

(Forging the Vessel of Recovery) 1- the Success of the First Century Church

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The success of the first century church can be duplicated by being filled with the Holy Spirit, recognizing the power is of God, and having intense conviction in our faith.

Duration: 56:34

Scripture: Exodus 15:23-26, Luke 10:17, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Acts 2:41, Acts 3:7-8

Topics: "Apostolic"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of personal witness for Christ. They highlight that while television, radio, and printed materials are valuable tools for spreading the gospel, nothing can replace the impact of a personal testimony. The speaker mentions a survey that found that only one person in a thousand is in the church because of television, while 98% of people come to church because someone personally shared their faith with them. The sermon also emphasizes the need for believers to actively engage in sharing the gospel with others, rather than relying solely on financial contributions or media outreach. The speaker shares examples of the power of the gospel to transform lives and communities, and encourages listeners to have a deep love for Jesus as their motivation for sharing the good news.

Transcript

If you'll turn with me to the Book of Acts, and this first lesson, Forging the Vessel of Recovery, my thought is the success of the first century church. Can we see it again? There's nobody under this tent, having read the Book of Acts, who doesn't recognize there's something missing in today's religion. You cannot read the Book of Acts and see the vitality, the vigor, the trust, the power of those believers without recognizing there's something missing in today's religion.

Isn't that right? There's some constituent missing that must be replaced. We must gain, we must recover that which is lost, if we are going to duplicate the success of that first century church. In the first chapter of the Book of Acts, I want to read verse number 8. But you shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and in the uttermost part of the earth.

Turn right over to the second chapter of the Book of Acts. I want to read verse 4, then all the way over to verse 41. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Verse 4, chapter 2. Verse 41 of chapter 2. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day, listen to it, there was added unto them about three thousand souls. I want you to turn with me to the third chapter of the Book of Acts. Third chapter of the Book of Acts, reading verses 7 and 8. Verses 7 and 8. And he took him by the right hand, lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, leaping, and praising God. Then in chapter 4 and verse 4, let us read these words. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men were about five thousand.

The only generation that ever reached their generation for Christ was the first one. He commanded them and us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. And the only generation of the church to ever reach this generation was the first one.

Without a radio, television, or jet airplane, they reached their generation for Christ. The apostle Paul evangelized eighteen hundred miles. That's like from the Rio Grande River to the Great Lakes, single-handedly.

From the Middle East, he planted the gospel along the major highways of Europe. He touched a generation for God, and died believing that everybody on earth had heard the gospel. They reached their generation for God.

They took, listen, they took the words of Jesus literally. He said in Acts 1 and 8, you shall have power. They went out of that upper room saying, such as I have.

They took it literally, it worked. He said you shall receive power. Peter said to a man that had been crippled for forty years, such as I have, I give to you.

He believed that he had received something tangible, real, wonderful, and it worked for him. It changed a generation for God. They didn't mince words, they believed.

They were men of conviction. They believed that what he said was a fact. When the wind blew through that upper room, they knew he had sat down at the right hand of the Father.

That which was coming to them was that which he had promised. And through that they evangelized a generation for Christ. There were certain things about them that must be repeated in this generation.

If we are going to see the success in the closing of this time as they saw in the beginning. And let me say to you very early on that the only question asked here is are you going to be a part of it? Because somebody is going to do it in this generation. I believe the end of this age has come.

I believe that we stand on the threshold of the greatest event of history. That's the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that we are a people on whom the ends of this world have come.

That Christ is going to come and he's not coming after a wore out, broke down religious machine. But he's coming after a church that was born in the first century. If you want to know what he's coming after, have a

look at the book of Acts.

Have a look at what he left. He'll not come after anything left, less than he left. He said upon this rock, I will build my church.

If he comes after, less than he started with, then certainly he would have failed. So it's not a question can we or will we. Somebody is going to duplicate the success of the first century.

And the only question I ask you is will you be a part of it? I've read the book of Acts. I'm reading the pages of that great book. As you read what's taken place, as dead folks are made alive.

As thousands are born into the kingdom of God. As blind people see Paul, see people jump and run. And communities are stirred and moved for God on every page.

I've had to breathe from my heart. That's life. That is life.

That is life. I read it over and over. It's not the sterile system of doctrines learned by men in Bible schools where they turn them out.

Like Acts handles that it's only a head knowledge of things. But it is a growing reality of God. And after having read it I turn to the book of Ecclesiastes.

Pastor, can I read these words? What has been shall be again. Thank God somebody in this generation is going to repeat it. And by the grace of God I intend to be a part of it.

