

# What a Difference a Day Makes!

by Ralph Sexton

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*Ralph Sexton's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of conviction, conversion, and correction in the life of a believer, highlighting the significant difference a single day can make in one's spiritual journey.*

**Duration:** 35:00

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Hebrews 4:7-8

**Topics:** "Spiritual Revival", "Personal Reflection"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by directing the audience to turn to Hebrews chapter 4 in their Bibles. He refers to a previous discussion about a specific time, season, place, people, man, Savior, salvation, and deliverance. The speaker then focuses on the phrase 'what a difference a day makes' and reads Hebrews 4:7, which mentions a certain day being limited. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing the power of a specific day and how it can make a significant difference in our lives. The sermon also emphasizes the need for personal reflection, honesty with God about our weaknesses, and a desire for spiritual revival.

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## Transcript

Turn with me, if you would, to Hebrews chapter 4. If you have your old Schofield Study Bible, it's page 1,294 in your old Schofield Bible. Page 1,294. And let us look together at what the Scripture says.

If you remember the other night, I talked about a certain time, a certain season, a certain place, a certain people, a certain man, a certain Savior, a certain salvation, and a certain deliverance. And if you would read with me in Hebrews 4 and verse number 7, I'd like for you to think with me on this thought, what a difference a day makes. What a difference a day makes.

In Hebrews 4, 7, Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time as it is said, Today, if ye will hear his voice, do what? Harden not your hearts. And if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of what? Another day. When I begin to take time to look through this process, and I see the power of a certain day, and what a difference a day can make.

When we begin to think about our personal lives, for ten nights, we've addressed the Bible studies and focused in on the church. This is not a jubilee. This is not a camp meeting.

This has been an effort for God's people to have a time of refreshing, a time of soul searching, and a time of revival. And for us to do that, we have to be honest with God about our own weaknesses, our own faults, and our own shortcomings. We need to pray and ask God to help us draw a circle, put a circle inside that circle, another circle inside that circle, and then for us to nail ourselves in that inner circle and say, This is the target area, God.

We need a visit of laser-guided Holy Ghost conviction. Would you turn the searchlight of heaven on and look me over? And God, everything inside of me that doesn't look like you, would you reveal it and give me the grace and the courage to ask you to help me begin to reflect your image? We are the children of God. We've been saved by God's amazing grace.

And the very element of revival that can come to the church is only possible when we realize that we had a day of conviction. If I think about what a difference a day can make, then I think about the day of conviction. I think about the fact that when God began to deal with me and God began to deal with you, I came under conviction.

That's not a word we hear a lot anymore in today's church culture. But the Bible teaches that I did not quicken myself, that God quickened me. As contrary to the bumper sticker it may be, I did not find Jesus, Jesus found me.

I wasn't looking for the Lamb of God when He passed by. I was just like you, headed to the next party, headed to the next thing that the devil had to offer. And I was on that path, you were on that path, and Jesus passed by.

And on the way to hell, on the road to damnation, doing the best that I could to destroy my soul, God in grace and mercy put up a roadblock along the Broadway and began to talk to me and convict me of how I was living and what I was doing. I did not convict myself. God's amazing grace convicted me.

I did not point myself to God. The Holy Ghost of Heaven pointed me to God. I did not change myself by doing a seven-step plan.

But the convicting power of God revealed in my heart and in my life that I was in need of a Savior. And the friends that I had, the convicting power of God, revealed that maybe they were really not my friends. The convicting power of God began to deal with me that the places that I was going, maybe I should not have been there.

And if you ever got under old-time Holy Ghost conviction, you can actually remember. I can remember and I know you can remember being at places before you got saved and got miserable because you knew you should not have been there. Now, who was that living inside of you that was preaching to you? It was not your own self convicting yourself.

It was the Spirit of God coming by. So if I think about what a difference a day can make, I have to think about the day of conviction. Now, isn't it amazing how we can resist the Holy Spirit of God and reject the preaching of God's Word and be a rebel unto a holy God and it doesn't offend God, but He comes back again.

And we say, but I don't want to go to Heaven. I don't want to go to church. I don't want to be a goody two-shoe.

