

My Experience as a Chaplain - Part 1

by Rolfe Barnard

The speaker's experiences as a chaplain in the Second World War highlight the moral and religious condition of America and the need for a return to biblical values.

Duration: 42:18

Scripture: Genesis 4:7, Matthew 6:33, John 14:6, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:22, 1 Peter 1:18-19

Topics: "Testimony"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his childhood experiences of reading books about success and deprivation. He then recounts a story of being invited to lead a protracted meeting at a desperate Baptist church in Brooklyn. The pastor of the church had to limit the number of attendees each night due to the overwhelming response. The speaker also shares his experiences as a preacher in a small town and as a chaplain in the Second World War. The sermon then focuses on the biblical text from Hebrews 9:22, emphasizing the importance of the shedding of blood for purification and remission of sins.

Transcript

I still have to use it. That's it. Shackled by a heavy burden, Needful load of guilt and shame, There Jesus touched me, And now I am no longer the same.

He touched me. Oh, He touched me. Peace that touched my soul.

Well, something happened, And now I know I'm made new. Since I met the blessed Savior, Since He cleansed and made me whole, Peace took praise in Him. I'll sing it while eternity rolls.

He touched me. Oh, He touched me. And oh, touched my soul.

Oh, something happened, And now I know I'm made new. I have to turn in the Bible this morning to the book of Hebrews, at chapter 9. At verse 22 of Hebrews, chapter 9. Just one verse. And almost all things are by the law, not all, but almost all, are by the law purified with blood.

And apart from the shedding of blood, there is no remission. We are greatly influenced by our experiences. Many years ago, I went to New York City to preach for the first time.

When I was a little boy, five and six and seven years old, I devoured Horatio Alger's books about the little boot-black that had lots of trouble, but he wound up being President of the Bank. In those days, the

youngsters read stories of deprivation that were blessed by success. The day they read about Hopalong Cassidy, and I didn't know what else.

And I had never been to New York City, and I didn't know they were just full of people. I remember there was a pastor of a Baptist church that was actually in Brooklyn. In desperation, he called the deacons of the church together.

They hadn't had what we call evangelistic series of services in 25 years, and they were in a desperate condition. And the pastor was saying, What on earth can we do? And one of the deacons said, Well, let's try to have what our father's mother used to call a protracted meeting. There used to be the glory of America.

And the pastor said, Well, but who on earth could we get to come and lead us? And they sent me an invitation, and I went, with some fear and tremor. And I was amazed to find out that after the first service, the pastor got up and said, Now, you people who are present this morning, you may be allowed to come back on Thursday night. There won't be room for you.

You give room for somebody else. And then that night he told those people they could be back on Friday night. And each night he graduated.

He left room for three services during the two-week meeting for young people up from 16 to 20. Nobody could attend. Well, I shall never forget the impression that was made on me by that meeting.

It was a small church, about 10 million people in New York City. And one evening after the service, some of the young people asked me to go down to the drugstore for a drink. And I questioned.

I said, I don't understand this business, youngsters just flocking. I wish you'd been here overnight. They said, we wish we could, but there's no room for us.

And a young man said something. Brother Preacher, in New York City, there are two places to go, the God's house or the hill. It's just about so.

Amen. People who think they can walk with one foot in the spirit of this godless age and the other in the house of God are going to be headed for trouble. I didn't make the world, but it's just about settled down to what that young man said.

I had another impression in New York City later. I went and ministered a week in the power of mission. I've had the privilege of ministering most of the awful missions.

I mean the missions dealing with the down and outs in many of the cities. Everybody that's a church member ought to go and live in those missions and witness to them, stay down on skid row and see what sin, if not checked in this life, will do. It's not a pretty picture of men and women who are already in the anti-room of hell, live in misery.

Every last person I've ever preached to in my life in a mission desperately wanted to be saved. They'd do anything on earth you ask them to do, any of the motions we got. But something's happened down the line.

Their will is completely gone. They're understanding his voice. That makes an impression.

Then my first pastorate, when I was the only preacher in a city of 5,000 people in a little town in this state, 26 months, 16 months the only preacher in town, living with death, walking the street, the main street of that city, when a man would have to walk on the outer edge of the sidewalk is on the main street. The poor fallen women were in their cubbyholes and they'd reach out and catch hold of the garments of a man as he passed by if he was a little too close. Not a nice picture.

Sin doesn't wait to ruin men in hell. It ruins them down here. My experiences as a chaplain in the Second World War were the most shocking experiences I've ever had.

