

Psalms 33 - Christianity Personal Corporate

by Richard Owen Roberts

The sermon emphasizes the importance of corporate repentance and the need for individuals and groups to repent of their sins and seek forgiveness from God.

Duration: 1:43:05

Scripture: Psalm 33:12, Psalm 33:20-22, Isaiah 65:1-3, Isaiah 65:17, Isaiah 65:24

Topics: "National Revival", "Corporate Repentance"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of a nation being under God's blessing by acknowledging Him as Lord. It challenges individuals to consider personal and corporate repentance, highlighting the need for revival not just on a personal level but also on a national scale. The speaker urges listeners to believe in the possibility of God using ordinary individuals, especially the youth, to bring about significant change and to seek a closer relationship with Christ.

Transcript

Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones. Praise is becoming to the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre.

Sing praises to him with a harp of ten strings. Sing to him a new song. Play skillfully with a shout of joy.

For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the loving kindness of the Lord.

By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth, all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap. He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it was done.

He commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations. He frustrates the plans of the peoples.

The counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart, from generation to generation. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance.

The Lord looks from heaven. He sees all the sons of men. From his dwelling place, he looks out on the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all, he who understands all their works.

The king is not saved by a mighty army. A warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory, nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope for his lovingkindness to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord. He is our help and our shield.

For our heart rejoices in him because we trust in his holy name. Let your lovingkindness, oh Lord, be upon us, according as we have hoped in you. Now, this might seem a bit absurd, but if you were standing in my shoes, you would understand.

It's terribly dark here. I see some lights that aren't lit. Could they be lit? They're burnt out.

Well, thank God you're not, and I'm not. But I am dim of sight, and it takes a whole lot more light than it used to. But I'll do what I can, and I may require your help.

Oh, look here. Wonderful. Thank you.

Now, let's go back to where we were this morning. We were looking at Luke chapter three, a perfectly wonderful passage loaded with the great truth so critical to our day and our situation. Now, the natural response to Luke three would be personal, the preparation of the highway of holiness, the fruit that was appropriate or in keeping with repentance, even that wonderful section on the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire.

That can all be personalized. But if all we do is to personalize it, we have failed largely. The scripture is not merely personal.

No, it is corporate. And for a long time, that was understood. But now we have become so focused on ourselves that we see most every scripture from a very personal perspective.

Now, many of you are aware that just as every individual sins and must repent, so every corporate entity sins and must repent. And just in case one of the young people is not familiar with such an expression as corporate entity, let me remind you of what an entity is. When two young people like the dear young folk I'm staying with, Mary, they're no longer two persons.

They are a corporate entity that we call a couple. One of these days, I anticipate they will be blessed with children. And so the corporate term couple is inadequate.

Now, we speak of them as a family. Of course, they are a family just as two, but in a much greater sense, they are a family. When there are children added.

A church is obviously a corporate entity. A mission society is a corporate entity. A school is a corporate entity.

A city is a corporate entity. A state is a corporate entity. A nation is a corporate entity.

Just as every individual sins and must repent, so every corporate entity sins and must repent. It would be quite unwise to speak on the subject of revival and to make it purely and solely personal. Now, just think of what you know about this subject.

Most everyone with any serious Christian concern can quote 2 Chronicles 7, 14. If you, as an individual, is that what it says? If my people, and it doesn't say if you as an individual who are called by my name, but again, it's corporate. If my people who are, not who is, as singular, but who are.

Every passage, practically speaking, on the subject of revival has a corporate aspect. Now, that, as I've said, is overlooked to an astonishing degree. And that whole understanding must be recaptured.

And we must think not alone of ourselves, but of our Lord. We call him the King. Is it enough to say he is my personal King? Does not the King have a kingdom? Are you the kingdom? Or is the kingdom much larger than you? So again, I repeat what I said.

As every individual sins, so every corporate entity sins. And as every individual sinner must repent, so every corporate group of sinners must repent. And of course, God, being far more aware of this than we are, has a form of corporate repentance called the solemn assembly.

When his people gather together and repent, and fast, and pray, and seek his face, and respond in obedience to all that the Lord has said. So, as I began, I'm urging again, think of Luke 3, not merely as a word to you personally. It certainly is that, but it's much greater than that.

It is a word to the church. And the implication of that, I'm sure, is obvious to you. The church must prepare the way of the Lord.

The church must bring down the high places, fill in the low places, smooth out the rocky places, straighten out the crooked places. And so I would like to begin tonight knowing that some of you have come from a variety of places. Has your church made ready the way of the Lord? You tell me, well, we have a half a dozen people in our church who are making ready the way of the Lord.

Well, good, but that's not what's called for. God expects the entire church to make ready the way of the Lord. Is it enough to say that we have individuals in our fellowship who are repentant and who demonstrate the fruits of repentance? Well, again, we're grateful if that is true.