I believe that God has given me something for this generation that I must share. And I believe that some of the things I'm going to say to you this week are what is going to be in that vessel of recovery. If you're going to be a part of this end time movement there's certain things that we'll have to be aware of, know and incorporate in our being.

Number one, that first church was aware that to be filled with the Spirit wasn't a one time experience that you talked in tongues 25 years ago. They knew it was more than that. To be filled with the Spirit as Paul said in Ephesians 5.18 Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be.

Be, that's present tense. Be filled with the Spirit. They were aware that to be filled with the Spirit required again and again returning to the altar of God to replenish that which God had given in the beginning.

You don't have to backslide, you burn up the oil. I said you burn up the oil. They were filled with the Holy Ghost in the second chapter of the book of Acts.

They healed a man that was crippled, prayed five thousand into the kingdom of God, got locked up, beat, threatened, went and had a prayer meeting in the fourth chapter and the Bible said they were filled with the Spirit. You see, as they suffered the humiliation, the flesh died, the vessel was enlarged. Or you just burn it up.

I'm not that old, but I can remember in the part of the world I came from when the REA hadn't reached there and when it did, we didn't connect to it. We just had these little kerosene lamps and the one characteristic of them was that as long as you kept oil in them, they did very well. But if you let the oil burn out, begin to burn the wick, all they did was smoke the chimney.

Isn't that right? All they did was smoke the chimney. And I learned a long time ago, if you let the Holy Ghost leak out of the church and you begin to burn the blubber of the flesh, all it will do is smudge your eyes, foggish you, and you'll never know where you are. They knew that they must go again and again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

That it was a constant, every day, being filled with the Holy Spirit so that we present Christ and not ourselves. This was the first lesson about early church. It wasn't that we'd get them filled and holler next, like giving a GI haircut and forget what it's all about.

I wasn't filled just to tell somebody I could talk in tongues or make me feel good to run around the church. I was filled that God could live in me wherever I am, on an airplane, in a restaurant, in a grocery store, apartment building, in the motel down the street. God is there because He is in me.

That's what it's all about. I wasn't saved to go to heaven someday. I'm sure going there.

I was saved to be filled with the Holy Ghost here in October 1984 that God could live in us and be in us wherever we are and whatever we do. We are here not to be doctors, lawyers, merchants, chiefs. We are here as a vessel of the Lord.

Everything else works out along that line. If we walk in the will of God, our only purpose to fulfill the purpose of God, then God will make out of our lives what is it necessary to put us where we're supposed to be. A young man came to his pastor, just got saved, filled with the Holy Ghost.

He was a dishwasher in a restaurant. And he said to his pastor, I believe I ought to have a better job now that I'm saved and filled with the Holy Ghost. And the pastor said to him, Son, you couldn't have a better job.

Why, pastor, you don't understand. I wash dishes in a restaurant. Yes, but that's not your job.

Your job is a vessel of the Lord. There's somebody back there in that dishwashing department that needs God. And the only way God has to get in there is for you to have Him in you.

Be honest. Be faithful. And promotion comes from the Lord.

He's the manager of that restaurant today. Wasn't here to be a dishwasher. Wasn't here to be a doctor.

Wasn't here to be a merchant. Here to be a vessel of the Lord. And if I'm faithful in that, everything else will work out in my life.

That early church was aware of this. They were aware of this. They were aware that to be filled with the Spirit meant at all times, listen, they knew, number two, that the power was of God.

I want to read something to you in Acts chapter 3 and verse 12. Listen to this. Acts chapter 3 and verse 12.

And they were all amazed. And went down saying one to another, What meaneth this? What meaneth this? That's Acts chapter 2 and verse 12. Then in verse 12 or chapter 3, And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, You men of Israel, why marvel you at this? Or why look you so earnestly on us, as though by our own power of holiness, we made this man to walk? They knew, they knew, they knew that the power wasn't of them.

Unless they maintain the fullness of the Holy Spirit, then there's no more cripples going to walk. Then any more blind people going to see. They knew that the power wasn't of themselves.

What the problem of the church is today, we've taught ourselves to believe that if we can learn just to quote scriptures, that we can heal people. There must be something in me. If I'm going to give anybody anything, I must have something.

I must always know that the power isn't mine, it's his. You know today, a great part of this country, God used you or me or some of us to work a miracle, let us tell it three times, and the world think we did it. Isn't that right? Let us testify of it two or three times, and the world believe that we did it.

One of the great truths set forth on this is when he sent the 70 out. He sent 70 out. They came back to him.

They said to him, on the return, they were rejoicing, Lord, even devils were subject to us. His first reply to that was a rebuke. You know what he said? I saw Satan fall as lightning.

