

Richard Owen Roberts 2 - Broken Before the Throne 2010

by Richard Owen Roberts

Richard Owen Roberts emphasizes the necessity of humility and desperation in seeking revival and effective prayer.

Duration: 2:07:32

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:9

Topics: "Repentance", "Revival"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the need for true humility and repentance in order to experience the power of God in our lives and in the church. It highlights the dangers of pride, lack of love, brutality, and other sins that hinder the manifestation of God's power. The speaker urges the audience to examine their hearts, seek forgiveness, and strive for holiness and love in order to see revival and transformation.

Transcript

Indeed, you're forced to acknowledge that, generally speaking, revivals are increasingly rare. And, long ago, a rather foolish but well-educated idiot wrote a book entitled, Primitive Traits of Revival. And, in that book, he tried to prove that the reason why revivals are increasingly scarce is because the populace is becoming better educated and no longer stirred by the raw emotionalism of revival.

Well, Pastor Dan, I think we know where that fellow is. You've spoken briefly about that. I think the education of people has had nothing to do with the diminishing of the frequency of revival, something a whole lot more fundamental than that.

Most of us have memorized 2 Chronicles 7.14, and we can sing it, and often do. Some of you have preached upon it, as I have, with frequency, sometimes a single sermon, sometimes eight or ten sermons in a row on 2 Chronicles 7.14. But everything breaks down, really, in the first of the four things that we are called upon to do. If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves.

That we're not willing to do. That has not happened. So what's the sense of talking about the rest? I'll tell you what's wrong with the prayer movement.

The prayer movement is a prideful movement asking God to do what is guaranteed he will not do. He will not come and heal the land until the people of God humble themselves. And that's tough, really.

What is more difficult than humbling yourself? And how do you know, even, whether you've made a speck of progress in this area? I've taken that to be a very serious word. I believe that God hates pride, and he distances himself from the proud in heart. We are told in Scripture that God holds the proud in heart at arm's length.

And it's wise, once in a while at least, to sit down and ask, How long is God's arm? And of course there is no answer. Because as God himself is infinite, so is his arm. We can just take it as a given that anyone who is proud in heart is held an infinite distance away from God.

Personally, I haven't seen anything yet in all my travels and opportunities of ministry that indicates that we're even near the matter of revival. One of our brothers at the table tonight when we were eating together mentioned that in a conversation with Henry Blackaby, he had stated that the next revival will begin in the prison and among business men. Curious kind of a thought.

Last week, on Wednesday, I had lunch with one of the employees of the Awana movement. Perhaps your church has Awana group in it, and it's a good movement. But they have an unusual ministry that it appears that a lot of people haven't heard of.

They've got the ministry that has several parts to it, but one of the parts is called Malachi Dance. This is not well publicized, very little in truth known about it. But this dear fellow said to me for a very long time, the most dangerous place in America was Angola prison in Louisiana where there were practically daily murders taking place among the prisoners.

Riots time after time after time. Then they got a new warden who, reasoning things out, said it's absurd to teach morality to people who don't know there's a God big enough to order them around. If this prison is going to change, it's got to come from the prisoners learning about the God of the Bible.

And I was told just a few days ago, there are 5,000 prisoners at Angola. About 85% of whom are inmates for life with no possibility of parole. Out of that 5,000, 2,000 are in Bible studies together.

I don't know any city in America that has 40% of its people studying the Bible every day. I don't know of any church that has 40% of its people in the Word of God. It's not far-fetched to suppose there is the possibility of revival beginning in prison.

Now why? Those men are desperate. Are you desperate? Let me ask this row. Are you desperate for God? You don't look like it.

Is anybody here desperate for God? Recently Maggie and I took on an additional responsibility. At a time we were sure we didn't need another responsibility because we weren't keeping up with the responsibilities we already had. But our church lost its pastor, so they said, will you become interim pastor? Now you can imagine what a lousy interim pastor you've got when he's gone half the time.

But nonetheless we've done what we could. I made just about three conditions in accepting the responsibility and one of them was the leadership team had to embrace the urgent necessity of turning the church into a house of prayer. And I made it crystal clear that means every member of this church committed to pray together at least once a week in a serious corporate prayer meeting.

Well, we're a long ways from achieving that. But we've reached maybe 40% or so now who are attending the prayer meeting. Now the last Sunday we were there I read to the group Psalm 107.

Four times in Psalm 107 it talks about the situation getting so desperate. Let me interrupt and say that's one of those historical psalms. 106 is a major historical psalm.

107 is also historical. Four times in the course of that psalm it talks about the increase of difficulties, the tragic situation in which the people of God were finding themselves. And when it got bad enough they cried unto the Lord.

I don't hear that. Most of the places where I go you can't even hear the prayer. Now I remember, Maggie remembers when our first child was born.

