

# The Glory of Primitive Methodism

by Denny Kenaston

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*The sermon explores the glory of primitive Methodism, highlighting their radical commitment to holiness, simplicity, and non-resistance, and challenging us to live a more committed and holy life.*

**Duration:** 1:35:26

**Scripture:** Psalm 50:2, Psalm 50:5, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Methodism"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the principles and rules followed by early Christians in their pursuit of spiritual growth. These principles include honesty in business dealings, abstaining from alcohol and extravagant attire, being accountable for one's words, and avoiding idle conversation and worldly entertainment. The preacher emphasizes the importance of discipline and accountability within the Christian community, where members would confront and correct each other in love. The sermon highlights the dedication and commitment of early Christians, who would preach multiple times a day, study the Bible while traveling, and prioritize their relationship with God above all else.

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## Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Oh, Father, this morning, where else can we go but to the Lord? Father, we thank you for being a faithful father to us.

Oh, so many Lord's days. Father, fifty-two times twenty-four. Thank you, Lord, for your loving kindness to us, God.

Yes. Unto thee, O Lord, do we lift up our souls. Oh, my God, I trust in thee.

Let not mine enemies triumph over me. Lord, this morning we recognize we have an enemy. We have an enemy.

Satan, the enemy of our soul. Lord, let not the enemy triumph over us, God. Father, we pray that you will lift us up, even as the songs that we've sang.

Yes, lift us up together and make us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Lord, I pray this morning, gather your children around your throne and minister to our needs. That's what we need, God.

We look to you for these things. We trust this service into your care, God. I pray.

Have your way, your sway upon every heart. I pray, Father, that you would move upon us by the Holy Ghost this morning. That we may hear what the Spirit of God is saying to the church.

In Jesus Christ's holy name we pray. Amen. You may be seated.

Greetings in the name. The name which is above every name. In the name of the one who is seated.

Far above all principality and power. This morning, angels and dominions being made subject unto Him. And we also, this morning, have been made subject unto Him.

Who is able to keep us from falling and present us blameless before the throne of His glory someday. Oh, what a heritage we have, brothers and sisters, this morning. I greet you in Jesus' name.

I want to welcome all the visitors also that are here with us. God bless you. Thank you for coming.

We trust that you'll be able to hear the voice of the Lord along with us as we sit together around the throne of God. Thank you for coming. We are ordering the service a little different this morning.

Because we're planning to have a baptism directly at the end of the service here. So, we're ordering the service a little different and I have the main message right away here. So, I'd like us to open our Bibles for a reading of Scripture in Psalms.

Psalms 50 is where we're going to read some of the most precious verses in the Bible we will find here in Psalm 50. Some of the most precious verses in the Bible. Do you know those verses? Like verse 2. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

Isn't that a precious verse? Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, the most beautiful thing there is. Beauty brought to its maturity. The beauty of holiness.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines. Ah, that's a beautiful verse. How about verse 5? Gather my saints together unto me, says God.

Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. That's a beautiful verse, isn't it? We want to read verse 1 through 9. And then also verse 14 and 15 as a bit of an introduction to the message this morning. And just make a few comments.

Now, Zion, in the Bible, is the church. In the Old Testament, Zion was God's people in the Old Testament. Now, in the New Testament, the church is Zion.

And yet, as we read in many of the Scriptures, we see that Zion is way more yet than what we can even see with our eyes today. Zion is way more than we can even begin to imagine. While it's true this morning, brothers and sisters, that we can say that Zion is the perfection of beauty, and it's the place where God shines, yet at the same time, there comes a day when God will shine out of Zion in such a way that we can't even begin to imagine.

But bless God, we get to be a part of that if we're faithful. We get to be a part of that whatever it is. Yet, we get to be a part of it this morning also.

The mighty God, even the Lord, has spoken and called the earth. From the rising of the sun, unto the going down of the same, unto the going down thereof, God calls the earth. God's voice calls, out of Zion, the perfection of beauty.

God has shined. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty. God speaks to the earth.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty. God manifests His holy character. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty.

God speaks to the earth. What a privilege we have to be called Zion this morning. Our God shall come, brothers and sisters.

He shall come and shall not keep silence. A fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.

Gather My saints together unto Me, says the Lord, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. God says that this morning, doesn't He? Gather My saints unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice. We know that's God's heart this morning, don't we? No half-hearted ones, says the Lord.

No half-hearted ones this morning. No uncommitted ones this morning. Gather My saints unto Me, saith the Lord, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.

God promises His side of the covenant, and we promise our side of the covenant. And oh, bless God this morning, brothers and sisters, God's side of the covenant is more than I can explain in five hours today. But our side of the covenant is simply a sacrificial life.

A life that has been laid on the altar for God and it stays there. Gather My saints unto Me, God says this morning. All over the world, God says, gather My saints unto Me this Lord's Day morning, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.

And the heavens shall declare, His righteousness for God is judged Himself. Shelah. Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against thee.

I am God, even thy God. Here God has a controversy with His people. Maybe God has a controversy with us this morning.

Hear, O My people, God says, and I will speak. If you will lend your ear, I will speak to you this morning, God says. I will testify against thee.

I am God, even thy God. I am your personal God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings to have been continually before Me.

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. Drop down to verse 14. Because this is what God wants.

Not a bullock. Not a sacrifice. Not money out of your pocket this morning.

Offer unto God thanksgiving and pay thy vows unto the Most High. And call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me.

That's what God wants. God says to Zion this morning, Oh, I'm glad for your sacrifices, but that's not what I'm looking for. I don't want a bullock this morning.

