

(Compilation) The Marks of God's Approval

by Leonard Ravenhill

This sermon emphasizes the need for churches and individuals to seek a genuine move of the Holy Spirit, rather than settling for mechanical routines and man-made conditions. It challenges believers to embrace the cost of true discipleship, including persecution and suffering, in order to experience the power of God and revival. The speaker calls for a return to the radical commitment of early Christians, willing to endure hardships and rejection for the sake of the Gospel.

Scripture: Acts 1:8, Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 11:36, Luke 9:23, 2 Timothy 3:12, Matthew 5:11, 1 Peter 4:12, Revelation 2:10, Galatians 2:20, James 1:2

Topics: "Genuine Move of the Holy Spirit", "Cost of True Discipleship"

Description

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Transcript

A Baptist preacher said something the other day that's very disturbing. I said, Doctor, what was it? He said, this good Baptist preacher said this to an audience that he was addressing. He said, I want to tell you that if God withdrew the Holy Spirit from my church today, it would function tomorrow the same way we wouldn't even know he'd gone.

And he thinks that might be written of many churches in that we become so mechanical. We go in at 11 and come out at 12 and the Holy Ghost must come and we open the door of the church and he must leave when we lock it and we try and lay down the track and say come Holy Ghost for thee we call spirit of burning come but come our way. We lay down the conditions.

Holy Ghost come but please don't violate our theology. Don't upset our status quo. Don't break our hearts over the lost world.

Oh yes, yes, preachers, you and I will raise our hats to Finney and Booth and we raise our hats to the martyrs and we thank God for the last drop of their blood but we won't give him the first drop of ours. They died, persecuted, forsaken, ostracized, penniless, but oh brother when it comes to the resurrection, what a

resurrection. I say we shed some crocodile tears over the last drop of their blood but we won't give the first drop of ours for Holy Ghost revival and maybe it's gonna take that before we get it.

You've heard me say before, I still say, I'm tired of leaning on to pygmies. I want to see some mature men, some strong men, some men that pull down strongholds, some men that are itching for praise and glamour and glory and projection. They want to be hidden and lost and become the seed in the ground that dies and brings forth fruit to the glory of God.

It's not easy, it's very costly. Just for a week I read something I've never read in 50 or 60 years of reading, 70 years. I've always believed it.

It's about giving a sketch of the cross and he said that they took Jesus and they stripped him. He know that they stripped him and part of the humiliation was to hang in a public place naked. Oh you can pass it over.

What right when God does it with you? In your church people begin to ridicule you. You're stripped of this and stripped of that and stripped of something else. It's hard to take.

But that's the way you make character. We have blinded our eyes to truth and we have put our fingers in the great need in America. The greatest need in America tonight is prophets.

And as dear Josie used to say, if you're going to be a prophet, brother, you better settle. Or as Dr. Parker originally said, if you're going to be a prophet, you'll have to preach repentance and before you start, dedicate your head to heaven because you won't last much more than six months maybe. John the Baptist himself didn't.

You get filled with the Holy Ghost and watch it. Where will you go? You'll go where those other men have gone. They put them in prison.

They were poor, they had nothing. Isn't that an awesome word? It is to me where Paul says, I have nothing and yet I possess all things. Now we've got everything.

We've got young preachers that have all the answers, know all the theology, know all that's going to happen, know all the end quote church history world without end. But they don't leave any revivals. All that blessed apostle says, I have nothing, but I possess all things.

Isn't that wonderful? He possessed power over death, power over disease, power over all the opposition of the devil. He went to cities and he had one of two things, revival or riots. We have neither.

I prefer a riot with a revival than have nothing. One man filled with the Holy Ghost. And it's so like Jesus Christ.

Before thou camest out of the womb, I sanctified thee and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. A prophet. That's the most thankless task in the world.

You know what, I think when God is angry with the nation, he gives it no prophets. There isn't a prophet in America the day I know of. Somebody sent a circular out with my picture on and said I was a prophet.

I never claimed that. I didn't give authority for that. It's nonsense.

I was going to say you never find a prophet that's rich, not that I'm rich. You never find a prophet that's the man of the year. Never find a prophet where the red carpet is laid out for him.

Immediately he takes up that mantle of prophecy. He gets the full load of the love of God and the full anger of the people. You know what we need? We need some people who are reckless for God.

Don't care about public opinion, don't care what godly people say or what the ungodly say. They get hold of the will of God and they run with it. You can chop me up if you like, I'm going to do God's will.

