very hard and very difficult, and he left there and he said, God, they need someone to raise them from the dead.

And God said to him, what were you doing there? What do you think I sent you there for? I remember ministering in Finland one time, and man, it just seemed to hit a wall, and it was so much traditional religion, and they were joking with me. They said, you know, the ice is so thick here. If we like the message on Sunday, we say amen on Wednesday.

It seemed like, how do you break through? I remember just after the first day or two, this excitement started to rise in my heart. This is what I'm made for. This is where we're supposed to be.

The drier it is, the easier it is for fire to spread and burn. Let it be. And by the way, I don't look at Charlotte as an area like that at all.

So how much more can we believe God to do something here? I soon came to the conclusion, Finney says, that we were all wrong, and that the reasons that had determined us against my going to Rochester were the most cogent reasons for my going. I felt ashamed to shrink from undertaking the work because of its difficulties, and it was strongly impressed upon me that the Lord would be with me, and that was my field. My mind became entirely decided before I retired to rest that Rochester was the place to which the Lord would have me go.

So they get on their way to go. Everybody's surprised by it. They begin preaching.

Look at what he says. There were very soon some very marked conversions. The wife of a prominent lawyer in that city was one of the first converts.

She was a woman of high standing, a lady of culture and extensive influence. Her conversion was a very marked one. And he realized in his preaching he had a challenge even more.

He said, I had found also that something was needed to make the impression on them that they were expected at once to give up their hearts, something that would call them to act and act as publicly before the world as they had in their sins, something that would commit them publicly to the service of Christ. When I called them simply to stand up in the public congregations, I found this has had a very good effect, and so far as it went, it answered the purpose for which it was intended. But after all, I had felt for some time that something more was necessary to bring them out from among the mass of the ungodly to a

public renunciation of their sinful ways and a public committal of themselves to God.

And after his calling for repentance, he says, a much larger number came forward than I expected. And among them was another prominent lady and several others of her acquaintance and belonging to the same circle of society came forward. This increased the interest among that class of people.

You start getting significant conversions among a certain class of people or strata in society or whatever the situation is, a sinful stronghold, and it stirs the attention and the interest of that group. Negative, positive, it stirs things. It was soon seen that the Lord was aiming at the conversion of the highest classes of society.

My meetings soon became thronged with that class. The lawyers, physicians, merchants, and indeed all the most intelligent people became more and more interested and more and more easily influenced. Very soon, the work took effect extensively among the lawyers in that city.

There has always been a large number of the leading lawyers of the state resident at Rochester. The work soon got hold of numbers of these. I'm just going to read a little bit more of the account.

There was at that time a high school in Rochester presided over by a Mr. B, the son of A.B., a then pastor of the church at Brighton near Rochester. It just leaves out some of the names. Mr. B was a skeptic, but was at the head of a very large and flourishing school.

As the school was made up of both sexes, a Ms. A was his assistant and associate at the school at that time. Ms. A was a Christian woman. The students attended the religious services, and many of them soon became deeply anxious about their souls.

One morning, Mr. B found that his classes could not recite. They couldn't do their lessons. They couldn't repeat things because they're under conviction.

When he came to have them before him, they were so anxious about their souls that they wept, and he saw that they were in such a state that it very much confounded him. He called his associate, Ms. A, and told her that the young people were so exercised about their souls that they could not recite and asked if they could not better send for Mr. Finney to give them instruction. She afterwards informed me of this and said that she was very glad to have him make the inquiry and most courageously advised him to send for me.

He did so, and the revival took tremendous hold of that school. Mr. B himself was soon hopefully converted and nearly every person in the school. When he says hopefully converted, it means for everything you can tell, the person was saved.

So this schoolmaster has been an unbeliever. A few years since, Ms. A informed me that more than 40 persons that were then converted in that school had become ministers. That was a fact that I had not known before.

She named many of them to me at the time. A large number of them became foreign missionaries. Finney says this revival made a great change in the moral state and subsequent history of Rochester.

The great majority of the leading men and women in the city were converted. Do you hear that line? The great majority of the leading men and women in the city were converted. He talks about the spirit of prayer

that prevailed.

Then he gives this account. I've said that the moral aspect of things was greatly changed by this revival. It was a young city full of thrift and enterprise and full of sin.