But why is it that the bulk of the people in the world hate Christ? Well, because virtually all the Christians they know, they think, are hypocrites. Now, you know, when a church is accused of hypocrisy or when an individual is accused of hypocrisy, it is possible to say, well, it's true, we do have some hypocrites in our church. But that's no excuse for you.

But why should there be any hypocrites in the church? Now, there were some hypocrites in the church in the book of Acts, but they didn't last very long. I don't need to tell you the account of Ananias and Sapphira. Now, if God were to destroy all the hypocrites in every church in America, how many would be left? Well, I don't pretend to know that, and that's not our great concern.

I'm just wanting you to freshly realize that this subject of revival, which is where our attention is focused this week, is first and foremost a corporate matter. And because we are all part of some corporate entity or perhaps several corporate entities, then it is naturally personal as well. But I do want to urge you to think a little further about what I already said, just as every individual sins, so every individual must repent, just as

every corporate entity sins, so every corporate entity must repent.

Now, some of you have already thought through this issue I'm about to mention, but some of you have not. Have you ever seriously asked the question, what is the very essence of sin? Well, you say, I'm not even sure what the old man means. The essence of sin.

Now, to help you in that, I remind you of the book of Jude and of the three root sins that are mentioned in the book of Jude. Now, perhaps you haven't even thought your way through the difference between fruit, F-R-U-I-T, and root, R-O-O-T, sins, but there is a difference. The majority of people who believe that they have repented have repented of the things in which they were caught.

I want to be careful. I don't think I have a political bone in my body, but as an American citizen, I am concerned, and we do live in a hyperpolitical age, and we do have some awareness of what's going on around us. So let us speak of a past president, a member of the Southern Baptist Church in the state of Arkansas, a man who sang in the choir, and a man long before he was president who was known as a pathological liar and an habitual adulterer, William Jefferson Clinton.

I don't think he was much worse than a lot of others. I'm not trying to make an example of him as the most wicked president we ever had. I think it would be hard to compete with the present president for that matter, but I'm not mentioning him tonight.

I'm talking about a perfectly well-known incident in the life of President Clinton. Accused of adultery, denying it up and down, his wife even joining in and saying, nothing but a right-wing conspiracy. But eventually, he admitted his involvement with that foolish young woman.

Now, at the time he openly admitted his involvement, he was invited to one of the biggest churches in the land to speak, and the pastor of that church said, our president has confessed his sin, and we must grant him forgiveness. Well, he didn't ask my opinion, and you didn't either, but you're gonna get it. Confessing what you're caught doing that is wicked is not repentance.

The Apostle Paul, some of you will remember, in that most splendid chapter seven of 2 Corinthians, very carefully spelled out the difference between the two forms of repentance. He spoke about that form of repentance that is still to be repented of, and that form of repentance that leads to life eternal. And what is the difference between those? He spoke in terms of the sorrow that is of the world, and the sorrow that comes from God.

When a person is caught sinning, and they acknowledge that sin, they acknowledge it by and large with the purpose of heading off the consequence of being caught. That's very different from true repentance. So in other words, it is possible to repent of the fruit, the visible results of sin in your life, and never to have repented of the hidden, the invisible roots of sin.

So I do want to take a moment to spell this out. Some of you, I understand, have read my book, Repentance, where there is a careful explanation of these matters, but I'm not of the impression, sir, I don't really know you, but I'm not of the impression, if you hear me say the same thing twice, I have damaged you. I don't have any difficulty repeating things.

Do you mind if I go over things you've heard before? Thank you. She said no. Now, the boy sitting where you are this morning said no at the wrong time.

Some of you will remember. That was you, wasn't it? Oh, come on now, friends. Let's think seriously.

In the book of Jude, there are three root sins that are mentioned. The root sin of unbelief, the root sin of stubbornness, rebellion, and the root sin of pride. Now, I've already told you, when it was said we must forgive the president because he confessed his sin, they didn't ask my opinion, and you didn't either, but you're going to get it, and here it is.

Adultery is not a root sin. Adultery is a fruit sin. Every case of sexual sin that I have had reason to seek to help someone with true repentance concerning has had underneath the outward visible sin a root cause.

Just to illustrate, some years ago, I had some very dear friends in the state of Arizona, and anytime I would agree to come to Arizona, they would arrange meetings throughout their region. Then one day, right out of the blue, a pastor near one of my closest friends called, and he said to me, do you know that your dear friend Vince is dead? Oh no, I said, I talked to him earlier this week when he's passed away. What? Yes, I think you know his whole family.

Yes, I said, I know his whole family. Well, his daughter, she's the wife of the church music director. His daughter came home, and she sat down in the living room with her mother and her father, and she said to her parents, I'm leaving my husband.

I'm sick and tired of wiping the dirty bottoms of little kids, and cleaning their hands and face, and all the rest involved in motherhood. I'm going off with a professor in the college. And these deeply committed, urgent, wonderful servants of Christ, a glorious pastor and his wife, said to their daughter, you can't do that.

You're a Christian. Ha! She said, church shows how much you know. You taught me what you wanted me to say.