I don't want the lamb that you raised, that you gathered out of your field. I don't want the money that is in your pocketbook. I want you.

I want you to be My people. I want you to come before Me with thanksgiving and praise. I want you to come before Me and pay thy vows.

Those beautiful utterings that came forth out of our hearts in those times when we were before the Lord and the heart was free and clear, those utterings, that's what God wants us to pay. Pay thy vows. And not only that, but God says, not only do I want that, but I want you to call upon Me when you get in trouble.

When you get in trouble, call upon Me, God says, and I will deliver you and thou shalt glorify Me. Beautiful psalm. There are many places in the Scriptures where I could have read this morning about Zion.

This is just one that I pulled out which is precious to me. These verses have future implications as well as challenge and inspiration for us. But I want to speak this morning about Zion.

I want to speak a message this morning that's been on my heart for a year. Imagine having a message and holding it for a whole year. But this message has been on my heart for a year.

Let me give you the title. The Glory of Primitive Methodism. The Glory of Primitive Methodism.

Or the Primitive Methodists. The Glory of the Primitive Methodists. You say, brother Denny, what in the world are you talking about Methodists for? We are not Methodists.

I know. And I am not a Methodist. This message is the fifth in a series that I have slowly been putting together about Zion.

It is a message on the history of the church. God's holy witness on earth. A series called Zion, the Perfection of Praise.

The first one that I gave was titled The Church That Revival Built. Maybe you remember. That's many, many years ago.

The Church That Revival Built. Looking at the history of the early church in the book of Acts. Also spoke a message called The Radical Chinese House Church.

Again, looking at Zion. Studying what God's people were like. Or are like.

Another one that I gave was The Radical Example of Moravian Missions. Another example of what Zion was like. Zion, the perfection of beauty, where God shines forth.

And also, reviving the righteous root of Anabaptism would have been the fourth one in that series. And now this morning, I would like to speak on the glory of primitive Methodists. I by no means want to discourage anyone by this message.

Sometimes people say, Brother, you put the standard way too high. My only plea to you is maybe you're not looking at it in the right way. It's not my standard.

It's God's standard. And the standard is not put high to discourage us, but rather to inspire us. Yes, and maybe to humble us.

It's okay if we get humbled when we look at Zion and realize we are very, very different than the Zion that we just heard about. So my desire is not to discourage, but rather to challenge and to inspire and to humble us this morning. Because, brothers and sisters, oh how far many have fallen.

We are admonished in the Scriptures to study what Zion is like. Study the perfection of praise. Look and see how God shined.

That's what we're encouraged to do in the Scriptures. Study the beautiful ways that God has shined through Zion the church. We are commanded to study the ways that God has spoken and judged the world through the church in the past.

That we also might be inspired and there might be a longing stirred in our own hearts that yea, in this our own day, God would also speak to the earth through the church once again. We're encouraged to study her sacrifices and study her praises and study her deliverances. And that is what I want to do this morning in this message.

First of all, I want to give proper credit for the information that I will be sharing. How many of you know who Brother Mike Atnip is? Only a very few of you. Brother Mike Atnip sent me one of the first copies of his book, *How the Methodists Saved America*.

Maybe you're familiar with that book. Let me see your hand. Not very many.

Brother Mike Atnip was living in Bolivia at the time and he got to studying the history of Methodism. It's four volumes about this thick if you put them all together. And as he began to study the history of Methodism, his heart began to burn.

His heart began to realize that here again is a beautiful example of primitive Christianity or the Christianity that was way back in the beginning when the floodwaters began to flow back there in Acts 2 and 3. He began to realize that. And after much study, he wrote a little book called *How the Methodists Saved America*. So, Brother Mike is the one who did the homework for all that I will be sharing with you.

I read this book two years ago when he sent it to me and in my heart I thought, someday, someday, we should gather that information together and put it into a sermon that God's people can just simply take a look at another expression of Zion upon this earth. And my encouragement to you fathers, seriously, is to get a copy of this book and read it to your family with some good, healthy discussion. Can you take that encouragement from me? Now, John and Charles Wesley and the early Methodists were radical Christians.

Not only did Methodism save America, it saved England from moral destruction. And by the way, radical Christianity usually does save the area from moral destruction. Many of the history books would say that England was almost gone and Methodism rose up for such a time as this.

And God used Methodism to shake England at its depths. As I study the early requirements of what it meant to be a Methodist, it is hard to believe what the early Methodist preachers got away with. There are three reasons offhand that they got away with what they required to become a Methodist.

Number one, they did it themselves. They were not asking the people to do something that they were not doing themselves. Number two, they had results.

And results speak very loudly. And number three, they viewed their little societies as groups of fellowship, not as church. So it was like a church within a church.

It was a holy club within a worldly church. It was all voluntary. You didn't have to be a Methodist.

You didn't have to join one of their societies. You didn't have to follow the rules of the early Methodists. It was completely voluntary.

But, as I said already, radical Christianity is a power that cannot be reckoned with by anyone. And it had its influence from the very beginning. And it seems like those radical early Methodists drew such a gathering of people who wanted to, not had to, but who wanted to join themselves to a band of Methodists and get serious about God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the world around them.

That's just the way it was. If you were willing to live a radical life, you could join the class meetings or the society. If you were not willing, you were out.

And no one pressured you. That was just all there was to it. Most of us, this morning, are not aware of what the primitive Methodists were like.

We only go by what we know today and things are way, way different today than what they were in 1730 when the first Methodist class meeting began over in England. Things have changed drastically. But in the beginning, brothers and sisters, they were more like us than most of us realize.