The inhabitants were intelligent and enterprising in the highest degree, but as the revival swept through the town and converted the great mass of the most influential people, both men and women, the change in the order, sobriety, and morality of the city was wonderful. At a subsequent period, I was conversing with a lawyer who was converted at this revival who I've been speaking, and who soon after had been made district attorney of the city. His business was to superintend the prosecution of criminals.

From his position, he was made thoroughly acquainted with the history of crime in that city. And speaking of the revival in which he was converted, he said to me many years afterward, I have been examining the records of the criminal courts, and I find this striking fact that whereas our city has increased since that revival threefold, so it's three times as big. He's writing many years later.

Our city has increased since that revival threefold. There are not one-third as many prosecutions for crime as there had been up to that time. The city is three times bigger, and prosecutions for crime are less than one-third of what they were when it was smaller.

And this is a district attorney giving the figures. This is, he said, the wonderful influence that revival had upon the community. Indeed, by the power of that revival, public sentiment has been molded, Finney says.

The public affairs of the city have been, in a great measure, in the hands of Christian men, and the controlling influences in the community have been on the side of Christ. About 11, 12 years ago, Nancy's dad, who's now deceased, decided to just get our family a subscription to Reader's Digest. So we started getting Reader's Digest.

And Nancy read an article in there and told me that you really need to read this article. And I thought of doing it and planned on doing it and had a notion to do it, but forgot about it. Some months later, I was preaching in California, and a pastor said, have you seen this article? And I read this incredible article in Reader's Digest.

I mean, it was an amazing article. And of course, I immediately wanted to tell Nancy about this incredible article that I had read, which was that very article that she had told me to read. Probably the only time that's ever happened in our 29 years of marriage, but that's why I remember it so well.

But listen to this. And I did have that sneaking thought, as Toby sits there smiling in the front row. I did have that sneaking thought as I went to tell her about this amazing article that perhaps is the one that she had mentioned to me earlier.

So look, this is Reader's Digest, okay? This is not Christianity Today or Charisma Magazine. This is not some evangelist newsletter. This is Reader's Digest, 1994, July 1994.

And by the way, I'm not saying, we know it's true because Reader's Digest said so. That's not my point, okay? What I mean is that this is just the perspective of someone writing for a secular publication, okay? The article is called Our Kindest City, 1994. Finney is there in Rochester in 1830, okay? John S. Tompkins wrote the article.

Tompkins wondered why it was that the city of Rochester, New York was rated the kindest, most altruistic city in the nation in two separate polls. One taken in 1940. Come on, 1940.

It's 110 years after Finney. Give me a break. And the other from 1990 to 1992.

That's over 160 years later. We could add up the age of most of the people in our student body and it doesn't equal 160. Slight exaggeration.

This is Reader's Digest. This is his answer. In 1830, this is, and I'm quoting, Finney spent six months in Rochester.

Charles Finney spent six months in Rochester. This is the subject of the article. And converted hundreds of residents, lawyers, doctors, judges, tradesmen, bankers, boatmen, workers, master craftsmen to born-again Christianity.

He scorched their consciences and urged them not to follow the selfish ways of the world. Finney angrily denounced the evils of selfishness and deliberately aimed his message at the wealthy and powerful, because he saw that's how God was moving there and that's what he was going after. Having converted the affluent, Finney's final step was to get them to direct their energy and wealth into beneficial philanthropies.

To start giving in constructive ways to help other human beings. He was amazingly successful. Rochester embarked on a church-building boom.

Rochesterians went on to establish a university, organize charities and self-help agencies, build a public school system, fight against slavery. The city was a station on the Underground Railroad which smuggled slaves into Canada. Because Finney was an activist and an abolitionist against slavery.

Formed unions and reformed prison system. Rochester became a city where love for one's fellow man was more than an empty phrase. Because of a revival that took place a century and a half earlier, people are still writing about it.

Because God got a hold of people and there was a mindset and a strategy. There's another account that records that before his ministry there were 100 pubs and taverns serving alcoholic beverages and he also preached strongly against drinking. After the revival there was one out of 100 left open.

The bad news is that Charles Finney is not alive and here today. The better news is we are. There's a whole army.

