

Men of Prayer in History

by Mack Tomlinson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer in the life of a Christian, highlighting the examples of praying men in history who experienced God's power and presence in their lives.

Duration: 1:05:46

Scripture: Luke 18:1, Ephesians 6:18, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, James 5:16

Topics: "Prayer Life", "Revival History"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer and the impact of praying men throughout history, highlighting individuals like John Knox, Robert Bruce, Leonard Ravenhill, and others who dedicated their lives to fervent prayer. It calls for a revival of prayer in the present day, urging listeners to heed the call to a life of intercession and seeking God's presence through dedicated prayer.

Transcript

Could we stand and read God's Word together? I'd like to thank the Lord and thank Brother Paul and HeartCry for the invitation to be a part of this conference. And we look to the Lord alone. I'd like to read two specific passages of Scripture.

The first is in Colossians 4. I could not earlier today think of where this verse was, and then my dear brother Chad Thompson overheard me, and he said, oh, that's over Colossians 4. Colossians 4, we'll read there, and then we'll go back right away to John chapter 1. Colossians 4, John 1. Verse 12, Brother Bill referred to this in his morning message, and the Lord had already directed my thoughts to speak on it as a biblical example of a praying man. Verse 12, Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, salutes you. Here was his ministry.

This is what he did. This was his calling. Laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

John chapter 1. One verse. Verse 6. Sometimes we read over these short verses, we become so familiar with them that we don't let the impact of what they truly say come freshly to us. We ought to pause and tear along at Scripture.

Verse 6 says this. What an amazing thing. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

Father, as we are here in your presence, again we bow our hearts to you, Lord Jesus. You know and I know, and these my brothers and sisters, they know, that in me, that I can of myself do nothing. Lord, you've already told us that in John 15.

Apart from you, I can do nothing. So Lord, I roll my heart and my burden upon thee. And I thank you, and we thank you today that our sufficiency is of you.

Whether to speak or to hear your voice. We ask you today to hear our cry. We ask you today to remember thy promise.

Lord, where you said, Though I am poor and needy, yet you think upon me. Remember us even this hour. Father, this afternoon, would you afresh enlarge our capacity to continue to receive what you give.

Speak to those, Lord, who need through this time to hear a living word from God. Quicken, we ask, our moral bodies, those who are weary, and continue, blessed Holy Spirit, to be among us. Our sufficiency is of thee.

And our expectation is of God. Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray and thank you that you hear us. And we look to you.

Amen. I was asked to speak on prayer and history. And you know, I thought, okay.

I mean, that's kind of like being asked, could you speak to us about cars? Or, you know, speak to us about the universe. Where do you start? What do you do? And the frustration for me is that I'm not preaching the Bible today. But I know God can use this.

I want to speak on the subject prayer and praying men, particularly in British history. And when I say prayer and praying men, I'm going to be speaking on men. But let me qualify this by simply saying that God, all through history, has raised up praying young ladies and praying young men and praying women and praying men and praying elderly ladies hidden away.

And God calls people to a life and a vocation and a ministry of prayer. Prayer and praying men. The power of the Holy Spirit coming through prayer.

In every generation, it's true that God sovereignly zeros in on and saves and separates and cleanses and draws and prepares praying men and praying women. Praying young people. He raises up bands of praying people.

One of the great revivals in 1859 in Northern Ireland started with a group of teenage boys praying in a haystack in a barn. They prayed and they continued to pray. They covenanted together to continue in prayer.

And like a match thrown on that haystack, the Spirit of God began to move in Ireland in the 19th century. He raises up praying bands of people. E.M. Bounds, who wrote probably the best books there are on prayer, said this, While the church is looking for better methods, God is looking for better men.

The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not fall upon machinery, but upon men. He doesn't anoint plans, but men praying men and women.

That is God's purposes. Now one of the great differences between our day, the 20th and the 21st century, and the 18th and 19th centuries, is the view that both preachers and believers held regarding God sending and giving the Holy Spirit in answer to prayer. Men of prayer.

There were giants in those days. Men and women anointed and sent of God to pray. And that's why this phrase from John's Gospel, it was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

He was sent to preach, but what do you think he did in the wilderness until the time of his showing forth? John prepared for 30 years to preach, six months to get his head cut off. Anybody want to go in the ministry? Jesus prepared 30 years to preach, three years. Men of prayer.

Well, there was a man sent from God whose name was John, but it wasn't John the Baptist. His name was John Knox. I want us to look at some praying men in British history and see what we can draw forth from our lives, because God lays His hand on people, ordinary men and women, not many mighty, not many noble, ordinary men and women whose heart He's touched to draw them and call them to a life and calling of prayer.