And I have said it to please you. But I'm tired of pleasing others. Now I'm going to please myself.

And her father, in his own living room, suffered a heart attack. And within a very short time, was in the glory. Repentance of outward sin may be satisfactory from your standpoint, but I assure you, it's not satisfactory from God's standpoint.

So one cannot bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance who has not dealt with both the fruits of sin and the roots of sin. And it behooves me to ask you, have you? Have you truly repented of the roots of sin? It's very common for me in a conversation with someone to hear them say, well, I admit I'm a very proud person. And that's said in such a way as to indicate to me, of course, that's no problem.

I got good reason to be proud. I mean, look at my handsome physique. Consider the mass of my brain power.

Think of my splendid personality and leadership gifts. Well, I spoke to that ever so briefly this morning in mentioning John, who maintained humility by comparing himself not with other men, but with Christ. But you understand that what I'm telling you is true repentance deals with the very essence of sin.

And the essence of sin is self. Sin is me versus you. We versus them.

All versus God. And it is not until the self-life is destroyed by the power of the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ that one can be truly considered Christian. And so again, I must ask, how's self been turned away

from? Can you honestly say, I am dead to sin? I am alive in Christ.

So the root sins, stubbornness, rebellion, disobedience in the form of unbelief. Let me speak just a word to that in case you're careless in facing truth. What does it mean to believe? Someone wisely questioned a statement that I made this morning.

When we talk about belief or faith, are we talking about something that is passive? The difficulty surrounded the word. Well, now what was the word it's called? Would you help me out? What was the word this person was troubled about? Ah, there you have it. Thank you.

Choice and a deeper issue than that. Claim, to claim. Now, some of us have been exposed to that crowd generally known as the name it and claim it crowd.

So the word claim can be an uncomfortable claim, but the word claim is an active word, not a passive word. One can say they believe and they're just sitting down, relaxing, comfortable, enjoying themselves. I believe.

But when you claim the finished work of Christ, that's active. You lay hold of what Christ has done. You live out what Christ has accomplished in your life.

Unbelief might not be observed by your using God's name in vain. You may never do that. It may not be apparent because you say to others, I hate God.

I can't stand anything God has to say. It can simply be demonstrated by a passive lifestyle where these great issues leave you unstirred. You could not be described in the language John the Baptist used concerning Christ.

He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. You don't have power. You don't have passion.

You don't have holiness of life. But now I'm urging you tonight, not just to look at these things in a very personal way, but to look at them in a corporate way as well, to understand, to be absolutely impacted by the fact that we are, if we are true believers, part of the kingdom of God. And it's not merely that we are sons and daughters.

Thank God that's true, but there's a larger issue. We are part of the kingdom of God. Now, that is mere introduction.

And as I said this morning, just kindness itself will enable you not to stop the stopwatch until we start the sermon. And now we're going to come to the sermon. And we have read out of the Psalms at chapter 33.

And that is our great subject for this evening. And what I've tried to say simply is that what we've been looking at this morning is both personal and corporate, but that a great deal of the teaching in Scripture on the subject of revival is corporate. Now, we are going to look at Psalm 33, but as I told you this morning, I'm not in any rush.

I'm old, I'm tired, I'm weak, yes, I acknowledge all that. But I may live out the rest of this day. And I'm thinking that's a good possibility.

I'm going to take advantage of it. So what I want you to think now concerning is this incredibly important truth. We often hear people say, if God is for us, who can be against us? And an awful lot of relaxation is

created by that notion that God is for us, and therefore no enemy really has any potential power to disturb us.

But while there's great validity in that statement, there's another statement that has to be considered. If God is against us, then what does it matter who is for us? Now look, the issue of revival deals with that very vital fact. God becomes the enemy of his own people.

Now you may not like that, but you didn't write the Bible. And I'm not moved by your opinion. Well, you say that's pretty strong language.

Well, of course it is, because it's Bible language. If God is against us, what does it matter who is for us? And a good many of you understand that when God intends to bring his own people under judgment, he is very likely to use his great enemy to do it. Now I want you to think realistically.

Here we are, citizens of these United States. Mostly, at least, there might be a few exceptions, and you're more than welcome if that is so. Now let me just make up some statistics.

Don't pay any attention to the numbers I give. The intention is not to convey specifics, but to get your thinking carefully about a very important matter. It is thought among many believers that perhaps 10% of those in America who call themselves born-again believers actually have the life of God in them.

Oh, you say that's too high. Or you say, oh, that's absurdly low. Don't pay any attention to thoughts like that.

Just let us suppose that there are 80 million people in America who call themselves born-again believers, and of that 80 million, 10% are genuine. I made all that up. I hope you know.

I'm not giving you specifics, as I said. But I want you to think along this line. So if there are eight million believers out of 80 million pretender, that's worth noting.

But now let's take it in another direction. There are Muslims in America. How many? I don't have any idea.

I've heard different figures. I don't have any notion of what's accurate and what's inaccurate. But again, I'm just pretending now.