And this morning I want to speak from the text without or apart from the shedding of blood. There is no remission. Are you familiar with the fact that in the Army in the Second World War soldiers, at least in the Air Force where I was and I'm told it was everywhere, were assembled together to hear some chaplain or some minister preach to them that every man who shed his blood to defend his country and America would be saved.

I heard that many, many times. It was drilled in our voice that if a man shed his own blood in defense of his country that God would take him to heaven from that bloody battlefield. I preach on my experiences as a chaplain because of the shocking things I discovered.

Everybody else I guess knew about them but it takes me a long time for God to show me anything. I entered the chaplaincy because I desperately wanted to preach to men who many of them were going to shed their blood for the country. Friends raised money before we got into war and I got a big tent and I went to near towns adjacent to Army camps and the influx of undisciplined and regenerated church boys whom we said goodbye to them and let them go into the Army as we were preparing.

Their undisciplined lusts were already making hell holes out of every city and reach of the Army camp. And the pastors didn't know what on God's earth to do. The Army sent the trucks into every city every Saturday night and load them up with your daughters to go out for the soldiers to hug on Saturday night in the dancing floor.

And that is all patriotism. And of course human nature being not as nice as we've been taught all hell was breaking everywhere morally speaking. So the pastors would always help me in the meeting.

And I found out that if you could confront young men who they had in a sense knew they were being trained to go beyond and be killed or killed. That if you could confront them with the gospel of Christ and the Christ of the gospel some of them would listen to you. But I had to go out of that business because evangelism was not considered essential to the war effort.

And every Baptist preacher that got gasoline enough to visit the hospitals owed it to the Catholic regime that has power in America because they're united. And they put so much pressure on the government that they had to give them gasoline so Brother Jackson, he wasn't old enough to don't guess but this fellow's got some sense. You remember the pastors got a little gasoline.

And they wouldn't ship my equipment on the trains and so I said well if we can't preach to the boys that are not yet I'll get inside and I'll hold my nose and I'm going to try to preach to those boys not that I'd be the only one but I'm just responsible for my little ministry and I won't invest it in the ministry preaching to boys. So I got in the Army. I got in the Army.

And I found out I found out the desperate moral religious condition America was in. I worked first hand with Catholic priests and Jewish rabbis and Baptist preachers and Presbyterians and Methodists and just named them. I lived in the atmosphere of training boys to kill.

I lived in an atmosphere where every Army officer understood that when that boy got over there and the bullets got to flying he'd be scared and the only way on earth to make good soldiers out of them is to treat them so rough that he wouldn't care whether he lived or died. It's the only way you could go over the top in the first world war. You didn't tell me people's scared.

But then they make a soldier out of him you just assume he's dead or alive and to hell with the consequences. And I was brought face to face that I've lived in two world wars and no wonder holiness is sneered at. Righteousness is an unknown word.

And this generation is going to hell with a little religious profession while we rot in moral corruption. I saw in the Army the product of Sunday morning easy going believism without transforming of character and calling it salvation. I live in the atmosphere of an abandoned desecration of God's holy day.

We didn't recognize Sunday in the Army and there didn't anybody else in America. And under God the reason I say to you that unless we can build some strong churches not a whole lot of little old two bit churches standing for some little old peckerwood gospel and going to tear in a passion the peace is over one little aspect of truth. Most of the little churches are started like that.

But some churches standing in the gap whether anybody listens or not being the salt to keep America from being swallowed up by the forces of hell that are blowing all about us. Ladies and gentlemen if we keep on like we're going now and do away with God's holy day rest for the body and worship of God we'll be as rotten as Rome when God had the spewer out of our mouth. There are two things that are the absolute crass of the moral tone of a nation.

What it does on the Lord's day and what it does with its money. I saw the promotion of fornication and adultery in the Army. My old Roman Catholic supervisor, a chaplain had 200 chaplains under him stationed in Montgomery, Alabama.

30,000 soldiers all of them training to be either fliers or navigators or whatever you call it, bombardiers in the Air Force. Pioneers, young people you had to be nearly perfect physically to get in the Air Force. And my old supervisor, a chaplain said, Brother Barnett you work harder than any 50 chaplains I've got reach more men, raise more hell in all my 200 chaplains put together.

He said, I don't understand a fellow like you. He said, are all Baptists like you? I said, no. Don't guess the world could stand a fellow like me.

He said, I don't understand your philosophy. And I explained, he said, unless a soldier can go to town on Saturday night and get him a quart of whiskey and a blonde woman life ain't worth living. He was a supervisory chaplain.