In fact, we're pretty weak. We're pretty weak. What was required if you wanted to join one of the societies? Just consider a few of the points of the requirements if you wanted to join one of these societies and remember that people were coming in mass to join one of these societies.

What was required? Number one, a strong desire for the reality of salvation. You must have a heart that says, I want to flee from the wrath to come and a desire to be continually saved from your sins. Number two, you must be willing to keep the Lord's day holy.

No work, no frivolity, and no buying and selling. If you didn't agree with that, fine, but no society. Number three, no fighting or arguing, no evil speaking of anyone, no using of many words in buying and selling.

That means you couldn't dicker and try to chew them down and get a better price and speak a bunch of words and puff up your product and be a salesman and make somebody buy something that they didn't want. That was not allowed. Number four, no drinking of alcohol, no wearing of jewelry or costly apparel.

Number five, you had to be willing to be accountable for your words. No idle or wasteful conversation. No songs or books that do not tend to the knowledge of God.

Boy, that'd clean things out, wouldn't it? I wonder how many magazines would go outside of our houses today if we put those kind of rules on people. Number six, you had to be willing to turn away from the soft life and needless self-indulgence. You had to be willing.

No giving or taking of usury or interest in business. No foolish or self-indulgent debts. I like that car, I'm going to borrow the money and buy it.

You wouldn't do that. Number eight, you must be actively living for others. Prison, the poor, the needy, clothing them, winning souls.

You must be actively living a life for others. Or, no society. Number nine, you must be willing to bear the cross and suffer reproach for Christ.

And we'll get into some of the accountability of this a little later, but I'm just giving you a little idea of what kind of radical people these were. And, reminding you again, the people were standing in line to see if they could perchance be allowed to come in to one of these little societies. You must always attend church and never miss the class meeting.

Number eleven, you must be willing to be accountable for personal devotional life. And number twelve, family devotions morning and evening. If you failed in any of these, you were admonished and given grace.

If you still failed, you were put out of the society. You were considered one who did not care about your soul anymore and you were asked to leave the society. Sounds pretty extreme, doesn't it? And you're all sitting there thinking, that's not right.

What were some of the major beliefs of these early Methodists? Number one, they were against carnality. Carnality was the gratification of any of the outward senses. Food, drink, pleasures, entertainments, all those things which are the gratifications of our outward senses.

A desire for honor was carnality. A desire for ease was considered carnality. Seeking happiness in anything outside of God was considered carnality.

These were all worldly. Fine clothing and the desire to be rich were considered an abomination to the early Methodists. Their heart was, let it not be once named among us.

That was their heart. Number two, they were non-resistant. That might be a bit of a surprise to you.

We kind of slot all the Protestants over there in the war side. It might be a bit of a surprise to you. They were non-resistant people.

Now, they did not emphasize non-resistance like the Anabaptists who taught it clearly and definitely and have held that up, and I bless God for that, all down through the centuries they've held on to that. The Methodists have not done that. However, those early Methodists, they were a non-resistant people.

Multitudes of them would not kill. Multitudes of them would not participate in the American Revolution and they were persecuted for it. They were constantly persecuted just because they were Methodists and they

never fought back.

They believed the principle of non-resistance just like we do here this morning. Many of them were put in jail because they would not carry a gun. They got it from both sides.

The American revolutionists persecuted them because they wouldn't fight for the cause and the government of England persecuted them because they wouldn't fight for the crown. They got it on both sides. But, multitudes of them said, I will not bear an arm.

I cannot kill someone else. Do with me what you want, but I will not kill anybody. Francis Ashbery's evaluation of the few Methodists who did join and bear arms, his testimony was this, they all lost out with God and never ever recovered from the war.

That's what he said. Interesting observation, isn't it? Number three, some of their major beliefs, they believed in simplicity and their definition of simplicity was a single eye to God. They believed in simplicity.

They wore plain clothes. They believed in simplicity of life. Clothes, houses, chapels and every other area of life.

They believed in simplicity and humility of life. No rings, no ornaments, no lace, no ruffles. The word superfluous was often used in their writings and that word superfluous means extra abundance, extra on the dress, extra on the house, extra money.

They used the word superfluous often. It meant more than was needed. The early Methodists were a peculiar people and they could be distinguished from the world at a single glance.

Maybe some of you have read in your own readings, I know it's quoted many times in different sermons, Charles Finney's words about the Methodists and Charles Finney's words about the Methodists, he was raising them up as an example of a people who were separated from the world in their dress, in their actions, in their houses and in the overall simplicity of their life. They were a people separated from the world and Charles Finney lifted them up as an example and said we should follow their example. Number four, they were anti-slavery.

Now remember, Methodism started in the United States in 1766. Slavery was not done away with until 1864. They were against slavery.

You could not be a Methodist and have a slave no matter how kindly you treated that slave, you could not have one. They saw it for what it was. They were way ahead of their time.

They suffered much persecution. The preachers were tarred and feathered at times for standing up and preaching in the South against slavery. All kinds of trouble came their way because they took a stand against slavery when nobody else was.

They believed in total abstinence with alcohol. This was in a day when it was acceptable to have a little drink here and there. And I trust that we still believe in total abstinence of alcohol, that we have not followed the voice of the world which so subtly creeps in among God's people and begins to tell them that it's okay.

Just a little sip is okay. Just a little wine for your stomach's sake every evening is okay. No, it's not.

The Methodists evaluated that whole situation in their day and they took a clear stand against it. If you were going to be in one of those societies, one of those meetings, no drinking. No drinking.

