

The Passion and Vision of Francis Asbury Society

by Dennis Kinlaw

The Francis Asbury Society promotes a message of heart purity and holiness, emphasizing the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse the heart and make it pure, and the importance of the presence of Christ in one's life for salvation.

Duration: 38:52

Scripture: Matthew 5:8, Matthew 22:37

Topics: "Francis Asbury"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares the story of A.B. Simpson, a Presbyterian pastor who had a transformative experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience ignited Simpson's passion for missions, and he preached a powerful message that inspired his congregation to give generously. The speaker also shares the story of Stanley Tam, a businessman who gave his business to God and saw incredible impact in spreading the Gospel. The sermon emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Spirit, living a life free from self-interest, and allowing the power of Christ's blood to cleanse and transform us.

Transcript

First of all, I want to say the Francis Asbury Society has nothing to do with Asbury College or Asbury Theological Seminary. Now, I was at the college for a number of years and taught also at the seminary and have had that association. But those are institutions.

And FAS was founded not to build an institution, but to promote a message. And there's a great deal of difference in a program to build an institution and a program to promote a message. In fact, sometimes it's harder to tell people what you're about when what you're after is to promote a message.

Now, what is that message? It's a very simple biblical one, but it is an incredibly important one. Let me say the thing we want to let the world know is that the blood of Christ can cleanse a human heart so that the heart of a person can be clean from self-interest, from his own desire to keep his thumb on his life and have some control over his life, that the blood of Christ can cleanse the inner heart of a person enough that he can love God with all of his heart, as Christ said we were supposed to do, with all of his mind, with all of his soul, and love his neighbor as himself. Now, the scripture uses a number of expressions to

describe that.

One of them is just simply the expression, pure in heart. And so in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And if it's a pure heart, it is a single heart, it is an undivided heart.

Now, that's what Paul's friend was expressing. And it's not a one of us who hasn't experienced it where we've had our own thumbs on our own lives, and our lives, our devotion to Christ has been mingled. There's been a division within us.

But the scripture speaks about the possibility that God can take a person's heart and unite it. The psalmist cried out, Unite my heart, O God, make it one. Another expression is, And I single to the glory of God, that as you live, the one purpose in your life is the glory of God, and you have let God take such total control of you that all you are, all you have, all there is about you is devoted to that single end, the glory of God.

And as we said, loving him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. I think this was what Jesus was getting at with the rich young ruler. And this is something that we usually don't connect with salvation.

But you will remember that this young man came to Jesus and said, What do I have to do to be saved? What do I have to do to have eternal life? And Jesus said, Keep the commandments. And the young man looked back at Jesus and said, Master, I've kept those. And Jesus said, Okay, one thing thou lackest.

Go, sell all that you have, give it to the poor, and come take up your cross and follow me. Now, Jesus wasn't after his wealth because Jesus didn't need his wealth. But you see, what he was after was the wholeness of his heart.

What he wanted was that young man. And when that young man, when Jesus said, One thing you lack, that young man turned and walked away, and Jesus' heart was broken because he had lost a young person whom he wanted and wanted totally for himself. I think that we in America are masters of stepping down the requirements for being a disciple of Jesus and a follower of him.

We talk about it, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And so we make a mental response to that and think that we're saved. But if you will follow the teachings of Christ, you will find that Christ said there ought to be a cross in every person's life, just as there's a cross in his, a cross in every person who claims to be a Christian's life, where a person dies to his own interests.

That's his terminology for getting your thumb off your life so that Christ controls it. Die to your own interests in your own way and come alive wholly and fully and completely for Christ. Now, somebody will say, Well, doesn't everybody who's a Bible believer believe that? Now, unfortunately, they don't.

Now, I'm going to talk about some people who are some positions taken by people that are my brothers, sisters in Christ, many of whom I have learned from and profited from. But you know, my responsibility in yours is to take the Word of God and follow it as God opens it to you. And in our day, take for instance, there has been a remarkable reformation in recent years of the reformation position that Luther took, simul peccator et us, that a person is at the same time both justified and a sinner.