We were living in an apartment and there was an elderly man who owned the building and who lived right beneath us. And every time that baby opened his mouth we were afraid that we would be put out. When a baby cries everybody in the world almost seems to know that the baby's crying.

Now what kind of a cry is it when you've got a hundred people in the room and 70% of the people who pray can't be heard. I experienced that this afternoon. Granted I sat in the back but this doesn't look like a very big room.

We haven't learned how to cry. On every prayer meeting in our church when I'm present I have to plead with the people. Please, please speak your prayer so that it can be heard.

I grant you God can hear the unspoken prayer but I can't. And what's the sense of a prayer meeting where you can't participate because you haven't the foggiest notion what people are saying. Crying unto Lord.

It not only makes us aware of the velocity that that is involved but it certainly speaks of the urgency. When a child begins to wail you can say to yourself, well that child was just fed 45 minutes ago. I am not going to get up and feed it again.

You've got to be a whole lot more resolute than any mother I ever knew to let that child wail and wail and wail. But now back to the prison. Why is it that 40% of the prisoners in the worst prison in the nation are crying unto God? I told you a huge percentage of them are lifers.

They'll never get out. There's a desperation there. A brokenness that's still needed in us and in our praying together as well as in our own closets.

But I've suggested that there's this critical problem of humility. You can't pray in a fashion that guarantees you're heard by God if there's no humility. And what does one do? Does one make a resolution? From now on I am determined, from now on I'm going to be humble.

Well, I've done that a good many times and it helps a little. While you're remembering the resolution, it doesn't take long to forget the resolution, but while you're remembering it, it helps. Then it finally dawned on me.

Pride is maintained by comparison. So, big hulky guy with muscles blossoming out of every portion of his body says, I got to feel good about myself. I know just what to do.

Mr. Roberts is standing up front. I'll go stand next to him. Well, of course you can find little runts like me everywhere.

And you can build your ego by comparison. The pretty girl likes to have around her some pretty plain girls because she sure looks good in the midst of those wilted flowers. And of course it does the ego of the plain girl good because she's the most beautiful girl in our school and she likes me.

But you think of it. We maintain and develop our pride by comparing ourselves with others. And no matter how wretched your circumstance, it's almost guaranteed that you can find somebody who looks worse than you do in at least some realm.

And it gradually dawned on me there's only one effective way to deal with pride and to bring at least a measure of humility into the life. And that's to stop comparing myself with my fellow humans and to allow only one comparison, myself and Christ. I'm not suggesting this is a little magic formula that automatically reduces you to humility because even though you've set your mind to compare yourself only with Christ, there'll be times when you'll find that little runt and stand next to it and feel puffed up.

Now this is particularly true in church life. I haven't spent much of my life in the pastorate most of my life. I've been an itinerant.

But during the relatively few years I spent in the pastorate, I always felt it was important to attend whatever ministerial fellowships there were in the area. But I found it next to impossible to maintain any regular attendance. Those meetings were so disgusting to me.

A man would say very modestly, Well, we've had a very poor week. Honestly, I'm ashamed of what a poor week we had. Why, we only baptized 13 this week.

And others would share his grief by saying, Yes, yes, we sympathize with you. We're not doing very well ourselves. Only 18 baptisms this week.

Oh, is that so? Well, we had a better than average week. We had 31 baptisms this week. And I'm sitting there saying, I haven't seen a true convert for two months.

Well, now as it turned out, my one convert in two months proved to be a whole lot more enduring than their 35 or whatever. The church is always comparing itself with other churches and feeling good about themselves. And just as I said about person to person, so no matter how lousy your church is, you can find one worse.

And we had these brilliant, shining examples of these monstrous churches with thousands upon thousands in attendance to make us all feel wilted and as if we are failing the Lord. On the other hand, it is sadly true that 20 sermons in one of those megachurches would not provide enough nourishment for a single sparrow, let alone a human being. And we all know that if you want the church to grow, don't say anything.

The less said the better if you can just prance around and make believe. But if you preach the gospel, the crowd thins. I know some of these churches say running 20,000 in attendance each week, that would be down to 200 if they ever bore down on the word of God.

But again you see, now that gives us wonderful grounds of comparison. Let's take this dear brother. How many do you have here on an average Sunday? 75.

But of course you are really preaching. Yeah, sure. So they got 10,000 over there, but they're just dinking around.

We're serious here. Whatever direction you take it, you can build pride by comparison. So the exhortation is quit comparing yourself with others or with other churches.

And let's get back to the biblical standard of Christ. Now what I'd like to do this evening, I haven't started the sermon yet, just sort of introducing the subject. I'd like to read a series of biblical passages.

Perhaps passages that you never strung together before. Let me return to the book and ask you then to join me as we take a series of passages, one by one. And the first of these passages that I call to your attention is in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Just a brief portion from 1 Corinthians 6, starting at verse 9. 1 Corinthians 6, 9. Now pay close attention.

