

How We Got Here

by Jack Hyles

The sermon 'How We Got Here' explores the degeneration of society, tracing it back to the steps of worshipping the creature more than the Creator, idolatry, and ultimately leading to immorality, and emphasizes the importance of praising God in preventing this degeneration.

Duration: 49:35

Scripture: Romans 1:21-23, Romans 1:26-32

Topics: "Moral Decline", "Faith Restoration"

Description

The sermon titled 'How We Got Here' explores the degeneration of society as depicted in the first chapter of Romans. The preacher starts by describing the current condition of society and then works backwards to show how it got to that point. The sermon includes anecdotes about the preacher's experiences with enthusiastic churchgoers and his concerns about being fired by the deacons. The preacher emphasizes the need for listeners to pay attention and follow his message carefully, as it contains important insights about the state of society and the role of faith.

Transcript

I've got a thousand different, well, more or less, titles I can give to my message tonight. But I'm going to call it, finally I've called it this, How We Got Here. How We Got Here.

In the first chapter of Romans, we have a step-by-step roadmap of the degeneration of society. Normally, when I teach or preach from the first chapter of Romans, I start at the first and go down, verse after verse, and show how, step-by-step, a nation or a people go into sin. Starting with the first step into sin, and the second, and the second, third, and fourth, and fifth, and on down, until we show the condition of the nation or of the people.

Now, tonight, I'm going to start where we are and work backwards. In other words, I'm not going to say verse 21, and then 22, and then 23. I'm going to start with the condition in which we find ourselves in Romans chapter 1 at the end of the chapter.

Then I'm going to work back and show you how we got here. And so the message is entitled, How We Got Here. Now then, everybody wake up and join the service.

We'd love to have you back with us anytime you can wake up. Two or three folks are enjoying a wonderful nap. Did you hear about the lady who got insomnia? And they tried everything.

They tried pills. They tried everything in the world. And finally she found the cure for insomnia.

She went to church and heard a sermon and went right off to sleep. And so I want you to listen now, because what I'm going to give you tonight is going to take really a lot of gray matter, and you've got to follow me very carefully. So look, please, in Romans 1, verse 26.

Now, in Romans 1, 26 through 32, we have a picture of our generation, the complete degeneration of man. Notice now, verse 26. For this cause God gave them up to vile affection, for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.

Does that sound like our generation? Yes, it does. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was me. That sounds like the homosexual craze of our day, doesn't it? Sounds like the lesbian and homosexual of our day.

Notice in verse 28. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient, or what they were doing. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful, who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Now, in these verses you find the description of the closing of the Gentile age. And I personally feel like we're in the closing of the Gentile age. I think we're approaching rapidly the wonderful event that we call the rapture of the church, or the rapture of the saints.

Now, how did we get here? Here we are tonight in a nation that's sold to filth and indecency, immorality, nudity. Here we are tonight in America. Jim Lyons, I told Jim Lyons about, oh, it must have been 12, 13 years ago.

I said, I said, Jim, the day is going to come in our generation when there will be nude mixed bathing in swimming pools and on beaches. And Jim was a bit offended. Why, he said, oh, I don't believe it.

Why, Preacher, he said, no. And he came back to me recently and said, Preacher, I never thought it would happen, but it has happened in our generation. Did you know, here we are tonight in a generation of people, many of whom go, females go with topless bathing suits, and you fly out to Los Angeles and get off the airplane, drive down the street near the airport, and you'll see sign after sign, topless waitresses serve here.

And by the way, the last time I was out there, those same restaurants that sign bottomless waitresses serve here. Can you picture that? Can you imagine a generation as wicked and as vile and as rotten and as sordid and as assentious as ours? Our generation, take most any state university you want to choose, and you'll find communism is taught right there in the university. And take most any state university you want to choose, and you'll find that nudity is allowed in plays right there on the campus of the university.

Our high school here in this area, at least one high school, has already had a nude on the stage in the high school and a play on the platform in the auditorium of the high school. Here we are in a generation where it won't be long, until marijuana will be legal, like liquor is now. Well, you say, how do you know marijuana's going to be legal? Because liquor already is, which is as sorry as marijuana.

A nation that'll destroy itself with alcohol will destroy itself with dope and narcotics a little later. Here we are in America tonight, our school, you can go to, students that go to Hammond High School have told me this, and a number of them have, you can go to Hammond High, and if you want some narcotics, you can get dope right there at Hammond High School. One student said the other day, I know where to go in Hammond Tech and get dope.

A student from Munster High told me the other day, I could take you to a place and show you where you can get dope in Munster High School. Here we are in a generation where right down there within two or three blocks of the police department, there's a place that advertises, get your head supplies here. I mean within three blocks of the police department, get your head supplies here.