And so a person will live all his life without ever being fully free from sin, but at the same time he can be justified. Now, you know, I read in the Scripture that Christ came to save us from our sins, not to save us in our sins. I don't want to play down the sinfulness and the sinful potential of the human heart, but I would

like to address the question of the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse a heart and to unite a heart, the power of the Spirit to unite a heart to where a person loves God with all of his heart, loves Him more than he loves anything else in his life, more than he loves himself or those things that are related to him.

I'm fascinated, by the way, in the last 50 years, 70 years in the United States, we've had the sweeping movement of what we speak of as the charismatic movement. Now, I have some dear friends that are in that. When I was pastoring in New York, one of the closest friends that I had, he was the best preacher I could find, was an assembly of God, a Britisher, an assembly of God pastor, and I had him preach for me numbers of times.

But you know, one of the things that interests me about the charismatic movement is that it talks a great deal about the Holy Spirit and talks about the gifts the Spirit can give. It talks about the signs and the wonders that the Spirit can perform. But the interesting thing is I can hardly find a charismatic theologian in the United States or in the English-speaking world that believes that the baptism of the Holy Spirit really cleanses the human heart.

The emphasis is on the power, not on the heart purity. But I noticed that Jesus says, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. I received the other day a book from a major evangelical press in this country.

It was an author's copy and was sent to me as a gift. And so I opened it. It was on spiritual power and spiritual gifts.

And I read very interesting appeal in it by a man who has nine books on the market in the Christian bookstores. And he talked about the fact that the thing we need to recognize and let be discovered again in the church is the signs and wonders of the Spirit, the power of the Spirit. He went on to explain that you can be filled with the Spirit.

Some people are filled 25 percent. Some people are filled 50 percent. Some people are filled 90 percent.

But at no point did he ever say it was possible for a person to be filled fully, completely. In other words, filled. And then he went on to say, Now, this has nothing to do with your getting to the place where there's real victory in your life over sin.

Because, you see, God knows that we are twisted and perverted enough that we will never be able to get away from the contamination of our own carnal self-interest. So he says the wonderful thing is that God has stepped down the requirements of grace to meet the condition of our heart. Now, what intrigues me is that book will be in every Christian bookstore in a matter of a few days if it isn't already there.

And, you know, one of the things that troubles me about much of the preaching on the radio and in TV in our day is the concept that salvation can be separated from the presence of Christ. You know, if you've believed, if you've been born again, then you're in. And you're fixed forever and your sins past, present and future are taken care of.

And so you don't have to worry about those. And so it doesn't matter whether you're in fellowship with Christ or not. It's whether you've had that one-time experience that fixes you.

Now, I remember the story in the Gospels about Jesus in the boat when the storm came up. And when the disciples were terrified, they turned to him and said, Don't you care whether we perish? It was the

presence of Christ in that boat that saved them in that storm. I do not believe there is any salvation apart from the presence of Christ.

It is when he comes into my life and I keep him there, live with him and walk with him, let him keep me through his spirit, that there is deliverance and freedom and the power of his spirit. And that is one of the things that troubles me about. So the end result is to be born again.

Bill Clinton's born again. And so anybody born again simply means to be forgiven. It doesn't mean to be saved from your sins.

Now, I notice that some of the best theological minds in our day say that what is the normal Christian life? I have a friend who worked with him on a board for a number of years. He has two articles that are very powerful articles on Romans 7. And his conclusion is that when Paul said, The good which I would, I can't do, and the evil which I would not, that is what I do, he says that is the normal Christian life because we will never be free from that permeation of sin within us and its control until the resurrection comes. If I were to name him, he'd be known by 90 percent of the people in this crowd.

But you know, there is something about me that when I pick up the Bible and read it, I find that there is a different picture there. And I want to tell you about something else that happened to me that has affected my looking at Scripture. In 1970, Elsie and I had just gone to the college and been there about 16 or 17 months.

I came to Louisville about to catch an 8 o'clock plane one Tuesday morning and was headed for Banff, Alberta. At 5 o'clock that afternoon Banff time, I landed in the hotel in Banff. And as I registered in the hotel, the hotel clerk said, Mr. Kinlaw, you have an emergency phone call.