There's something quite remarkable, I believe, that appears as we take these passages one after another. So 1 Corinthians 6, 9. Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor homosexuals nor thieves nor the covetous nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. Well, that's a simple list of twelve types of sinners who cannot enter the kingdom of God. Let's go over them again just to try and fix them in our minds.

The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Don't be deceived. Neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor homosexuals nor thieves nor covetous nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers.

Now then, I want you to stand as I call your particular profession. First, let every fornicator stand. Well then, let every idolater stand.

Well then, let the adulterers stand. Not much participation. Now it gets more dangerous.

Let the effeminate stand. Let the homosexual stand. I think we're going to have to shout that a bit in our nation.

No homosexual shall enter the kingdom of heaven. Isn't it remarkable to ordain a person to the ministry whom God has plainly declared cannot under any circumstance enter the kingdom of heaven. You see the point.

We're dealing here with those gross sins. Sins of the flesh. The notorious sins.

Now I know a bit of timidity might have kept you from standing when your position was called. But I hope there was a greater reason why you didn't stand. I hope that you are not one of those just described.

There are plenty of them in the churches across America. I hardly need to report to you that the statistics have clearly proven that the sin rate in the world is essentially no different than it is in the church. There are two areas that appear to be exceptions.

Among those persons who call themselves born-again Christians who married and divorced and remarried the rate is greater in the evangelical church than it is in the world. And the other areas of homosexuality it

is thought, I don't know that this is clearly demonstrated, it is thought that the percentage of those in the church who are practicing homosexuals is greater than in the world. A few of you know that among other responsibilities Maggie and I own a rather large bookstore in Wheaton, Illinois.

And very often huge quantities of books come in, used books. And a week or two ago I was sorting through a pile of books and I came across one by a very well-known evangelical writer. And I was particularly interested because a long time ago Billy Graham, the evangelist, asked me to become his ghost writer.

I know it's a bit of a shock to some of you but most of the prominent men in the church don't write the stuff that gets published under their name. Somebody else does. I've written just a wee bit for others.

Anyway, he offered me the job but it was impossible to accept. But the man who ended up doing it wrote the book that I discovered in the pile a few days ago. His name is Mel White.

He was for years a closet homosexual. Then he came out in the open and declared himself. And he has been trying to prove that homosexuality is acceptable to God in his autobiography, page after page after page of distortion of biblical truth.

Now, we just read it ever so plain. The effeminate and the homosexual shall not enter the kingdom of God. Now, I would like to hope that focusing for a few moments upon those ten awful sins made you feel good.

That's not me. I'm not guilty of any of them. If you're not, this is truly an exceptional audience.

Nonetheless, I'm going to hope that that's true. But now, a second passage that I ask you to turn to out of Galatians chapter 5. The book of Galatians chapter 5. Picking up at verse 19. Galatians 5, 19.

Now, the deeds of the flesh are evident which are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outburst of... Uh-oh, now it's getting closer to home. Outburst of anger. When was the last time you lost your temper? Disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now let's turn desperately honest. Is not humility observed when one becomes desperately honest? When all sham and pretense is God. When truth reigns.

When I no longer pretend to be holy and admit what a rotten louse I am. So each of us, if we really are concerned about the glory of God and the well-being of the lost, need to face verses of this sort. It's one thing to be able honestly to say I am not an adulterer.

I am not a fornicator. I am not a feminine. I am not a homosexual.

But am I a creator of strife? Almost every church of my awareness has some people within it who are creators of strife. A high percentage of families have some agitator in them stirring up strife. Jealousy is prominent.

Outbursts of anger seems like you can barely get through a week without some professed Christian blowing up. And again, let's not forget the statements are clear. I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, grace is involved and we're not shutting off the kindness of God. We can be grateful that the word practice is included in the passage because every one of us would fall if it was a single occurrence that is being spoken of. But some of us who practice these things pretend that we don't.

And we justify our position by saying such things as well, if you think I've got a bad temper you should have known my father. And of course I respond no, thank you. Knowing you is difficult enough.

But it's easy to throw stones at others. Old preachers lose their temper as well as young preachers. There is forgiveness.

But these are pretty severe words. And words that are urgently needed if we are ever going to get serious about humility. I mentioned the prisoners on death row.

There's not a whisper of hope for them in this life. Their only hope is in the next life. So they are, thank God, turning in some measure at least to the grace of God.

But if we take these passages seriously any who practice these things those who are regularly losing their temper those who are frequently in dispute and stirring up strife and those who are racist and who are envious they're all in trouble serious trouble. Another passage in Ephesians chapter 5 Ephesians 5 picking it up at verse 3 Do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you as is proper among saints. There must be no filthiness and no silly talk no court jesting.

These things are not fitting but rather giving of thanks. Let no one deceive you with empty words for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Now, if you didn't find yourself in the Galatians passage you're sure to find at least something of yourself in the Ephesians passage.

