

The Story of My Life

by Oswald J. Smith

The speaker shares their personal testimony of how they came to accept Jesus Christ and became an evangelist.

Duration: 46:01

Scripture: Genesis 1:11-12, Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 103:2-5, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 25:1-13, John 3:14-15, Ephesians 1:3

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story of how he was inspired by his teacher to consider becoming a minister. He initially felt unsure and unprepared, but when he was called upon to preach, he found himself speaking with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The speaker describes how he was amazed to see a song leader using gestures to lead the congregation in singing, as he had only seen ministers before. He emphasizes that he offers no apology for sharing his story and expresses gratitude for what God has done in his life. The speaker also briefly mentions his upbringing as a country boy and his struggles with illness.

Transcript

And it came to pass that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell onto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

And I said, What shall I do, Lord? The Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. May the Lord add his blessing to this, the reading of his own precious word. Three times in the Bible, the conversion of the Apostle Paul is related.

Sometimes personal testimony is more effective than a sermon. Therefore, I offer no apology tonight, as I tell the story of what God has done for me. I was a country boy.

I didn't know anything about city life. I lived 100 miles from the great city of Toronto in Canada, and about 20 miles from the city of London in Ontario. My father was a station agent, a telegraph operator, and we lived in a little country railway station among the farmers, way out in the country.

I was an ordinary barefoot boy living in the country. Now, I wasn't always big and robust and strong like I am today. I used to be quite delicate and I used to be quite weak.

Consequently, I was very, very often sick, and I found it difficult to attend school. I was out of school so much because every now and again I would faint, faint dead away, and I would have to be carried home and put to bed. I remember one time my mother sent me to a farmer to get the milk.

The farmer's wife was standing in the doorway of her home. She gave me the milk. Another woman was standing beside her.

I started to walk away. Before I was out of earshot, I heard this farmer's wife say to this other woman, well, poor boy, he's not long for this world, is he? That's the way they used to comfort me when I was a boy. I remember one time I was standing in class.

The teacher kept us standing longer than usual. Suddenly, the back of my head came into violent contact with the floor. Again, I had fainted dead away.

They put me on the stagecoach and they sent me back to my railway station home a mile and a half. And for two years, I was so weak that I was unable to return to school. Thus, I found it most difficult to get any kind of an education when I was a boy.

I was sick so often. I fainted so frequently. No one ever dreamed that I would live to be a man.

Even our own family physician predicted a very, very early death. No one ever thought that I would live to travel around the world to make 19 different world tours and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, traveling through some 70 or more countries. No one ever dreamed that that would be possible.

They all thought that I would be gone before I ever grew up to manhood. But God had a different plan. God undertook.

By his grace, I've lived to this present day, stronger today than I've ever been in my life before, praising him for all his wonderful goodness to me down through the years. Now, I didn't know much about church when I was a boy. The nearest church was in a village three and a half miles away.

And our own village, the village of Embro, was four miles away. If I wanted to go to church, I had to walk a distance of three and a half miles, or I had to walk a distance of four miles each way. And I only went four or five times during all my boyhood days.

I did not have the advantages that you have here in a city, because I lived so far away in the country that it was impossible for me to get in touch with church life. Something happened in our community when I was still quite a young boy that interested me tremendously and had a great effect on my life. There was an old ditch digger who lived in our vicinity.

He was a confirmed drunkard. He had a great big red nose, the result of his hard drinking. One day he disappeared.

When he came back, we discovered to our amazement and astonishment that the old ditch digger had been marvelously converted. He was a new man in the Lord Jesus Christ. Immediately he commenced holding cottage prayer meetings in the homes of the farmers round about the station.

I don't know what it was, but something in this young heart of mine, when I was only some 13 or 14 years of age, cried out for those prayer meetings. Time after time, I left my railway station home and under the starlit sky, a boy 13, 14 years of age, I trudged along the dusty roads to some farmer's home, where I sat spellbound as I listened to the old ditch digger proclaiming the message of God's salvation. And yet, I wasn't saved.