What are head supplies? Narcotics, dope, heroin, so forth. Get your head supplies here. Advertise right there within three blocks of the police department in City Hall.

That's our generation. Our generation, free love, new morality, indecency, nudity, homosexuality. Out in California recently, the United Church of Christ ordained a homosexual to preach the gospel.

And in the ordination service, he admitted he was a homosexual. And now we have, it's our generation, denomination ordaining avowed homosexuals to preach the gospel. I got an anonymous letter the other day.

Somebody wrote me a letter. And forgive me for laughing, but it's not funny. It's sad, but it's so funny too.

They said with the very idea of you intimating that all homosexuals are effeminate. But do you know, listen, do you know it is as dangerous, and I get as much criticism today for preaching against homosexuality as I used to get preaching against cigarettes. Do you know that today people threaten to whip me because I preach against lesbianism and homosexuality? Our generation.

Right here in this area, you have churches who belong to the denomination that have ordained preachers, pastors. One man said, ordained to preach, pardon me, one male, one it said, ordained to preach and said, I hope to have a meaningful relationship with another male. I'd like to walk down the street and see a pastor petting some guy.

I guess in their church, he stops and says, hey, you two fellows, quit holding hands while I preach. It's our generation. I mean, you know, it used to back out of stuff.

Now it's pulpit stuff. Used to be certain areas of town, shady kind of places. And now it's a pulpit.

It's a preacher. It's a pastor. Now, ladies and gentlemen, if we don't watch out, we'll become adjusted to this wicked kind of dirty society.

And sin will not be exceeding sinful to us anymore. Now, how did we get here? How did we get here? Well, I want you to notice very, very carefully, and I'll show you how we got here. The first thing is I showed you where we are in verses 26 through 32.

Now, if you want to know how we got here, look back to verse 25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Now, what was the step right above our licentious, lustful society and our condition now of serving the creature more than the Creator? Or shall we say humanism? Serving the creature of what I think is more important than what God thinks. And we worship the body and the mind and the soul of man. And what got us there? Well, look back to verse 23 and you'll find that.

And change the glory of the corruptible God into an image made like a man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Idolatry. You see, it's the kind of society we have.

And right above that, worshiping the creature. And right above that, idolatry. And what caused us to get into idolatry? Look back, if you would please, to verse 21 and you'll find that.

Because when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Now look, now I want you to go out a step at a time down and show how you get down.

Look at verse 21 now. Because when they knew God, okay, here's a generation of people, here's a nation, young people, here's a nation that knows God. Here's some people that know God.

Now what's the start down? They glorified Him not as God. Where does a nation start down? They don't glorify the Lord. Where does a nation begin deteriorating? Not glorifying God.

They believe in Him, but don't glorify Him. Down in Greenville, South Carolina, there's a church there, the Tabernacle Baptist Church. Dr. Harold Seidler is the pastor.

Anybody ever been to the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina? Everybody ought to go. Dr. Seidler is a wonderful, wonderful Christian man. He has the most demonstrative people I've ever seen in my life.

I mean they whoop and they holler and they holler and they whoop. And I recall one night I was preaching and all of a sudden, listen, I wouldn't dare preach on heaven. They shout when you preach on hell.

I mean I wouldn't dare preach on the millennium. They rejoice when you preach on the tribulation. And I was preaching one night and right back in the middle, right about here, a fellow went, Whoop-dee! And he jumped about four foot in the air.

He landed on his feet and he came running down the aisle and he put his hands like this, running down the aisle like this, all the time going, Whoop-dee! Whoop-dee! And he got down to the Lord's Supper table and he ran in his chariot race around the Lord's Supper table. Whoop-dee! Whoop-dee! And I just stood and watched. Everybody watched him.

And everybody got up, came unscrewed and turned loose and began to shout and praise the Lord. And now, that's not the way we do it. And I'm not, in fact, if somebody got up and did that right now, I'd say, Whoop-dee! Outside.

But knowing that I'm here, I'm preaching now and I want to be heard. But you know what? That church is not in the serious danger of going liberal. You ever hear anybody get up at church and say, Glory to God! The Bible ain't true! Hallelujah! No, you don't work it that way.

When you quit glorifying God, you're in danger of starting down. As long as you can keep your hallelujah, you won't be in any serious trouble. As long as you can keep your praise the Lord in your heart and say, Thanks be to God! And praise God for His goodness! You won't get in any serious problems.

Where'd they start down? They did not glorify God. They believed Him. They knew Him.

But they didn't glorify Him. And so what happened? You know what? God wants us to love Him. God not only wants us to be saved.