I'm just using figures just to get you thinking. Suppose there are six million Muslims in America. And suppose 10% of them are genuine Muslims.

Who honestly believe that infidels like you and me must be destroyed. That means on the basis of 10%, there are 600,000 Muslims in America ready to destroy everything that is dear to you. I've made it all up.

I don't want you to, for a moment, think I've given you absolute facts. I'm asking you to think. Now listen, what do you think the United States government can do to prevent 600,000 Muslims destroying this nation? They can't even prevent one from beheading someone.

But now this is important. When God is angry with his own people and is determined to bring them under judgment, he uses often his own enemies. Now there's not the question in the world, but what Muslims are enemies of God.

They worship and serve that which is no God at all, that which is grievously wicked. The whole tone of their system is evil. It is anything but from the God and the creator of heaven and earth.

But I'm asking you, fix that thought in your mind. When God is angry with his people, he causes his enemies to bring them down. Well, you say that's quite a notion.

Where did you get it from? Well, will you, before we look seriously at Psalm 33, turn to the prophet Isaiah and look with me at chapter 63. Now you know I didn't make this up. I made up the statistics, but I didn't make up what we're gonna read.

Isaiah 63, will you join me in picking up the reading at verse seven? I shall make mention of the loving kindness of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he has granted them according to his compassion and according to the multitude of his loving kindness. For he said, now look, friends, before I read on, will you endeavor to get inside God's heart? Now I know that's hard, but you know, as we read our Bibles, we should be gaining God's heart in our reading. This is the living word of God, the word that will open the heart of God to us and enable us to a measure at least to see what God sees, to feel what God feels.

Very critical to a burden for revival is gaining insight into the heart of God. The only men and women that I know who have persisted over the decades in seeking God in revival are those who caught at least a measure of his heart in these matters. And you don't feel what he feels if you don't see what he sees.

And I urge you each one without exception to set your heart to see what God sees and to feel what God feels. Now look again at this passage, verse eight. For he said, surely these are my people, sons, who will not deal falsely.

So he became their savior. In all their affliction, he was afflicted. In his love and in his mercy, he redeemed them and he lifted them and he carried them all the days of old.

Can you not almost put yourself right there when God brings his people out of Egypt and for 40 years carries them along in the wilderness and his heart is beating with compassion toward these people. But verse 10, they rebelled. And they grieved his Holy Spirit and in frustration and discouragement, I don't know what to do.

No, no, God is not a God of nonsense. He's never befuddled by the evil of men. They rebelled, they grieved his Holy Spirit.

Therefore, he turned himself to become their enemy. He fought against them. Do you understand that when that happens to a people, they only have one hope? Now, we live in a very stupid nation with a lot of very stupid religious leaders.

They have some understanding of how awful things have become and how do they deal with it? By some new way, dreaming up some scheme. And we've had an endless series. For instance, the church growth movement.

What good did that do? Now, we got the multiple campus ministry, oodles of churches that have numerous campuses where one great preacher presides over the whole. If you have a very inventive mind and come up with some new notion of how to do things, you'll easily find a follower because people love notions. But if God is the one who turned himself and became our enemy, and if God himself is the one who is fighting

against us, what good will any new notion do? That's what we're facing, friends.

We are facing a God who has turned himself and become our enemy. And it is very common for him then to take his own great enemy and use them to bring us under discipline. There is nothing silly about foreseeing the strong possibility of the Muslims rising up in mass, not from outside, but those right here, and bringing this nation down.

Now, to whatever extent our government leaders consider that a possibility, they'll go about it by raising our taxes again, thinking that they can cure the problem by spending more money that doesn't belong to them. But what good will anything like that do? When God is angry with his people, there's only one hope, that his people change so thoroughly that his anger is withdrawn. Now, I want to ask you very bluntly, did you come tonight? Will you be here tomorrow and throughout the week? Because you are convinced there is only one hope.

So now we're ready for Psalm 33. Our dear brother Anthony has again read it with wonderful focus and emphasis, and we're deeply grateful. But now, we want to look at it ourselves.

And our focus tonight is not the Psalm in its entirety, though we shall go over it, just so that you can get a true sense of this Psalm. But I want to call your attention now to the text of the evening, which is Psalm 33 and verse 12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance.

Let me read it again. And open your heart wide now and say, oh God, let this passage grip me as never before. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance.

Now I want to come back to where we began. The problem that has developed in the American church of individualizing everything, of making salvation purely personal, of discarding all sense that he is the God of the nation, not only the God of the person, that Christ the Savior is the Savior of his people, not merely of you as his person. Now this passage creates a lot of trouble when an old man like me makes statements like I have made and will make, because many say, now that passage has only to do with Israel, nothing to do with us.

That's of course how those same people treat 2 Chronicles 7.14 and a vast variety of other passages. But now let me ask you to really put your heart into gear and to think of the true problem that we face. Number one, I'll give you a series of thoughts to consider.

Number one, we assume that Christianity is individual, not corporate. I've already tried to demonstrate the absurdity of that. I hope that you realize how false that is.