I used to wonder, why did he say that? They evidently had a successful crusade that cast out devils, healed the sick. But yet he never rejoiced with them over their testimony. He said, I saw Satan fall as lightning.

What he was saying is, I see the same pride trying to get into you that was in Satan. That's what knocked him out of heaven, pride. Let me tell you something, boys.

He is saying, don't you rejoice because devils are subject to you. You rejoice because your name is in heaven. And if you ever break that link, devils are not subject to you.

They are subject to you because I am in you. Keep the Holy Ghost there. Where Christ can come out.

And devils will always be subject. Break that link. It's nothing but religious talk.

I saw people scream at devils till they were hoarse. And the poor people left just like they came. They knew the power wasn't of themselves.

He said, don't look on us as if by our own power we did this. I received something that upper room yesterday that's in me. And he said, it's as real as anything.

The Holy Ghost is as tangible and real as electricity in those lights. Thank God it can be in us. And God can use us with it.

They knew this. Listen. Second, they knew the treasure was in earthen vessels.

Oh, how soon we forget that, huh? Listen to me. They said we have this treasure in earthen vessels. They had to tell themselves that.

You must never forget that. They said this thing that's working is in earthen vessels. And all they were saying was that vessel has to be kept under sanctification if that river is going to be in there.

It's in a vessel that can be corrupted. This body is not redeemed. The Bible said in Romans 8 that all of creation is groaning and waiting for the redemption of this body to wither.

This body has not been redeemed. After even the hair turns gray, the eyes get dim. Amen.

The feet don't run as fast as they used to. It is corruptible, it's corrupted, and it's dying. And that first church recognized that this treasure, this power, this work was in earthen vessels that had to be kept in sanctification.

We've been led to believe that this power be in the idolatrous. We've been taught that people who are idolatrous loose living folks could have this power. There ain't no such a thing.

You can learn how to say words, but I'm going to tell you something, folks. The Hollywood-eyed, the Vegas-eyed, or the Nashville-eyed, if you're going to entertain in Vegas on a Sunday, a Monday night, you're not going to have power in a pool pit on a Sunday night. Amen.

This is an earthen vessel that has to be kept in subjection and sanctification. The Holy Ghost will leave it if you begin to contaminate the vessel, this vessel. They knew that, oh, my God, if I could drive this home to you and I, that if this power is going to reside in us, we must recognize that this power is in earthen vessels that can be corrupted, and that all times I must keep this body under subjection.

Oh, yes, sir. I must keep it in sanctification. Second, my third brother, they were men and women of intense conviction.

That's almost lost in this age, you know that. Very little conviction. I grew up in a little town in Texas, less than 500 people that had a higher moral conviction than the average Pentecostal church.

It's sad to have to say that. I'm talking about people with conviction. If they believed their hat ought to be on, you may cut their head off, but they wouldn't take that hat off.

They were people of intense conviction. They believed. They wouldn't sell it for a mess of pottage.

They wouldn't sell it. The Bible said they loved not their lives unto death. They believed what they believed and they stood for it.

Amen. There was no way that they would sell like an eesaw that which they believed could gain an advantage on this earth no matter what it cost them. They went everywhere preaching the resurrection of Christ.

Thomas went into southern India and died at the hands of the Hindus, a horrible death. All he had to do to save his life was to tell them that that resurrection was a fabrication of their own mind, to deny what he really believed. But they loved not their lives.

They wouldn't sell what they believed for a personal advantage. The weakness of the church today is demonstrated by the fact it lets circumstances determine its convictions. It lets circumstances determine its conviction.

Isn't that sad? I said that's a sad thing. It's a sick world, brothers and sisters, when we come to the place that as a nation there is a debate on and a whole host that want to endorse and give what they call homosexual rights and add them into the affirmative action. I mean it's a sick world we live in.

Do you know that? Every civilization has ended with that awful spirit of perversion. And today as a nation we've come to a place that we are talking about adding them or wanting to that's in the platform of giving

them the same rights we give minority groups. Listen, I was born like I am.

You was born like you are. That homosexual wasn't born that way. God didn't make that.

Amen. He didn't make him that way. That's demon possession.

What a sad day it is when we arrive at that place. But you know, a great part of the church don't have enough conviction to even know. That's the truth.

They don't have enough conviction to see what's taking place. They were men and women of intense conviction. What they believed, they believed.

They didn't deviate not one inch from the thing that they believed no matter what the cost might be. They stood on the Word of God. I had a man just got saved a few years ago in the church.

He and his family had moved into the city. And this is back a few years ago and several years ago. It was about 1958.

And he was working for the RC Coal Company at that time making \$65 a week. He got saved, heard me preaching on time, knew there was the Word of God, called me over for a little personal counseling. And what he wanted me to do was tell him he didn't have to pay those tithes.