There's a whole army of people all over this region, in different places, in different pockets, in different churches, in different communities with an anointing from God and a calling from God and a vision from God to bring about change. Not just to have religious activity. Not just to have good services.

Not just to build a building. Not just to have nice words and meetings, but to bring about change. That's what we live for.

That's why Jesus put us here. I want to say a few things very specifically to us here. And please remember again the person bringing this to you.

In my own heart and mind when God was calling us out of Pensacola, if I picked any place to be we would have been in New York. God had to overcome some resistance in me in terms of just staying in the south. And then the question is, well, why Charlotte? There's so many other places we could be.

And that may be the same question that others were asking as God sent them here a year ago, two years, five years, ten years, twenty years, however long it is. I want to say clearly that God brought us here for a specific purpose. And He's raised up and planted many other churches and ministries here in this region for a specific purpose.

We are here because of a God-ordained purpose. Do you understand that? It's not just that, well, when you figure it out, there is an international airport that's better than Pensacola. It's true.

I learned in Pensacola that if you're a Christian and you die in Pensacola, you go to heaven by way of Atlanta. Not an easy place to get in. Hey, there are plenty of other places in America with international airports.

Some of them with several. Well, you know, there are plenty of places with more universities. We had all these reasons.

I mean, we knew God was speaking to us to come. He spoke it to some on the team and then confirmed it to me and to others. But we got here.

We started driving around. I remember Nancy and I just driving around thinking, all right, why here? And it was clear. It's because God has a purpose.

Because there's something God wants to do. There are other things we've prayed through in terms of logistics and where and this and that. Other things, He's still speaking to us about details and where we'll ultimately get planted with our own facility.

Certain things we know, certain things we don't know. But I'm just telling you, when we got here and we're driving around, we concluded the only reason we're here is because God wants to pour out His Spirit in this area. He's brought a lot of people here and others have been laboring here for years before we got here to share together in something He wants to do.

And I'll say it again, I believe He wants to do it in such a way it gets the attention of the nation and becomes an example of what He can do in a region. I believe that. And I don't think God's saying, you believe that? Oh no, what are we gonna... I don't think God is flabbergasted by that.

God is thrown by that. God's put a world-changing DNA and the DNA of city-wide revival into fire and we can live with nothing less. We had a friend visiting with us, a woman that's been in ministry for a good number of years.

She was in the service Thursday night. We were just talking about the spiritual atmosphere and she said, I felt so strongly. I was in the midst of so many people who were hungry to be world-changers.

Not for our praise or glory because we're anything, but because it's the heart of Jesus. Smith Wigglesworth, the apostle of faith, used to say that the key to being a soul winner is to remember that the Savior of the world lives inside of you. Listen, it burns in our hearts as we send out workers around the world and other parts of the country that have that same mentality.

We want to see a nation touched. We want to see things shaken. Even if it seems crazy.

Look, it was crazy a few years ago, I believe it was October 12th, about three years back, that our fire team in Holland, two and a half years back, our fire team in Holland, which is a good-sized group now, but at that point just had four full-time people, at the front page of one of the leading newspapers in the country, front page story about the fire base in Holland. Their story was right above the picture of Jimmy Carter receiving the Nobel Prize. Come on, what? What in the world are we doing on the front page? This is God saying, I'm going to use you to shake nations.

Have an influence, have a voice. Listen, it has nothing to do with our ability or our wisdom or strength. It has to do with His ability and wisdom and strength.

It has to do with the largeness of His vision and the largeness of His calling. Why minimize it? Look, I'm a Jew and my heart beats for my people, but I see God's vision for our people, for my Jewish people is massive. Why shouldn't I share that vision and that burden? Anyone with a heart for missions, why shouldn't they share the largeness of the heart of God who wants to see a multitude that no one can number, from every people and background? What else should light think when it goes into dark places except it's going to shine and bring about change? And if it dies in the process, so be it, but it's going to die for the glory of God.

And while it has breath in life, if it's 80 or 90 years or 20, it's going to live for the glory of God. Some of us were in the midst of revival in Pensacola and saw how God could just light up a place and bring people from around the world and there are places even lesser than Pensacola and more obscure and more isolated where God moved and people came flocking from all over and it was His way of saying, it's my glory and my honor. And although there was not a unified effort with churches coming together with a strategy to touch the city and perhaps the flood of revival and people coming from around the world took away some of that vision, but a lot did happen.