And lastly, and I could give you many more, but I'm just giving you enough to draw your heart to help you to see that they're more like us than we ever realized they were if you go back to the beginning. Number six, most of them were against political involvement in the beginning. Bishop Ashbery, which was the bishop in the United States of early Methodism, he wrote, we neither have nor wish to have anything to do with the government of the states.

Our kingdom is not of this world. These were the early Methodists. Now, I want to read you something.

It's more than I could have copied, so I just want to read you. How many of you ever heard of Peter Cartwright? Do you know that name? Let me see your hands. Alright, good.

Peter Cartwright was an early Methodist preacher. I think he lived in the second and third and fourth generation of Methodism here in the United States. He was one radical preacher.

Listen to his description of the Methodists. He's speaking, looking back, on what it was like when he joined many, many years ago. He says, We had no pewed churches, no choirs, no organs.

In a word, we had no instrumental music in our churches anywhere. The Methodists in that early day dressed plain, attending their meetings faithfully, especially preaching, prayer and the class meetings. They wore no jewelry, no ruffles.

They would frequently walk three or four miles to class meetings and then home again on Sundays. They would go 30 or 40 miles to their quarterly meetings and think it a glorious privilege to meet their presiding elder and the rest of the preachers at the meeting. They could, nearly every soul of them, sing our hymns and spiritual songs by memory.

I don't know if you ever saw a Methodist hymn book, but it's about as thick as ours, and it has about a thousand hymns in it. They could sing that hymn book by memory. Wow! They religiously kept the Sabbath day.

They abstained from dram drinking. That was just a little drink. They called it a dram.

They abstained from dram drinking. Not because the Temperance Reformation was ever heard of in that day, but because it was interdicted in the general rules of our discipline. The Methodists of that day stood up and faced their preacher when they sung.

They kneeled down in the public congregation. Methodists of that day stood up and... I'm sorry, I read it twice here. They kneeled down in the public congregation as well as elsewhere.

Imagine that! We're in a restaurant. It's time to eat. Who's going to have the prayer? Let us pray.

Everyone gets down on their knees in the restaurant to pray. And when the preacher said, let us pray, there was no standing among the members in time of prayer, especially the abominable practice of sitting down during the exercise of praying was unknown among early Methodists. And I'm not telling you that we have to do all these things.

I'm just wanting you to see the heart of these people. Amen? They were serious about what they were doing. And you may be sitting here by now and thinking, what a bunch of legalists.

That's all they were. Yeah, well, I don't know if I'd call them legalists. They shook this country as we will see a little bit later.

I think they had a little bit more than just laws and rules. What do you think? Major point number three, what was their vision? What drove these people? An early conference stated these words. Our goal is to reform the continent and to spread scriptural holiness over these lands.

That was their goal. Wow, what a goal! Their goal was to start a Methodist church in every new settlement as America moved west. That was their goal.

A fire burned in their bones which drove them forward to sacrifice all kinds of things to spread the Gospel and to promote scriptural holiness across the whole land. The story of Dayton, Ohio is a good example of what happened thousands of times in early Methodism. Not hundreds, thousands of times.

Dayton, Ohio. We all know Dayton, Ohio. It has a population of 850,000 people in it today.

But there was a day when Dayton, Ohio was just a small little town with 12 log cabins in it. But the itinerant Methodist preacher showed up in Dayton, Ohio finding out that there was a small little village over there called Dayton. And he went there, as they were wont to do, and sought out an open and a familiar family that might be open to preaching the Word of God.

They went and looked for the house of peace in that little village. Once they found a house of peace, then they made announcements. We're going to have a meeting tonight at such and such a time.

And some of the people gathered. This was back before there were televisions and sports and all the other things that people do to entertain themselves. And when someone came by and said, hey, there's a preacher here and he's going to preach tonight.

Everybody came. It's sort of like the concomitants, Daniel. That's the way it was.

And so that Methodist preacher, he would get up there and preach the Word of God and preach repentance and preach the Gospel to these settlers and lay the claims of Christ before them. When the meeting was over, he would make an announcement. I'll be back in two weeks.

Anybody who wants to hear, I'll be back in two weeks. And he went on his way. The next morning, he went on to another place.

And two weeks later, he was right back there again to have another meeting. And thus he did, again and again and again. And soon, there was a convert and another convert and another one.

And soon, there was a little society, one of those little meetings where those people were willing to bear their souls before each other and before God. And eventually, a church just sprung up out of it. And thousands of Methodist churches were started just like that.

That was their vision. They had an evangelical zeal that caused them to press forward against all hardships. They looked at America as it was expanding to the West.

And instead of saying, ooh, that looks like too hard of a place for us, they said rather, look at the opportunity! Nobody's out there. No church is out there. Let's go! And they did go.

And many of them suffered and died to go. Many of them went through all kinds of difficulties. But thus did early Methodism spread in America.

See how they grew and prospered. Just look at some of these statistics. In 1766, a handful of Irish Methodists landed in New York City.

And it appears they lost their way a bit at first and got caught up in the big city and lost their vision until a little old Methodist lady landed in New York City a year or two after these first Methodists landed and I can't give you her name off the top of my head, but she was one of those mothers in Israel. And she walked into the midst of those people who called themselves Methodists and saw them sitting around a table playing cards. She came back the next day and found them again playing cards around the table.

And that dear mother in Israel walked up and grabbed those cards in her hand and walked over and threw them in the fire! Imagine that, ladies! What kind of a radical was that? And pled with those few Methodists to get back to the radical Christianity that they knew when they were in Ireland. And the preacher repented at the swift rebuke of that old mother in Israel. Eighteen years later, there were twelve hundred communing Methodists in the United States.