John Knox, 1514-1572. He certainly learned the secret of faith and usefulness was prayer. Real prayer.

Now, some of us know John Knox as the great Scottish reformer who thundered forth sermons, but we don't know the suffering that he experienced to get there to be used of God. Knox learned that the secret of true usefulness, the secret of preaching, the secret of spiritual courage in obtaining needed grace was prayer. Prayer and more prayer all the time.

He learned that the secret of enduring trials and real persecution was daily dependent prayer. Now, for John Knox, this came at a hard price, because in 1547, he was arrested and spent 19 months as a slave in a French galley ship. Now, basically, that was a military or commercial ship where they used slaves in the bottom deck, the lower gallery of the ship.

They would chain them to benches in the lower gallery as the ocean water was able to flow freely in at their feet. They chained them there to row the ship. And John Knox stayed on that ship as a slave, rowing for 19 months.

You think he learned something down there of real prayer? Through English intervention, Knox was released within two years, and he was brought to London in the year 1549, and he became a chaplain in the English government. And as a result of this deepening, of this shutting away, and his developing his prayer life in hard circumstances, in a place that he thought he was forgotten and saw no calling and no openings and no hope of release, Knox was chiseled out in the place of prayer and hardship. And as a result, though outwardly a fearless and bold witness, he was a humble man of prayer first and foremost.

Knox spent seasons in prayer. He lived in an attitude and spirit of prayer. Now, he only had one sermon that's ever survived in writing.

And in that sermon, he said this about prayer. He said, Let us humble ourselves in the presence of God, and from our hearts desire Him to assist us with the power of the Holy Spirit. We may yet be assured that with our God there is power.

And Mary the Queen did state, it was accurately true, I fear more the prayers of John Knox than hearing that an enemy army is marching against us. When Knox was asked to explain the power of the movement

of the Word of God that began to conquer Scotland in his days, here was his explanation, that God gave His Holy Spirit to simple men in great abundance. That can give any of us hope.

God gave His Holy Spirit to simple men in great abundance. John Knox was a praying man, and God called him to a life of prayer in the midst of all the other things in ministry that he was called to. There was another man sent from God in Knox's own life.

His name was Robert Bruce. 1555 to 1631. Now, though Robert Bruce was 40 years younger than Knox, their lives overlapped.

Bruce was 17 years old when John Knox died. And isn't this an amazing thing? In the God of providence, in the God of history, He sends servants to serve their generation by doing the will of God, and they die, and He's brought new servants on the scene. Knox dies, and Robert Bruce shows up.

And he was like a gospel William Wallace. William Bruce was. He was an amazing man.

He was one of those men of Scotland that had in his day a fervent passion for the glory of Christ and for reaching perishing Scotland with the gospel. Often at the risk of his own neck, because in those days, depending on who was ruling on the throne and what mood they were in, it might be illegal one week to preach the gospel. You might be preaching to the Parliament the next week.

Well, Bruce often was at risk of his life. John Livingston, a contemporary of his who we'll hear more of later, said this of Bruce. No man in his time spoke with such evidence and power of the Spirit.

Many of his hearers thought that no man since the apostles spoke with such power. It was prayer in a large measure that made Bruce what he was in terms of reality, and personal godliness, and impact, and the Spirit falling upon his simple gospel preaching. Now, Bruce's king, King James, the king for whom the Authorized Version is named, was a fickle and wicked man.

At times, King James would come to hear Bruce preach, and he would try to avoid the conviction of sin that he would feel under the sound of Bruce's preaching, so he would on purpose begin to talk to his servants out loud, and others could hear. Even Bruce could hear it in the pulpit. On one occasion, Bruce deliberately paused.

He stopped preaching until the king was quiet. But when he began preaching again, the king started talking again. Finally, Bruce pointedly addressed these words to the talkers, and I quote, It is said to have been an expression of the wisest of kings, when the lion roars, all the beasts of the field are quiet.

Well, the lion of the tribe of Judah is now roaring in his gospel, and it becomes all kings of the earth to be silent. Methinks there was silence the rest of the sermon. Where did such courage come from, toward a king even, who could have had his head? It was prayer.

Bruce was preaching at that memorial, memorable weekend at the Kirk of Shots in Scotland in June 1630. The Presbyterians would have what they call communion seasons. They didn't stick on the Lord's Supper at the end of a sermon for ten minutes or thirty minutes.