I like being a rebel. I like my reputation. I like being a party person.

And so you just leave me alone, Holy Ghost. And the Holy Ghost just comes back and hugs you again. And He doesn't pay any attention to your rejection.

And many times the greatest sermon you ever heard was nothing more than a little soft breeze that blew across your soul when you were trying to turn the music up a little louder, trying to drink another one, trying to light up another divvy, and thought, you know, if I get some of this Columbian grass in me, I'm going to feel better. But the buzz wasn't there because the sweet presence of the Lord was overriding the bud. Could I get a witness on that? Amen? You know and I know it was the convicting power of God that changed his heart and life.

So if I think what a difference a day makes, I've got to think about the day of conviction. I've got to think about the services where I held on to the back of the pew and you held on to the back of the pew. And the only way you got in was that you tried to say, nope, not tonight, some other time.

And then somebody would invite you two weeks later or a month later. And you said, I'll go, but I ain't going to sit on the front. I'll sit on the back row.

You remember that? You'd make a deal with your family. I'll go. Or I'll go stand outside.

But that day of conviction came. Now the second event that occurs is that day of conversion. All of a sudden, conviction made the change to conversion.

Because when God got a hold of your soul, you could not recycle yourself. You could not change yourself. But you became so broken under the power of God that you were willing to kneel down in mercy and say, God, I surrender.

I know that I have to have a Savior. I know that I have to be changed by Your might and by Your power. And I'm begging you tonight, God, if You'll forgive me of my sins to the best of my human ability, from this day forward, I'll serve You with all my heart and all my life.

Now, this is a day of conversion. And after that day of conversion, ladies and gentlemen, when you said, God be merciful unto me, a sinner, you think about what a difference a day made. Before that day of conversion, you were dead in trespass and sin.

After that day of conversion, you were a brand new creature in Christ Jesus. Before that day of conversion, hell was your future. Now, after that day of conversion, heaven is now going to be your home.

Before that day of conversion, you were blinded by sin. Now, after conversion, you can see because the Spirit of God cleaned the world out of your eyes. Before that day of conversion, you could not hear.

You couldn't hear the singing. You couldn't hear the Word of God. You couldn't hear the witnessing.

You couldn't hear the preaching because the devil had blocked your hearing with the things of this world. But after that day of conversion, all of a sudden, you had never heard the birds sing like they began to sing. You had never heard the voices of your friends like you heard them that day.

Because now, you had heard the voice of a holy God. And a dead man had been made alive by the power of God. The eyes that were blind would now see.

The ears that could not hear would now hear. And all of a sudden, a dumb mouth that could only talk of the things of the world, now all of a sudden, you've got a brand new vocabulary. And you're talking about, I can't tell you what happened.

I don't know the words to tell you. But I just know the other night, I was dead. And in a few moments, I was alive.

I was blind, but now I see. I was crippled up by sin, but now I can walk. I had a day of conviction.

I had a day of conversion. And I am a new creature in Christ Jesus. But guess what? After we get saved, it doesn't stop there.

Because if you're really born again and saved and washed in the blood of the Lamb, and you're trying to serve God, then all along life's journey, we know that there's temptations to make a mistake, traps, shortcomings. I know this wouldn't happen in South Carolina. We have a lot of problems with it in North Carolina.

Envy, jealousy, spite, gossip, fault-finding, criticism, root of bitterness. Those are mountain diseases. We have them up in North Carolina.

But I want to tell you something. Saved people can get infected with those things. You say, but I've had a day.

I've had a day of conviction. I've had a day of conversion. Well, that's wonderful.

But now, you need a day of correction. The very way that I know I'm saved is God loves me enough to correct me. Now, I know you'll find this hard to believe, but I always was not a very good boy.

My dad loved me, but he loved me enough to correct me. And he was a good man. He loved me.

He loved his family. He loved the Lord. He loved God's Word.

And he loved me enough that he would correct me. Now, I have wished a hundred thousand times that my dad had met Dr. Spock. I grew up in an abused age.