God wants us to love Him. God wants us to glorify Him. God wants us to praise Him.

God wants us to adore Him. God wants us to worship Him. So what happened? First they knew God, but they didn't glorify Him.

Not as God. And neither were thankful. Now then, look at verse 22, the next step down.

Professing themselves to be wise. Hey! They went to college. And they got some learning.

Like the fellow said, his boy went off to college and got some learning. And the fellow said, what chains do you see in him? He said, used to when he'd plow a row. He'd get through plowing.

He'd say to the mule, whoa, Red, turn around and get up. Now he says, halt, Rebecca, pivot and proceed. And so they got off to school.

And you've taken a little Greek. You've taken some Hebrew. And you've taken some philosophy.

And you've taken some psychology. And now you're wise. You have a degree.

You've been off to college. And now you've got your doctor so-and-so. Or you have a B.A. or a B.S. or a M.A. And so you profess yourself to be wise.

And the Bible says, when you get wise, you become a fool. Our country is full of a bunch of little fools running around here thinking they're wise. Where did it all start? We could praise Him, the Lord.

I made mention this morning. I preached to the Nazarenes a great deal. I love the Nazarenes.

You know why? They love me. And so if they like me, I like them. And so I preached to the Nazarenes.

And I warned them. The day was, I can recall, we used to have a Nazarene church in our neighborhood. And my mother and I walked by that church.

I'd say, Mama, who are they? She'd say, Nazarenes. I'd say, what are they like? She'd say, peculiar. And we could hardly sleep.

That crowd making so much noise. It's eleven o'clock at night. Now, what's happened? The Nazarenes, they've lost their hallelujah.

Not all of them. But I go and I say, keep your hallelujah. Keep your praise of the Lord.

Listen to me. As long as you can keep praising God, you'll keep abasing yourself. As long, the bigger you can make God, the lower you'll make yourself.

The higher you can exalt Him. And the higher you can raise Him. And the more you can praise Him, the less you'll think of yourself.

Because praising to God is defacing to the flesh. But here are these people. They knew God.

What happened? But they didn't glorify Him as God. What else? They weren't thankful. What else? They got wise.

And when they did, they became fools. Now, what happened? In verse 23. And changed the glorious God of the uncouple of God into an image made like the couple of men.

What'd they do? Listen to me. When a Christian quits praising God, then he thinks he's wise. And when a Christian becomes wise, then he wants to conceive his own God in his own mind.

Or with his hands. And idolatry sets in. Now follow me.

Immorality. Are you listening? Immorality is a direct result to idolatry. Or of idolatry.

Idolatry always comes before immorality. When a nation loses its morals, it is as a result of idolatry. Now what does idolatry result from? Idolatry results from man thinking he's wise in his own mind.

God's not like the Bible says He is. I think He's another way. Now you may get him a piece of wood and carve his God out.

Or you may carve his God out in his mind. But whatever he's doing, he's making his own God. And what happens is this.

When a man makes his own God, then he has no resources at all for morality, or principles, or decency, or chastity, or purity, or right. Why? Because he has lost his concept of a God that made him. Why did he make his own God? He became wise in his own eyes.

Why, boys? Why did he become wise in his own eyes? Because he quit glorifying God. Listen to me. The safest thing in this world, and the surest way to keep this church from going into... Young people, no talking while I preach.

Everybody listening, the folks behind you that want to hear, and I intend for them to be able to do so. The safest thing in this world to keep a church from getting wise in its own eyes is to praise the Lord. You know colleges, Christian colleges that soon drift away into neo-orthodoxy? You know where it starts? They quit praising God.

Dr. Bob Johnston used to say, Hey, fella, you listen while I preach. You in the white tie. Don't you dare hit a fella beside you anymore while I'm preaching.

As long... Dr. Bob Johnston used to say, Every time we hire a Ph.D., we have a week's revival to offset it. Now what's he saying? He's saying this. When a school quits saying, Praise the Lord, the Bible's true.

Thank God Jesus is coming. And all of a sudden the Bible becomes somewhat of a mathematics book, and there's no amen. You heard me tell about Percy Ray down in Myrtle, Mississippi.

I went down to Myrtle one time, and Percy was preaching. And he jumped off the piano. He weighs 260.

And I want you to know they turned wild and they turned loose, and everybody started hugging each other. Now, you college students would like that kind of revival, I'm sure. But, I mean, they start praising God and clapping hands.

And if you didn't keep... And you say, What did you do? I just praised the Lord and clapped hands. You say, Why? I didn't want to get run over. I can recall when I was a kid, and our folks years ago, I told this story one time here when I was a kid.