Number two, we recognize the corporate aspects of Christianity, but we suppose it all is well in that realm. That's where the church by and large is at. We've got these immensely successful churches.

Now how can a church with 18,000 in attendance, even for a moment, think there's anything wrong? In my city, the city of Wheaton, I had developed an immense burden and I was very astutely aware that the country goes to the city, but the city doesn't go to the country. Now you might not quite know what I'm getting at, but it's just one of those sociological facts. The pastors of the little churches will go to the big churches, but the pastors of the big churches won't go to the little churches.

Again, a fact. So with that fact in mind, after a great deal of prayer, I contacted the pastor, a dear man, at that time, pastor of the church across the place, across the street from our home and our offices and our book ministry, and I asked him if he would be willing to call together the other three pastors of the biggest churches in our city and told him why. And he said, oh, gladly, I'll do that.

We'll meet here. And so he contacted these other men, perhaps unwisely, though I think he had to really. He said, Mr. Roberts wants to speak to us.

Well, that didn't interest them. They had a notion of what a jerk Mr. Roberts was. But nonetheless, out of respect for the pastor that invited them, they gathered together in his office.

And he again told them, Mr. Roberts has something to say to us. And so I urged them to get under the burden of revival. And I laid out a series of obvious facts.

And I asked them to start by meeting together themselves the four of them for a season, time after time for protracted seasons of prayer. And then when there was unity and oneness of heart among them, that they begin inviting the other pastors of the area. And then when there was a powerful prayer base among the pastors, that a series of lectures on revival be announced for the whole area, that the largest auditorium in the region was available, and that we could meet on Sunday night after all the churches had their regular service, we would in no way interfere with what was going on, simply add to it by a series of lectures on revival.

Now, I angered them to a degree in the next statement. I'd like to ask each one of you to give a lecture on the revival, but you've got to agree to listen to every other man. Well, they didn't like that.

And most popular preachers don't. They like people to listen to them, but they don't want to listen to the others. Anyway, I'll not go into that.

It's a bit wide of a remark. When I finished laying out these things, the lead pastor, the pastor who had called the men together, said, I believe God has put this upon Mr. Roberts' heart, and I am ready to commit myself 100% to the series of things he has called for. But, I make that commitment of 100% with a proviso.

And that is the other three of you commit yourselves 100%. Then he added, I know you guys somewhat, and I know you're not used to giving yourself 100% to the things that really matter. Well, then there was a period of silence, and then a second man spoke up, and he said, well, I guess Mr. Roberts might be right, and I guess I'd be willing to cooperate.

And then eventually, a third man said, well, I suppose it'd be wise. And then the fourth man said, no, no, wait a minute. I know Mr. Roberts very well.

In fact, I discussed with my staff before I came what Mr. Roberts would be likely to talk about. And I got a question that we've got to ask. Do we need revival, or do we have revival? Well, we have three services every Sunday morning.

We have two Sunday school sessions every Sunday. We've got dozens of Bible classes. We have all kinds of activity for every age group.

I say we don't need revival, we've got revival. And I think you can guess what I did, but I didn't do what I'm doing now. I didn't come back.

But look, I mentioned that because this was of extraordinary consequence. We've got to ask with integrity, do we need revival, or are flourishing megachurches evidence that we have revival? Are flourishing megachurches are evidence of one thing. We've got some very clever men.

Isn't it amazing? You can have a church with 24,000 people in it and no prayer meeting. So I'm giving you a brief series now. I'm asking you to consider these issues.

Is it safe to assume Christianity is merely individual? Is it okay to acknowledge the corporate aspect of Christianity and yet to suppose all is well? Is it possible, number three, to recognize the larger dimension of Christianity, but suppose, now here we come home, but to suppose, my dear brother, that you're too inconsequential to have any impact. Let me ask you, dear sir, do you think yourself a very important man in the kingdom of God? I didn't mean to embarrass you, but each of us must be honest. We admit there is this huge corporate problem of sin, but we say, I'm not anybody.

What could I do? What could you do, my dear young friend? What could you do? What could each of us do that would matter? We're all inconsequential. I'm as inconsequential as they come. But I'm not home sleeping because I honestly believe that God uses nobody to accomplish his great purposes.

I do not believe there's a person in the room who God could not use. I wish I had known personally Dwight Lyman Moody, a shoe salesman who considered himself a nobody and the churches considered him a nobody. But he was burdened for the city of Chicago.

And he went to a major church and asked if they would give him a Sunday school class of children. And they said no. And he decided to start a Sunday school for the urchin children on the streets of Chicago.

And before hardly any time had passed, he had 300 children in the Sunday school. And some of the wealthy godly businessmen of the city like McCormick and the founder of the Quaker Oats Company got behind him. And then a couple of elderly ladies cornered him one day and they said to him, Mr. Moody, we're praying for you.

And he suggested they would be wiser to pray for somebody who needed it. And they said, God led us to pray for you. That the Holy Spirit would baptize you in power, passion, and purity.