He told me all of his problems, how much it cost him for rent, how much it cost him for car note, how much it cost him for the school, kids, and all of this kind of a thing. And he said to me, Preacher, you can understand that I just can't pay those tithes. I said, let me tell you something, sir.

God hasn't authorized me to be a banker to lend His money to anybody. Amen. I've got no right to change this book.

Amen. That's the big problem with the church. You know the problem in this country.

Those judges sitting on that bench have interpreted that law according to who's in front of them. You never saw a multimillionaire in an electric chair. Those laws are interpreted by the influence of affluence of those in front of them are the lack of it.

And the preacher has interpreted the Word of God to fit the parishioner. I have no right to change this what God says. That's the way it is.

And the church must come back to a place of conviction. I must just say what He says. I have no right to change anything for you or anybody.

When Herod said to John the Baptist, what about me? John said to the king. And he knew it would cost him his head. It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

It's not lawful for you. He told him what he had to tell him because that's what God said. He didn't write the book.

Amen. Men killed each other. Isaiah was sown asunder for the message that he preached.

Every apostle but the apostle John died a violent death simply because they were men of conviction. They loved not their lives unto death. I want to tell you something ladies and gentlemen.

There will never be a repeat of Pentecost in its power like the book of Acts until God can forge a vessel that has convictions about what He says. This book is the book of God. I said it's the book of God.

He said what He meant. He meant what He said. No preacher, priest or pope has a right to change what's in this book.

Then, they knew that the power, the power with God was a position. I'm talking about can we duplicate? Now I'm telling you that somebody is going to duplicate the success of that first century. They knew that they must always be filled with the Spirit.

That that treasure was in earthen vessels. They were men and women of conviction. And they knew that power with God wasn't positive thinking but a position.

Jesus said if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask what you will and it shall be done. Power is a position. Daniel was in Babylon and he demonstrated the power of God as well in Babylon as he did in Jerusalem.

He was in Babylon but Babylon never got in Daniel. Problem with the church. The church is in the world.

That rotten world has got in the church. Grounded it out. Grounded it out on the shores of heresy.

Worldliness in the church. What a tragedy. Daniel was in Babylon but Babylon never got in Daniel and he never lost his power.

I'll say to you today, brothers and sisters, we're going to recognize that we're in this world we're not of this world. I belong to God. I'm governed by laws higher than this world.

I must live by them no matter what the cost of it may be. If this world's laws contradict the laws of heaven, then I must live by the laws of heaven. I cannot.

I'm governed by a kingdom that's higher than this kingdom of America or any other kingdom on this earth. I belong. There's laws and principles that must govern our lives and if I abide in him and he abides in me, then thank God I'll ask what I will.

Jesus said or Paul writing to the Corinthian church said, come out from among them and be ye separate and I will be your God and you will be my people. But it rests on that premise. One man, one man took the Bible pulled all the promises out.

Got a Bible with nothing but the promises of God. So like hotcakes. All folks recited about it.

He was telling me about that. I said, you're going to be in trouble with God on that. You take away from this book, God will take away from you.

And those promises don't work outside of the setting that God put them in, in that Bible. No, your little old promise box at that breakfast table won't work. That promise you can't pull it out of the context.

The Bible says in Exodus 15 26, I am the Lord that healeth thee. That's a promise of God, but you pull it out by itself and it don't work because Exodus 15 23 24 and 25 says if you keep my commandments and you obey my statutes and you don't partake of the evil of Egypt, I am the Lord that healeth thee. And if you don't keep his commandments and if you don't obey his statutes, then he is not your Lord that will heal

you.

Oh, come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord. There is that position that must be kept by the church of the living God if this is going to work. It's no use in you coming here and getting a prayer card.

I'm not talking about rank sinners. All along the line, God heals sinners in a sovereign act of his own will. He heals sinners.

But when you deal with a church, it's a different thing. It's a sovereign act of God to deal with a sinner. He's dead.

Ain't nothing in him to respond. But if you're born again, then the life of God is in you and there must be a response from you to the word of God. There's no need in coming here and getting a prayer card, climbing across that platform to the man of God to lay hands on you.

If you're going to continue adultery, fornication, lying, cheating, evil, stealing, all of this kind of thing, ain't anything going to happen to you when we walk with him. He said, you come to that altar, you come to that platform where the man of God has come to pray. If you have ought against your brother, if you have ought against your sister, your brother, you just leave your gift right there.

You go to your brother, you go to your sister, and you get it right with them. You straighten everything up with them, and then you come back here to this altar, and there'll be an answer. And if you won't do that, you don't believe anything, no matter how boisterous you are about having faith.