They would come in a communion season for five or six days, and ten or twenty preachers would preach. And on the last day, they would have preaching stations, and they would have five sermons going on at once. And the ministers and elders, the people would come toward the end of the week, and they would

be spiritually examined and exhorted, and they would be given a token to be able to come to the communion table after they had examined their hearts.

And then at the end, they would all have communion together. Bruce was preaching there at this large communion season, and a young man, young John Livingston, had been chosen to preach that final day. He was scared, scared to death.

He was about 24. So the night before, he stayed up all night praying out in the fields, and then fear gripped him, and he said, I can't do it, I can't do it. And he tried to run away.

But as he was going, the Scriptures gripped his heart, and he came back. And Livingston did preach to several thousand the next day in fear and with the power of the Spirit coming down. And history records that nearly 500 that day had a discernible change wrought upon them, attributing their conversion to that single sermon of whom most proved afterward to be lively Christians the rest of their lives.

Bruce, Robert Bruce, faced persecution. He had to run for his life, hiding at times. And when he did, he gave himself to prayer.

The key to his life and his fruitfulness, and we ought to learn it, was that great grace came to him through ongoing, habitual, private prayer. That's all he had. All Bruce had was God and Christ and the Holy Spirit and his Bible and a sound gospel.

That's all he had, but that's all he needed to do the work God called him to do. They did so much with so little, and we do so little in our day with so much. Some of us, if we gave time to prayer and the reading of Scripture that we give to the computer, well, I'm not supposed to preach.

So, great grace was on Bruce's life because he was enabled to live in the presence of God. He cultivated and welcomed and nourished, was his words, the presence of the Spirit of God in his life every day. And he lived in the presence of God.

A fellow countryman of his, Robert Fleming, said of Bruce, he was a great wrestler who had extraordinary familiarity with his master. What was said by John Flavel could have been said about Bruce. Prayer begets and maintains holy courage in evil times.

Brethren, you think we're heading into more and more evil times? Evil times. Leonard Ravenhill used to say, America will come to the place that we will either learn to concentrate in prayer or we'll pray in concentration camps. Take your choice.

I used to hear him say that 20, 25 years ago, and it didn't fully register with me. But you look at our day, and you see God bringing our nation into a judgment mode. And one day, it could be that true evangelicals, that large churches and visible churches will be a thing of the past, and the church could be underground and be a persecuted minority, and it will be a hate crime, punishable by law, to declare publicly that Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

In our day, that could happen. Evil times, beloved. He said, prayer begets and maintains holy courage in evil times.

When all things around you tend to discouragement, it is your being with Jesus that makes you bold. He that is used to being before a great God, he that is used to being in the presence of a great God, will not

be afraid to look such little things as men in the face. Praying for and depending on the Holy Spirit was central in Bruce's life.

Listen to what he prayed. The first time he was silenced and put in prison in Edinburgh, his prayer was this, Oh God, if it be your good pleasure to exercise me with a new trial and pull both the people and ministry from me, if it would please thee, instead of the king's favor and the priest's favor being toward me, please triple thy Spirit upon me, and let me see in my heart thy face brighter and brighter. Many years later, in 1628, his praying was still the same, pleading for the Holy Spirit.

One day he was in a prayer meeting, sitting at a table with some men, and he was pleading in prayer when he unconsciously hit the table with his fist and suddenly, at the same time, there was such a manifestation of God in the room among them that a man exclaimed afterwards, Oh, what a strange man is this, for he knocked down the Spirit of God upon us. What Bruce needed as a Christian, the presence of the Holy Spirit continually, he especially needed as a preacher. And in one meeting to preachers, this was his message.

We must study to entertain, and see, we're so used to modern use of our English words that we don't even understand the meaning. Entertain, welcome, desire, long for, practice the presence of. We must study to entertain and nourish the Holy Spirit.

Bruce preached. And he said this, Many begin to teach the Word, but it seems like many flocks of the saints remain without being built up, and the kingdom is not built because they have only the Word and lack the power of the Spirit that makes the Word effectual to hearts. An incident in the life of a young preacher, Robert Blair, shows how seriously Bruce viewed this, our need of the Holy Spirit continually in life and ministry.

Robert Blair was a gifted young man from Glasgow, Scotland. He was a candidate for the ministry. And Bruce heard him preach one day.

Afterwards, in conversation with Bruce, Blair came to him, and Blair asked Bruce's advice on his sermon. Blair initially might have regretted asking the question. He got an honest and unforgettable response.