I didn't know Jesus Christ, but I reveled in those cottage prayer meetings. Presently one day, the old ditch digger came to my father and asked permission to hold his prayer meetings in my father's waiting room. My father instantly gave permission.

Then I never had to go to the prayer meetings again. The prayer meetings had come to me, and I was able to step into the waiting room from my own home and again listen to the old ditch digger as he proclaimed the message of God's salvation. About the same time, there was an orphan boy who was very wonderfully saved in our community.

And we used to have a Sunday school in the little red brick schoolhouse that I attended as a boy, one and a half miles from our station. I had to walk to that schoolhouse a mile and a half each way, winter and summer, whenever school was open. And sometime later on, the farmers started holding a Sunday school during the two summer months in that little red brick schoolhouse.

My brother and I trudged along those dusty country roads to that little red brick schoolhouse in order to attend the Sunday school. That was about the only touch we had with the religious world. One day, as I was sitting there in class, my teacher, a farmer's daughter, turned to her class and she said something that she had not planned upon saying.

And may I just pause to say that oftentimes you will prepare your lesson most diligently and teach it, and your scholars will forget everything that you have taught them. But someday you will say something by inspiration of the Spirit of God that you never intended saying. And it will fasten itself upon the heart of someone in your class.

And that life will be revolutionized as a result. That was what happened to me. For suddenly, my teacher turned and she said this, any one of you boys might be a minister.

I don't know how the other boys responded. I was about 14 years of age. But I know that from my heart, I instantly responded, not out loud, just to myself.

And this is what I said, I'll be that boy. I'll be that boy. And you know, from that day until the day I preached my first sermon, I never had any other desire in life but to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And I wasn't even saved. I didn't know the meaning of conversion. I didn't know what it meant to be a Christian.

But from the moment I answered that teacher by saying, I'll be that boy, I never had another desire to do anything in life but to proclaim the message of God's salvation. But the question was, how was I going to know whether or not I was called? I didn't know you had to go to a cemetery, I mean a seminary. I didn't know that you had to train.

I didn't know that you had to make preparation. Nobody had told me anything about that. I thought I simply had to find out whether or not I could speak in public.

And I didn't know how I was going to find out. Now then, something happened when I was 16 years of age that revolutionized my life. The great world evangelist, Dr. R. A. Torrey, and his song leader, Charles M. Alexander, came to the city of Toronto, 94 miles away, to hold a great citywide evangelistic campaign in Massey Hall, our largest auditorium, seating 3,400 people.

The newspapers came to my father's station every day. I used to watch the section men as they grabbed the bundle of newspapers, tore them open, and then read the news of the day. That was our only contact with the outside world.

Presently, those newspapers contain most startling news. The newspaper told about this great campaign that was being held in Toronto, 94 miles away, told about how people were coming in on trains from 200 miles around, told how the entire city was being shaken for God, told how hundreds upon hundreds of people were being turned away, unable to get in, told about the great crowds gathering night after night in Massey Hall. One day, my mother said to me, so-and-so is under conviction.

I didn't know what she meant. She was referring to one of the farmers who had been reading the newspaper accounts. I didn't know the meaning of the word conviction.

I had never heard of anyone being convicted. I had to learn that later. One day, after I'd been reading those newspaper accounts, and let me say that Dr. Torrey's sermons were published word for word, taking up columns upon columns in the newspaper.

Charles M. Alexander's hymns were being published, words and music in the newspapers, especially the glory song. And as soon as I got hold of that newspaper each day, I fairly devoured it. God commenced to work in my heart as I read the accounts of the great campaign that was being held in Toronto.

Suddenly, I went to my mother. I said, Mother, may I go to Toronto? May I attend these great meetings? And my mother very wisely answered, yes, you may go. I often wonder what would have happened if she had said no.