You don't believe a thing if you won't obey what this book says. To believe God is to obey God. Unbelief is always linked with disobedience.

It's said that Israel never got into that promised land because of their unbelief. That is, their disobedience to God is called unbelief. And believing God works out always in obedience to what God says to you.

Power is there. Keep that position right. Keep that position right.

You'll find that God will be there. God will be there. Then listen.

To maintain their position of power, they, the early church, fasted often. Oh my. I know you've been shouting with me up to here.

And you've agreed with me to this point. But some of you, I may lose you here. Oh my.

Listen. To maintain that place, and that position, that separation from the Bible said they fasted often. Amen.

Fasting isn't a bargain counter with God. Amen. You're not going to fast 20 days and God don't use something.

There's only one thing that fasting accomplishes. It is a surgical knife that deals with that carnal nature. Deals with that self.

Fasting is for one purpose on this earth. To crucify the old man. To bring it down.

Everything that has life demands some kind of a food to keep it alive. Isn't that right? If it's plant, animal, human or spiritual, it has to be fed if it lives. Plants, if you don't feed them, they'll turn yellow and die.

If you've got a dog, you don't feed him, he'll die. If you've got a husband, you don't feed him, he'll die. And if you're a spiritual person, and you don't feed on the word of God.

Fasting, fasting brings the old man down. They fasted often. Now the problem, the problem isn't hard to discover.

I don't have to sit here and guess to tell you why the church is not functioning as it should function. And nobody loves the church any more than me. But you never get an alcoholic healed until that alcoholic is willing to admit he's an alcoholic.

And as long as you and I believe everything's alright, we're never going to look inward. But when we begin to look at the book of Acts and the power of God, and the thing that God wants, and to see what's happening, then examine it. You don't have to look far to discover why we're failing.

In Galatians chapter 5 in verse 17, Paul wrote these words. He said, So then, the flesh, the self, lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. These are contrary one to the other, so that we, what, cannot do what we would.

My, my. What would we do? He said, as you go, cleanse the leper, heal the wretched, the deceived, freely give. That's what we're supposed to be doing.

As he was in this world, so are we. Acts 10.38 about him says, Have God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good, healing all, A-double-L that were oppressed of the devil. If we're to be what he was, then we should heal all that are oppressed of the devil, and the problem is the flesh.

Paul said, the problem here is the flesh. The flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that that church cannot do. It is this hodgepodge of flesh and spirit.

Amen. Fasting is to break the hold of that carnal nature. Isaiah 58, verses 6 and 7. You read these words, Is not this the fast that I've chosen to loose the bands of wickedness? Let the oppressed go free.

And that you break every yoke. Now, if you read the first 5 verses there, Israel has come to the prophet, and they're saying to him, we fasted, God won't hear us. We bowed our head as a bull rushed, but God won't pay us any mind.

And the prophet said to him, but you fasted for the wrong purpose. Your motive was that your voice may be heard on high. You're fasting for your own profit, is what he's saying.

But he said, this is the fast that I've chosen that to loose the bands of wickedness. You go to Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2. And you come to this. To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Who has believed thou report, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? And then the prophet said in verse 2, God's ear is not heavy that he can't hear you.

His arm isn't too short to reach you, but your iniquity. Oh my. Your iniquity is the culprit.

Has separated between you and your God. That word iniquity is not the same thing as the word used for sin. The word iniquity has its roots in that thing we just called the flesh.

The iniquity, that self spirit. That spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience. That flesh that sits in the temple of God as God.

Amen. That self, that has usurped the place of God, that can't love God but it wants to go to heaven because it don't want to go to hell, but it doesn't love God. It wants God to serve him.

That self, that tries to lead God instead of God leading him. This is what he's talking about. This is separated between you and your God.

Isaiah said in 58 and 6, this is the fast that I've chosen to break the hold of that carnal nature. He wasn't saying that I fast to break the hold on you, but to get myself free. It's only as a church is free that she can free others.

So he said, this is the fast that I've chosen. To lose those bands of wickedness. To break the strangle hold of that flesh.

That's keeping the church from doing what that church would do. If you run the reference, it'll take you to Romans 7. You find Paul there in the 7 chapter of Romans, saying what I want to do, I can't do. What I don't want to do, I find myself doing.

Then he cries out oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death. I know there's a lot of people saying that Paul wasn't saved here. I submit to you, no man can write Romans 5 and 6 without being saved.

Oh no, you can't write that kind of gospel without knowing Christ. Yeah, he is born again. All he's going through the same struggle you went through when you got born again.