Here's what Bruce said to him. I found your sermon very polished, but there's one thing I missed in it. The Spirit of God, I found not that.

Blair came to admire Bruce even more because of that. And Blair was the one who took a long journey to visit Bruce when he was in prison, his second time for preaching the Gospel. Bruce knew dark days, and sometimes he felt totally deserted, as you and I feel at times.

But sometimes he felt God's sensible presence so much because he continually sought the presence of God. He felt God's presence so much with him, he couldn't contain himself in the night from breaking out with the words, I'm the happiest man that ever was born. Happy that I ever knew and served God.

The happy man, Robert Bruce, who was always praying for more of the Holy Spirit. Prayer and praying men. God raises them up.

There was also a man sent from God whose name was Thomas. Thomas Boston. Born in 1676.

Boston was a minister in the Church of Scotland for 33 years in two churches until his death in 1732. There were great realities that drove Boston through pain and suffering to have to pray. Some of us don't pray because we're too comfortable.

Some of us don't pray because we're not desperate. Because we have everything lined up perfectly and we feel no sense of need. And often God engineers pain and difficulty and pressure and heartache and extremities to drive us to prayer.

Thomas Boston experienced this. Great realities that brought him a prayer life. Many critics of his ministry there were.

Many critics. The death of six of his children. He buried six of his children.

The developing mental insanity of his wife which kept her confined to her bedroom for years. These things drove Boston to his knees and gave him power with God. His biographer, Andrew Thompson, shows how prayer was real in Boston's life from early on.

Thompson says, See, young Boston, from the time of his youth, we see him kneeling beneath the branches of the apple tree in his garden. And there he found secret prayer, the element in which his spirit lived. Morning and evening praying was not sufficient to satisfy the cravings of his heart for intercourse with God.

And Thompson says, In every condition and situation, Boston learned to run to the heavenly mercy seat and to go there for hourly duties and heavy ministry labors which were beyond him. And for those, he hurried with his empty vessel to the fountain of life. Boston says in one of his sermons about prayer, God is doing something with all of us, though for a while he may appear to leave prayer unanswered.

Do you ever feel that way? Many servants of Christ before us have had to learn not to tire, not to grow weary, not to faint, not to give up, as they awaited days of greater blessing coming in the future. How much Boston owed for wondrous blessing to this one habit of being a praying man and letting nothing interfere with being alone with the Savior. That's where we may often fall short, isn't it? How often do we let things that even seem necessary and good interfere, intrude? Well, there was another man sent from God whose name was Calder.

James Calder. You may never have heard of him. He lived in the 18th century in Scotland from 1712 when he was born to 1775.

He gave himself to prayer. He exemplified what David said in the Psalms when David said, but as for me, I will give myself to prayer. Calder gave himself to a life of prayer.

He was a pastor in two different locations over his ministry in the north of Scotland. And while he was pastor in Inverness, Scotland, there occurred a remarkable revival that broke out under his preaching about the same time that George Whitefield and John Wesley were preaching with real success in the south of the country. Though there's no written record of his conversion, Calder, as early as the age of 23, began to experience deep realities with Christ.

And he began to know the ripening fruits of deeper and deeper Christian experience. He was one of those men who seemed to want one thing, to desperately know Jesus Christ in all His fullness, and he was forever crying out and petitioning to know Him more. He cried out like David did in Psalm 42 and Psalm

63.

Calder had a soul craving that would not be satisfied with anything less than experiencing the presence of Christ. Let me give you some glimpses from his journals. He says, I was enabled this morning to say with humble boldness, Abba, Father, and soon my bonds were loosed and my soul was brought into a larger place where I experienced liberty and rest.

The Spirit caused the north wind to awaken and command the breezes to blow upon my soul and the spices began to flow out. Faith, love, and a savor for things above were now felt anew. Oh, to be more humble, thankful, vigilant, tender, spiritual, holy, and devout more than ever, oh God, work it in me.

I am so far behind. How little have I seen of Christ's glory. How little have I yet attained to.

How little have I tasted of His love in comparison to what there is to taste. But blessed be His name from my little drop. Oh Lord, Thou that knowest all things, Thou knowest that I would not trade it for ten thousand worlds.

Another day He wrote these words. After visiting a sick young man, I returned to my closet where I continued two more hours without interruption, spinning prayer, at which time I can say, to the praise of His grace, the Lord was pleased to shine and breathe upon my poor soul by His Word and Spirit to freshly quicken and humble and comfort and enlarge and sanctify me in some measure. I was helped to plead and wrestle in an importuning and believing way for my own soul, for my children, for friends, for brethren in the ministry, and for others.