Covetous. I'd like everybody who has never ever given way to covetousness to stand up and shout hallelujah to themselves. No, I mean we're dealing with problems of immense importance where so many of us are regularly falling before the God of this world.

But now the three passages that we have read all are earmarked by the fact that these lists say these persons guilty of these sins shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. But let's turn to another passage. This one in 2 Timothy.

2 Timothy please. At chapter 3. But realize this that in the last days difficult times will come for men will be lovers of self. Lovers of money.

Boastful. Arrogant. Revilers.

Disobedient to parents. Ungrateful. Unholy.

Unloving. Irreconcilable. Malicious gossips without control.

Brutal. Haters of good. Treacherous.

Reckless. Conceited. Lovers of pleasure.

More or rather than lovers of God. Holding to a form of godliness and denied its power. Avoid such men as these.

Now let's be literalist. Let's set our minds right now to avoid everybody who in any fashion is described in the 18 sins that Paul has just mentioned. If you avoid everyone guilty of these sins you can't even associate with yourself.

Now is this just fun and games? Is this just apostles getting paid to blast off a lot of nonsense? Or is it the word of God? Now the thing that concerns me in those first three lists we had a clear statement describing those who are not subjects of the kingdom of God. Now this particular statement is not along that line. I don't want to read something into the passage that isn't there.

But what it plainly says is those who are guilty of these 18 sins, any or all of them, this greatest curse of knowing the form of religion but denying its power. I spoke earlier of the message given to a St. David's Society long ago in Schenectady, New York, mocked by the mayor of the city on the question are revivals so rare? And it could be rephrased. Why is the church today doomed to live under the form of religion but denying its power? Isn't that really the nub of the situation that we're living in? We have thousands of churches that have got the form in place, but there's no power.

But frankly I think it's even worse for an individual to have the form in place and yet to lack the power and then to attend revival prayer conferences and to do so all the time and nothing changes. Now let me lay out something that a few of you I know have thought of but perhaps not all. In your mind have you ever distinguished between sins that take you to hell and sins that rob God of his glory? Have you ever been used in that incredible situation at the end of Moses' life? I want to make reference to it but relatively briefly now.

Do you remember the incident? Do you remember what happened to Moses at the end of his life? But knowing it's really quite consequential can be immensely helpful. Let me distinguish again and ask you have you ever thought of the difference between sins that condemn one to hell, sins like the three lists that we read where it is absolutely stated those that are guilty of these things shall not enter the kingdom of God. And then I've asked you on the other side have you sensed the difference between sins that condemn to hell and sins that rob God of his glory? So let me recite briefly the details about Moses that you may not have brought forward in your mind and ever thought seriously about them.

In Deuteronomy chapter 32 there is a song that occupies the bulk of the chapter referred to as the song of Moses. But at the end of the song of Moses, Moses is exhorting what they've been told. But then the Lord speaks out.

And it might be well to turn there because I don't want you to think I'm making this up. This is part of the sacred text, Deuteronomy chapter 32. Let your own eyes focus upon the words that are spoken here.

As I said, it's a song. But at verse 48. So this is Deuteronomy 32 at verse 48.

The Lord spoke to Moses that very same day saying, Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho and the land of Canaan which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. Then die on the mountain where you ascend and be gathered to your people to Aaron, your brother, died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people because you did not treat me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin because you did not treat me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel. You shall see the land at a distance but you shall not see the sons Now maybe you haven't thought seriously of the meaning of that.

So let me ask you some simple questions. When did God call Moses? A long time before. What did he call Moses to do? To lead.

Is that it? To lead them out of Egypt? Ah yeah, don't leave out. To lead them to the promised land. Now he is being told rise up on the mountain where you can look across and see the land of promise and lie down on that mountain and die.

You'll never finish your life work. you don't need to respond to this outwardly but weigh this inwardly. Which is worse? To go to hell or to let the Lord down and never finish your life work? Well it depends on whether you're saved or not.

I know an awful lot of people who think they're saved and when they read this section or Numbers 20 and all the passages that pertain or when they hear me preach about it their question if only one question Pastor, do you have an exfiguration? Oh well as long as you didn't go to hell I don't care what else. But there is a reason why revivals are rare. And that reason is because the few people that call themselves Christians are focused upon escaping hell.

Not upon the purpose for which they were created. You were not created to escape hell. Some of you Baptists may need to forgive an old man who was never a Baptist and in all likelihood will never be one who was indeed brought to faith in the Presbyterian church and required as a youth to memorize the Westminster standards and in particular the Shorter Catechism.

Have you ever heard of the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster? It's all right. I'm not beating on you. I just want you to listen.

Will you promise me you'll listen? I'm going to hold you to that now. The question is man's chief end. Yes, the answer.