I was sharing with our students the other day a note that I had from September of 1996 from the youth pastor at Brownsville now, then, who's now pastoring in Michigan. Actually in Rochester, Michigan now that I think of it. And I was just looking at some of the things that were happening.

For example, in the 32 campuses in the county junior high, high school campuses before revival, there were only 3 Bible clubs on the campuses. And then within a year and a half of revival, there were 32 Bible clubs on the campuses. And the previous year, just at the very beginning of revival when they had See You at the Pole event where kids come in the morning and pray at the flag poles.

September of 95, there were 300 kids at the flag poles. September of 96, there were 2,000 that gathered for prayer at the flag poles including some who preached the gospel and gave an altar call. I personally met with the superintendent of schools as I was about to debate a critic of the revival in late 97.

I met with him personally to ask him what was the effect of the revival, what's positive, what's negative. He said, nothing negative to say, but let me tell you some of the fruit in the schools. And he went on to do, he said, in fact, the school where I was the principal, let me tell you exactly what happened there.

That just gives us a glimpse. We think, man, if God pours out His Spirit and we can focus in the midst of that, on the region, on the area, and people can come together with a voice and a mind and a plan from God to do something, who knows what can happen? It's just in us. God put it in us.

It's not a matter of being bigger or better than someone else. It's just part of who we are. And He put this in many other hearts and minds.

And to just go on with life and ministry and services and congratulate ourselves because things are going well, without bringing about change, man, that doesn't appeal to us at all. And we don't see that as the New Testament pattern and the pattern of what God's doing around the world. There was a book that came out some years ago by a fine, wise man of God with some excellent counsel on how we could take our cities for God.

And when the book was out, an old man of God with many years of experience and wisdom was talking to me. And he said, someone said to me, how do you like that book? And he said, I said to them, I don't. People were surprised because everyone was talking about this book that had come out.

This was Leonard Ravenhill who had made the comments. He said to me, people said to me, how do you like the book? He said, I don't. He said, why not? He said, the author hasn't done it.

Don't write a book about how to take your city until you do it. That was his perspective. You know, God is very practical.

God is very practical. James, Jacob 2, 18. I'll show you my faith by what I do.

You've got all this big talk about, I'll show you my faith by my actions. That's the way God's looking at things. 1 John 3, 17 and 18.

1 John 3, 17 and 18. In terms of telling someone, oh, I love God, I love God, but your neighbor who's in need, you don't care about. What's Johnson? How can the love of God dwell in somebody like that? And then he exhorts, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 4, 18 to 20. 1 Corinthians 4, 18 to 20. He's challenging some of the arrogant believers there in the city.

And he says, well, we'll see what kind of power they have when I get there. Kingdom of God's not out of words, but of power. In other words, talk is cheap.

Let's produce. Let's see the goods. If we're going to do it all around the world, how about doing it in our backyard? We've got a tremendous vision for the nations.

The Muslim world is going to be saved. How about seeing Muslims saved here? Oh, God, we're believing for the day we're going to sweep through the whole nation. How about here? And wouldn't it be amazing to show what God has done and to glorify Jesus here to encourage others to go elsewhere and do the same? Think of where your faith would be for that.

It's time to let the spirit of faith arise. To have the spirit of Joshua and Caleb, not the spirit of the ten spies whose names we forget. I can't tell you off the top of my head the name of one of the ten without going to check it.

And their names are forgotten for a reason. They're the ones that we can't take out of the land. Giants in the land.

Grandsons in their side. Big and strong. We all should have just died in Egypt.

There's a reason we don't read. You don't read about them in Hebrews 11, the heroes of the faith. Their names are not going to be written.

It's not when you walk into the gates of heaven and walk through the gates and the pillars and all the everything, the imagery there, the walls and all that, you're not going to see. And here's the special tribute to the whiners, the complainers, the unbelievers. In fact, in Revelation 21, when it lists those that don't make it in and are cast into the lake of fire, the list right at the front talks about the unbelieving and the cowardly.