And I looked to see who it was from, and it was from the dean at the college. Now, those were the days when we were having riots on college campuses and university campuses all over the country. And I thought, emergency, wonder what's happened.

So I walked straight across the lobby to a telephone, and I called my dean. I caught him fortunately at home. He was home for just a few minutes for supper.

And when I got him, I said, Custer, what's the problem? Well, he said, it's chapel. And I said, chapel? What do you mean chapel? Well, he said, it isn't over yet. I said, Custer, it's 7 o'clock at night, your time.

Chapel was at 10 o'clock this morning. What do you mean chapel isn't over? Well, he said, Dr. Kinlaw, I simply, he always called me that. He was an old military guy.

He said, Dr. Kinlaw, Hughes Auditorium has more people in it now than it had at 10 o'clock this morning. And so that's the way I learned about the revival. I remember he would call me every day and tell me what was taking place.

I've never experienced anything quite like it. I think maybe, if not the greatest, certainly one of the two or three greatest senses for me of the presence of the Holy Spirit was standing in a telephone booth listening to Custer tell me about what was taking place at Asbury. So I was due back, landing in Louisville on Thursday night about midnight.

I got in my car and I drove to Wilmore. It was interesting, the closer I got to Wilmore, the slower I drove because I didn't know whether I was ready to walk into the presence of God that was there. And so I took probably longer than I've ever taken to drive from Louisville to Wilmore.

I walked into the back of the auditorium and sat down in the back corner seat as far away from the pulpit as I could get and tried to look as unprecedented as I could look. I sat for about an hour and a half and a student came back and knelt next to me, a girl. She was on probably the best witness team on our campus.

She looked up at me and she said, Dr. Kinlaw, would you pray with me? I said, yes. I said, what's the problem? She said, I'm a liar. I said, what do you mean you're a liar? She said, I lie so much I don't know when I've lied.

I said, well, let's go downstairs in one of the rooms downstairs where we can have some, be alone and pray, talk. So we went down and talked. She said, what do I do? I'd never said this to anybody before, never been in quite that spot.

I said, well, why don't you start back with the last person you lied to and go to everybody you can remember you've lied to and ask them to forgive you for lying to them. She said, oh, that'd kill me. And I said, well, I don't think so.

I think it might liberate you. Three days later, that girl came to me aglow. And I said, did something happen? Oh, she said, I'm free.

I said, how'd you get free? Well, she said, I just hit my 34th person. Now, I had a seminary student come to me. He was halfway through seminary, deeply distressed.

And he said, what do I do? I had a required course for my graduation and I cheated on the final exam in college. If I go confess that and lose that credit, then I've lost all my seminary work because you can't get into seminary without an AB degree. What do I do? I said, well, do you want to live all the rest of your life knowing that you're a cheat? Well, he said, no, I don't like the thought of that.

I said, well, why don't you go? And I named the professor for him to go to. And so he went to him, the professor of the class where he had cheated. And he confessed.

And the guy worked out something for him. He graduated from seminary and is in the ministry at the present time. Now, he was a seminary student studying for the ministry when he was in college, but he was cheating on an exam.

On Saturday night, I walked into the auditorium and looked for a seat. And the only seat I could find was on the second row down on the left, almost on the left aisle, left wall. And as I walked in and sat down, I found myself sitting inside of a staff person in Wilmore.

And we sat for a little while. And finally, he reached over and took my arm and I thought he was going to break it, squeezing it. And I looked at him and his face was crimson.

And he said to me, Dennis, we knew each other well. He said, I've got to tell somebody. Let me tell you.

He said, my wife, she and I were missionaries overseas with the Methodist church for a number of years. When the bishop appointed us to this appointment here, he said, my wife did not want to come. She said, I

hate the college.

I hate the seminary. I hate the Methodist church. She said, I hated everything.

She said she hated everything about Wilmore. He said, you know, this week a student came to my wife and said, I need help. Would you pray with me? And he said, my wife was terrified.

So he said, as she sat with the girl, suddenly she spotted me. And so she called me and I went over and prayed with the girl. Said tonight we were at supper.