Your boy was in there. Some of you men were in. Once a month I had to make a speech.

The squadron commander and one of the physicians and the chaplain make a speech. The squadron commander, the physician would get up and tell your boys how they might have sexual intercourse without contracting venereal disease. And then I was supposed to get up and tell what the Bible said about

adultery and fornication.

And then always on the table were hundreds and thousands of contraceptives piled up. And when the physician would give his instructions and the chaplain would talk about what the Bible said, the squadron commander would get up and cuss a little bit and say, for so-and-so, so-and-so's sake, don't let us waste this money here. Fill your pockets full.

And did you know that in the Army if a boy went to town and hurt himself physically and he could not prove that he had carried with him a contraceptive, he lost his pay all the time he was in the hospital. What are you talking about, Brother Barnum? I'm talking about two world wars like that. When we threw the Bible away, when we forgot God's holy day, and when we trained the manhood of America like that, under God, the chances are you're going to wallow your filthy way in the pit of moral corruption and go on to hell.

If you don't quit this little two-bit stuff and begin to agonize after the mercy of God to apply the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the only thing on earth that's got power to clean up a filthy guy like you, Baker. If you don't quit this little Sunday morning junk in this little tent in God's house, if I have got the bellyache and this sitting on the rail of the spectator, follow this awful age that's too sunk in its moral corruption, it's going to drown you. I saw the degradation of the ministry.

I honor every godly preacher. Oh, my soul, how ungodly I found out the public preachers of America are. Amen.

Amen. If sin is slaying its thousand now, morally corrupt religion easygoing politics on Sunday morning to make us comfortable in our sin, that's American religion today. And I saw, as I had never seen before, this terrible truth that our churches do a nice little job of just failing at one point.

They're failing at making Christians out of people. The army, of course, divided religiously into three classes, Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish. Everybody wasn't a Jew.

It was either Catholic. Everybody wasn't a Catholic. They'd put in the lump of a Protestant.

Somebody asked me about whether you could be a secret disciple or not. I don't know how to handle it. But I won many Catholic boys to the Lord.

But I told all of them not to tell anybody because they could have been court-martialed. And I could have been court-martialed for actually talking to a Roman Catholic boy about his soul. Did you know that? That's reading over your radios and your televisions and your big papers and your big denominational magazines and the very atmosphere, religiously speaking, now we're awful broad-minded.

Awful broad-minded. After all, we're all headed for the same place. I ain't, brother.

I don't want to go there where everybody that's religious now is headed. And I went to Harvard University to learn how to be a chaplain. And the head of the school, the chaplain of the morning would say, men of God, that's Catholic, Jew, and Protestant, do not be seen drunk on the streets.

If you have to get drunk, do it in your own room. I saw the hospital chaplains making the rounds, or the chaplains making the rounds of the hospital every Monday morning in the V.D. department of venereal disease. And I've heard many a chaplain cuss a boy out, not because he committed fornication Saturday night, but because he contracted a disease.

No, nothing wrong with the sin. The thing that broke that Catholic preacher's heart was that that boy couldn't be a good soldier for a while. Oh, boy.

You mean to tell me this generation's nice, this generation? You reckon you're going to escape it when Jesus Christ came to deliver us out of this present age? And that means the spirit of this awful age. Salvation's no good unless it does that. Rather, there's an ungodly age to be delivered out of, sure as you put my hat on.

Church membership didn't do a bit of good, but two weeks after your boy got in the Army, unless Jesus Christ was enthroned in his heart, he's chasing women and getting drunk and gambling. That's right. Baptists and Methodists and Presbyterians and Catholics.

Oh, that didn't matter to nothing. And the boys that knew the Lord took out like sore thumbs. They'd follow me around, and I'd feel like a little puppy dog.

Crowded out, sneered at, defeated. Holy Joes, they called me. The chaplain was supposed to be a good Joe.

I never will forget the first time I went to the officers' dance. I got a letter from the hard-drinking, hard-cussing Episcopalian colonel. He'd been in the Army 30-some-odd years.

He was my dear friend. I tried to win him to the Lord. He said they put a little water on my head when I was a baby and confirmed me when I was 12, but said it didn't do no good.

He'd get drunk as a boiled owl every Saturday night, but he had some sort of something. He'd get sober up, and he'd sit right on the front seat of the chapel. He gave me lots of favors, but I couldn't land it for the Lord.