I put up petition after petition in the prevailing name of Jesus and most of them, I believe, were received in such a way that I had little room to doubt but that they would be graciously answered. This was the best day I had in secret prayer for some years past. No language can express His kindness to such a one so undeserving.

Nine months later, He said this. Blessed be His name. I had much freedom in pouring out my heart in prayer for each of my children in particular and in recommending my poor feeble lambs to the care, guidance, protection and special grace of our adorable, tender-hearted shepherd who delights according to His sweet promises to gather the lambs in His bosom.

There I leave them. Eternal praise to my Father's God and my God for the promises of grace. Now when He was low and needy and hurting and dry and dead, Calder would say things like this.

This day my soul complains of heart coldness, estrangement, and heart atheism. Beloved, do you and I ever get that real and that honest in prayer? We can't impress God in the prayer closet. Do you ever, when you feel lower than a whale's belly, when you feel deader than a dodo bird, when you have nothing, do you just go before God and pour out, Lord, I am as cold as I can be.

I am poor and needy. I am hurting. I am dry.

And you begin to wait upon Him. And your heart, aching and needy, though yet longing and desirous and hungry, begins to wait, as David said, I will wait in silence before my God. This is what Calder did.

He said, alas, I still carry about within me this plague, this lack of heartfelt love to Christ and complacency toward God. He prayed, O blessed Spirit, may I be helped to look up, sigh, pray, and wait for the dawning

of the cheering beams of the Son of Righteousness. The next day in prayer, Calder said this, yesterday in prayer while I was confessing my spiritual idolatries and shameful departures, and I attempted to partake of the blood and righteousness of Christ in a fresh way, He was pleased to receive me graciously and to manifest some tokens of His love and His sweet countenance to my poor soul.

This was a sweet reviving indeed. My darkness vanished, my cold heart began to warm, and my weary soul found rest as I was blessed with some delightful experience with God, that for which I had been earnestly praying for several days past. Let me hasten on.

After James Calder, there was another man in Scotland who was sent of God, a praying man. John MacDonald was his name. Many of us have never heard of him.

In 1740, and the years after that, there was a real and extensive period of revivals that began to occur throughout a large part of Scotland. And they continued almost for 60 years to the beginning of 1800. The 19th century, not just the 18th century, but the 19th century would see great works of grace.

John MacDonald is connected with what they called the Great Awakening in the north of Scotland. He was born in 1779. And in his teenage years, he got his education in mathematics in the city of Aberdeen.

And it was during his first year in the university in Aberdeen, while home on vacation from school, while reading a man named Jonathan Edwards, that a work of conviction of sin began suddenly in his heart. And soon, with all his soul and all his heart, he turned to the Lord Jesus Christ. Before long, he entered the ministry in the year 1805 at the age of 26.

And God launched him sovereignly and graciously into a special preaching ministry that continued for 44 years until his death in 1849. At the age of 34, God sent MacDonald to the north of Scotland for what would become an unusual period of blessing and fruitfulness through his life in ministry. But in that year, his 34th year of life, his wife Georgina died, leaving him three small children.

That week, MacDonald had been scheduled to preach at one of those communion seasons, a great gathering of believers. And in view of the sorrow, the elders in charge came to him and proposed a postponement of the communion. MacDonald declined and said this, Let not the death of my wife hinder the remembering of the death of my Savior.

He preached from Hosea 2.19, I will betroth thee unto me forever. Not thinking of himself, says John Kennedy, his biographer, he gave himself up to the praise of Christ. He was asked to preach again in that evening.

And he preached from Psalm 45, O hearkened daughter, consider an inclined thine ear Preaching to around 10,000 people in the open air, the congregation broke down. Such was the weeping and the crying and the spiritual commotion that happened. It was a day of God's power in sending the Spirit down in answer to prayer.

That began an awakening in the north of Scotland that appears to have continued for an extended time widely. And MacDonald began to be called upon to preach far and wide. An old veteran Scottish preacher, Lachlan McKenzie, wrote to MacDonald soon, urging him to come and preach for him.

Here was McKenzie's invitation. I wish I could do a Scottish accent. I can't, so I'll keep a Texas accent.

He said, I hear you keep a large store of Holy Ghost powder which you use in blasting. I wish you to come and try your skill in breaking the hard rocks of Loch Caron. What an invitation to come and preach.

MacDonald wrote to his brother these words, We have great need of earnest and persevering prayer here. I stand in need of that which would quicken and enliven me. Beloved, so do we all.