Eight years later, there were twelve thousand communing Methodists in the United States. And ten years later than that, there were sixty-six thousand communing members, not counting all the children. By 1802, one twentieth of the population of the United States was Methodists.

Imagine that today! One twentieth of our population. That's sixteen million people. Imagine that today.

Sixteen million people. Godly families. God-fearing families.

Having devotions in the morning and in the evening. Holy families. Living a holy life.

Living a separated life. Pursuing heart holiness with all of their heart and soul. Imagine sixteen million of those in the United States today.

That's the way it was in early Methodism. What were the secrets of Zion's strength? This is the last part of the message. And we have nine points in this one.

We will take them quickly. The secrets of Zion's strength. Do you know what? I think I could shut down my message right now and let you tell me what they were.

And I believe we could probably put all nine of them together. But I'll give them for the sake of the message. All I'm saying is, this is not new to us, brothers and sisters.

Number one, dedication and consecration was a secret of their strength. These people were sold out to God. They sought a holy, sanctified heart that walked with a holy God.

This produced a very practical, holy life. It always does. When we pursue a holy, sanctified heart and a holy walk with that God, it produces a holy life.

You may say this morning, oh, but Brother Denny, they were off on sanctification. Don't be too sure of that. Early Methodism.

Just quoting a few of the things that Brother Mose mentioned in his teachings on sanctification during the leadership seminar. Wesley's doctrine of sanctification was very close to what ours is here. But freedom from sin was the standard.

Amen? That was real clear. That was one of the greatest motivations of their class meetings. I want to be free from sin.

I want to overcome sin in my life. So much so that I am willing to bear my soul to do it. Freedom from sin.

This was the standard, however you get it. Amen? First blessing, second blessing, or even the third blessing. Don't worry about all the blessings.

Just get the heart holiness, whatever it costs. And I believe that was the attitude of the early Methodists. They weren't into this second blessing doctrine that everybody fusses about today.

Number two. The second secret. Hardship and sufferings.

As always, these bring brokenness and grace into a believer's life. We know that. That's nothing new.

This came two ways to early Methodism. Two ways. One, the hardships of early settlers.

Just simply the hardships of going out to Dayton, Ohio where there's only twelve log cabins. And going out there and starting a church was hardships. But it was hard to live out there.

And people sacrificed. And there were times when they didn't have food to eat simply because they just didn't have any food. These hardships, God used them, sanctified them to the blessing of the hearts of those early Methodists.

The second reason, the hardships of preaching and kingdom building in the midst of these early settlers. Rain, snow, heat, mosquitoes, gnats, mud, Indians, no bed, no food, all kinds of persecutions, loneliness, and the list goes on and on and on. Francis Ashbery gave an account of visiting the Methodist churches in what is now called the state of Kentucky.

He said he found those Methodist preachers poor, a bit scruffily dressed, and skinny because they hadn't had any food to eat for a long time. You know what? He didn't say anything bad about any of that. He said, I found them rich in faith also.

Hardships and sufferings. Number three, they took a clear stand against materialism. Money.

They believed, literally, lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. They believed that verse and took it literally. Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth.

Wesley wrote, I have only known two Methodists who grew rich without declining in grace. I only know two Methodists. How many Methodists do you think that he knew who grew rich without declining in grace? Do we think that we can do better? Wesley taught.

Francis Ashbery taught. The early Methodists believed. Earn all you can.

Save all you can. And that's by being frugal. And give all you can.

Earn all you can by being a hard worker. Save all you can by being frugal and not buying anything extra self-indulgent for me. And give all you can.

Wesley's testimony is amazing. He lived on thirty pounds a year all of his life. He never changed it.

His income increased continually. He just gave everything above thirty pounds away every year. Forty pounds this year, ten goes away.

That's twenty-five percent of your income. The next year, fifty pounds, he gave it away. That's fifty percent.

Look at that. This was Wesley's testimony. His books made him rich.

He wrote these little penny books with a desire to get the message out everywhere he could and the books were small and they sold for a penny and he had no idea what would happen. All of a sudden, he found himself a rich man from all the proceeds from these penny books. He gave it all away.

Still, thirty pounds, that's all he needs to live on. He gave it all away. Gave it away.

Gave it away all his life. Gave it away at the end of his life. He was giving ninety-eight percent of his income away and living on the other two percent.

Thirty pounds a year. Wow! Toward the end of his life, he wrote these words, Many Methodists so-called increase in worldly goods and relapse into the spirit of the world. Thus, their religion is but a dream.

They took a clear stand on materialism. Number four, Christian accountability. The Methodist class meeting was the means for this accountability.

We talk about accountability around here. We believe in accountability. That's not a new principle even as we sit here this morning.

It's not. But they had the class meeting was the means of accountability. And remember, this class meeting was voluntary.

They entered into it with a great desire to flee from the wrath to come and to overcome every sin in their lives. That was their motivation. I tried to think of a way to illustrate how that would be here in our own midst.

What a class meeting would be like. And I guess this is the way I would like to explain it. It would be as if on one Sunday morning I stood up here and said to all of you, we're having a special meeting starting next week on Saturday afternoons.

Anybody who wants to come is welcome. But here are the rules for the little meeting if you come. You have to be willing to read your Bible and pray two hours a day.

You have to be willing to fast once a week. You have to be willing to open your heart up and really confess your needs. You have to be willing for somebody to sit you down and say, what have you been doing this week? Did you speak any evil about anybody this week? You have to be willing and willing and willing and willing.