If my mother had refused to let me go a distance of 94 miles, I often wonder what the result would have been. But my mother wisely said yes. Then I said, Mother, may my brother go with me? My brother was two years younger.

He was only 14 years of age. I was 16. She said, yes, your brother may also go.

I'll never forget the day we stepped on the train and headed for the great city of Toronto, 94 miles away. We very quickly found our way to a Yonge Street car. We got off at Shooter Street, and we walked around the back of the car, and we saw a great crowd of people.

Now, I'd never seen a crowd of people before. I lived in the country. I had only seen a handful of people.

And now for the first time in my life, I was looking at a great crowd of people standing on Shooter Street. Filled with curiosity, my brother and I hurried over and joined the crowd. And then we saw that they were standing in front of the great doors of Massey Hall, waiting for them to open.

And being boys, we elbowed our way through that crowd until we got right to the front and were standing before the doors themselves. Half an hour passed by. Then the great doors were swung open.

We were literally picked up in the crush and carried into Massey Hall. And that's how I entered Massey Hall for the first time in my life. When I got inside, I stood for a few moments in the aisle on the ground floor, about two-thirds of the way back.

But I saw I would have to get a seat quickly because Massey Hall was rapidly filling. In about 10 minutes' time, the entire hall was packed to capacity with 3,400 people. Let me tell you something.

My brother and I attended every service that was held from the time we arrived until the end of the campaign. We never missed a single service. We had traveled 94 miles to hear the gospel.

And I want to tell you, we were not going to miss it. Let me tell you something else. We were never turned away.

We were never shut out. We always got there on time. And many a time after I got inside, I'd walk along the side aisle and I'd look through the windows at the hundreds upon hundreds of disappointed people who were standing outside, who had been unable to get in because they had come too late.

I never had that experience. I always got there on time and I always got in. We sat down in the center of the hall about two-thirds of the way back.

The doors had been closed. The hall had been filled. We looked up at the platform.

It was a choir of some 500 voices on the platform. Suddenly we saw a man with a shiny bald head and a wonderful smile step out on the platform and face that audience. And then he started to swing his arms around in various directions.

And as he swung his arms around, the people commenced to sing. I sat there spellbound. I didn't know you had to throw your arms around to make people sing.

I had never seen a song leader before in my life. I had only seen a minister the three or four times I'd gone to church. And the minister always stood fairly in front of the pulpit and never moved three inches to the right or three inches to the left during the entire service.

I didn't know you could stand at ease on the platform. I didn't know you could move around freely on the platform. And I didn't know that when a song leader commenced to throw his arms around, people would sing.

And so they sang the first two hymns and I was so filled with amazement that I never thought of joining in. And then they came to the glory song. It had just been born.

It had just been introduced when I was 16 years of age. I thought they would lift the roof of Massey Hall as they sang the glory song. I think I'll never forget it to my dying day.

The last day of the campaign arrived. As my brother and I walked together toward the Great Hall, I said to him, Ernie, I'm going to accept Jesus Christ tonight. The very moment Dr. Torrey gives the invitation, I'm going to be the first one to get up out of my seat, walk down the aisle, shake Dr. Torrey's hand, and go into the inquiry room.

My brother looked at me. He said, I'm going to do the same. As soon as you go, I'll go.

So we made an agreement. That day, Dr. Torrey preached on Isaiah the 53rd chapter and the 5th verse. But he was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. And with his stripes, we are healed.

Then he read it again. And he read it like this. But he was wounded for my transgressions.

He was wounded for my iniquities. The chastisement of my peace was upon him. And with his stripes, I am healed.

I don't know what Dr. Torrey said. I know he made some mention of the love of God. But I wasn't the least bit interested in his sermon.

I was waiting for the invitation. And all I wanted that day was the invitation. I wanted Dr. Torrey to get finished with his sermon and to extend the invitation so that I could get up out of my seat and make my way to the front and make my decision for Jesus Christ.

So I paid no attention to the sermon. I sat there waiting for the invitation. At last it came.