Every one of us. We have great need, as great as MacDonald did, for daily quickening and enlivening by the fresh influence of the Holy Spirit. Four years later, MacDonald was preaching in a part of Scotland called Loch Tay.

I'm sure that's not how the Scottish say it, but it'll do. Around 1,500 people lived there. In September, he preached, and the report came.

MacDonald preached for over two hours from Isaiah 54, verse 5, Thy maker is thy husband, to a congregation of 4,000. During the sermon, suddenly, there was hardly a dry eye anywhere. Eagerness attended the preached word while tears flowed, and the most hardened persons in the congregation seemed to bend.

For MacDonald, and those he ministered with and walked with, continual conscious dependence upon and pleading for the Holy Spirit was utmost in their theology, in their hearts, in their prayers. They became different men under fresh baptisms of the Holy Spirit at different times. They saw a direct connection between the outpouring of the Spirit and prayer, importuning prayer, pleading the promise of the Father, the sending of the Spirit, which was not just to happen on the day of Pentecost, but was to be the beginning of many outpourings all through church history that God would do it all over again.

Thomas Chalmers of Scotland, in the first half of the 19th century, said this, I am quite aware that talent is secondary to godliness in ministry. And that gifts in a minister are second to grace in him. Chalmers said this, I am therefore all the more thankful that many of our young preachers are men of faith, power, and prayer and have become instruments of great and promising revivals in our land.

What young ministers was Chalmers talking about? Some of his own students, such as Robert Murray McShane, Horatius, and Andrew Bonar. And another man sent from God who studied under Thomas Chalmers named William, William Burns. William Burns was used mightily in preaching in Scotland.

And after seeing revival, he felt a call to go to China and to labor the rest of his life with Hudson Taylor in obscurity. It reminds me of Philip in Samaria and the great outpouring of the Spirit in Jerusalem. And the Holy Spirit tells Philip what to do.

You go down to Samaria, to the desert. And God sends him from a season of revival down to talk to one man in a chariot. That's what William Burns did.

He went to China. And he mentored Hudson Taylor. And he preached glad tidings until he died there.

I could tell you more about Burns, but one story. The occasion was Kilsyth, Scotland. Burns was 24 years old.

He was preaching for McShane in McShane's church in Dundee. While McShane was in Israel, Burns had had just an ordinary ministry really up to that point without any blessing or power until the summer months of 1839 when suddenly, the more he sought God in prayer, the more he hid himself in a secret place, he

began to preach, people said, suddenly with new authority and new power. Those who knew him spoke of his preaching being lifted to a whole new level of power and authority.

And what happened there in Dundee July 23rd was reported by several witnesses who were there. In the morning service, Burns took as his text, Psalm 110 verse 3. Thy people shall be willing in a day of thy power. The message was heard with silence until toward the end when Burns was describing the power of the Spirit of God that's displayed in revivals in former years.

Suddenly, it became evident to him from the faces of the people that God had come to them in power. And later he wrote, most were in tears and then a scene which could hardly be described took place. As from that one service, a remarkable change of heart took place and the converting influence of the Holy Spirit was remarkably at work in the church and in the town and in the parish.

It was a day when God literally fulfilled Burns' own text of Scripture. A willing people in a day of God's power. Burns was transformed by that day.

Not by success, but by this. He says, The appearance of a great part of the people from the pulpit gave me an awfully vivid picture of the state of the ungodly in the judgment day of Christ that's soon to come. Burns was gripped with a view of the glory of God and the advancement of the souls of men.

He was a burning and shining light. He was a praying man. And there's one more man I want to tell you about who was sent from God.

His name was Leonard. Leonard Ravenhill. Leonard Ravenhill was born in 1907 in Leeds, England.

Some of the brethren here in this conference knew him. Some here knew him well. He was born into a godly Methodist home to praying parents who took him the first seven days of his life to an all-night prayer meeting.

Hey moms, how about that? He was converted at the age of 14. And he took up the profession in a few years of being a tailor making men's clothing. By the time he was 23 years old, he knew he was called to the ministry.

And off he went to Cliff College there in England where he studied under and was trained by Samuel Chadwick at Cliff College. It was there that Leonard Ravenhill felt he didn't have too much of a future in preaching. So he decided he would give himself instead to having a life of prayer.

He decided that his calling was to pray. He decided he wanted the greater calling, a calling greater than preaching, and that was prayer. For he said, it's a great thing to speak for God to men, but it's a greater thing to speak to God on the behalf of men.