If ever God was looking for men who, as we would say, square the shoulders and carry the burden, it's in this day in which we live. If ever we need to be alert that we don't get caught and trapped in false doctrine, it's the day in which we live. If ever there's a day when we should put on the whole armour of God, God in heaven, you know, apart from Mussolini, he was the first to train schoolboys as soldiers, but we don't send schoolboys to the battle.

You don't send babies to battle. They want bottles, not battles. They want the nursery, not the armoury.

How often do you go to a prayer meeting where you feel there's real engagement against principalities and powers and the rulers are the donors of this world? One of the most awesome things, I think, that Jesus ever said was to his disciples, I give you power over the enemy. No, no, no, over all the power of the enemy. And it includes sickness, I admit that, but it doesn't mean that merely.

There's only one power that can withstand the onslaught that's on all the nations of the earth right now. And that is the church of Jesus Christ anointed with the Holy Ghost. There's an old saying that all is fair in love and war.

And I'll tell you what, if you stir hell up, the devil will stir everything he can against you. You'll get misunderstood, misrepresented, and if you're not thick-skinned, no, no, no, it's not if you're thick-skinned, if you're not mature enough, it'll get you down. It's not the contradiction of sinners that gets you down, as Psalm 1 says, it's the criticism of saints that gets you down.

Eli thought that Hannah was drunk. Sure she was drunk, she was drunk with God. She was intoxicated.

She got through to God, he was going to remove her barrenness. Paul is God's intoxicated man. But again, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.

The blood that fell from him became seed in the heart of that brilliant young man there. And he's going to do what this man should have done. But God says the best thing I can do is cut this man's life off and take that man who's the biggest rebel in the world and make him, he's the biggest persecutor, I'll make him the greatest preacher.

He's a murderer, but I'll make him a missionary. He's a fool, but I'll make him come to the place where with all his colossal intellect and his marvelous background, he says, I'm a fool for Christ. Why does he stay on and become the chief rabbi? Why does he become more famous than Gamaliel with all his wisdom and knowledge? Because one day he had a vision.

The devil hates Christ and he hates the church. And the world is never going to treat us well. Why should you get a better treatment from this rotten world than he got? Why do you expect to be accepted? In fact, the more holy you become, the more corrupt the others are.

There is no joy this side of eternity like the joy. Jesus, oh for the joy that was said before him. Is the joy in hanging on a cross naked? He wasn't covered up, that's part of the humiliation.

Is the joy marching through a street with all the thieves and liars and hypocrites and religious people scorning? That's the Son of God, that's the man that's going to build a new world. Look at him hanging on a cross. What was his joy? It's the will of the Father.

The first baby and the husband of the second and never be a third. Because we don't know what pain is. But I'll tell you what, I believe that soul travel is infinitely more than physical travel.

Jesus thought of the travel of his soul. We reminded ourselves last night his hair was as white as snow. Why? Because he went in the Gethsemane and everybody was stuck in.

So why do you go? Do you expect better treatment from this world than Jesus? God, if you do, you'll be disappointed. When did his greatest friends desert him? In his hour of need, they deserted him in Gethsemane. They deserted him at a cross.

They weren't even at the resurrection morning. When the whole of hell trembled, when Jesus led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men, they didn't say a word. So this man causes a problem.

Everybody does if you're born again. We say Jesus, oh if Jesus came, he's the Prince of Peace. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Jesus comes, he comes to bring a sword.

He divides people. He divides children from their parents. He divides people in ministries.

You suddenly wake up to where you are and who you are and where you're going and suddenly like that you realize that it's Jesus Christ is all he is and he's all I need or he's nothing at all. Either he was the most disillusioned man or a liar or else he's the most fabulous message in the world and he has the most fabulous message in the world. But Jerusalem is the place, the home base is where revival must come.

Beginning at Jerusalem. And that's the hardest place. They were most despised, discredited, disappointed, disillusioned men in the world.

You wonder why people don't believe you. They didn't believe Jesus, so forget it. Where did he see all this? I mean God tears the clouds away, takes the veil off the future and he sees into eternity.

But he saw it on a prison island, a place called Patmos which in the day of the Apostle John was just a prison colony where they dumped the worst characters in the whole world. And it was there that God revealed himself to him. You say the heavens don't open to me.

They opened for Stephen when he was battered to death, when his body was bloody and broken and suddenly the heavens opened. We want heaven to open to us in a conference. But God most likely will take us to a place of persecution and privation.

Pentecost in the New Testament meant to be married to poverty, persecution, privation, prisons, pain. Today Pentecost is married to prosperity and security and happiness. The very opposite of what it was originally in the word of God.

This one thing I do it will be hell to get there. I forgot one of the old Puritan preachers said in the 1600s you have to go through hell to get to heaven. You have to lose everything in order to become part of the bride

of Jesus Christ.