And God came upon him. When he went to Scotland with his friend Iris Sankey, and Sankey took along his portable organ, the Scots church people said he brought the devil's box. The tens of thousands of them turned to Christ.

When he went to Cambridge University to speak, multitudes of students came because they were hoping for a happy hour, where they could make a mockery of a stupid American shoe salesman. And they laughed and they cheered and they pointed fingers and they did everything crazy thing they could think of. But by the next day, hundreds of them were on their faces before God.

And a great boost to the whole worldwide missionary enterprise occurred as those Cambridge seven moved out into a world transforming work. Don't tell me God doesn't use nobodies. That's all he uses.

And why should not each person here be part of this glorious family of God made mighty both in word and in spirit and wonderfully used. But now let me come to a very critical issue. Does any of what I'm saying tonight really accurately apply to the United States of America? When I was young, I didn't need notes, but I'm not very smart and never was.

And I don't have quite as good a memory as I did. So I didn't wanna take a chance and I brought some notes. You know the name Patrick Henry? Listen to what he said.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that this great nation was founded not by religionist but by Christians, not on religion but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. You've heard the name Samuel Adams. In his fast day proclamation in the year 1795, he said the supreme ruler of the universe having been pleased in the course of his providence to establish the independence of the United States of America.

We ought to be led by religious feelings of gratitude to walk before him in all humility according to his most holy law that with true repentance and contrition of heart, we may unitedly implore the forgiveness of our sins through the merit of Jesus Christ and humbly supplicate our heavenly father. I get so weary of well-educated stupid men like the current president who says America was never a Christian nation. What nonsense, what incredible stupidity for a man in a position like that.

This nation was founded as a nation under God. Some are concerned because the pilgrim fathers thought they were creating a nation in covenant relationship with God and they insist that a covenant is always two ways and we have no written document from the Lord that says I accept the commitment of your pilgrim father. And I'm not trying to prove that we are a covenant nation in relationship with God.

I'm just telling you what our founders thought. Or listen to these words from Benjamin Rush, one of the signers of the constitution. I do not believe that the constitution was the offspring of inspiration, but I am perfectly satisfied that the union of the states in its form and adoption is as much a work of divine providence as any of the miracles recorded in either the Old or the New Testament.

And John Jay, providence has given to our people the choice of the rulers and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and to prefer Christians as their leader. Now, I don't much care whether you're educated in terms of history or not. I don't care whether you believe that this nation was Christian.

I just want you to know what I believe. I believe Christianity is both personal and corporate and I believe God himself is concerned not only about you, but about the United States of America. And I want to ask you now, I'm awfully slow at getting to it, am I not? But I want to ask you to look now at this wonderful psalm.

Number 33, verses one to three. Praise is becoming to the upright. Sing for joy in the Lord.

Oh, you righteous ones, praise is becoming to the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre. Sing praises to him with a harp of 10 strings.

Sing to him a new song. Play skillfully with a shout of joy. So three verses devoted to the propriety of praise for the God of heaven.

Then verses four to seven, an open and a very clear cut acknowledgement of the awesome power of God. For the word of the Lord is upright and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and

justice.

Look what I've done. Well, my apologies. It's back.

Good, excuse my clumsiness. Let's go back to verse four. The word of the Lord is upright.

All his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the loving kindness of the Lord.

But the word, by the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. And by the breath of his mouth, all their host. And then if you will, verses seven through 12.

He gathers the waters of the sea together. As a heap, he lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord.

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.

The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations. He frustrates the plans of his people. But then we come to the center now.

The focal point of our great concern tonight. The counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart from generation to generation.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. The people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance. That's where we focus.

But just a moment in terms of the rest of the chapter. Verses 13, 14, and 15. Nothing escapes his sight.

The Lord looks from heaven. He sees all the sons of men from his dwelling place. He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth.

He who fashions the hearts of them all. He who understands all their works. And then the obvious truth.

The arm of the flesh will fail. Verses 16 and 17. The king is not saved by great strength.

A warrior is not delivered. Or excuse me. The king is not saved by a mighty army.

A warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory. Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.

And then this wonderful promise. Verses 18 and 19. Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon those who fear him.

And those who hope for his loving kindness to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. And then it becomes very real and personal. The Lord is the believer's help and shield.

Verses 20, 21, 22. My soul, our soul, waits for the Lord. He is our help and our shield.

For our heart rejoices in him because we trust in his holy name. Let the loving kindness, oh Lord, be upon us. According as we have hoped in thee.

But as I said, a wonderful context. We could spend a whole week upon it. But we want to deal now, not a great long time.

And I mean that sincerely, not a great long time. But just enough to catch our hearts and to give us an urgency. I ask first of all, pertaining now especially to verse 12.

To whom does the passage really apply? Well, obviously it applies first and foremost to Israel. Israel was absolutely God's first choice. This is spelled out in so many beautiful passages like Deuteronomy chapter seven, verse six.