Beautiful. To glorify God and to enjoy him forever. Moses at the age of 120, now that's a bit older than me, robbed God of his glory.

And therefore was commanded lie down on the mountain and die. Look across before you lie down and see where you were supposed to end up and realize that because you robbed me of my glory, I can't let you finish your life call. I said this already, but I've got to repeat it.

If you're truly sad, it's an awful lot worse to rob God of his glory than to go to hell. No outward response, please. But how many of you feel deeply what I've just said? That your great burden is ever to bring glory to God and never to rob God of his glory.

Now every person described in 2 Timothy 3, in the verses that we read, every person who has the form of religion but denies its power is robbing God of his glory. Why is our nation growing worse with every passing week? Well, there are numerous factors that enter in, but the primary reason is because the church has so robbed God of his glory that the world thinks Christianity is ridiculous. That only idiots, those whose minds are avalanched, those who are suffering from brain disorder could ever believe anything as silly as Christianity.

And frankly, if I didn't know any better, because what I see in the church by and large is ridiculous nonsense. Now what's the point of praying for revival if you haven't had a change of center in your life? If your interest in Christ is to escape hell, you haven't had a change of center in your life. And you're still

selfish if your interest in Christ is yourself.

All who are truly born of God have a new center. The words of the Westminster sort of catechism are not just words, but they are the gripping passion of the life. I want to live to the glory of God so that I can enjoy him forever and so that I can spend eternity shouting the praises of the Almighty.

What possibility is there of any of us enjoying God when all we know of religion is reform? What I'm trying to say is you can look through that first three lists and say, oh well, I'm not perfect, but I really don't practice these things when I do any of these things. I'm grieved, I'm brokenhearted, I long for deliverance. But you can try to lead a holy life and desire to lead a holy life and do so for purely selfish reason.

Take someone like myself. I speak with care. My parents were truly converted when I was eight years of age.

Their lives radically transformed from that time on. That's 70 years because I happen to be 78 at the moment. For 70 years I have been exposed to the great truths of Christianity.

I like what I read. I like what I've heard. Fortunately, in my case, I've not only been exposed to the truths through others, but experienced them deeply in my own life.

The thought of knowing nothing but the form of religion, the thought of not knowing the power is horrifying to me. I can't imagine anyone willing to drift along with the form and lack forever the power. And yet everywhere I look, that's exactly what I see, people who have the form.

And over time, even the form gets messed up. And it looks less and less like the real thing. So when you don't have the power, you soon corrupt the form.

But let's go back now to the Deuteronomy passage. Now, for a moment, let me just speak a wee bit more about Moses. You've got your Bible in front of you.

Most of you, a few of you, are breaking my heart because you don't seem to own a Bible, or at least nobody ever told you it would be good to bring it with you. But I'm turning to Numbers 20. And I just want to read a bit here.

Numbers 20. There are 5 or 6, really 7 passages that deal with the subject of Moses and what happened to him in the end. But let me just give you a quick resume of the situation.

Verse 1 of chapter 20, Miriam died there. So, Moses is in a very difficult situation. He was in a team ministry with his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron and his sister died.

But God doesn't give out excuses and allow poor behavior because you've lost a loved one. Verse 2. There's another complication here. The people assembled together against Moses and Aaron.

Now, you never were in a situation, Pastor, where the congregation did such a thing, were you? Never. But to God it was true and would be always true. It's tough going when you're supposedly the pastor of a group of people that band together to give you an impossible time.

These were rotten people, thoroughly full of themselves. They hated Moses and Aaron and loved them at the same time. So they militate together to provoke Moses.

I don't spend the whole evening on this but I got a couple more things I've got to point out. Look at verse 6. Moses and Aaron came in from the presence of the assembly to the doorway of the tent of meeting and they fell on their faces then the glory of the Lord appeared to them. Now, this young fellow is courageous.

He never had a preacher step right up to him before, speak right in his face so he's not quite sure how to handle it but he's doing fine. Were you ever in a situation where the presence of God was so real then what did you do next? Nothing. Now in this case Moses did something next and what he did is what got him into such trouble.

The Lord said to Moses now the people are mad. They're congregated against Moses and Aaron as I pointed out. Moses and Aaron where the Lord's presence was so powerful it fell down on your face.

Yeah. Yeah. Now what did you do next? Don't answer brother.

I don't want to incriminate you, make you embarrassed but to hear Moses and Aaron have had this incredible experience of the Lord appearing to them in the most magnificent way imaginable and the Lord had said to Moses these people have been murmuring about the lack of water what I want you to do is to speak to the rock. And many of you know what he did instead. He lost his temper and he took the rod and he walloped the rock.

Don't forget the Lord said speak to the rock. A similar thing happened and that time the Lord said take the rod and whack the rock. And water came out.

This time the Lord said speak to the rock but he whacked it and water came out. The people got what they wanted but Moses got what he didn't want. To provoke him to the defiance of God.