One thing I know I cannot say him nay. I tell every preacher to come to my office. God the Almighty doesn't care that much about your ministry.

I told that to a fellow recently, he nearly fell down, I'm glad he didn't. Couldn't have picked him up. But he trembled.

What do you mean God doesn't care about my ministry? I said God is concerned about making you. You'll be existing when your ministry is being forgotten in the dust. He's making character.

He's making us like Christ. He wants to do anyhow. And yet Paul says that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.

What do you mean the resurrection? He's written volumes on the resurrection. He's told us about the coming in different orders, different styles of flesh. First this order, then that order, then the other order of resurrection.

And it says that if by any means. But what else does he have to do? Good Lord he's being stoned, he's being beaten, he's being shipwrecked, he's being kicked out of the synagogue, he's being driven out of cities. What does he have to do to attain this prize? He doesn't ask for the prize of the high calling.

He's not asking for the high calling, that is the holy resurrection, the outright, the prize of the high calling. He's asking for the out of the outment. But to get that I have to have, I don't have to be a world's greatest preacher.

You don't have to be more tied than anybody else. You don't have to do something that everybody clamors for in these days. I have to know the fellowship of his suffering.

To be made conformable to his death, that not only then, but even now I shall know resurrection life. He comes alongside to help. Well it's nice, but it's not really true.

He doesn't come alongside, he comes inside. And he comes with strength. Now you don't have to agree with a thing I've said, I've already made that clear to you.

But sometimes I think that in the last analysis, the sign of God's blessing in the Old Testament is prosperity. And the sign of God's blessing in the New Testament is adversity. In other words, what's your breaking point? That's all after you die, which could be five minutes from now.

There are no rich people, don't let anybody fool you. The only thing anybody owns, some of you millionaires sitting here. The only thing you own is one beat of your heart, that's all.

Doesn't matter who you are, what you are, but I am a common denominator there. But you see, we're going to have a thousand million, million, billion, trillion, quadrillion years after we die to be happy. Now I think in one area we've slipped up, we've kind of suggested if you get saved and filled with the Spirit, you're going to be happy.

Well I've got news for you, as soon as Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, he had the worst experience he ever had in his life. He went in the wilderness and fought the devil for 40 days, 40 always being a period of probation under the divine eye, and for 40 days he had combat with Satan. But remember this,

he didn't come back on the edge of a nervous breakdown.

He came back as full of the Spirit as he went into the wilderness. He returned in the power of the Spirit. Now if you're looking for the Holy Spirit to come and fill and possess you just for fun and send you around to banquets and breakfasts, all he'll do is get you fat anyhow.

But he doesn't come for that reason. No man want, but wreath and tangleth himself with the affairs of this life. Not the sins of this life, the affairs.

What did Paul say? Paul says, you know that towering figure Demas, one of my best students, one of my best preachers, there's a great future for him. But Demas hath forsaken me, having what? Committed adultery, stolen money. What did he say? Having loved this present world.

Remember what Paul says in Philippians? There's a certain group of people, I've told you, Roman Catholic Church, the Mormons, all the others, they do not oppose Jesus Christ, they oppose the cross of Christ. He says, I tell you, even weeping, they're enemies of the cross. The church of Rome makes its money out of plastic crucifixes.

The Mormons say that it's the church of the Latter Day Saints, they don't hate Jesus Christ, they hate the cross of Jesus Christ. And what does he say? He says, I tell you, even weeping, listen to the group, they're enemies of the cross of Christ, number one. Number two, whose God is there buried.

Number three, they mind earthly things. He doesn't say they've gone into adultery and wickedness and vileness. They got fascinated, mesmerized.

The church of Jesus Christ tonight, on the average, its people are as mesmerized with money as the people outside. Mesmerized with fashion and style. I love that phrase in Hebrews 11 again, of whom the world was not worthy.

They wandered around in sheepskins and goatskins. Those were the only four coats you could have. Sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted and tormented.

And yet they were in a sense of God's will. The first man they ever read of in the Bible was a majestic man. He'd never seen a priest, he'd never seen a sacrifice, he'd never seen an altar, he'd never seen a Bible, he'd never heard anybody preach.

And yet one day he went down there and he yelled at the top of his voice, the Lord is coming with 10,000 of his saints to execute judgment. That's the word of a prophet. But the man who doesn't get a hill of beans about the persecution of the opposition, he's not brought with God.

The man who walks with God is never alone. The man who walks with God is never poor. The man who is rich and doesn't walk with God is poor.

I don't care how much land he owns. I don't care how big his church may be. The devil isn't afraid of numbers, he's afraid of God's pure men.

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