I've always wished that they had timeouts when I was little, because I'd still be in timeouts. But my dad didn't believe in timeouts. And he actually believed that if you love your child, you'll make that child mind to behave so that they'll grow up and be a responsible citizen.

Now, listen to me. I'm not talking about child abuse. I'm not talking about taking a logging chain, wrapping it around your little boy or girl, taking them out in the yard and getting a bull whipping, whipping.

Anybody with common sense knows that's child abuse. And I'm going to tell you something. They get about two or three years old, you don't have to get a whip.

All you got to do is get you a little old switch, about four or five inches. Listen, it's the thought. Right there, my grandmama called it hickory tea.

She'd look at me. She'd say, Sonny, you want a little hickory tea? I'd say, no. Did you get that pumpkin pie off my dining room table? Well, what's that on your face? I don't know, Grandma.

Well, it looks to me like it's pumpkin pie. Hickory tea. It don't have to be long and big.

It don't have to be a cane or rock. It's when they're tender and young. You understand that? Now, let me help you with something here.

You're saved and born again. God has hickory tea. But if you won't respond to that, He can move on up.

Hello? Grandmama had hickory tea, but Daddy had a leather strap. That's how I got tall. You try to get away from that all your life, and you grow.

There's another bad boy right there. See, Brother Dave? I mean, you can spot them bad ones. Where's Dillingham? Seven feet tall.

He was rowdy. You know, but God loves us enough to correct us. And a parent loves us.

So, if a parent loves me, and God loves me, and I'm born again, I've got a day of conviction, a day of conversion, and what we're praying for tonight is that God would love us enough to give us a day of correction. God, have I neglected you in my prayer life? God, have I neglected you in my Bible reading? God, have I neglected you in my attitude towards other Christians? God, have I been so in discord? God, have I been gossiping? God, have I been having green-eyed jealousy? You see, if we want revival in our local churches Sunday, what we've got to beg God to do is to convict us, and if the people have had conversion, then He would correct us. And if He'll correct us, then we can have a genuine, all-time, Holy Ghost, Heaven-sent revival meeting.

Now, the first chastening that comes for a born-again Bible believer is the loss of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever lost your temper? I know you wouldn't do that, but some of us type A's, huh? Wired a little tighter than others? I was on the way to the airport, catching a plane to go speak at a national conference. Had just enough time to swing into the cleaners, get my shirts, head to the airport, pull into the laundry, jump out, leave the car running.

I said, hurt, I hate to rush. I've got to have my shirts. I've got to get to the airport.

The little lady comes back. Mr. Sexton, I am so sorry. Your shirts aren't ready.

What do you mean? My shirts aren't ready. And then something inside here, you know, starts to grow. I've had those shirts over a week.

You've had enough time to make me a shirt. You start saying real cute things like that, you know. You could make me a shirt.

All I ask you to do is wash my shirt and iron it. I've got to go... Never mind. Never mind.

I'll figure something out. I'll just buy a shirt when I get there. I'll just go to the mall.

Forget it. Get in your car and leave. I've got about halfway to the airport.

Yeah, well, you won't. Where are you going, son? You know where I'm going. I'm going to preach.

Well, I hope you have a good trip, son. I won't be going with you. What do you mean? The only Christian that lady at the cleaners knows is you.

And you just were cold, rude. And you made yourself so important. She doesn't own that store.

She just works there. She doesn't schedule the laundry. She just works there.

And if you want to preach tonight and have me show up, I advise you to turn the car around and go apologize. But I might miss my plane. Have it any way you want it.

You can have a plane without me. Or you can miss the plane with me. Or I might stall the plane if you'll be obedient so you can get on it.

And then you have to walk back in there and say, I'm so sorry. Will you forgive me? I grieved the Holy Spirit of God a few minutes ago. I'm supposed to be a Christian.

But the conduct you've seen out of me today was not very Christ-like. I apologize. I was under stress to catch an airplane.

I couldn't think what I was going to do without my shirts. And those are not your problems, ma'am. You didn't make them.

And all I did was be rude and condescending to you. And the Holy Spirit of God told me that I couldn't preach tonight unless I told you that I was sorry. And she started crying and said, I'm so sorry about your shirt.