The spirit of cowardice that runs for no reason. The spirit of the slothful one that just makes excuses. How come you haven't gone out to get a job yet, man? There's a lion in the streets! There's a lion in the streets! Whatever the excuses are, they seem pretty pitiful, don't they? We need to have the same spirit.

We can take the lamp. We can take the lamp. We can see the mission's vision totally fulfilled worldwide.

We can see radical breakthroughs and the greatest outpouring of the earth. We can be right in the middle of it. We can see massive influx of every kind of lost sinner and messed up life.

We can see revival in Israel. We can see it. You have to understand, despite opposition and sometimes you get worn out, and we're all human beings and we can get discouraged, I have to tell you, if I don't see these kind of things happen in my lifetime, I will be absolutely shocked.

And I've seen God do so much already and over the years now, walking with Him 34 years or going on 34 years and seeing His incredible faithfulness and goodness and how we just keep scratching the tip of the iceberg and there's more, there's more, there's more. I can't possibly see how the longer we walk with Him that we believe for less. Yeah, we all hit walls.

We all sometimes get the wind knocked out of us. We all hit disappointment. Sometimes we can't even get our own lives the way we want to get them and we're frustrated.

I understand all that, but I'm talking about looking at Jesus. Looking at Jesus. Looking at Jesus.

Focusing on what He says. Let His promises burn on the inside of us till it takes hold of us. We can take the city.

And Joshua and Caleb were right. It took a whole generation to catch up with them and find out they were right, but they were right and they did it. What a crazy idea, man, to be called to the subways of New York City.

What a crazy idea. And then to announce a Sinners Anonymous Club and to have people begin to testify on the train and then other believers starting to stand up and testify on the train What a crazy idea. What an awesome way to touch a city.

I mean, God is so wise that He does things in the most foolish ways. So we realize, oh my God, this is God. I mean, just think, if we had enough money and connections, you know, to have this massive advertising campaign and to take up every, for the next six months, every commercial, radio, television, anything, pop-up ad on the internet, everything that would come into this area for the next six months that we'd just be able to take over, buy out everything, and have the perfect Jesus message.

We'd think, that's a pretty good plan. We really did it. God's so much bigger and wiser than that, that in a moment of time, working in the most inconspicuous or to the world foolish way, He can bring about radical change.

You need to stir yourself and encourage yourself with promises. You need to remind yourself. Paul told Timothy to fight the good fight of faith based on the prophecies that were spoken over.

Stir yourself, encourage yourself, remind yourself. Those of you who journal, go back to it. Those of you who have bona fide words that have been spoken to you straight from the Lord or from others, remind yourself and above all, take hold of the promises.

Spend time with a great God, who has great promises for this world He created. How are we going to make an impact on the region? Let me just list a few things for you quickly. And I say this, we are newcomers here, so because of that, we have great respect and honor for those who have been laboring for years before we've gotten here.

But we are not novices. And we have certain experience given to us by God that is part of who we are. And we are eyewitnesses to what God has done.

I remember one time flying into Korea. I've been over there 10 times now to South Korea. I remember flying in one time just amazed at how many people on the plane, on the Korean air flight were reading Bibles.

How amazed! And then to go through certain parts of the city and just to understand that 40 or 50 years earlier, that part of the country, the Christian population was less than 2%. And then within a period of a generation it jumped to 25%. And right now just time for a fresh wave of the next thing God's doing.

You can go to plenty of places in Africa where 100 years ago there were almost no believers. I mean, less than a percent. And the whole country was divided between Islam and Adamism, just these tribal religions and things.

And now some of them, 50% of the people are professing faith in Jesus. Even if only half of them really know the Lord, that's extraordinary. We've gotten to be in the midst of things that God's doing and see them.

And we know what He's calling us to do and to be part of here together with those that are laboring. So just a few things. I'll list these very quickly, even though it's 7. I'll list them quickly.

Keys to impacting this region. This is nothing new here, but just to remind you. Number one, everything must flow out of the base of prayer.

Everything. Everything. Everything.

Everything must flow out of the base of prayer. Ravenhill used to say, no man is greater than his prayer life. No movement is greater than its prayer base.

Everything must flow out of the base of prayer. Finney talks about the spirit of prayer that prevailed in Rochester. He said, one minister was given a powerful spirit of prayer.