It would be like I announced a meeting like that for next Saturday afternoon and then I would just show up and see who else would show up. I wonder how many would show up. Let me read you a little bit about these class meetings.

Again, this was too much to copy. In order to confess our faults one to another and pray one for another that we may be healed, we, the society, we intend to meet once a week at the least. We intend to come punctually at the hour appointed.

We plan to begin with singing or prayer. We intend to speak to each other, to speak each of us in order, freely and plainly, and state the state of our souls. That was part of the class meeting.

First, where are you at with God? Where are you at? Now you. Now you. We intend, each of us, to speak freely and plainly the state of our souls with the faults we have committed in thought, word, and deed, and the temptations that we have felt since our last meeting.

And lastly, we desire some person among us, the class leader, to speak his own state first and then to ask the rest in order as many a searching question as he would concerning the state, the sin, and the temptations of our souls. Some of the questions proposed to everyone before he was admitted and continually in these class meetings. Do you have the forgiveness of your sins? Have you peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that you are a child of God? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you? Do you desire to be told your faults? Do you desire to be told of all your faults and that plain and clear? Do you desire that every one of us should tell you from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you? Consider.

Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear concerning you? Do you desire that in doing this we should come as close as possible that we should cut to the quick and search your heart to the bottom? Do you desire that? Is it your desire and design to be on this and all other occasions entirely open so as to speak everything that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, without reserve? What known sins have you committed since our last meeting? What temptations have you met with? How were you delivered? Wrong English. What have you thought, said or done of which you doubt whether it be sin or not? Have you nothing you desire to keep secret from the rest in the class meeting? Anybody want to meet next Saturday afternoon? But here's the point. You may listen to that and think, whoa, this is crazy.

This is way out of line. Well, maybe we should take another look at it. Maybe we should think about it a bit.

Maybe we should pray about it. It seemed to produce one powerful people in its early days. Number five, discipline.

Discipline. That means in this little class meeting, if you open your heart up or you showed up there and things were not right in your life, or you showed up there and said, you know, I went to Walmart last Sunday after church and got all my things and stuff like that, then the class leader would say, brother, what are you doing? We can't do that. That isn't right.

If you continued, he would simply go to you on the side, admonish you, give you grace, and finally just say, hey, it's fine. If you want to go do that, do that. But you can't be part of this little class meeting.

We're serious about our soul salvation. They believed in discipline. Words used to describe the preachers and the class leaders were stern, plain, and firm.

When things were not right, action was taken to bring clear commitments to Christ back in place. You never missed a meeting. If you refused to open up and be honest, if you confessed a struggle with a certain sin, it was followed up.

If you refused to repent, you were out of the meeting. Point number six. Personal work by the preachers and the class leaders.

They went house to house giving personal time to teaching, to exhortation and accountability to the families in their charge. Richard Baxter's book, *The Reformed Pastor*, was read by every class leader and every preacher. Richard Baxter's book, *The Reformed Pastor*, where Richard Baxter explains his methods of visiting the flock, keeping them accountable, interviewing them, checking their soul's condition and the condition of the family and the marriage.

Personal work by the preachers and the class leaders. Number seven. Prayer and fasting.

The early Methodists fasted at least one day in a week and some two days in a week and some even more than that at times. They fasted. An empty stomach was no big deal to them.

It was a normal thing to have that hunger down in here. They got used to it. They knew the secret and power of fasting and prayer.

They took the fire of their prayer life out of their closet and into their active service. Many of the early preachers would spend hours each day in communion with God. And out of that communion with God, they preached.

They visited. They held their class meetings. They exhorted.

They encouraged. Out of their communion with God. Number eight.

Hot preaching. The early Methodist preachers were known for their fervent preaching. These men, most of them, were not educated.

Most of them did not have the privilege of going to a university or studying for the ministry. They had in their possession a Bible, a hymn book, and the Methodist church discipline. That's all they had.

Oh, and one more thing. The Holy Ghost. They had the Holy Ghost.

And they preached fervently. They had a fervent delivery of the message out of their hearts. They had something to say.

They believed it with all of their hearts. And they said it with joy and fervor and enthusiasm. Many of the itinerant preachers preached as much as four times a day their first sermon beginning at 5 a.m. They had four places to go in a day.

Get up in the morning. Spend some time alone with God. First sermon is at 5 a.m. Finish the service.

Have a little breakfast. Jump on your horse and take off. And ride who knows how many miles.

What are you doing while you're on the horse? Praying. What are you doing? You've got your Bible open. Reading your Bible.

Planning what you're going to say in the next place. You get there, maybe in the middle of the morning, or maybe at lunchtime, or just before. You have another service.

You have a little meal. Jump on your horse and take off again. They did this continually.

Those men had a fire burning in them. And if you've ever been involved in ministry, you can imagine what that schedule did to them. You may think at first, oh my, that's terrible.

That's rough. No. Every sermon they preached just stoked the fires hotter in their hearts.

They had a fire. The fire of their first love burning in their heart. And thus did Methodism spread itself all over America.

They preached in barns. They preached in schoolhouses. They preached in houses.

They preached out in the open air on an old tree stump. They preached on the back of wagons. And any place else where they found the opportunity, they preached.

One of the requirements for a preaching status among the Methodists was this. People had to be convicted of sin and souls had to be saved or there would be no license given to preach. In other words, you had to be unctionized by the Holy Ghost in order to be a preacher.

No souls get saved. No conviction. No anointing.

No probing of the Spirit in the hearts of men and women. No license to preach. And lastly, point number nine, they reprovved sin.