He said to me, of course, I've got an invitation. You get an invitation from the colonel. That's a command.

I was supposed to show up at the officers' dance at 9 o'clock. Well, I knew I'd have to do that and I'd get in the Army and all that sort of junk. So I dressed up my best bib and took her, and I never had been one of those things.

I got there at 9 o'clock. Nobody else there. About 11.30 here, they came in.

And about 1 o'clock, I had preached five times the next day. 1 o'clock, I did like Paul Joseph. The colonel had him.

But the preacher, you see, Brother Jackson, supposed to be there to sort of put a godly atmosphere on the situation. And that's all the churches, most of them, are doing now. They're just sanctifying this ungodly... I love to see you folks with belly aching and bear over this godly pastor here, a church that folks would drive ten miles out of the way to get close to because they actually believe the word of God.

Oh, sin! Sin! Deeds! Dirty! Filthy! Hateful! Prevarious, lawless sin! No remedy on God's shining sun for it except an application of the merits of the life laid down of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's high time we recover a little of the vigor and the tremendous earnestness of people long ago. And you'll find men like Ho and they'd shame until the day he died.

Every morning you'll get up and try to get a little assurance from the word of God that perhaps he's got a saving interest in the shitload of pain. You made a little decision, been a little like hell ever since, and you think you're going to go to heaven when you die. But whose blood? The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What does that mean? It means life laid down. What does it mean? It means that rebellion is so terrible, that lawlessness is so widespread, that sin is so hateful and obnoxious to God that even God can't find any other remedy for sin except for his son to pour out his life. Ignore that! Take it for granted! Make it commonplace! And you'll pay for it with your soul.

This is true. This is precious. The blood of Christ.

Without shedding of blood, there's no remission. There's no remission. I had this unique experience.

For nine months, I preached to a different crowd every Lord's Day. And I preached to them knowing that I would never preach to them again. They brought the young men in and kept them on the post for 13 weeks.

And then they went somewhere else. The first seven weeks, I believe I'm right, they were confined, 30,000 precious young men to the post. And the Jews were marched to chapel in formation.

And the Protestants were marched to chapel in the chest. Sixteen hundred young men would fill the theater. At nine o'clock on Sunday mornings, the sergeant would march 1,600 young men to the theater.

And we'd have a 30-minute service. As soon as that service was over, they'd march out. And as soon as the path was clear, there were 1,600 other young men waiting.

And they'd have their service. They had five such services. Then the next Lord's Day, I preached at 10 o'clock, a different crowd.

For nine months, I preached to 1,600 young men. I had other services, but I preached to 1,600 young men who were marched to chapel. They had to attend.

And that's the only chance I ever got to preach to them. I was not allowed to give any sort of an invitation. I was supposed to follow an order, have everybody quote the Lord's Prayer, and I wouldn't do that, and I got in trouble, but they couldn't make me.

I said, I'm not going to allow an unsaved man to see our Father, because God isn't his Father. And we had a lot of fun. And I'd book them.

But, of course, I could not give what you call an invitation, because the young men weren't there because they wanted to be, like I hope you are. They were there because there's march there. But they couldn't keep me from doing this.

I threw away all the service and preached the same sermon, I guess, every time. For nine months, preached 1,600 boys a day, never preached to two different boys at the same time. Just one shot.

I was the only chaplain on that field that believed the gospel. We had some Baptist boys preachers that told me not to get drunk in public, and you ought to be good. Well, they already knew that, you know.

Because I don't do no good telling a fellow what he ought to do. He already knows that. Ah, he needs access to power that he hasn't got.

And I would say, now, if any of you boys understand the relationship, for lack of it, to the Lord Jesus Christ, you write your name and squadron number on the order of service and pass it to the ushers, and they'll take it up at the close of the service. And I'd get hundreds of those names every day. All I did as a chaplain, instead of passing out cigarettes and drinks and sponsoring dances and all that junk, I just had a prayer meeting going on all the time, my study.

I'd get on the phone, call up the commander and say, I want you to send Thornton over to see me. And he'd have to do it, you know. Yeah, come this boy.

And we'd get in there and lock the door. And he wanted to know the Lord, and that's how it's done now. I read one time when 64 great bombers got shot down on one flight over Germany.

Eight boys to a bomber. That's way up in the neighborhood of 500 boys. Made a sortie over Germany.

That's the most, I think, bombers that were shot down in any one flight. And I wondered how many of those perhaps 500 young flyers and bombardiers and navigators, eight to a bomber. I wonder how many of them, when they get to the judgment, will find out I had one chance to preach to them.