His heart was broken. As he and I prayed much together, Finney said, I was struck with his faith in regard to what the Lord was going to do there. I recollect he would say, Lord, I do not know how it is, but I seem to know that Thou art going to do a great work in this city.

The spirit of prayer was poured out powerfully, so much so that some person stayed away from the public services to pray, being unable to restrain their feelings under preaching. And one man in particular, Abel Clary, God raised up as an elder. The burden of a soul would frequently be so great, Finney said, that he was unable to stand, that he would writhe and groan in agony.

Someone said about him, he can't go to the meetings sometimes. He prays nearly all the time, day and night, and in such an agony of mind that I do not know what to make of it. Sometimes he cannot even stand on his knees, but will lie prostrate on the floor and groan and pray in a manner that quite astonishes me.

I said to the brother, I understand it. Please keep still. It will come out all right.

He will surely prevail, and he did. Everything must flow out of the base of prayer. Number two, we must live the lives ourselves, walking in holiness and love, shining as lights in dark places.

First key is the people of God living as the people of God. We don't have to look on the outside. Initially, the first call is for us to be responsible, for us to live right, for us to repent, for us to do good, for us to shine like lights in dark and needy and hurting places, for us to not be hypocrites.

We must live the lives ourselves. Number three, we must win the lost. We must win the lost.

I know this is a no-brainer, but sometimes our brains aren't working. Sometimes we're so caught up with Christian activity and even with right emphases, like the first two, that we forget the way we're going to change a region and the way we're going to be in agreement with God is by winning the lost. It always has to be in our hearts and minds.

I don't mean 24-7, but in the general thrust of our lives. Not just for the few here and there. Lord, we've got to see people saved.

If you're in a position in life where you're just, because of where you are in life right now, you are actually not in a position to meet a lot of unsafe people, you can certainly pray. And you can certainly believe God for divine appointments. He can do it in the most extraordinary ways.

I'm not trying to thrust some mechanical burden on anyone, but to say we must, we must, we must, as followers of Jesus, be fishers of men and women. God, give me souls in my neighborhood. God, give me souls in my community.

God, give me souls on the campus. God, give me souls in the place of business. Give me wisdom.

Give me the right timing. I'm going to pray people in. We must win the lost.

It's only through the conversion and discipling of the lowest and the highest that will change the city. Some of the most worthless, useless people will become princes, mighty soldiers in God's kingdom, warriors, gems, men and women shining for Him. And some of the people in highest places, as they come under the fear of God and get changed, it's going to have a citywide impact.

We're explicitly told in 1 Timothy 2 to pray for those in authority, because God would have everyone be saved. It's part of the thrust there. We must win the lost.

Number four, we must infiltrate every facet of the society, bringing the kingdom into the schools, the workplaces, the communities, the media. I'm not talking about trying to force everyone to be Christian. I'm talking about seeking to have God's standards, God's ways, God's mind, God's approach lived out in all these different aspects.

See, as we go after sinners, we're caring about individuals. Their lives are precious to the Lord, but also think, another step forward touching the city. Another step forward touching the city.

And I believe there are people here, listen, one of, I'll tell you what I believe in a second. Let me introduce this first. When I was in Michigan recently, I met a young lady, young woman of God.

I've known her mom and dad for many years. Her dad was not always a dad, was not always a husband. In fact, he was led to the Lord by a friend of ours when he was part of a gay dance troupe traveling through Europe.

And we have a friend of ours. Some of you know our friend Clark Sloan who's been in Italy over 30 years in the mission field. His wife Sue has this gift of winning gays and lesbians to the Lord.

And I'm talking about the worst. You know, there are a few folks on the team that were transvestites that had, they looked like women, okay? They didn't just dress like women. They looked like women.

Different hormone shots and stuff. And one of these people, you know, Sue was just preaching to one night, talking to, and just kept feeling, because in Italian there's, you know, male, female as you're talking. She was speaking to this girl, but kept feeling she was supposed to call him he, him.

And it was a man, actually. Transvestite, prostitute. Part of their missions team now.

Actually, a couple of them like that. And Sue had preached to this other fellow who was part of a gay dance troupe. And he got radically saved and has led mission works for their team around the world.