They did not leave the reprovving the world of sin to the Holy Ghost alone. They reprovved sin. They spoke out against evil in their day.

This was done in preaching. It was done in the class meetings. It was done in home visitations.

And even out in everyday life. They reprovved sin. But I want to quickly say, the stories that I read of those old, early Methodist preachers who reprovved sin, there was a tear coming down their cheek.

Wow, they did it. They did it in brokenness. They did it in humility.

But they did it where they saw something that was wrong, they spoke out against it. Just a couple of conclusions and I'll be done this morning. This is a good message for baptism today, isn't it? Number one, each time we study Zion, we see a repeating pattern of clear principles that produce a vibrant testimony.

Each time. Go to Acts. Go to the Moravians.

Go to those persecuted Chinese. Go back to the Anabaptists. We see a clear repeating pattern of principles that produce a vibrant testimony.

Can we learn from that this morning? They all seem to be somewhat the same. It seems to me that these principles produce a vibrant, holy life. And it seems to me that the absence of these principles produces a

loose and a weak and a cold and a carnal life.

Point number two, This helps us keep our focus on the most important principles first. Amen. There are many things we believe.

This book is full of beautiful things which we believe. But this helps us and reminds us to keep our focus on the most important ones. Number three, We do not want to reproduce a Methodist church this morning.

That is not my desire. Or to take all of these things that I have just given you and now put them all in this church. But rather learn from these principles and apply them to our day and the setting that we live in.

I do believe we will get the same kind of results. And lastly, Let us humble ourselves and acknowledge how far we are from this primitive type of Christianity. This should not discourage us, brothers and sisters.

But motivate us to keep on going. The question is, what kind of church do we want? Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Many times, in many generations, down through the annals of Christian history, God hath shined out of Zion.

Now it is our turn, brothers and sisters. May God help us. But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.

Beholding the glory of the Lord. And that is the glory of the Lord. The outshining of Christ through His people.

Through His people. Who live, and yes, die in Christ. Living in Christ.

But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. Looking at these different, numerous pictures of God's glory. That shone out through the people who lived a dedicated and committed life.

And, may I say, a full life. Full life. We all are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

Even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The only way this can happen in anybody's heart, or in any group of people's hearts, is by the Spirit of the Lord. Moving individuals to walk with God in that way.

Now the Lord is that Spirit. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. I greatly appreciate the challenge this morning that was laid out here.

Of the testimony of the early Methodists. It's good to hear how God worked in their hearts. So maybe we can open up here, and maybe you have something to share.

A testimony or a thought. Maybe you've been encouraged. Maybe you were losing your way.

Or maybe you're afraid to be open and honest with where you are. Are we afraid to be open and honest with where we are? Or am I willing to open up my heart? Let my brothers and my sisters know where I'm at. Know about my struggles.

Ask them to pray for me. Raise your hand if you'd like to share. Amen.

I'd like to say amen to the message. Coming from some of that background, I also have done a little bit of study on the early Methodists. It's easy to, in our day and time, to look at them and to consider them

legalists.

Consider them fanatics. Even some would say consider them off. But when we look at the life that they lived, the methods that they lived by, and the fruit that that produced, I would say they were far from legalistic.

They stood upon the word of God. They stood upon the truce. Each rule or regulation had much scripture to support those rules and regulations.

I've done a little study of the Holy Club, which Denny mentioned briefly there, on those groups of men that would have several other questions, and some that he mentioned this morning, that they would ask themselves on a continual basis. It opened up their hearts to be transparent. It opened up their lives to where if somebody wanted to be clear, the opportunity was made time and time again.

It closed the door to hypocrisy. Hypocrites would not last half-hearted. Those that wanted to live borderline Christianity would not make it.

Many were cast out. And as my studies, and especially hearing this message, it's been a while since I really got into any of it, but it's provoked my desire to see the Holy Club revived amongst God's people. To see that type of accountability, that type of clarity, not a holier-than-thou club, but a club, a group of men that is just able to stand before one another and bear their hearts.

Oh, that God would raise that up amongst us. Thank you, brother. I was blessed with a message this morning I was reading in Titus.

There's two verses that really stood out to me. It said, For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men. There is a grace that people proclaim, but here's what it says that the grace of God does that bringeth salvation.

It teaches, the next verse says, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly and righteous and godly in this present world. I think that was the message that was brought out today. May God bless it.

Thank you, brother. We cannot get away from the practical. I have a hand up here.

We cannot get away from the reality of the Christian life must be a practical life. It must be lived out according to what we teach and preach. Okay, for the male.

I think that goes beautifully with what we, let me see, a few Wednesday nights ago we shared on, you shared on, exhorting one another daily. So much the more as we see the day approaching. And I was just looking at this where it says, it says in Hebrews chapter 10, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but the manner of, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another.

And so much the more as you see the day approaching. But the one, the verse before that is, let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. And I just had to think, as brother Denny was sharing, you know, with that verse up there, that that is a way and a means that God, I think, would want us to attain.

How should I say it? That's a way and a means God would want us to be accountable to one another and exhort one another daily to, so that we can strive and reach some of these goals that were laid out before

us this morning. You know, as we exhort one another daily, we can, we can be built up in that way to. So I just thank you, brother, for sharing that message.

I was just blessed and encouraged and ministered to. Over here we have one. It must be a voluntary thing.

Must be voluntary. If you don't want to live godly or you don't want to live this way, you don't need to be here. Yes, brother.

Yes, I appreciate that message too. And it's just good to hear in 2006 in America, where sometimes I feel like a weirdo and like I'm too radical. And the church world around us, much of them would feel that way about the things that we do.