There's two people in there. When you're born again, there's a new man, there's an old man, and the warfare between that carnal and the spiritual so that what you want to do, you couldn't do and what you couldn't do, you didn't want to do you found yourself doing. And he said, oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from the body of this death.

Now in that, Paul used for an example in here, an allegory. One of the means the Romans used of putting a man to death for certain crimes in the Roman state they sentenced you to death and to kill you, they took a dead corpse, a dead body chained it to you face to face wrapped you with it so that you live with it, you slept with it, until you died from the stench of that rotten corrupted flesh. Amen.

What Paul is saying, what that corpse is to a living human being that carnal nature is to the spiritual man. It kills him, murders him, and keeps him from doing, and God said, this is the fast I've chosen to break that hold. Let that spiritual man out front, and it's God out front that's the nature of God.

Isn't that right? Let that spiritual man gain the ascendancy over the soul and the body pulling the whole man Godward and you'll see this is the place of maintaining that position. Listen. Listen.

The actions of a new creature is the action of God it's the action of God. This is what's meant by the name of Jesus. This is exactly what the Bible means when it said they went everywhere preaching remission of sin in the name of Jesus.

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of Jesus. When you're baptized in the name of Jesus, it just simply means that it's not I, but Christ. I can show you Peter raised Dorcas from the dead in

the name of Jesus, but he didn't say in the name of Jesus or I. He was there.

It was that spiritual man. It was Christ coming through. The preacher, he'll always work, ladies and gentlemen.

This is what he's meant. You see it was not, no longer I but Christ. Paul said that.

Peter raised her from the dead. This is what's meant by the name of Jesus. The action of that new creature is the action of God.

Spiritual growth is putting off the old man and putting on the new. Amen. Putting off the old.

Fasting is God's means of putting off the old man. Fasting. That's the only way.

You've got to deny it. Fasting isn't just merely missing a meal, but it's fasting that mind. You've got to cut that television off.

You can feed your mind on the trash of this world and have a spiritual being. There ain't no way on this earth you can sit down and watch that trash hours at a time and have any spirituality about you at all. That old man would sit there till he died.

Isn't that right? He'd sit there and watch that violence and rape and plunder. But God says in Psalms 11 and 5 the soul that loves violence, God hates. I didn't write this.

I'm telling you. Fasting is denying this mind. Denying this body.

Denying those actions. Going the way God would have me to go. God's means.

God's means of putting down that old man is fasting. Next, listen. They were totally impressed with the Lord Jesus.

Oh, hear me church. You can be excited about miracles and be dead. I can take you through the Bible and show you folks that jump and run and shouted over the bread being broke and the multitudes being fed.

The dead walking. The cripples walking blind to see Him. And they got so excited.

They hooped a lot and run, jumped and shouted. But then Jesus got them in the 7th chapter of the Gospel of John and said, except you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you. And they left him cold.

A lot of people impressed with religion. I'll tell you what drove them to the ends of the earth. They were impressed with Christ.

They were impressed not with what He did, but the man himself. Oh church, how we've relegated Him to a second place. I want to tell you something.

I'll say it without fear of contradiction. I don't care what it calls itself. Any church that has as its center anything other than Jesus Christ is a cult.

If water baptism is a center it's a cult. If communion of the mass is a center it's a cult. If talking in tongues is a center it's a cult.

All of these are part and parcel but He is the hub. All of these come from Him. All of them point to Him.

All of them come from Him. They were impressed with Christ. They died for Christ.

They lived for Christ. Their whole life was a love to Jesus. This is what drove them, brothers and sisters, to witness, to tell others.

They were impressed with Christ. They had moved beyond the scene. That is the mere excitement of religion to Christ Himself.

At that point, circumstances have no effect on their lives. Paul said, none of these things move me. You can't read the book of Acts.

You come to places in there that is not 5,000 getting saved. They're in jail houses. They're being beaten.

They're sawn asunder. They're pressed without measure. But he said, none of these things move me.

If you're only excited about the happenings of miracles, I can tell you're going to pass through times when they're not happening. But he said, I'll never leave you, nor forsake you. They moved beyond the scene to the unseen.

And the circumstances had no effect on him. 90% of the church today is governed by the scene. Governed by the scene.

Yes, sir. That's the reason there's such a response that if you send me \$100, you're going to get \$10,000 back. That sounds good to the flesh.

No matter you don't get the \$10,000, you'll try it again next time. Try it again next time. God says, if you give, I'll give to you.

I believe that. There's no way you can buy from God. Amen.

There's no way, but you can make an instant appeal to the carnal nature of the human being. Because he's governed by circumstances. And so he's double-minded because the circumstances are changing every day out there, folks.