I used to go out to a Negro church called the St. Mary's Baptist Church about 10 miles out of Marshall, Texas. And I'd conduct services every Wednesday night. And, oh, my, what a time we'd have.

I didn't... We had the Negro church, and I loved those people so much. And dear, sweet Christian people. And I'd get out there about 0730, 8 o'clock on a Wednesday night, and I'd see... They didn't turn the lights on.

That kerosene lamps and lanterns didn't turn the lights on. And so I'd walk in the back door back there, and the folks were all facing this way, and the lights were all off. And so when I'd walk in, it'd be pitch dark, and all those dear colored folks would turn and face me, and all I could see was eyes.

I'd just count the eyes and divide by two. I didn't know how many folks we had in the service. And so I'd be preaching along.

I'll never forget it. We had a deacon named Deacon Bussey, and I'd be preaching along, and Deacon Bussey'd get happy. Oh, he'd get happy.

I can recall one night I said, Deacon Bussey, would you dismiss the service, please? And he wouldn't do it. And I said, Deacon Bussey, would you dismiss the service? He didn't do it. I said, Deacon Bussey, would you please dismiss the service? And he said, Reverend Jack, there ain't nothing I wouldn't do for you, but I don't know what dismisses mean.

And I said, Reverend Bussey, Mr. Deacon Bussey, would you pray for us? I said, I can sure pray. And oh, boy, have you never heard a southern Negro Christian pray? You ain't never heard no prayer. I said, dear Lord, we come into thy wonderful, wondrous, amazing presence.

We pray that we shall so live that when our summons come to join the great host of heavenly travelers and sojourners, we pray that we shall so live until we shall stand before thy great white throne justified in thy blessed and wonderful sight. You never heard such prayer in your life. And so I'd be preaching along, and Deacon Bussey'd get happy, and we'd get happy as I had to start to roll.

And I can tell real shouting. Real shouting is always accompanied by the rolling of the eyes. A person doesn't roll his eyes because they sit down and shut up.

It's a counterfeit, because real shouting, that's in the Hebrew. That's in Jude chapter 2. You'll find that. And so his eyes began to roll.

And then pretty soon, he'd start swaying from side to side. And after a while, the entire back row would be swaying from side to side, and eyes rolling all the time. And they're all in front of him, swaying from side to side.

And pretty soon, the men sat over here, and the ladies sat over here. Never a woman sat on this side. Never a man sat on this side.

And the men all get up, and they start waving their hands and shouting and rolling their eyes. And the ladies do the same thing. The ladies would form a circle around this side, and the men form a circle.

I've been preaching all this time. You talk about, I never could say, sit down and shut up. They didn't listen to me.

They didn't care if I was preaching or not. And in the end, one fellow would hold on to the other like this, until all of them formed a circle around the whole section there. Thank you.

Oh, you saw a figure out there. And so all the men, each man holding on to the waist of the fellow in front of him, and here all the ladies get over here, and they'd start singing, Praise the Lord, and they'd sing, What could I do without the Lord? And they'd walk around the building and shout and praise God and bless God, and I think it was real. And many a Wednesday night, about 11 o'clock at night, Dr. Jack Hyatt was on the tail end of that men's line with my hand on Deacon Buss's waist, and what could I do without the Lord? And by the way, I learned to roll my eyes pretty good, too.

And I do it. Now, I'm not sure that's the way the New Testament church was supposed to do it, but you know what? We never had one liberal tendency in that colored church. Nobody ever got up and said, We have found that this particular poor, there are two Isaiahs, and one Isaiah was written by one man, part by another man.

We didn't, we just thanked God. I mean, we just read a verse and holler and praise the Lord and rejoice and thank God. Listen, if you can keep your shout, you'll never degenerate.

Keep your, keep your hallelujah, keep your praise the Lord, keep the glory in the heart, keep the fire burning and the joy and the thrill and excitement. I'm saved and blessed be God. I'm saved.

As long as you can say that, you won't get very far away. But here these people knew God, but they glorified Him not as God, neither were they thankful. Then what happened? They became wise.

They went off to college. They got some education. Then what happened? They decided they knew more about God than they thought they did until they studied Karl Barth over in Germany and found out that God wasn't the old fundamental God.

And hell no longer has fire. And heaven no longer has golden streets. And Jesus is no longer going to come again, literally.

And born again. That's just a turn. And before you know it, you profess yourself to become wise.

And the Bible says you become His fool. Then what do you do? Then you make your own God. Then what do you do? Then you go into homosexuality and lewdness and all kinds of wicked licentiousness and fornication.

Why? Because you started out as gaunter, you quit glorifying God. Now then, basically we got here because of idolatry. Now I'm going to give you tonight four different types of heathen idolaters in this educated society of ours.