And it's just good to look back and realize that we're not that radical. We're not doing anything different than others before us had done. If anything, we can do more.

And it's just an encouragement to me. We need to hear that because everything else around us is telling us, you know, you don't need to go so far. You don't need to be so different.

Also, one thing that I wanted to say about the accountability. Recently, I heard a testimony of a man that had been in bondage to pornography for years. And he was in church.

He was even a leader in some things. And everybody looked at him. They looked good on the outside, his family and him.

But they knew there was something wrong. And finally, he just he got so sick of it that he just said, I'm going to do whatever I need to do to get rid of this. And he confessed it to his wife, to his children, to others, leaders and friends.

And it was a short time until he got free. And what he said just stuck with me. He said, you know, I didn't have a lust problem.

He said, I had a hypocrisy problem. That just struck me so hard. He said, I didn't have a lust problem.

I had a hypocrisy problem. If I would have confessed this when I was a young man, 17, my lust problem would have gone away. And so hearing how the Methodists did that, that's what they were doing.

They were, how do I say it? They were using the means to get rid of the hypocrisy in their life. And that's why they were free. That's why they were overflowing.

And I thought in my own life, you know, and I had some struggles years ago there, how I didn't want people to know. We moved into Lancaster City and I didn't want people to know I was struggling. I wanted to have it all together.

If I would have just been real and just, you know, finally I was later on, but if I would have just done that in the beginning, I wouldn't have had those problems. I had a hypocrisy problem. So let us use that means that God has given and we can be free.

Thank you, Brother Paul. That's wise words for us to consider. We have a problem with sin.

It's because we're hiding. We're hypocrite. Sin can rule and reign on us.

Yes. I just want to thank God also for the message this morning. I remember I, when they started preaching about the other messages, I quickly went over my mind before he went down through them.

I remembered every one of them and that's the ones I would have put down if you would ask us to name them. Except the first one, I don't know if I remember that one. But I also remember another message he preached, I don't know, maybe two or three years, something like that ago, shepherding one another.

I wonder how many of us remember that message. At that time, we were somewhat new attending this fellowship here and just picking everything up on the fly and blessed with the teaching here and that was one of them. A number of us young families had, in response to that message, started being together.

I just want to confess before God and my brothers that I had slipped away from there. I know God wants that. Like Brother Daniel preached to us several Sundays ago about going back to fishing in our comfort zone.

And I'm with Jonah. I think God wants to raise it up and we need to do something about it as brothers. We do.

We'll only have more personality struggles and conflicts. They'll only increase if we back away. And we need to be real.

I don't know what it means, but I want to say to the Lord this morning, God help me, I'm going back there. Thank you for that message, Brother. I needed that.

I feel like also God's, this morning for me, given me a vision and maybe even some tools, what it takes to go back there. I think I kind of lost my way a bit. Maybe mostly in vision.

I praise God. I know it can't be a striving in our flesh. It'll never come out right.

It will be legalism. But if it is a desire to rule the flesh down and walk according to the Spirit, that's what made those men strong and powerful. And it will do the same for us, I'm sure.

Amen. Amen. Yes, I'd like to say to the congregation that at my age, I don't know when God would ever take me home, but I want you to be very, very accountable to me and always come to me if you feel that I'm not living the life Jesus Christ wants me to live.

Because there's no other person in this life that I want to spend eternity with any more than is Jesus Christ. And I think that's what we're all here for. I don't think what Denny said is powerful enough.

I think we should have higher standards. And that's just my heart. Because where I came from, we had no standards coming from a Catholic religion.

They were hypocrites. And I'm not degrading any religion. I'm just saying, for what God gives us, we can never repay Him.

Ever. But we can always try and have high standards. And I just want to love Him and serve Him.

And I want to be humble. And I want you to be accountable to me at any time. Because if you come to me in love, that's what Jesus Christ is all about.

And I thank you very much for letting me serve you. Thank you, Brother Robert. I didn't get to hear the whole message this morning, but I am blessed and challenged in my heart by what I heard.

I just want to share a few scriptures here that speak to my heart deeply. After Solomon had dedicated the temple with much sacrifice, the glory of the Lord appeared. And then after that, as Solomon was by night upon his bed, the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.

If I shut up heaven, that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. Now my eyes shall be open and my ears attend unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever and my eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually.

The Lord gives us a beautiful promise there, that when we find ourselves in a dry place, personally or as a congregation, he says that if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray. And I just want to take that to heart this morning and just encourage us also as a congregation that we can humble ourselves and pray and have that open transparency one with another. Thank you Brother Denny for sharing and preaching the word to us this morning.

And may the Lord bless this congregation as we seek his face. Because God does promise that when we humble ourselves, he will forgive and he will heal. So may we go forth in confidence and faith in the Lord.

Thank you. It seems to me that someone who is seeking God and seeking for the grace of God in their lives, when they hear a message like this, their heart says, yes. It says, Amen.

I will do. By God's grace, I want that kind of a life. And the heart will say Amen to that.

And say, yes, I see it. But I also wonder if sometimes the response to a message like this or to maybe some would say it's legalism. And their response to some direction by the local congregation would say, well, that's legalism.

But I do believe that a heart that is truly seeking for God will not say that's legalism. But will rather respond and say, yes. And seek God for more of God's grace to be able to live a godly, holy life.

And desire to live according to God's word. I believe it's the carnal mind that says that's legalism. I don't want to part of it.

I believe it's the carnal mind. Because they're not willing to be subject to a disciplined life. That's my thought.

May God help us in those areas.

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