But Dr. Torrey gave the invitation in a different way, a way he had never given it before. He said, Well, all those who are 25 years of age or over who want to be saved tonight, will you get up out of your seats? Will you come down the aisles to the front and give me your hand? Go into the inquiry room. And I sank back into my seat.

I was only 16 years of age. And his invitation didn't include me. So I couldn't go.

A couple dozen people went from the ground floor. A dozen people went from each of the two great galleries, one above the other. And I sat there.

Then he lowered the age. He said, Well, all those 20 years of age or over who want to be saved tonight, will you get up out of your seats and come to the front? And dozens came from all parts of the auditorium. But I was only 16, so I couldn't respond.

And then he spoke a third time. He said, Well, all those 16 years of age or over who want to be saved tonight, will you get up and will you now come forward? And people from all over the auditorium got up out of their seats and surged down the aisles. But suddenly, suddenly, I was turned into a lump of lead.

Do you think I could get up out of my seat? I could no more move than I could fly. I didn't know anything about the power of Satan at that time. I didn't know that even when a man wanted to go forward and get saved, that Satan had power to keep him in his seat.

I didn't know that. I had to learn that later. But I was experiencing it, for Satan was holding me right there in my seat and I couldn't move.

My brother realized that something had gone wrong. He sat looking straight forward at Dr. Torrey. Then he turned and looked sideways at me.

Then he looked forward at Dr. Torrey again. Then he quietly folded up his arm like that and drove his elbow into my ribs. I don't suggest that you do personal work like that, but it worked for me.

It broke the spell. The next moment I was on my feet. The next moment I was in the aisle.

The next moment I was standing at the front shaking hands with Dr. R. A. Torrey. The next moment I was down in the basement of Massey Hall sitting on a chair. The personal worker sat on a chair opposite me.

He didn't yell with me. Then he got up and walked away. He thought I was through.

I knew that nothing had happened. He had made the fatal mistake that so many personal workers make. And I've seen to it that my personal workers never make the same mistake.

He had kept me seated on the chair and I sat there watching everybody coming in, every movement in the room, so that I could not concentrate on what he was saying to me. And in all my instruction in dealing with my counselors, I insist that they get the seeker on his knees, that they turn him toward a wall so that he can't be disturbed, and then that they deal with him and get him through to God. This worker didn't do that.

I was left unsatisfied. Then I became desperate. Nobody else spoke to me.

I was sitting there alone. I can't tell you how it happened. I don't know to this day how it happened.

All I know is this, that suddenly, in desperation, I bowed my face in my two hands, and instantly the tears gushed from my eyes, poured through my fingers, poured down onto the seat of that chair in front of me. And in that moment, I knew that I had passed out of death and into life, and that Jesus Christ had come into my heart. It only took a few moments.

It has lasted for more than half a century, and it's going to last as long as time. It's going to last for all the eternal ages of the future. It was the greatest thing I had ever done in my life.

I thank God constantly for the decision I made when I was a boy 16 years of age. I went back to my country home. I was very backward about confessing Christ.

I had no church. I had no pastor. I had no one to help me, no one to encourage me, apart from my mother, who was a nominal Christian.

I received little or no help from anyone. I should have backslidden. But I discovered that when a man really slides forward, God can keep him anywhere, and God kept me.

I used to go up to my bedroom. I would lay the Bible out on my bed and read it every day. I've done it every day from that day to this, 365 days of the year.

Then I would pray. I'd say, Lord, make me an evangelist. Now, I didn't say, Lord, make me a minister.

I didn't say, Lord, make me a pastor. I didn't know anything about a minister. I didn't know anything about a pastor.

I was ignorant. But I had seen an evangelist. I had seen Dr. R. A. Torrey, and I said, Lord, make me an evangelist.

And I prayed day by day, asking God to make me an evangelist. Now, I didn't know how to find out whether or not God could use me to preach the gospel. I used to manufacture sermons at night as I was lying in bed, and imagine I was preaching them.