I believe there's some, God's just going to give you favor in certain areas. Be it reaching gays and lesbians, be it reaching the wealthy, be it reaching the poor, be it reaching the Muslim, or the Hindu, or this one, or that one, or the alcoholic, or the drug addict. And it's just going to be like a Holy Ghost glue on you.

And there's going to be a special love and patience that you have, and God's going to enable you. Father, make it so. Lord, I feel faith for that right now.

Make it so. May there be targeted evangelists here, men and women who are used to just reach people in the gay community, people in the pro-abortion community, people in the highest strata of society. The athletes, and the people in the workplace, and the down and out mom, and this one and that one.

Lord, may there just be specialized anointings that come on us, that open doors and give grace and favor. Not that we even try to make it happen, but you just do it. You bring the people to them.

Thank you, Father. I remember one time talking to a Jewish lawyer. I was flying from Atlanta to L.A. I was flying from Atlanta because I lived in Pensacola, if you remember.

Point I made earlier. I'm flying to L.A. I'm talking to this lawyer. Young Jewish man.

We're chatting for a while. Somehow get to talking about the faith. He says, you know, I have wrestled for years, years.

He said, Tom Saenz has not slept. I have wrestled for years with the question of, is Jesus the Jewish Messiah? He brings this up to me. He says, but there are so many objections.

I said, you know who you're sitting next to? This is the guy that wrote the series of books on answering Jewish objections to Jesus. You talk about a divine appointment. You always compare notes, and both of you are not supposed to be on that plane.

You're supposed to be on other planes. Those kind of things happen, and I don't think, oh man, I've got a lot to do on this flight. I hope he gets help.

It's like, whoa, this is God. This is a divine setup. We must win the lost.

We must infiltrate every facet of the society. That may mean God calling you into different parts of the society to bring about change from every different angle for the kingdom. Number five, we must stand up for righteousness and justice being a prophetic witness, a voice of conscience, and an agent of mercy.

We must stand up for righteousness and justice being a prophetic witness, a voice of conscience, and an agent of mercy. Thank God for those that have been laboring on these fronts for some time in the city. We join forces together.

I know one thing that God has enabled us to do is to be a voice, to articulate some things, and to be a tip, sharpened tip of an arrow that the other brothers and sisters can pull back and shoot out. We don't mind piercing the walls with our own heads. It's alright.

We don't mind being the tip of the arrow. By God's grace, we're able to mobilize. And we're still small now.

We're a few hundred people. By God's grace, if He gives us thousands, and we can help mobilize thousands in other places, a holy army can be raised up. Number six, we must demonstrate the power of the Spirit.

We must demonstrate the power of the Spirit. Most of the city's shakings and acts came about as a direct result of miracles performed in Jesus' name. We must demonstrate the power of the Spirit.

In other words, we must be vessels through whom God works, and healing, and deliverance, and supernatural utterance. We can't make it happen, but we can cry out to God for it, and we can stretch out in faith to do it. As He leads and directs, we can better equip ourselves before God to walk in these things.

We can believe for others with anointings like this to be used in power. It's interesting, most of the miracles and acts did not take place on a stage in that sense. It wasn't in front of a camera, and they didn't have cameras then, if I'm correct.

Probably. Alright, thank you. But the point I make is it just happened in different places, and God saw fit to get the word out.

Sometimes prominent places, other times not. Leave it to God as to how to get the word out, how to publicize, and how to do it. But listen, you say, why do people start persecuting when miracles happen? It doesn't make any sense.

Why do they start persecuting? One reason is because it brings the reality of God, and they don't like that. It brings us truth of His power and kingdom. Just go through Acts and see what caused a lot of the shaking in different places.

Number seven, we must walk in unity as much as it lies within us with the rest of the body in this region. Again, honoring those that have been here for years, that have labored and prayed, that have sought to bring unity, that have sought to bring change. Seeking to walk together, to serve, to help, to join forces.

You don't compromise to do that. You come around common principles of life and death before God. This is pleasing to the Lord and the Church.

It's all His family, and it's practical as well. The way we're going to bring about citywide change is with a citywide army. Amen? By people coming together with their different gifts and strengths and abilities.

Listen, one of the gay strategies is the buck stops with us. In other words, we will spend a lot of money on our agenda. We will spend a lot of money to have a city become more friendly to the things that are important to us, and we will take our money other places that don't.