Amen. Today, it's one way. Tomorrow, the whole political climate of the world may change.

Maybe an atomic bomb sailing this way before morning. But I'm telling you, if you're anchored in the rock of ages, and not just some little something you saw. They moved beyond the seen to the unseen.

They were totally impressed with Jesus Christ. That's the reason they were able to take the gospel to their generation. Their quest was for Jesus, not a personal prophecy.

Oh, that I might know him, was the cry of the preacher Paul. Jesus was their first love, and that love moved them beyond the ordinary. He said to the church of Ephesus, he commended them for a lot of things, didn't he? But then he said to them, I've got something against you.

You've left your first love. And he said, if you don't regain that first love, I'm going to come and remove this candlestick. That's my presence.

You know what he's saying? If you and I don't keep that first love, we're not going to be a part of it. You know what first love is? That's to love first. That in everything he has the preeminence.

It's like a man meets that girl. Amen. He loves her.

She becomes the love of his life. All others in a shut out are supposed to be. Amen.

And everything is turned to her. That's the way it is with Christ. They were in love with Jesus.

Thank God, and it drove them to the ends of the world. They weren't in love with him because of what he had done for them, but because of who he was and what he was. And this is the thing that moved them to reach their generation for Christ.

Amen. That first love was kept alive. 54% of the marriages in this country wind up in a divorce.

You know the main reason? They don't keep that first love alive. Don't pay any attention to each other. Don't talk.

Don't... You know, that man, he looks at her when she gets to be about 40, and she's not that cute little teenager he married, but if he looked that bald head in the mirror, he's not that cute little boy she married either. I mean, that first love has got to be kept alive. Yes, sir.

And so it is with Jesus. That first love. If you one time are closer to God than you are now, you better move yourself up a notch.

He's a coming. I said, He's a coming. There's a time when some of you under this tent today, when they begin to sing Oh, how I love Jesus, those tears begin to flow automatically.

Just the mention of His name sends a shiver up and down your spine. Amen. But today you can hear it, and it doesn't move you.

Something is wrong. You lost the one thing on this earth, amen, that's going to get you there. Ephesus, he said, you'll either gain that first love, or I'm going to remove my presence.

And then listen to this. Not only were they impressed with the Lord Jesus, amen, but they were willing to make any sacrifice necessary to fulfill His command of the Great Commission. Their only reason for living was to do what He told them to do.

We can't help but to speak what we've heard and seen. There was a life in there that drove them beyond the limits of the ordinary. And they were willing to make any sacrifice to tell others about this Christ.

To give, to go, to die. Listen folks, I really praise God for all of the means we have for the gospel. The television, the radio, the printed page.

But nothing takes the place of that personal witness. Nothing. In a recent survey, they found that only one person in a thousand is in the church because of television.

Spending 500 billion a year, that's good, the means of communication. 98% are there because some disciple in the church said to somebody, I know Jesus, you ought to know Him too. He'd fix my life up, He can fix yours.

Telling what good things God has done for you. We've come to believe in this age of the mass media, we've come to believe that our obligation to the Great Commission is just to send \$10 to a ministry somewhere. You need to send \$10 to a worthy ministry.

But that doesn't remove you from the obligation of talking to your neighbor about Jesus, or sending the daughters of the church to the far corners of the earth to be a witness for Christ. You hear and say we're reaching the whole world with television. Let me tell you, I've preached across India where there are 900 million people, only two television stations in the entire country.

In the entire country of 900 million. 90% of that 900 million live in villages that don't have electricity even once a week. No.

It's going to cost you more than that to make him known. And one of the earmarks of that church, they were totally absolutely ready to make any sacrifice necessary even of their own life to fulfill that commission. The lack of missionary zeal in some churches is almost frightening.

The lack of desire to get the gospel. That's the reason I love this minister. I come all as I can.

I pastor a church. I've got a lot of things. Do a lot of traveling.

But this man is a missionary man. Reaching out to the world with the gospel. Not just with the radio, but personally.

And supporting others. Amen. He put over \$5,000 in last April into a project I had going in Africa.

He's reaching, reaching out. Amen. Listen.

God said God said to them, going all the world, preach the gospel to every creature. They were dead men and women on a furlough. They weren't moved by things about them.

The climate changed always, but they continued on with one purpose. They never saw anything but the fact that I'm here to make God's word known to a generation of people. God said, ask of me and I'll give you the heathen.

Ask of me. You read that in Psalms chapter 2 and verse 8. Ask of me and I'll give you the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost part of the earth for thy possession. They knew what that asking incorporated.

Listen. That psalm was primarily wrote to Jesus. But whatever was wrote to Him was wrote to us.