I'm sorry you had to come back. I said, whoa! No, don't you cry. I'm the one who's supposed to be crying.

Because I hurt you. And she said, thank you. Because she said, I couldn't figure out.

I knew you were supposed to be a preacher. Conviction. Conversion.

And correction. Sometimes we don't always understand what God's doing. There was a young man who graduated from high school a few Mays ago.

And all his last year, he kept talking to his mom and daddy about he wanted a new car, he wanted a new car. All his friends were getting new cars for graduation. And daddy, it was blessed.

And they had good income. And the family was blessed. And the young man figured, it's not going to be a problem if dad and mama want to get me a new car.

They can do it. As a matter of fact, that senior year, that young man had been so blessed that he had sort of started living a selfish life and spoiled. And he didn't particularly like going to church.

And he thought it was sort of old-fashioned and out of step. And sure enough, when he graduated, they got home that evening. And the tension had built up because he thought the car ought to be there.

And there wasn't a car. And he thought, mama and daddy ought to do for me because they can do so much and I ought to get my car for graduation. And when the mom and dad got in from the ceremony that night and he came home, his daddy brought him a box wrapped in beautiful wrapping paper with a bow on it.

The boy tore that open and inside it was a Bible. A Bible. And he looked at his mama and his daddy and he got so angry and so mad because for months, that's all he talked about.

He took that Bible and he threw it down onto the sofa in the living room and he said, a Bible? You should have bought me what I wanted, a car. I'm through with you guys. I'm through.

I'm just barely tough through this year. I just was putting up with you because I wanted a car and I'm sick of you. I'm sick of going to church.

I don't want to see you again. I'm packing my stuff and I'm getting out of here. And he did.

And he stayed gone. Two years. Three years.

Four years. Five years. And in the six years he got tracked down by his mother.

And she said, son your daddy's dying. He's dying with cancer. He's grieved himself to death almost over broken fellowship because he loved you so much.

You're the apple of his eye. Would you please come home and at least see your daddy before he dies? Would you do that for me? The mom and the son had talked periodically every two or three months but no Christmas, no birthdays, no thanksgivings. They were cut off.

And he came home. While he was coming into the edge of town his daddy took his last few breaths and died. When he got to the house the sheet was already over his father's head.

The corner was on the way. He held his mother and tried to console her. And he went to his room.

He said, well I'll spend the night with you, mom. All of a sudden he was going to be there for her. And he went to his room and what he did, his room was just like he left it six years ago.

His pictures were on the wall. His favorite jersey was still there. His bed was made up and on the bed was that box with the wrapping paper and the Bible still in it.

They had left it on the bed. He sat down and he looked at that box for a minute. He saw that Bible inside it.

He picked it up and he thought, maybe I've been a fool. My dad's gone. I never could fix that between us.

The convicting power of God began to sweep over him. The prayers of that dad before he left and the prayers of that mother. And he picked up that Bible and began to feel the leather and look at it and he opened it up and it said to my son.

And he recognized the handwriting of his father. And he thought, maybe I've been a fool. And when he picked it up and began to flip the pages, an envelope fell out.

And it had his name on it. And when he opened it up it was a bank cashier's check to go buy a new car. And the note said, son use the Bible to be your road map as you travel down life's journey.

Your mom and I are not sure what color or kind of car you would like but here's the bank draft to pick out what you want. I am so proud of you. Love, dad.

The dad never got to tell him that the Bible held the treasure his heart desired. How easy it is for us to get busy living in this world and we start missing the hey boys of the Holy Spirit. Those tender words that say you're drifting away.

We'll never have revival while the church looks like the world. We'll never have revival while the church is hungry after the world. We'll never have revival while the church is caught up and trying to be a lookalike.

We need revival. It's got to begin at God's house with God's people. One of my favorite stories is about a mother who was in the kitchen and she was peeling potatoes and working and every now and then her little five year old girl was sitting there talking to her and the mom kept turning away from her peeling the potatoes and talking and when she turned to her little girl she'd pick up her apron and sort of cover her hands and keep peeling those potatoes.