And then one day I made a plan, a very desperate plan. I said, I'll go far away from home. I'll go so far that nobody will know me.

I'll go at least 10 miles away from home. And when I get far, far away from home where nobody will know me, I'll find a little church somewhere in the country, and I'll go up to the pastor, and I'll ask him if he'll allow me to preach in his church. If I fail, I'll go home a wiser boy.

If I succeed, I'll know that I'm called to be a minister, but I must find whether or not I can speak in public. I thought that was the way I was to find out whether or not I was to be a minister. You see, I was very ignorant.

I didn't have the opportunities that you have had, but I didn't have to carry out my plan. My father was moved to another railway station in a village. One day, the Presbyterian minister approached me, and he said, Would you mind saying a few words at the Young People's Society next Monday night? Would I mind? I had been waiting all my boyhood days for that moment.

That was a dream of my life. With great eagerness, I said, Yes, of course I will. And that night, I spoke a few words at the Young People's Meeting.

Then I went to Toronto, attended a Baptist church, and one day, the leader of the Young People's Work said to me, Would you mind speaking at our Young People's Meeting on missionary work in Japan? I said, Yes, I'll be glad to, of course. I didn't give him a chance to change his mind. I was so eager to find out whether or not I could say anything in public that I grasped at the opportunity like a man grasping a straw when drowning.

I didn't know anything about missionary work in Japan. I didn't know whether there was any or not. I didn't know where Japan was.

I didn't know the first thing about Japan, and I wasn't going to let an opportunity like that slip. But I said that night, Only God knows. I'll never know.

But I spoke on missionary work in Japan. How I got by, I don't know. Then I became a culpateur for the Bible Society, and I was sent to the American playground of our country, Muskoka, the great Muskoka District, just north of Toronto, where there are 2,000 great lakes, 2,000 wonderful lakes, the playground of our country.

And I was sent up there to sell Bibles. And I trudged along the dusty country roads with my pack of Bibles when I was just 18 years of age, going from door to door, from house to house, selling Bibles. One day, I got off the train at a little station called Severin.

There was a great crowd on the platform. I waited until everyone had left, except one man, dressed in black. He approached me.

He said, I'm the Methodist minister here. Who are you? I said, I'm a culpateur for the Bible Society. He said, where are you going to stay tonight? I said, I don't know.

Well, he said, you better come home and stay with me. I thanked him. We started together across the fields for his home.

When we got halfway across the field, he stopped. He turned to me, and he said something that sent me up into the seventh heaven. He said, would you preach for me tomorrow? Would I preach for him? I would have given a million dollars had I had it for such an opportunity.

Yes, I said. Of course, I'll preach for you tomorrow. And he thanked me and walked on.

Then he stopped again. He said, you know, I have three appointments tomorrow, one here at Severin in the morning, one in Wesley, a country charge in the afternoon, one in Washago, the largest town of all at night. Would you be willing to preach for me at all three charges? Yes, I said.

Of course, I'll be delighted to preach for you at all three charges. I didn't have a sermon to my name. I'd forgotten all the sermons I'd manufactured in bed, but I wasn't going to miss an opportunity like that.

I had been living for that moment for years past, and I said yes. We walked on, and I fell behind. I was afraid he might ask me another question.

I was afraid he might ask me if I'd ever preached before. And if he had asked that question, I think the sun would have fallen out of the sky. I think I would have laid down and died.

Sure enough, he asked it. It had only gone a little way on when he stopped again. He said, I suppose you have spoken before, haven't you? My heart was in my mouth.

I didn't know what to do. And then I thought quickly, and I said, he didn't say preached, did he? He said spoken. He said, I suppose you have spoken before.

And my mind went back to the two young people's meetings at which I had spoken a few words. And so I turned to him honestly, and I said, yes, I have spoken before. And I used the word that he had used.

And he seemed to be satisfied. He put me in my bedroom that night. I went to a corner of the bedroom.