So look at verse 13. Those were the waters of Meribah because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord and he proved himself holy among them. How did God prove himself holy among these cantankerous Israelites? God proved himself holy by saying Moses it was your responsibility to uphold my holiness and you did not do so.

Therefore you forced me to uphold it. So I uphold it at your expense. Lie down on the mountain and die.

Now friends I believe that's what we're faced with in the American church right now. His holiness before the people. But God is not going to allow his holiness to be dragged down by a silly and or corrupt church.

How could God possibly send revival in righteousness to a contemptible mess like he has on his hands and he's not going to send revival until we humble ourselves. And so far there's not much by way of encouragement in the church. Isn't it awful that an old man comes to speak to you on a Monday night and he says the only real evidence of God moving mindfully among those enduring a life sentence.

Now with those sobering thoughts let's go back to the Thessalonians passage. Excuse me the Timothy passage. 2nd Timothy chapter 3. 2nd Timothy 3. Now realize this.

That in the last days difficult times will come. Now I know that this is a mixed group with varying backgrounds and we're not all from the same fellowship and there are a variety of interpretations given even to such statements as last day. I may not be able to change your mind.

I won't even attempt to do so. I'll simply tell you when last days are described. There are two periods in scripture.

The early days and the latter day. And the dividing line is the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Everything after the resurrection was the last days.

Now I concede that's not everybody's opinion. I'm just simply telling you what I believe to be absolute gospel truth. The church has been in the last days since its beginning.

Now that there are later days in the last days obviously but the church throughout the centuries has believed itself to be living in the last days. Now we are seeing increasing signs that things are reaching a terminal point. For years I maintained a very large personal library.

Some of you have heard me say this. For a long time I kept a section in the library of about 2,000 books that dealt alone solely with the subject of last days eschatology. And often when I was feeling kind of run down and worn out I'd just have myself a little walk among these books and have a good laugh because the most absurd sort of nonsense has been published on the last days.

I mean virtually every naughty person in the world has been in some way described as antichrist. William Jefferson Clinton, Barack Obama, etc. But in the last few months I've begun to think that we might really be in the last of the last.

I don't see anything at all that in... I want you to listen. Now you promised me you would. You don't know how long you're going to live, but let's suppose that you live another... What is your age now? Nineteen.

Let's give this fellow another 70 years. Eighty-nine, will that be all right? No, nothing final here, just a suggestion. Now, in ten years you're going to be living under a wall now.

Appealing? You ever read about Nazi Germany? It's projected now that within ten years America will be like Nazi Germany. Does that sound good? No. No.

But that's where we're headed. Every indication is that's the direction as a nation we've chosen. I don't think that's the will of God, and that's the will of those people who are content with a form of religion, but who deny its power.

There's only one thing that can prevent that from happening, and that's the power of God. We're not here in order to feel a little better at the end of this period. We're on behalf of a nation and a world that doesn't have the sense to discern what's happening.

I'd like to hope that in some measure every one of us who is here is aware of the fact that we are down now to one single hope. We got a number of grandchildren and it was kind of hard for us to come away last Friday to start this series. First up in Pennsylvania, now down here, because the grandchildren were all there.

We don't see much of them, but as I look the grandchildren over, this little four-year-old here, ranging up to five-year-old, that these children will grow up in a Christian nation that treasures freedom. No hope. I don't see any hope.

Not a bit of hope. Save in the power of true religion. But, if we want the power of true religion, if we want it to be stronger with form, then we say from now on, nothing but reality.

We're going to have to pay attention to the 2 Timothy passage. So, let's turn there again and carefully look it over. Realize this, that in the last days, difficult times, I've said there are 18 things specified here.

Number one, men will be lovers of self. Let's not allow any distortion of the truth in our own hearts. Who do you love most? I'm not asking you to know.

I meet all kinds of people that can't even say they love their wife more than themselves, or they love their children more than themselves. How can a man who has deserted his wife and children for another woman, dare to say, I love my children more than myself? How can a man who has deserted say, I love my children more than How can a man say that? Don't you know it's impossible to love others if you don't love yourself? That's what's being taught in most of the churches. You go into a so-called Christian bookstore, you'll see shelf after shelf after shelf of nonsense teaching you to love yourself first and foremost so that you can love others.

No, no, no, no. Let the liars publish all the trash they want. The truth of the matter is anyone who is a lover of self is doomed to the form of religion and doomed to forever be denied its power.

If we want revival, we're going to have to deal with that. I don't think that one can take a list of 18 and deal with every one of the 18 items in an evening. I think some of us are going to have to get really serious and say this is the word of God.

A lot of us can honestly say, personally, I don't own the power of God in my life. Oh, a little snatch here and a brief look there, but that's not what's being discussed here. This is talking about walking in the power of true religion.