Unfortunately, a lot of businesses respond to that. They don't just respond to morals, they respond to money. Well, if you have a particular company that is aggressively standing against things that we believe are important in God's sight, and standing for things that we know are very ugly in His sight, and we appeal to them and reach out to them, and they don't respond.

If you have enough people that simply say, okay, our money will walk away because in good conscience we can't give it to you, that makes an impact. Aside from the fact that it makes an impact on us by forcing us to make decisions based on moral issues, not just on convenience. Other forces are united, we must unite to defeat them.

A kingdom divided against itself will not stand. So, just a couple of questions and I'm done. Bottom line is, why not? You know, at weddings, you know, what's the standard formula? What is it? If anybody... Anybody... What is it? How do you say it? Well, speak now or forever hold your peace.

But say what? Speak what? If you have some objection... Oh, exactly. Someone's got it exactly? A lawful impediment. That's in England.

British English, where they speak actual English as opposed to like, awesome, wow, like man, like here. Okay. Lawful impediments.

I don't have an impediment of speech. No one's breaking the law here. We wouldn't really get a good response to that here, but in England, they use better words.

I remember being in England one time and this pastor saying, whilst I would not decry that kind of activity. I thought, I don't like being in England. Whilst I would not decry.

I've got to read Wesley and that kind of stuff to get English like that. Whilst I would not decry. So, at weddings, you have this segment at certain weddings and traditional weddings where they say if anyone

has any objection, basically, if anyone knows any reason why this couple should not be coming together, speak now or forever hold your peace.

So, I'm basically saying the same to you. You tell me why not. In fact, if anyone has any objection to tell me why not, speak now.

Okay, there are none. So, look, I'm not giving a prophetic guarantee, okay. I'd be happy to if I felt God told me to.

I'm just telling you what He's put within my heart in terms of vision. But, the fact is, the word is filled with promises. Those promises are enough to move us.

And then, what else should we be doing here? What kind of attitude should we have? What kind of attitude should we have, really? And, other question, what have we got to lose by believing this and going for it? Better to set a high standard and get partway there than to capitulate with the devil. Make a deal with hell and the flesh. I mean, look, we haven't even started to fight yet, basically, in terms of the things God's given us to do.

How could anybody be discouraged? You know what I'm saying? We haven't even gotten into a skirmish yet. Oh, a few little things for a few people here. You know what I'm saying? We haven't been laboring for 20 years to the point of shedding our blood and everything's going backwards.

Maybe you fight off a little discouragement there. We haven't even hardly gotten started, especially for fire just here and now together, a year and a half or so. Is anyone here ready to throw in the towel and declare that the flesh and the world have won? So, look, there is a commitment to stand together in the Word.

And in Joshua 24, before Joshua was going to leave the scene, he challenged the people. Are you going to serve idols or are you going to serve God? They said, we're going to serve God. He said, you can't.

He's too holy. No, no, no, we're going to serve God. He said, look, it's for me and my household.

We're going to serve God. We're going to serve the Lord. That's what's in my heart.

That's what's in the hearts of the other leaders here at FIRE. We're going for it. As for our flock, our family, our household, our church, school, ministry, the things God's called us to do together, we're going for it.

Moses challenged the people when they fell into sin, worshiping an idol at the foot of Mount Sinai and said, whoever's on the Lord's side, come over here. Whoever's on the Lord's side, come over here. So I want to strongly encourage every one of you here that if you consider yourselves part of FIRE, then come on over and let's get this thing done.

And let's throw ourselves in with a long-term vision. And God will give vision. There are others that may have a lot of the plan that we don't have and be light years ahead of us on some of these things.

And there are others that may have been groaning in prayer since before we ever thought of being here or before some of us were born. But I know there's a part that we have to play, and I know that there's something God wants to do on a larger level. And I'm determined.

Listen, if we're here, we're planted, there's a reason, there's a purpose, I say it's time that we unify our hearts, understand why we are here. If you're part of FIRE, let's go for this thing together. Get it done.

See Jesus exalted and the forces of hell crushed under our feet to the point it gets the attention of the nation and the world. If you want to be counted in on that, I want you to stand to your feet now. Thank you, Lord.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/14/SID14245.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/michael-l-brown/we-can-take-the-city/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net