My son was sitting here and my daughter here and my wife sitting across from me. His wife was the daughter of a Methodist preacher, been a missionary in Christian service all her life. In the middle of the meal, she said, David, I have something I need to say to you and to my son and my daughter.

And he said, what's this? She said, you know, this week when you were praying with that girl that I got you together with, he said, yes. He said, while she was getting into the kingdom, I got in. And I want to tell you that for the first time in our married life, I'm on your team.

He was convulsed with weeping, joyous weeping. Now, you know, I lived through a number of experiences like that. You know what the bottom line conclusion I came to was? That there's stacks of Christians with defeat in their lives at the point of sin.

And there's guilt and impotence, unhappiness, frustration, and there is a power in the Spirit of God that can set a person free, clean his heart, clean him up, make him free. And as the girl who said she was a liar said to me, for the first time in my life, I'm free. You noticed she was on a gospel team.

Now, you know, we had something else happen in that same general period, because it was in 1771 that Francis Asbury came to the United States. He was 26 years of age. He lived, died in 1816.

And for 44 years of that time, during the Revolutionary War, he was under house arrest for a while, and so he had a room and a bed the rest of his life. He never owned a bed, never slept at home, because his home was the saddle, and he covered America. He did more to lay the spiritual foundation for America than any other single figure, and the Methodist Church does not even provide a biography for him, because he had only one passion.

I went through his journal looking for Christmas devotional notes, because we'd send out a Christmas card every Christmas. So I thought, if I could just get a good Christmas thought from Francis Asbury, then I'd have, you know, sort of the perfect Asbury Christmas card. So I searched.

You know what I found? The typical one. I rose at four at Sister Jones in Waccamaw, South Carolina, preached at five, and at seven was on my way to my next preaching appointment. Only one passion.

Well, let me tell you the kind of man he was. He was riding, I think it was in Wilmington, North Carolina. He was going into the city on his horse.

He passed a slave. He spoke, Good day, sir. The slave responded.

He was very, very interested in the slaves, and for years he had a black preacher travel with him, Black Harry. But he went on his way, and the spirit spoke to him and said, You should have witnessed to that person. So he turned his horse around and went back, and the black was still there.

And so he got on off his horse and came to him and said, Sir, what is your name? And the guy said, I don't know. I've never known my name. I'm a slave.

Isn't that incredible, the degradation that we put human beings through in our sinfulness? He said, They all call me Punch because I fight so much. So Asbury opened the scripture, told him about Christ, about the power of God to save, prayed with him and went on his way. Twenty years later, Asbury was back in that community.

And so he was preaching in the church. At the end of the service, a black came up to him, looked at him and said, Bishop, I'm Punch. And Bishop Asbury said, Tell me the story.

Well, he said, You know, you talked to me about Jesus, prayed with me. He said, I went to my room, got out on my knees, confessed my sins, asked him to forgive me, and my room was filled with an incredible light. And you know, I've never fought or cursed or played cards since.

And I've got 300 people out here that call me their pastor. Now, that's the kind of guy he was. So I got interested in that kind of gospel.

And do you know what I found? It had incredible power in it. In 1771, there were 2,000 Methodists in the United States. And by 1860, one out of every three church members in the United States was a Methodist.

Now, that's power, isn't it? But you know, the interesting thing is, what was the essence of the gospel that he preached? If you read his journal, you will find him saying at one point he had been out of, he had been sick and had to stop ministry briefly. And he said, God spoke to me. I have not put enough emphasis on entire sanctification and personal holiness.

That is what will make this nation, change this nation. And so he preached it. You know, the interesting thing is, it had enough power in it that it broke across denominational lines.

Henry Clay Morrison was the president of Asbury College. But before that, he was pastor in Danville, Kentucky. His heart was hungry as a pastor.

He talked with a Presbyterian preacher. The Presbyterian preacher said, well, now, Henry, what you need is what Wesley called entire sanctification and what we Presbyterians call the deeper life. You need to know the victory that God can give you with a clean heart.