I knelt down, put my forehead on the floor. I said, Lord, you know I haven't a sermon to my name. I've forgotten every sermon I ever had.

I said, I've got to preach three times tomorrow. Now you'll have to give me a sermon. The Bible says, open your mouth wide, and I'll fill it.

Lord, here I am, I said. I'm opening it. Now he said, Lord, you fill it.

And then suddenly I thought about the last sermon I'd heard in Toronto, in that Baptist church. Dr. Elmore Harris, one of the greatest theologians in this world of ours, one of the editors of this Schofield Reference Bible, whose name is in every Schofield Reference Bible, had preached. The last Sunday I was in Toronto, and I have a good memory.

And I said to myself, I'll try to remember what Dr. Elmore Harris had to say, and I'll pass on as much as I can remember to the people, and I may get by. That night I went to bed, and I slept like a child. Next morning I went with Reverend Elijah Brown, this Methodist minister, to his first charge.

He introduced me. I gave out my text, Ephesians 1-3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

A text that no mortal man ought to venture to preach on until he's been 25 years in the ministry at least. As fast as I could draw it in this way from Toronto, as I pictured Dr. Harris and tried to remember what he had said, I passed it out this way. And I was able to keep going for about 30 minutes without a note of any kind.

And then I sat down. That afternoon we drove in a horse and buggy, for there were no cars in those days. We drove in a horse and buggy to the charge for the afternoon, Wesley.

As we drove along, this minister started to talk to me about theology. He started to talk to me about Arminianism and Calvinism. I'd never even seen the animals in my life.

I didn't know what he was saying. I was completely lost. Every now and again, as he carried on the argument, I'd say, yes, I suppose so.

I guess so. I think so. And then he ended his argument like this.

He said, you know, I think we Methodists have the better of it. I think there's much more in the Bible for Arminianism than there is for Calvinism. And I said, yes, sir, I suppose there is.

And I hadn't the faintest idea what he was talking about. I was praying and I was saying, Lord, you'll have to give me a new sermon. If I preach the sermon I preached this morning, this minister may think that I only have one sermon.

And I said, Lord, you'll have to give me sermon number two before I get to this church. I knew the Lord could work quickly. And as we drove along, I thought of the brazen serpent.

Surely, I said, I can describe how Moses put the serpent of brass on the pole and how it represented Jesus Christ on the cross. Surely, I can do that. And I thanked the Lord.

And that afternoon, I preached on the brazen serpent. Now, there was a railway right across, right along my side of the church. And as I looked out the window while I was preaching, I saw an engine and a great heavy freight train coming along the tracks.

And I knew that my voice would be drowned completely. And I said to myself, as I kept on preaching, I said, will I stop until the train goes by or will I keep going while the going's good? I said, if I stop, I may never get started again. I decided I better keep going while the going was good.

So as the train approached, I raised my voice. As the train got nearer, I raised my voice still higher. I saw the people smiling.

I knew they were not getting a word that I was saying. But after the train had gone by, I was still going strong. I wasn't going to stop and run the risk of not getting started again.

So I kept going while the going was good. That evening, we had our supper together in Warshago. I was to preach in the church of all for the day.

They were talking about the crops at the table. I was asking God for sermon number three. I said, Lord, if I preach either of these sermons, this minister will think I only have two sermons.

I said, you'll have to give me a third sermon before it's time to preach tonight. And while they were discussing the crops, I was asking God for another sermon. Suddenly, I thought of the ten virgins.

I said, Lord, I can start reading the passage. There are quite a few verses in it. And after I've read the first verse, if anything comes to me, I'll say it.

If it doesn't, I'll go on and read the second verse. And if anything comes to me, then I'll say it. And so I'll get through the verses.

And by the time I read the passage, make a few comments, it'll be time to sit down in any case. So I went to the church that night. That minister got up to introduce me.

He said, I want to tell you of the blessing I've received from our young friend at the two services that we've held today. And I looked up at him in amazement. Blessing, I said.