The first idolater is the fellow who believes in centralized government. I'm going to be a John Bircher for a few minutes here now. And I'm going to tell you that the first... Listen.

Follow me. I'm going to make a statement. Hang on to your seats.

Don't get mad. If you do, I'm going to make it anyway. McGovern is an idolater.

Well you say now, wait a minute. I've seen his house. He doesn't have a single idol in his house.

No, but he has an idol in his philosophy. Centralized government is idolatry. Fellas, line up beside me here, would you please? Line up beside me here.

I'm going to let you have a farm over here and you plow your farm. And don't plow. We all plow at the same time.

You can have yours here. I'll have mine. Okay.

Now then, I believe God's going to take care of my needs. Dear God, I pray you would help me to make a good crop this year and give me rain, give me sunshine, give me strength to take care of my crop. You believe God will do it? Okay, then I don't need a pension check from the government, do I? I don't need Social Security, do I? Why? Because I've got faith in God, right? Hey, how about you? Well, pray.

You going to make it all right? You want a check from Washington every month? How about you? You going to pray? Well, pray. Okay. You going to be okay? You need to be on Social Security? Okay.

How about you? You going to pray? Pray. Dear Lord, help me. Dear Lord, do help him.

All right. You believe God's going to take care of you? You believe God's going to take care of you? Pray. Okay.

How about you? Okay. Pray. Okay.

Now, by the way, America was built that way. There was a day when you didn't have to get a check in the mailbox from Washington, D.C. to make it. Why? We believe in God.

That's why. A man got on his knees and looked up to God and said, Dear God, give me strength to take care of my field. And give me strength to take care of my crop.

And give me rain and sunshine. And he claimed a promise, My God shall supply all your needs according to the riches and glory of Christ Jesus. But all of a sudden I find myself a little bit backslidden.

Okay. Boys and girls. Girls on the second row, are you watching while I'm preaching? I find myself a little bit backslidden.

And so I don't pray like I used to. And I don't think it's going to rain. Oh, my.

What if it doesn't rain? Oh, I won't have any crops if it doesn't rain. Oh, my. Hey, fella, let's get together here.

All right. How about your crop? You're backslidden too. How about your crop? Not very good.

You're worried about it? How about yours? It's got worms in it. You're worried about it? Uh-huh. How about yours? I'm worried about mine.

You're worried about yours? Uh-huh. Let me ask you a question. Is Philippians 4.19 still in the Bible? Will God still supply all of our needs? Uh-huh.

If we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, will all these things still be added to us? Uh-huh. Okay. Except we don't have faith to believe that anymore.

So what shall we do? Fellas, let's get together here and let's form a co-op. Let's form a co-op. Let's all get together and I'll put in 10% of everything I make.

You put in 10% of what you make and all of us put in 10%. Okay? Get plenty out of pocket. Put 10% in here.

Now then, if any of us has a bad year, then he can take out of this kitty here, you see, this 10%. Why do we do that? We just formed a socialistic community. We just decided to vote for McGovern.

Why? Because we lost our faith in God. Oh, so centralized power is as a direct result of losing one's faith in God. Is that right? Okay.

Now if God can supply my needs, I don't need this co-op, do I? Huh? But if I'm a little worried about it, so what am I saying? I'm saying that we have built ourselves an idol. That's what the Tower of Babel was, an idol. That's what left-wingers are, idolaters.

That's what... Communism is idolatry in its fullest degree, in its final state. When we don't trust God, we trust the state to take care of it. And so, thank you, fellas.

That's what centralized power is all about. Hey, come back, fellas. Let's form a denomination.

And we'll all be pastors of that denomination. Now, we're all pastors. Well, God's going to take care of me.

I'm going to preach the Bible and God's going to take care of me. I know He is. How about you? Think He's going to take care of you? How about you? Are you going to preach the Bible? And God's going to supply your needs? God's going to give you a church? How about you? What if your deacons vote you out? Get another church.

How are you going to get it? God will take care of you. How about you? What if your folks vote you out of the church? He'll still supply. What if they cut your salary? He'll supply.

How about you? Is that a fact? What if you lose your church? And God's going to take care of you. Hey, these sound like good men of God, don't they? I see. Okay.

By the way, God will do exactly that. He'll do exactly that. But I get preached in one of these days, and my children are teenagers now, and I've got a lot of bills to pay.

And I get up and I say, I tell you, you miniskirted, long-haired rascals. And the three deacons go to punch each other in the face. Ooh.

They might be going to fire me. I walk out the door, and there are those three deacons there talking outside the door. Anytime three deacons get together and talk, it worries the fire out of me.