And so the present man who became the president of Asbury College was helped by a Presbyterian. It is interesting, it jumped across all the lines to where there was a Unitarian pastor in New England that preached and witnessed to entire sanctification, total surrender, being possessed by God, letting God get your thumb off your life, letting possess you. One of the greatest outbursts of Christian influence and effectiveness in human history came in the latter part of the 19th century that came out of that message that jumped across to Baptists and Congregationalists and Presbyterians and even, as we said, congregate others, all the denominations.

Keswick movement developed out of that. And so the modern missionary movement came out of that. Christian colleges were formed, Gordon.

It's interesting, the main street in front of Wheaton is John Wesley Street. Gordon was founded by a Baptist who had a deeper experience. You have Biola, founded by a man whose Wesley, or Luther,

Moody would send for him.

And he said, I want you to preach two sermons, ten reasons why you believe the Bible to be the word of God, and your sermon on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which he meant not tongues, but to be filled with the Spirit. R.A. Torrey, who was a Yale graduate. It had incredible power.

It changed the American landscape. It was a major factor in defeating the forces that wanted to hold on to slavery. It was the kind of force that George Will said about Wesley and the women in England, they saved England from gin.

I love that line. But incredible moral power. But what about the 20th century? You know, it's a very interesting story.

It's so different. When I first was converted as a teenager, I looked for a Christian bookstore. I finally found one in the state of North Carolina where I lived.

It was in the capital, Raleigh. I got books there to nurture my soul in. There was not a Christian radio station in North Carolina.

I didn't know one in the country. Do you know something now? There's a Christian bookstore in every town in the United States, practically. You can't get out of hearing of a Christian radio station in most of the sections of the country.

They're everywhere. Christian TV goes around the world now. And the more Christian bookstores we get and the more Christian radio stations we get, the more the moral life of the country collapses.

Now, are you going to tell me there isn't something wrong with the message that we're preaching? I go back to 1970 and think of Christians. They were in Christian service, in Christian work. But in their inner hearts, there was enough pollution and defilement to keep them from knowing the power of God and the freedom of God.

Now, I believe God can make Christians real Christians. And that's what our business is. To preach that gospel of an undivided heart, of an eye single, of a heart filled with love for God where the person's got his thumb off his life, his hands off, and Christ possesses him.

And you know, when it happens, it's a different product and it has a different impact. One of the stories that has its roots in that last century and in that message came home to me in a very real way. I had the privilege of serving on the board of a missionary society in this country for a number of years.

At that time, we had a rule that when a person reached 72, he had to retire from the board. We had on the board a man who was very special, a businessman. He had been saved as a door-to-door salesman by a lady who led him to Christ.

At that time, he was giving about \$2 million a year to the missionary society that I was on the board. And so his retirement came. And I was assigned the duty of giving him a gift and thanking him and telling him goodbye.

I've never felt more stupid in my life. Giving a book to a guy who was given \$2 million a year, he was retiring from our board. He wasn't retiring from work.

This past year, I think he gave something about like \$4 million to Christian missions around the world. So I gave him the book. And he looked at me and said, may I say something? What do you do with a guy who gives you \$2 million? You say, yes, sir.

So he said, I want to tell you why I got interested in this mission. He said, I became a Christian as a door-to-door salesman, found a buddy, and we prayed together every Thursday night. God began to deal with my heart, and I wanted to count.

An evangelist came to our church, and he said to me, Stanley, you need to see a mission field. Go with me to Korea. So he said, I found myself in Los Angeles overnight in the old days before flying on to Korea.

He said, my evangelist friend said to me, there's a lady here I'd like for you to meet. So he said, he took me to meet a lady by the name of Leti B. Cowman. She's the one who put together the book, Streams in the Desert.

I suspect the second most influential devotional book that's ever been published. He said, we spent some time with this very regal lady. He said, we came to the end of the conversation, and she said, Mr. Tam, may I tell you a story before you go? He said, why, certainly.

She said, my husband and I were young people in Chicago. He was a young executive with Western Union, had 110 telegraphers under him. She said, I attended a Methodist church revival and was converted.