So he gave himself to a life of prayer. He read D.M. MacIntyre's book The Hidden Life of Prayer. In my opinion, the finest book there is on prayer.

And he began to give himself to hours of prayer. By the 1940s, Ravenhill began an itinerant ministry of preaching throughout Britain. And with other young preachers and evangelistic team that came together, he walked the length and breadth of England more than once, preaching all the way.

Preaching in the open air, anywhere doors would open, in the marketplace. And by the late 1940s, he began making some trips to the U.S. where he became close friends with A.W. Tozer. Finally, in 1958,

Leonard and his wife Martha moved to the United States, first working with Bethany Fellowship in Minneapolis, and then later with David Wilkerson and Nikki Cruz in the early days of Teen Challenge in the 1960s.

Leonard was the staff and house Bible teacher. And daily, he would teach the Bible to the staff and the young people. And he would get down with them and teach them to pray.

He was an anointed preacher and prophet. But he was much more than that. He was primarily a man of prayer.

The Raven Hills moved to Texas in 1975 near San Antonio, from which base he traveled widely preaching. And when he was home, he would pray all day and into the night. He was preaching in Fort Worth, Texas, regularly in those years when I first heard him and others that are here began to hear him and meet him in those days.

There would be times that some of us would have the courage to call him. And after he had moved to East Texas, we would call and say, Could we come down and see you and talk to you? He would always say the same thing, just immediately. I can give you one hour.

That's all he would say. Yes, sir, that would be great. And he would tell us when to come.

But the hour would always turn to two or three and you couldn't get him to stop. He loved to talk about the deep things of God. He loved to talk about prayer and praying men.

And he preached fearlessly. I remember one night in 1978, my friend Al Whittingill, who's here, Al's church in Fort Worth, James Avenue Baptist, Leonard was there for meetings. And one night, when the song service was over, Leonard walked to the pulpit and he says this, You boys in the back, since you've come in, all you've done is laugh and talk and comb your hair and fool around in God's house.

How you dare do it, I don't know. But don't you say another word while this meeting's on. And he took his Bible and he said, Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 13.

I'm going to preach on love. And he did. And the Spirit of God moved that night and those boys came in tears, broken, in repentance, and asked His forgiveness and began to seek the Lord.

Let me mention some of his words. Our God, he says, is a consuming fire. He consumes pride and lust and materialism and all other sin.

He said there's only two kinds of people, those that are dead in sin and those that are dead to sin. He said the only time you can truly say that Christ is all you need is when Christ is all you have. Why do we expect to be treated better in the world or by the world than Jesus was? He said my main ambition is to be on the devil's most wanted list.

Jesus I know and Paul I know and Ravenhill, he'd say. He said today's church wants to be raptured from responsibility. He said when there's something in the Bible that church members don't like, they call it legalism.

He said our seminaries today are turning out dead men who preach dead sermons that can never raise the dead. He said many preachers criticize me for taking the gospel so seriously, but do they really think that on the judgment day Christ will say to me, Leonard, you were really too serious about some things.

He said if Jesus had preached the same message that today's preachers do, He would never have been crucified.

He said we're tired of men in soft arraignment with softer speech who use rivers of words with only a spoonful of unction. And this is one of my favorites. Here's his definition of revival.

He said revival is when God gets so sick of being misrepresented by the church that He decides to show up Himself. One more quote. He said there's a terrible vacuum in evangelical Christianity today.

That vacuum is a missing person, the true prophet. The man with a terrible earnestness. The man that's totally otherworldly.

The man rejected by other men, even good men, because they consider him too radical, too committed. Let him be as plain as John the Baptist. Let him be a voice crying in the wilderness of modern theology and shallow church entity.

Let him say nothing that will draw men to himself, but only that which will move men to God. Let him come daily from the throne room of a holy God where He has received His orders for the day. Let him cry with a voice that his generation has not heard because he's seen a vision of God that his generation has not seen.

God have mercy on us, Ravenhill said. Give us prophets. He preached passionately.

He wrote heart-stirring books. Why? All because he prayed passionately all the time. What most people probably don't know about Leonard Ravenhill is that he would go to bed about 9 in the evening.

He would get up at 11, two hours later. He'd go to his office and he would pray until 4 or 5 in the morning. Then he would go back to bed for a few hours.

That was his life. That was his life. That's what made him live and labor and preach and pray for eternity.

He had a framed plaque hanging on the wall of his study. It had one word on it. Eternity.

That's all it said. He studied in the light of eternity. He lived in the light of eternity.