And they get together, and they're talking outside the door. I say, hey, fellas, tell you what we're going to do. What if my deacons fired me? What would happen? What would I do? Hey, what let's do? Let's form a nomination.

Huh? And let's elect a superintendent. He can recommend us to other churches in case we lose the one we've got now. Okay? Okay, nominations are now in order for a superintendent.

Mr. Vineyard, all right? Second motion? All in favor of Mr. Vineyard, raise your hand. Hey, Mr. Vineyard. I'd like to take you out to eat, Mr. Vineyard.

My dear Dr. Vineyard. Oh, we're glad to have the lovely Mr. Vineyard with us. You know why? Because I've got to keep in good mood with him.

Why? Because he's my hope to get a church in case my deacons are going to fire me. What happens? Centralized power is always a substitute for God. Always is.

Anytime centralization of power in the church, in the country, anytime centralization of power is a part of the philosophy of a nation, what? They've lost their faith in God. You say, I don't believe it. I dare you to check America, and you'll find in direct proportion to her losing her faith in God, you'll find her going toward communism.

Thank you, fellow. Communism is complete dependence on the state. It's a canopy of protection and security that is a substitute for God, and substitutes for God are idols.

Where did America get where she is tonight? Because socialism and centralized power and bureaucracy, all of it, is caused by a lack of faith in Almighty God. It's idolatry. When you lose your faith in God, you get... By the way, did you know that's what cities are all about? That's what cities are all about.

Anybody here, when a storm came up like we thought was going to come up tonight, ever say, oh, I wish you were with somebody? My mother used to say, let's go over to see Miss Jones. Now, Miss Jones was a little old bitty shrimp. She couldn't... the wind could have taken her and blown her away.

But somehow or other, if we get Miss Jones, if Miss Jones is able to protect us, no! Girls, no! Not able to protect us. But there's some security about getting together, isn't there? Let me ask you a question. Let me ask you a question.

Could you walk alone with God and make it... Could you walk in a storm alone? Do you know one reason we're so bereft of leaders in America? There are so few real men who can walk alone without being propped up. You know why? We've lost our faith in God. I get on an airplane.

Let's have a little trouble. Everybody just goes to pieces. I was flying to Detroit, Michigan.

And an engine caught on fire. On an Electra prop plane, an engine caught on fire. Well, now, to be honest with you, it is not the most blessed feeling in the whole world.

Look, I mean, if it's cold, you can keep warm. But who wants to keep warm at the expense of... And so the pilot came on and said, ladies and gentlemen, we've lost one engine. And he said, we'll feather that engine.

But he said it shows it's on fire. The machine, the little button here, Ray knows what I'm talking about. Ray Newton, he's a pilot.

But some little button up there, he said, shows it's on, the engine is burning. And so one stewardess went and opened the bathroom door and locked herself in the bathroom. And the fellow beside me got his pillow.

He got a pillow, and he put his head in the pillow. And I said, forgive me, but I said, is it still burning with your head in the pillow or not? He said, it's not funny. It's not funny.

And I said, I know it's not funny, but I said, good night. It's not going to help anything because you do it like that. Like a little boy and girl said, come find me.

And so we came in, we circled the Metropolitan Airport in Detroit, and looked down, and you never told me it's flashing lights in your life. I mean, firetrucks all over that place. And I said, hey.

He said, what, what, what, what, what, what? He said, what are those? I said, they're firetrucks. He said, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho. I said, they have us in mind.

He said, now, don't understand me, I was very, very happy to get on the ground. But not many men can walk alone. I got an old hair field on a Convair 880 Delta Airlines jet, no, PWA, jet plane to fly to St. Louis, Missouri.

And I sat down with the lady, and the plane was loading, and I said, my name's Jack Holland. She said, my name's so-and-so. I said, hey, do you know if you die, do you go to heaven? She said, there's no heaven.

I said, well, yeah, there's a place where you're going to suffer forever. She said, there's no such thing as pain. Oh.

I said, well, you get prepared to die. She said, no such thing as dying. You think you're dead.

Well, that interested me, because, and look, she's a Christian science, which is neither Christian nor science, but she's Christian science. She said, no such thing as death. Nothing to worry about.

You think you're dead. A little boy one time went to his mother, his mother's Christian science, and said, Mama, said Mr. Jones down the street is sick. She said, no, he's not sick, he just thinks he's sick.

The boy came back the next day and said, Mama, remember that man down the street that thought he was sick? He thinks he's dead now. And so we got out on the runway, and we took off in the air, and that lady all of a sudden, she held on to the side, and the flaps came, the landing gear came up, and she went, oh. And I said, you think you're scared, don't you? I said, you're afraid you're going to think you're dead, too, aren't you? She said, it's not funny, it's not funny.