For you are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you as a people for his own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples.

For you were the fewest of all the peoples. But because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which he swore to your fathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand. He redeemed you from the house of slavery from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Who could question that this passage pertains to Israel? Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. But is it only relevant to Israel? Can we take it to heart tonight? Can we honestly believe blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord? Maybe you're dubious about that. But the men I quoted a few moments ago were not dubious about it.

The Pilgrim Fathers were not dubious about it. Abraham Lincoln was not dubious about it. George Washington was not dubious about it.

Countless numbers of well-known, highly regarded men of old believed that blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. I believe blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. I'm concerned about you.

I wouldn't be here if I weren't. But my concern is a lot greater than my concern about you. I'm concerned for my nation.

For I believe with all my heart blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. I readily acknowledge that the hour is late. I know that I may not live to see America turn back to God.

Many of my friends are now in the glory. Many of them, their names are familiar to you. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones of London, Leonard Ravenhill, lastly, of Texas, J. Edwin Orr, Armin Gesswein, Stephen Oldford, all men with whom I traveled and worked, all pleading as I am pleading with you to take it as a fact that the nation whose God is the Lord is blessed.

They all died without seeing the blessing. But the fact that they didn't see it hasn't discouraged me. I think it is as wonderfully possible tonight as it ever was.

Naturally, I'm disturbed when prominent men in Christian circles laugh. Not so much at me, what does that matter? But at the truth that I present. I wish they didn't.

I wish they would all quickly embrace it. But does it matter that some make mockery of things others of us hold dear? Well, if I thought that God had to use them, I would be distressed. But I know God doesn't use the mighty, the powerful, the consequential.

I know he uses people like you. And especially, I know that he uses young people like this row here. And I look throughout this dear audience and I see not a lot of immature, youth, not a lot of those who never amount to much.

But I see the beginnings of a true revival of genuine religion in the hearts, in the lives of those the world has dismissed as nothing but God has appointed as his chosen vassals. I understand that God rarely uses men of my age and virtually every revival on record begun under the leadership of youth. But nothing prevents me from saying to a young man, have you considered what God can do through you? Are you open to it? Will you commit yourself to seek him with all your heart? I'm not asking, will you imagine yourself as great and mighty? I'm asking you to believe God.

And if I could, I would ask each of you face to face as I've asked this young man, is not our great need now faith, faith based on biblical wisdom? That God still uses that which is not to affect that which is? But let's press a little further in this wonderful issue. As I said, we know that first and foremost, the passage verse 12 applies to Israel. And we know some of the wonderful things God said to Israel.

But let me ask you to listen closely now as I read from Isaiah 65 verses one to three. I permitted myself to be sought by those who did not ask for me. I permitted myself to be found by those who did not seek me.

I said, here am I, here am I to a nation which did not call on my name. Now, who's that talking about? That's talking about us. God promised that he would raise up a nation in Israel's place.

Was it Russia? Well, I don't pretend to know in full the mind of the Lord, it might be. China, Iran, I don't know. But I do know this, America did not become the greatest nation on earth on its own.

It was God who truly did make America great. I've got the quotation here, I want to read to you. Some of you may have heard the name Alex de Tocqueville, a Frenchman who visited America.

Listen now to these words. I sought for the greatness of the United States in her commodious harbors, her ample rivers, her fertile fields, and her boundless forest. And it was not there.

I sought for it in her rich mines, her vast world commerce, her public school system, in her institutions of higher learning, and it was not there. I looked for it in her democratic congress, in her matchless constitution, and it was not there. Not until I went into the churches of America did I understand the secret of her genius and power.

America is great because America is good. And if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great. Now we can say, oh well, it's happened, it's too late.

Hurry up, Lord, and come and rescue me from this mess. But what if Moses had thought that way? What if any of the prophets had thought that way? What if the kings of Israel and of Judah who led the nations in great revivals thought that way? What if Joel thought that way? What if Peter thought that way? What if Paul thought that way? No, they all believed in a God who is still able to do anything. That's the God I believe in.

It's not too late. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Why not set your heart to see America once again, the nation whose God is the Lord? I know a lot of good people who don't accomplish anything because they're afraid of public opinion.

Don't be an idiot. What does it matter what some unbeliever thinks? If God is for us, who can be against us? As we have noted already, if God has become our enemy, it's hopeless. But it's not impossible that we repent before God, not only as people, but as a nation.

And once again, our nation becomes the place of God's incredible blessing. Now, I don't want to just go on and on. I do want to read another quotation to you.

One from a well-known American leader, Samuel Adams. He who is void of virtuous attachments in private life will soon be void of all regard for his country. I'm going to repeat that.

He who is void of virtuous attachments in his private life will soon be void of regard for his country. Now listen, some of you have voted for men who had lost all personal attachment to goodness. In the state of Illinois, where I live, we have a terrible governor.

We've got two governors of the past in prison. Looks to me like the present governor belongs there. Now we got a very wealthy and successful businessman running for governor.