And that little girl began to watch her mother peel those potatoes and it dawned on that little girl that my mama's not allowing me to see her hands. She had never paid any attention to that but she had gotten to the age now that she began to notice that mama was holding her hands away. Mama wouldn't let her see her hands and it dawned on that little girl you know what? I've never really seen my mother's hands.

If I think about it, mom's always turned her hands from me. Mom's always washed me with a washcloth over her hands. Come to think of it mother wears cotton gloves around the house a lot.

And all of a sudden that little girl said, Mommy are you keeping your hands from me? And the mama stopped peeling those potatoes and she said, what do you mean baby? And put her hands up under her apron. She said, Mama why are you hiding your hands? And she said, well baby I don't want to scare you. And she said, what do you mean? She said, well honey when you were real little my hands got burned real bad and they're scarred and I've always been afraid working over you and caring for you that the scars of my hands would cause you to be afraid.

But let me tell you a story baby. When we brought you home from the hospital we put you in a beautiful bassinet, a wicker bassinet in your bedroom and your daddy and I would come in and we'd stand and look at you, the treasure of our life, our beautiful little baby girl. We had decorated your room.

We had beautiful curtains and all kinds of hanging toys for our child and we had stuffed animals in the room. Your daddy and I were downstairs and we were drinking coffee and we were thinking about the joy of holding you in our arms and what a gift God had given us in giving you us a little beautiful girl. And all of a sudden one of our neighbors ran up on the porch and said your house is on fire! Your house is on fire! And your daddy jumped up and he looked up the steps and sure enough there was smoke building in the hallway.

And he said you run and get our girl. I'll go get a ladder and a hose. And he took off and I went up the steps and the horror of horrors was the smoke was coming from your room.

And that bassinet had caught on fire. And the heater had caught the curtains. And as I got to your bassinet the flames were coming up the back of the wall and that wicker was beginning to burn.

And I reached down into that fire and I got you out. And I started back to the door holding you as closely as I could and when I did the flames had filled the doorway and the furniture was engulfed and all those toys were burning and there was no way out of your room. And I went to the window and I opened the window and I yelled for your daddy and your daddy and the neighbor were running with a ladder coming to us to help us.

And the flames were growing hotter and wilder every moment. And finally I couldn't stand the heat anymore and I couldn't breathe. And I began to climb out the window as they're coming across from the barn with the ladder.

And there was a little ledge, about a two inch ledge, where the first floor and the second floor meet together. And I got outside and I put one hand inside the window and I put my feet on that ledge and the fire was rolling and it began to burn and you and I stood outside on that little ledge and I held inside and the fire began to burn my hand. And I said, I've got to hold on.

I'm not going to drop my baby girl. And when my flesh began to blister and to cook, I couldn't hold on anymore. I put you into the other arm and I put my good hand in the fire and I held on.

And while your daddy was putting up the ladder it began to burn my other hand and baby, my hands are scarred because I had to hold us and keep us out of the fire so we could be alive today. And that little girl said, Mama, let me see your hands. And that mother pulled that apron down and those fingers had been melted together.

Her left hand looked like a hook. The scars were unbelievable from that fire and that pain. And that little girl reached down and she took those scarred hands and she went She said, Mama, that's the prettiest hands I've ever seen.

That's the hands that reached in the fire and pulled me out 2,000 years ago outside of Jerusalem. The Lamb of God. My kinsman, Redeemer.

He reached down, Jack, inside those flames and He took the heat of hell for me. He took my death. He took my wickedness.

He took my ungodliness. He took my backslidden. He took my heart of rebellion.

My will to go back and back and back and walk with Him and back and He kept loving me and He reached in that flame and pulled me out and He pulled you out. And tonight in heaven the only thing from this earth is the scar. Those male scarred hands where He bought you and He bought me where He reached inside the fire and set us free.

You could be here tonight and this would be a night of conversion. You could be here tonight as a Christian and this would be a night of correction. But whatever God's got in store for you, Jesus has paid for it.

He's paid for it. Hey, God ordained this night that we could see if we're sincere about revival.

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