You know, we've got a generation of folks that can't much make it alone. We want to huddle up together. Did you know God can take care of his own? Did you know God's able to take care of your needs? Young preacher, there's a God in heaven, and that God in heaven can give you a church if he wants you to have a church.

You don't have to be propped up by some denominational secretary who messes with business that's not his own. God can take care of his men. If God can't take care of you, preach another God.

Centralized government is idolatry, and one of the reasons why we tonight are facing a wicked, vile, sensual, nude, homosexual, adulterous generation is because of the idolatry of centralized power. There's a second idolatry in America tonight that's caused our problem, and that's humanism. Humanism is mental idolatry.

The pagan in Africa gets a piece of wood and builds him a god. The intellectual in the university gets his mind and builds himself a god. A little lady said to me just recently, she said, I have my own concept of God.

And I said, you know what that is? That is self-idolatry. Now you listen to me. The same old song and dance comes out of every university in America.

Any professor you will talk to, nine out of ten of them, they have the same philosophy. I have my own God, and it's up to each man to have his own God, and every man decides what he thinks about God. Well, that's pagan idolatry.

That is you deciding with your mind what God is like, and it's you building your god. And that's what humanism is all about. How can you define humanism? Anytime you find anybody that lowers Jesus, he's humanistic in his philosophy.

Anytime you find anybody that exalts the flesh, he's humanistic in his philosophy. This lady I mentioned a while ago, a very nice lady, she said, I don't believe in heaven or hell. But I said, the Bible says it.

But she said, I don't believe the Bible. But I said, it tells about Jesus. I don't believe that Jesus was God.

I think he was just a man. Now, was it surprising to hear her say in the next breath that she didn't believe, didn't agree with me, because she said she thinks man is good? You see, that's the next step. After you think God is not good, man is good.

Humanism is pulling God down and raising man up. And that's what I said. Ninety-nine and forty-four one hundred percent of the universities in this nation tonight are built on humanistic philosophy of exalting man and bringing down God.

She said, everybody's good. I said, oh, everybody's good. I said, who's killing all these people around the country? Who's robbing all these banks? Everybody's good.

The honest, simple truth is, ladies and gentlemen, when you have a little God and a big man, you've got nothing but homosexuality and licentiousness and wickedness and a vulgar society. Why? Because idolatry is the forerunner of paganism and lewdness, and so humanism. What's the prevention? Again, I say to glorify him.

There's a third kind of idolatry, and that is substituting the means as an end. Do you recall the story over in the book of Numbers, isn't it? Yes, Numbers. The story of the brazen serpents.

And all of a sudden, fiery serpents. I never will forget. I was preaching over here in the other auditorium one night, and I was talking about the fiery serpents, and I said, serpents are everywhere.

I mean, oh, fire serpents are everywhere. I said, you'd come home at night, you'd open the door, and a snake would be on the door, and it bites you on the hand. You'd open the cabinet to get some dishes out, and there'd be a snake up on top of the dish there looking at you.

And I said, everywhere. In the garage, there were snakes. I said, snakes everywhere.

I looked down the front row, and every kid on the front row had his head sticking out. Why? He didn't want to get bit by those snakes, that's why. But snakes were everywhere, really.

And the fiery serpents were biting the Israelites, and they were dying, just falling over dead to the thousands. And Moses came to God and said, God, what can we do? And God said, get your piece of bread. And I want you to beat that piece of bread and make it look like a serpent.

And I want you to put that brazen serpent on a pole and pull that pole high. And tell all the Jews if they'll turn and look at that brazen serpent, they'll live. They will not die of the snake bite.

And, oh, it was wonderful. Was it the serpent? Was it the piece of bread that healed them? No, it was God that healed them. But you know what happened? The Jews, some of the Jews got healed.

And they said, oh, thank God, I got healed. And they said, well, look at that brazen serpent. It wasn't long.

So they'd have religious exercises. And they'd walk by that brazen serpent and they'd kneel at that brazen serpent. I'm not sure what sign they made while they knelt.

But they made some kind of a sign, and they knelt at that brazen serpent. And what happened? They were worshipping the means instead of the end. It wasn't that brazen serpent that made them well.

It was the God of heaven that made them well. But they worshiped the means as an end. And that's idolatry.

And, by the way, ladies and gentlemen, if we do that, God will take away that means. I know people who've come to churches like this, and they've said, oh, I need to be saved. And they came to Christ, and they trusted the Savior, and they fell in love with the church.

And that's wonderful. Nothing wrong with that. I think we have the greatest church on the face of the earth, and I thank God for it.