And he has been immensely successful. He is truly immensely wealthy. But he has no attachment to virtue.

His wife in the newscast the other day said we are both very much in support of abortion. Well, if she'd gone on, she doubtless would have said of every other wickedness that's an abomination in the eyes of God. Now that doesn't affect most of you because you don't live where I do.

But to what extent are you buried in that godless and ungodly men be placed in position of leadership? We don't even insist that the pastors be godly. How can we make a ruckus about having governors and senators, et cetera, who are ungodly? Why don't we set our hearts to be done with nonsense and to get on with the work of the kingdom of God? But just for a moment, consider this question. Why is the word of this psalm so gloriously true? Why is it that a nation under God is indeed a nation under divine blessing? Well, no matter who's in power on earth, our Lord is still in power in heaven.

And while there's wisdom in looking forward to heaven, there's also wisdom in looking forward to heaven on earth. And I want to tell you in case you've missed this, that the reason why revival is so absolutely significant to me is because earth never comes closer to heaven than in seasons of revival. Look, let me put it to you this way.

In your mind, what is the greatest attraction of heaven? Is it the fact that the streets are paved with gold? Now look, I can slip and fall on concrete. I can imagine what it would be like walking on golden streets. Now I grant God can make non-slip gold, but honestly, I don't have any attraction at all to golden streets.

I know that in heaven there is no night, but that doesn't grip me. My dear wife, Maggie and I, we have a little compact, never wrote it out and signed it, but we've got it nonetheless. The last person to bed is responsible to turn out the lights.

And many a night when I've decided it was time to go to bed, in a jiffy, I'm there, and then I shout out, Maggie, shoot out the lights! And when the darkness descends, it's glorious. So again, I'm not against a place where there's no night, but I sure don't get worked up about it. When you start to move into the realm of who's there, then it really starts to get interesting.

I've not seen my dear dad for a long time. My own mother at 102 was taken to glory, and that was 12 years ago. I'm looking forward to seeing her again.

I've got a lot of friends. I've mentioned some of them already who are there. I'm looking forward to seeing them again.

I got some friends I never met. People like George Whitefield. Some of you have seen the great thick book I've done on Whitefield, and I think it's gonna be wonderful to sit down in heaven next to that dear man and say talk for about 30 years about the glories of Christ.

But honestly, while I do get warmed up about those who are there, that's not the great attraction. The great attraction is Christ. Look, I don't have any problem admitting the truth to you.

I have enjoyed a long walk with Christ, but that walk has often been interrupted, sometimes by sin, sometimes simply by divine sovereignty. I had an extraordinary season of many months where the nearness of God was so absolutely precious, and then one day I realized I had lost His nearness. And immediately my heart was broken, and I cried, oh God, what have I done to grieve your Holy Spirit? And for days I wrestled with that issue.

What did I do to grieve the Holy Spirit? And then, I don't say I heard a voice in my ear, but I certainly heard a voice in my soul. What did you do to gain that glorious sense of my presence? And I cried out, Lord, nothing! And He said to me, if you did nothing to gain it, why are you so sure you did something to lose it? And naturally I asked, well, if it wasn't something I did that caused you to draw away, why did you do it? And my dear Savior said to me, Dick, my plan for you is that you walk by faith and not by sight. And when I'm with you so steadily, so gloriously, you don't need faith.

My walk with Christ on earth has often been broken, but I look forward to heaven, because heaven will be an unbroken relationship with Christ. And in fairness to truth, one must then ask, what about hell? What is the most awful aspect of hell? Is it the fire that is never extinguished? Is it the worm that never dies? I grew up in Schenectady, New York, and one of my jobs as a boy was to take out the garbage. Now at that time in New York, we had two cans, the garbage can and the trash can.

The garbage can was exactly that, a garbage can. And when you opened the garbage can in the summer, it was a swarm of worms. It was awful.

It stunk fiercely. And I don't understand what I'm about to say next, but as a boy, I thought the most admirable job in the world was the garbage collector's job. For they came along in a dump truck, and a man stood up in that bin, and others handed up the garbage, and he poured the garbage out, and it was all around him.

He had on a pair of hip boots, and then they trucked that garbage to a pig farm. And after their truck would go by, the stench of garbage would last in the neighborhood for hours. Is the worst aspect of hell the worms that never die? Is it the evil that reigns unchecked? Is it the presence of the devil himself? My dear friend, let me tell you what I am convinced is the worst aspect of hell.

One can be in hell an entire year, or 10 years, or 100 years, or 1,000 years, or 100,000 years, or a million years, and never once entertain the thought sooner or later Christ will come. Because as heaven is marked by Christ's unbroken presence, hell is marked by Christ's unbroken absence. And I say again, revival is when earth comes closer to heaven than at any other time in human history.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. I want my nation to know the blessedness of God as Lord. And I'm going to, by God's grace, devote every bit of strength I have left to encouraging others.

And I'm asking you tonight, will you set your heart to live a radiant life that Christ will use to turn the nation back to himself?

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