So, set your heart to discern whether the love might not be a significant part of the absence of power of true religion in your life. Number two, lovers of money. Now, that's a tough one.

Some of us thought we were doing pretty well. Then our wonderful government has maneuvered and worked at a time when they promised us it would get better. I mean, what is the date today? Have any of you gotten quarterly statements from the institutions that handle your money? You see, I'm old, and it's a well-known fact people don't live forever, and the likelihood is there'll come a time when I won't be able to leave my bed, but I'll still have to pay bills even if I'm a dying cripple.

Most of us try to lay aside a little something, and that's wise. There's prudence in it. But when the quarterly statements came just after the 1st of July, down another 14%.

Already, we've lost almost everything, and now it's still being snatched away by these lovers of money. Before we had made some progress in conquering the love of money, but as the money disappears, and as you are facing possible bankruptcy or the loss of your home, then you begin to get a feel of how well you're doing in terms of conquering the love of money, that the love of money guarantees knowing nothing better than the form of religion. Surely, we want to deal with that.

Number three, boastful. I mentioned attending pastors' meetings and men modestly saying, you see, I don't meet many people other than boasters. I find myself even sometimes doing that.

If, in counting something, the number is nine, oh, well, it's easier to say ten, or an even dozen. We're exaggerators. It's shocking how frequently we discover that we've stretched the truth a little, boasted in that quiet kind of a way, made it look as if things were other than they really are.

Arrogant. Arrogant. Word number four.

Isn't it interesting that the first word of 2 Chronicles 7.14 in terms of what we must do is humility, and the biggest focus in this list of 18 has to do with issues of pride. Boasters, that's an issue of pride. Arrogant, that's an issue of pride.

Ungrateful, that's an issue of pride. Conceited, that's an issue of pride. Five out of the 18 touch on the issue of humility or the lack thereof.

Now, I'll have to turn my back to my friends here when I pick up this next section. I don't want these young friends to feel that I was looking at them. How old are you when that issue of parents expires? I was in my sixties.

My mother was living in Rochester, New York, with a sister. I was going out to the car to get something, and my mother said to me, don't go out without putting on your jacket. And I wanted to say, I have been on my own for 45 years.

You don't need to tell me when to put on my jacket. And then I said, obey your parents. Honor your father and your mother.

So I bowed my heart, and I said, Lord, I want to honor my mother. So, enough grace came to say, thanks, Mom, that after all these years, you still care. We're pretty late in life normally before we get beyond this issue of parents.

Oh, obviously some lose their parents when they're very young, but I don't wonder what some of you still have parents alive. Now, of course, the world is very good at this, reviling the church, making fun, mocking us, helping us to realize how stupid we are. But I find lots of revilers in the church.

I find lots of people who, if there is a new convert that comes right out of the worst kind of sin, and some holy old saint will whisper to another holy old saint, don't worry, they'll be backslidden in no time. You know, when a new convert, a genuine new convert is added to a church, it upsets the status quo. New converts are the waters.

They've got such enthusiasm and love for Christ and commitment that everybody else is saying, sit down and shut up. Why do you have to embarrass that? There's a conspiracy to keep everything at the lowest possible level in the church instead of a divine possible. Is there a reviler in the group tonight? Are any of you in any fashion guilty of reviling? Then we've got the word ungrateful.

How many times in the last month have you felt as if God wasn't fair to you? For a while we ought to have Thanksgiving every week until we get the habit of praising the Lord. I honestly believe that the church across America could not be described as grateful, but ungrateful. And again, let's not forget every one of these sins is explaining why we've got the form and not the power.

Unholy. Now who would like to stand and testify that your life is marked by holiness? That everybody that knows you knows that you truly are holy? That ought to be the aspiration of every one of us. I remember my parents being converted when I was eight and they took my brother and sisters and I to a church that had plaques, scripture plaques, all around the whole sanctuary.

Often those plaques had to do with holiness. And somehow, I can't attempt to explain this, somehow it dawned on me that there's no beauty in all the world as glorious as the beauty of holiness. But can I boast and say I have achieved it? Can you? Did anybody ever seriously describe you as holy? It's one thing to

aspire to holiness.

It's another thing to rise up to the provision of holiness that is in Christ. Our lack of holiness is dooming us to the form of religion and depriving us of the power. Unloving.

Now, it's easy to see in the world how this is so. Maggie and I are members of a relatively small church. At the best, it was never more than 300.

We've had, the two of us, a number of areas where we have an understanding where we never really had an agreement. It's just that these things are understood. And do you know what the word itinerant means? Yeah.

Yeah. Somebody who travels about. I'm what's called an itinerant preacher.

Most of the time, it seems I'm away from home. Maggie had this determination that when I was away from home preaching she would handle the troubles that were occurring at home. She would handle them quietly herself.