Nothing wrong with that. But, oh, before you know it, you put the church above God. And the Lord Jesus looks down from heaven, and he sees us worshipping the church instead of the Savior.

And one of these days the Lord will come and remove the church, and you won't have the good old first Baptist church in heaven. Ladies and gentlemen, the best way in the world to ensure this church being like it is tonight is for every one of us to always praise the Lord and exalt Him and love Him most of all. Oh, once it was a blessing, now it is the Lord.

Once it was a feeling, now it is His Word. Once His gifts I wanted, now the giver own. Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.

All in all is Jesus. Of Jesus will I sing. Everything is Jesus, and Jesus is everything.

Just keep praising Him, and keep exalting Him, and keep loving Him. Oh, love the church, but worship God. Love the church, but praise Jesus.

Love the church, but not ever even close to our love and devotion for the Lord Jesus Christ. I love First Baptist Church, Hammond, but listen to me. I'd walk out the door tonight never to walk back in again if it came in between my worship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was not the First Baptist Church, Hammond, that plucked you out of sin, my brother. It was the Lord Jesus Christ. He used us as a tool, but never, never, never, never, never let us tonight reach up and let's say we love our church, but take it off the throne.

He alone deserves a place of worship in our hearts. And before you know it, He takes it away. That's where baptismal regeneration came in.

I love to baptize. Man alive, I enjoy getting that water up there and baptizing folks. I could do it all day and all night, and I love to do it.

But you get where you love it so much before you know it, you think it saves people. And the means becomes the end. And the Lord says, okay, that's where lewdness comes.

That's where we get in all this trouble. That's where denominational hierarchies come. And that's where you get the place where we love our denomination.

Even who doesn't break the truth. I wouldn't pull out. I wouldn't quit the schools.

I wouldn't quit spending money, support that wicked program. Why? You have allegiance to the denomination rather than to the Lord Jesus Christ. But there's a fourth kind of idolatry.

And listen carefully to this one. It's the idolatry of putting men before God. Paul in Barnabas had performed some miracles.

And the people came down and fell before him and said, One of you is Mercury and the other two, Jupiter. One is Jupiter and one is Mercury. And they bowed down before Paul in Barnabas.

And Paul in Barnabas said, Get up! We're not God. Don't worship us as God. Don't you recall when Peter came to the house of Cornelius, they bowed down and worshipped him.

And Peter said, Stand up. I also am a man. Oh, let me say, I want you to love me.

I mean that. I need your love. I need your prayers.

I need your help. Today I was so pleased. Mrs. Clara Bennett passed away.

And she was up in years. No, no talking, please, Mr. Earley. She was up in years.

And Mrs. Bennett passed away. And before she died, they asked her if she had any requests at all. She said, Yes.

They're going to bury her in Kentucky. And everybody, if you die and you're saved, you die and go to Kentucky when you die. So they're going to bury her in Kentucky.

They asked her if she had any requests. And she said, Yes. Before I take my body to Kentucky, would you have Brother Hiles come and conduct a memorial service for me? That's my only request.

And I was so pleased that she didn't want me to do that. She loved me. And her daughter said today, Oh, how my mother loved you.

And that made me feel real good on the inside. A while ago I came out the office door. As I opened the door, I stepped on something.

And it was on a stack of tomatoes. I just squashed one is all. And it was on a stack of tomatoes.

And somebody had raised some organic grown tomatoes. You know how you raise organic tomatoes? You play the organ all the time they're growing. And there were some organic tomatoes.

And my heart was warm. Somebody loved me enough to give me the tomatoes. And this morning I got through baptizing, went out in the alley.

And a little girl, she must have been about seven or eight, she came up and said, Hello, Brother Hiles. She reached out and she took my hand, walked with me hand in hand down the alley. And I just enjoyed it so much.

I think she was 19. I'm not sure. But anyway, that little girl, about seven years of age, walked down the alley and she squeezed my hand.

The other day I was out in the back in the alley coming in. A little girl, about five years old, came up. And she took my hand and she went, Ah, that means do you love me? And I squeezed back, yes, I do.

And she squeezed back, how much? And we squeezed real hard for four or five years of age. And I liked that. I liked it very much, very much.

This morning I was in the baptismal dressing room. One of the men, we got the greatest preacher in the world. And I didn't mind that.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I don't have to have that, but I don't mind that. But let me say this.

Don't ever put me where Jesus ought to be. Never. There are two reasons for that.

One reason is I want Him to have the praise. But the other reason is this. Did you know that sometimes God will take away from you that thing that you put in His place? And I don't want to be taken away.

But He will. I've preached the Sermon on this at least once every three or four, every four or five months since I've been pastor of this church along this line.

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