He did preach as a dying man to dying men. He raised his three sons in the light of eternity. One night, Leonard walked into his young son David's bedroom late one night.

And he taped a note on the foot of David's bed. He had written it for David. It said this, Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he's weak and knows enough to face himself when he's afraid.

Build me a son who will be unbending in honest defeat and humble and gentle in victory. Build me a son whose wishbone will not be where his backbone should be. A son who will know Thee and truly know himself.

Leading, Lord, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here, let him learn to stand up in the storm, to lean upon his God. Here, let him learn compassion for those who fail.

Build me a son, O Lord, whose heart will be clear, whose goals will be high. A son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men. Give him humility so that he remembers the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.

Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, I have not lived in vain. The week Leonard Ravenhill died, the last Sunday of November in 1994, that son, David, wrote these words. I knew a man who gave his life to see revival fire.

He prayed by day. He prayed by night. To birth is one desire.

He had but one obsession, to see a glorious bride, arrayed in spotless purity, brought to her bridegroom's side. His power while in the pulpit was matched by very few, and yet he loved the closet there with the God he knew. While others strove for man's applause, for fortune and for fame, he had but one ambition, to exalt his Master's name.

For 87 years he lived just for eternity, a man of faith and wisdom and true humility. He knew one day he would have to stand before God's judgment seat. And so he ran to win the prize his mission to complete.

The fortune that he left behind was not in stocks or gold, but lives transformed and challenged their stories yet untold. Life has had no greater privilege than this that I have had of knowing this great man of God and having him as dad. Prayer and praying men, dear brothers and sisters, this can be the case in our day.

God is not finished making people a prayer. John Knox and Robert Bruce and William Burns and Leonard Ravenhill were once unregenerate, lost men, and themselves had feet of clay and were men of imperfection, and they were average people that God called them to a life of prayer. There was a young man in East Texas that I had the privilege of meeting and praying with.

His name was Jerry Howell. And in his 20s, as a single man, he heard the call of God to give his life to a life of prayer. And hidden away in East Texas, he would preach in nursing homes during the week.

But his job, his vocation, his ministry, his calling was prayer. And Jerry would pray eight to ten hours a day. Keith McLeod, brother Bill McLeod's brother, was a man who gave himself to a life of prayer.

And I wonder today, as we think about the call of God, who hears the call to pray? We think about it so definitively and so formally and so officially. I'm called to preach. I'm called to the mission field.

I'm called to work with youth. I'm called to pastor. Where are those that are called to pray? Where are those who would say, I don't care if I'm ever in public or if I'm known, I'll take the hidden place.

I'll have a hidden life of prayer. I will have as my job to pray. I'll stay hidden.

And I'll have a worldwide ministry that doesn't take money, doesn't take the internet, doesn't take people around, doesn't take the applause of men. I'll learn to pray. I'll ask the Lord Jesus to take my life just like I am, and I'll ask Him to teach me to pray.

No one takes this upon themselves except the one who's called of God. But I believe with all my heart, even in this conference, God could single out and zero in on retired people who are finding that they don't want to spend the rest of their retirement years driving around to Arizona or Florida gathering seashells or playing golf. They don't want to waste their life and they would hear the call of God to give themselves to a real life of prayer.

Or the young man or the young woman, who hears the call of God for them to say, I will give myself to a life of intercession. Lloyd-Jones said this, We need less traveling and less conferences. We need less talk and more kneeling in prayer.

More pleading to God to have mercy on us. More crying to God to arise and scatter His enemies and make Himself known. Prayer doesn't fit us for the greater work, beloved.

Prayer is the greater work. And if we're to give the place to prayer, which our calling and the seriousness of the times require, other things are going to have to be given up and left undone. It will cost us to reassess our priorities and to concentrate on prayer.

But brethren, listen. Our hope is not in the men of the past or the present or in men at all. It's in Him and in the Sovereign Spirit.

Because Knox's God and Boston's God and Ravenhill's God is our God. And He's still making men and women after His own heart. He's still shaping and forming, praying men and women.

Would you hear the call of God, the call of the Father, who says, I'm in the secret place. Come. Come.

Come. And hear and answer the call to prayer. Let's pray.

Father, Father, I ask You to take my simple and feeble and impure words and wash it all in the blood of the Lord Jesus. And strip away from it all that's not of the Holy Spirit. And I ask You to use this in our hearts to do a work regarding prayer in the lives of many.

It will account for eternity. In the name of Jesus Christ, Father, this is our prayer. Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/i1qfHFhGuhg.mp4>

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