And I came home and tried to witness to my husband, but he would have nothing to do with it. And then one night he agreed to go with me to church. And when he came home, he got down on his knees by our bed, and my husband found Christ.

And she said, when he found Christ, a great hunger developed within him to serve him. He said, one Friday we were, she said, one Friday we were on the streetcar, and we passed Moody Memorial Church. Said there was a sign out front, missionary conference, A.B. Simpson speaking.

Now she said, neither one of us had ever been to a missionary conference. That's the first time we'd ever heard of one. But he said, let it, let's go.

So that night they went to the missionary conference. A.B. Simpson, who interestingly enough, pastored a Presbyterian church in Louisville, he got a hunger in his heart for something he didn't have. And he had a profound experience of being filled with the Spirit, and it transformed his life.

And missions became his passion. And so that night he preached. And they had never heard a when he got through, he said, now we must take an offering.

Now he said, the offering's going to be different, because when the collection plates pass, you'll notice they're full instead of empty. They're full of watches. Now they're not gold watches, but they're good watches.

And if you have a gold watch, if you'll put yours in the plate, you can take one of the others out, and we'll sell those gold watches so the gospel can be carried around the world. She said, we'd never seen anything like this. Said, here came the plate, and it was full of watches.

The person handed it to me, and I handed it to Charlie. And she said, he took it with his left hand and with his right hand. He reached in his watch pocket and pulled out the gold watch I'd scrimped and saved for months to buy him.

And he dropped it in the plate and said, I turned and looked at him and said, I gave that to you. But she said, the plate was gone. Said, A. B. Simpson came back to the pulpit and said, now we must take another offering.

This time you'll notice the plates are empty. There are a lot of us that wear more jewelry than is necessary for good grooming. And if you'll just take that jewelry that you don't need for good grooming and put it in the plate, we'll sell it all and send the gospel of Christ across the world.

Here came the plate. Said, I handed it to Charlie. He took it with his left hand, and with his right hand he reached over and took my left hand.

And he pulled my engagement ring off, and he dropped it in the plate. And I turned to him and said, you gave that to me. But he said, the plate was gone.

He said, A. B. Simpson came back to the pulpit and said, we must take another offering. This time we must take a money offering. She said, it was Friday, it was payday.

My husband had in his pocket the pay for two weeks. He said, when the plate came, he reached in his pocket and pulled it out and dropped it in the plate. And I said, what are we going to live on for the next two weeks? But she said, it was gone.

Said, then he came and said, now we must take the real offering. We must take the offering of life, because there are people here who need to give themselves wholly to God so he can do with them what he pleases. Send them where he will, and if that's you, we want you to stand.

And she said, to my horror, Charlie stood up. She said, the most decisive moment of my life came then. I knew Charlie well enough that if he said he was going to do anything, he'd do it whether I went with him or not.

And I didn't want to live alone, so I stood up too. But she said, Mr. Tam, our whole lives have been different because of that moment. You know what Stanley Tam did? He came home, got his lawyer, and said, how do I give my business to God? And the lawyer said, what'd you say? He said, how do I give my business to God? The lawyer said, that's impossible.

Stanley said, well, I guess I need another lawyer. And he got one. Last year, he was involved in, I think, probably 100,000 conversions around the world.

Now let me ask you, is the world perishing the way it is because we've still got hearts that are full of self, self-interest, divided, unclean, so that everything we do has the defilement of self-interest on it somewhere? When there's a power in the blood of Christ that can clean us up and make our lives count. Now that's what we're about. And do you know, what we're finding is there are a lot of people hungry for just that kind of thing.

That girl who said, I'm a liar, wanted to be free. And Christ set her free. That seminary fellow who was studying for the ministry wanted the guilt gone.

And God took it away and he was free. And that fellow who sat next to me and Hughes on that Saturday night, his family's never been the same since. Marriage has never been the same because two became one in Christ.

Now that's what we're about. It's a message. It's a message.

And so we use, we try to find evangelists who will preach it, literature that will express it, retreats that will give people an opportunity to enter into that kind of experience, support anything moving in this country or across the world that will bring the church to the place where Christ died to bring it. That's what we're about. Thank you for listening.

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