One day, I was preaching in the United Kingdom and I called home and I could tell by the tone of her voice something was dreadfully wrong. I said, what is it? And she said, well, do you remember so-and-so that is a family in our church? Yes, I said, of course. Were you aware that the daughter had been attending recently? Yes, I said, I was alert to that.

She said, I know that you would know that she had three illegitimate children. Yes, I said, I know that. Did you know she was pregnant with the fourth illegitimate child? No, I said, I didn't know that.

Well, she said she was reaching term and a woman became very friendly with her. And yesterday the woman came to the pregnant woman's home with two men. They went into the kitchen and got the big butcher knife.

There were two children at home. The third child was playing somewhere else that day. They took the knife, killed the two children.

Then they slit this pregnant woman open and took the baby and left. And there she is lying on the floor in a pool of blood. So they murdered three and carried away the infant that they extracted from the womb.

Unloving. We read about things like that. Very shortly thereafter, you know, we live in the Chicago area.

It's a terrible area. It is truly a wretched place. Sin abounds.

We read in the newspaper a young girl who managed to hide her pregnancy was in her parents' apartment. The child was born. She opened the bathroom window and threw the child out the window.

Someone passing by heard a wail. It was wintertime. The child landed head down in a snowbank.

I mean, in the clothing out of which she emerged from the womb, naked. And this woman was able to rescue the child from the snowbank. We know that we're living at a time when there's an incredible lack of love.

But how can a person destroy their own church? Which is happening every day. All around the country, persons who claim to be children of God, lovers of Jesus Christ, are smashing the church to pieces with

their lack of love. Well, some of us aren't that vicious, but if we were to say, Holy Spirit, will you point out to me every area in my life where I lack love? We might very well spend days weeping over what the Spirit of God showed us.

Irreconcilable. Can't bring these warring parties together. Malicious gossip.

Oh, we see so much tragedy that comes in the church from vicious tongues. Malicious gossip. My dear friends, it's quite clear, isn't it? What God wants of every one of us is to take this list of 18 things and say, Holy Spirit, bring to the forefront of my mind and heart every violation of these 18 things.

I'm tired of the form of religion. I've got to know the power. I hate belonging to a church that knows nothing but form.

I want to belong to a church that knows the power, but there's no danger of my church being taken to the forefront I want to belong to a church that knows the power of form. I want to belong the power of form. I want to to a church that knows the power of form.

I want to I want to It's tolerant of it, but it encourages it. We have lack of self-control in realms of sex, in realms of eating, in realms of drinking, in addiction to drugs, etc., etc. I mean, this is a colossal problem in the church, the lack of self-control.

And again, you can shrug this off. It doesn't take 18 of these to sap you of power. Any violation at all that you tolerate dooms you to the life of form and prevents the power.

Brutal. Brutal. What I've seen within the church, the brutality with which people treat one another and dear friend, especially the brutality with which they treat pastors.

I have not, as I said, I told you already, I haven't spent much of my life in the pastures, but we were in pastures in California, and they were ganged up to destroy us. And I heard somebody say, Who is this pastor anyway? Is he here? Yes, that little runt there. Well, we'll deal with him.

And men did that. Vicious, brutal. And you know how it is, especially among Baptists.

Almost every Baptist church has at least three times as many members as they do attenders. And so whenever any issue gets hot, then those who haven't even seen the pastor show up to give him a royal treatment and to boost him clear across the city if they can. Brutality.

And some of us have participated in that kind of wickedness. Haters of God. Now obviously, one of these points will strike you personally more strongly than another.

But all 18 are to be weighed seriously. And again, we are to ask the Holy Spirit to show us what applies in our case. Treachery.

Think of all those persons betrayed by their spouse. Think of all those children betrayed by a parent. And sometimes by both parents.

Reckless. Conceited. Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

So you announce a church prayer meeting and you plead for every member to come. Not just a half a dozen, they'll come right up to you and say, oh, no possibility of my coming. My favorite team is on the

television this afternoon.

I was in a church in Colorado for a series of meetings at the time when one of their favorite teams was in a championship game down in front of me. Shall we cancel the service or shall we get the big screen television and put it in the lobby? They decided on the latter. So at the beginning of the service they said, any time you want you just slip out to the lobby and see how your team is doing.

Oh, I've been mentioning extremes. But it doesn't have to be extreme to fit. Is there anywhere in which you are a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God? Well, I've used up the time.

I've distinguished between sins that take people straight to hell and sins that rob God of His glory. And a powerless Christian and a powerless church is a thief of God's glory. And the bulk of the world is convinced that Christianity is fraud because they know nothing but persons in the form of religion but deny its power.

And I believe it would be right before God to sit quietly and to say, I really am sick of the form. I really want to know the power. Show me everything in my life that is robbing me of your power.

So let's spend the next half hour soberly asking God to show us who we really are.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/-AxIWguv30g.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/richard-owen-roberts/richard-owen-roberts-2-broken-before-the-throne-2010/>

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