We are the body of Christ. The vehicle through which Christ expresses Himself. And Christ and that to Him ask of me and I'll give you the heathen knew to ask meant Calvary, meant death.

It meant bearing the sins of the whole world. That's what asking for the heathen meant. And those apostles knew that to ask of that heathen meant the worst kind of situations.

It meant it was going to cost them everything. But He said, ask of me. If you're willing to pay the price.

It's a sad thing that ninety percent of the gospel is preached to six percent. Two thousand seven hundred million people live on this earth that never one time heard the name of Jesus. How many times you heard it? How many nights have you laid awake pleading with God for the heathen? What do you have when it

comes time to give the missions a penny march? You know a lot of places I was in a place that had a penny march for missions.

Two thousand seven hundred million. And a penny march. People give a dollar.

Listen. They weren't concerned on how much they were supposed to give. They were saying how little can we live on that we may make this Jesus known.

That's the reason they reached the earth. There was a burning zeal, desire in them to touch a world for Christ and it drove them to the extremes. That's not much a part of us today.

I said that's not much a part. You can raise more money to pad the pews in the most churches than you can to reach the heathen. You can raise more money for a new air conditioner than you can to reach the heathen.

Let me tell you something. What has been is going to be. Somebody is going to be that vessel.

Somebody. The power of the first century will be repeated. We see a glimpse of it here and there.

A friend of mine was in Green Bay, Wisconsin in a revival meeting. Brother John McDuff got a great church in Pasadena, Texas. He went into that stage city, into an assembly of God's church.

When he arrived, the pastors told him, they said, No, we know, Brother McDuff, that you're an emotional man, but we don't have none of that here. We don't want any of that here. We just want you to teach and preach and whatever happens, just let it be.

In other words, they toned it down to a pale orthodox chant around a dead altar fire. Amen. And he says he came there to preach, though.

He said, I came, I felt God wanted me there, up there in that predominantly Catholic community. He began that revival. And he said he preached for two weeks and nothing moving.

But one night, as he was preaching, a young girl, just 12 years old, began to travail, and they didn't know what was wrong with her. As she groaned, it looked like she was having a tachypenitis. Amen.

She groaned and wept and groaned and wept. It went on and on and on. They saw that there was nothing physical, that there was something happening.

Some of them tried to cast the devil out of her. They never saw anything like that. But as she went on, all that day and night, then another joined it.

Amen. But that travail broke out. Zion was actually in birth pains.

And he said on the third day of that, a cloud came into that assembly of God's church, settled down just above the people. And for three months he was there, just directing the traffic. Roman Catholics would come in off the street, sit down on the pew, and repent, and rise up and prophesy, and call the church back to God.

One of the deacons of the church, never been filled with the Holy Ghost, was fell out under the power of God. And when he was filled with the Holy Ghost, John said he was lifted off the floor about six inches. He said, I went, run my hand under him.

He just lay there, subtended in the air for ten, fifteen minutes, speaking in other tongues. Why should I think it strange? The same Holy Ghost picked Philip up and carried him thirty-five miles down the road. I'm telling you what has been is going to be.

God is going to startle this generation with the power of his gospel. But let me tell you something. He must have a vehicle for that to come through.

Amen. He must have. That first century power is going to be repeated.

When the instrument is right, the river will flow. God I believe at this moment is forging his instrument of recovery. Will you and I be a part of it? There's always been a remnant that have been the harbinger of a new start that involved the others.

But God has always reserved a remnant. Out of the six hundred thousand men that left Sukkoth, only two of them made it across that river. Joshua and Caleb.

But God has always had those that weren't affected by the trends of the time, but were men and women of conviction, stayed with the word of God when it made them look like an illegitimate child at a family reunion. But they stood with their lawns dirt about with truth and said the river's flowing in the wrong direction. We're going to have to turn it around.

And it was with those those alone that God was able to effect his revival. And God is in this moment forging a vessel of recovery. I sense it.

He talks to my spirit. I felt the Holy Ghost speak to me in the night, Pastor. Forging that vessel, that vessel of recovery.

And the question is not a question, not can we, but who will be those that repeat the success of the first century. Tomorrow, tomorrow, I'm going to tell you about that as my message will be a new cruise. I believe the most startling message of this Bible to honest to God believers, a new cruise, a vessel God will use to recover the church from a spiritual deflection and set her once more on the course of God's purpose in this earth.

Stand with me and let's worship God. Hallelujah. Lift your hands, folks.

Let's love God this morning. You've been a wonderful class here on the first day of this day services. Oh, thank you, brother.

Glory to God. Glory to God. Come on.

Worship Him, folks. Worship Him. Worship Him.

Worship Him.

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