And they think I'm an old sourpuss. The Brother Jackson will just about say amen. They didn't have many opportunities to hear a chaplain preach on Christ to hell.

When I get to the judgment, I'm going to be looking. Some of the sows, and I preached to quite a few. They'd move them out.

Nine months every Lord's Day, preached to 1,600 boys just one time. When I get to the judgment, I'm going to be looking, looking, looking. How many of those precious boys I'll have to see sent to hell? Be a witness against them just that one time.

I didn't fool around talking to them about they ought to be good. I just had a little simple message. There's just one remedy for the dark-dyed sin.

And that's to have the merits of the Lord's life laid down, applied to you. So that when the Christ, holy God, left son Paul Rothbard, he'll say, when I see the blood, that's my own hope, and that's yours. That's yours.

Blood! Blood! Unaccepting blood! I wish I could preach it until the Spirit of God could plunge it. You are such a wicked person that the only way God can avoid sending you to hell is to hang your son on a cross, and for you to be a partaker of that cross. An old, hard-drinking colonel had his executive officer call me, and he said, Chaplain, the CO wants to see you as soon as you can get over to the office.

I walked there. The old colonel had been my friend. All the chaplains, those frightened men that had trouble with lying officers, they didn't give a hoot.

It's these religious guys that want you to keep from being honest with souls. And he said, Chaplain, I'm going to break a little rule here. But he sent the boys out on bidwack and said, If you want to, why don't you get a car.

I'll have one sent around. He said, You go out there and tell the captain. I said, You could hold a religious service.

I know this ain't nobody's supposed to know about this bidwacking business. That's when they're out there on a seven-day alert. And he said, The alert's done come in, and they've just got two days now till they'll be shipping out.

And he said, Why don't you go out there and tell the captain. They ain't got seven days no more. They've just got two.

He said, Of course, this is Army secrets. But you can go out there. He said, If you get in trouble, I'll ask.

And he was about violating the rules. Old heart, drinking heart, cussing Episcopalian. I talked to him and tears rolled down his cheeks.

I said, Preacher, I'm too far gone. No hope for me. And so I got in the car and went way out in the country.

And there were several hundred boys out there being on alert. Getting ready. They knew most in time now they'd be packing their little ribs.

Go to the port of embarkation over where the bullets were firing. I told the captain, he cussed a little bit. I said, Well, if the colonel said so, it's all right.

And he had a boy blow a horn, and everybody came around and said, The chaplain's here, and he's going to have a religious service, and you boys want to attend. It'll be all right. I said, It'll give you an hour.

And everybody did. He told them, This is it. This is it.

You boys are shipping out. They're scared. Anybody be scared of that since it's not coming out of the rain.

I never faced those bullets, but I just don't believe you. You tell me you can go through that kind of war and not be scared. I don't believe you're a human being.

And so they got out the little organ, and a fellow that is a beautiful white boy played the organ, and a boy with teeth like pearl and skin as black as soot led to singing. And they sat on the grass under some trees, passed out a few songbooks, and pumped that organ. And that old colored boy led them singing, What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Down at the cross where my Savior died. There where for cleansing from sin I cried.

There where my heart was the blood of pride. Glory to His name. And then I preached to them.

I said, It's Christ or hell. It's Christ or hell. It's be identified with that one who was taken outside of a holy city and killed between two malefactors.

So that when God looks at you, He says, There's an old boy that is identified with that one. This congregation enabled people by thy grace to lay hold on the living Lord who's on a throne. He got there by laying down his life on a bloody tree to pay the debt of sinners.

Speak to hearts right now. If you came to this house of God this morning wanting an opportunity to identify yourself with this group of people by a letter, a promise of a letter, asking this church to baptize you, we want to give you an opportunity to do that thing this morning. And then we want to give people an opportunity to make this the initial time when you start out on an all-out search to be joined to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not identify a physical move of salvation, but the little woman didn't have to touch the hem of the garment of the Lord, but she thought she did. Any way on earth, you can publicly and privately, and from now until the day you die, begin to hang on to the skirts of the Lord Jesus Christ, crying faith to Him, Lord, have mercy on my soul. We want to give you an opportunity to make that initial start this morning.

If you want to come for prayer, you come. If you want to come for instruction, you come. If you want to come for baptism, you come.

If you understand what that implies, if you're here from some other place and you want to be identified with these people, you come. We're going to sing a little song while we stand, and that's the invitation.

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