What's he talking about? Blessing. I'm not here to bring blessing. I'm here to see if I can keep going, if I get started.

I don't know anything about blessing. He called upon me to preach. I started in on the ten virgins.

Forty minutes had passed before I got to the last verse. God gave me something to say, verse by verse, as I read the passage. At the conclusion of that service, I got into that buggy.

And as we drove back the seven miles to Severn, I want to tell you, my heart was in the glory. Talk about a thrill. I've never known a thrill from that day to this to compare with it.

I knew beyond the slightest shadow of a doubt that I would spend my entire life preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. I knew that all I had to do was to make the necessary preparation, go to college, go to seminary, get my training, be ordained to the ministry, and then I would spend a lifetime in the service of Jesus Christ. I haven't been like a lot of other young men who have had to make a choice between business and the ministry, or business and the mission field.

I never had to make that kind of a choice. I've never in my life had a desire to go into business. I've never had a desire to do anything else but proclaim the message of God's salvation.

When I was a teenager, I didn't think about anything else but my relationship to God. And the only thing in which I was interested as a teenager was whether or not I was right with God. And I want to tell you, as I drove home that night, my young heart was thrilled beyond expression.

I praised God all the way home. I didn't let the minister sitting beside me know how I was feeling. But I want to tell you, I was walking on air.

I knew that I would spend my life in the ministry. Listen, my friends, if I could go back to the day I was 16 years of age, when I walked down that long aisle before 3,400 people in Massey Hall and shook Dr. Torrey's hand, went down to the inquiry room and there opened my heart to Jesus Christ and received him as my Savior, if I could go back to that hour after knowing all the ups and downs of the Christian life for over half a century, I want to tell you, I would do again what I did when I was 16 years of age. And if you have never made that decision, if you've never walked down an aisle, if you have never stood at the front, if you have never taken a physical step of any kind toward God, I want to tell you, you're making the greatest mistake of your life.

If I had it to do over again, I would do it at a younger age, if possible. I wouldn't want to go through life without Jesus Christ. He's been a wonderful Savior.

He saved me from many a pitfall. He's guarded me and protected me through the years of my life. He's never failed me once, even though I've often failed him.

He's always been at my side. I wouldn't exchange the Christian life for all the money in the world. They tell us that life starts at 40.

I don't believe it. I believe that life starts with Christ, and you do not even begin to live until you make your decision for Jesus Christ and receive him as your own personal Savior. And listen, if I could go back to when I was 18 years of age, when I preached those three sermons that first day I'd ever preached in my life, if I could go back to that day, I would again, after knowing all the ups and downs of a minister's life for well over half a century, I would again decide to go into full-time service for Jesus Christ.

There isn't anything like it. There isn't anything so glorious. There isn't anything so wonderful.

And I love to challenge young people. I don't know how any young man or any young woman can resist the challenge and turn away when he can invest his life for the Lord Jesus Christ and do something that will count for time and for eternity, either here or on the mission field. I would again make the same decision.

And tonight I want to appeal to you. This is my last service. It's probably the last time I'll ever be in Adelaide.

We'll probably never meet again until we meet in the glory land. And I want to ask you as I bring this message to a close, if you are unsaved, if you have never walked down an aisle, if you have never made a decision for Jesus Christ, I want you, as soon as we start singing, I want you to come forward and stand here at this barrier at the front. The workers will come right along.

They'll stand beside you to support you and to encourage you. But I want you to make that decision tonight. I traveled 100 miles to make that decision.

I traveled 100 miles to hear the gospel. I didn't know anything about it, but I traveled 100 miles to decide for Christ. And it's the most important thing I've ever done in my life.

And my friend, if you live to be 80, 90, or 100 years of age, you'll thank me for inviting you tonight. If you walk down these aisles and stand here at the front with the counselors who will stand by your side, it may only take a few moments or a few minutes at the most. It will last through all the countless ages of eternity.

And I want you to come tonight.

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