

The Unfinished Work of Christ

by Vance Havner

The unfinished work of Christ is evangelization, where we proclaim his finished work and perform the unfinished work.

Duration: 38:17

Scripture: Psalm 37:4, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 5:5, Matthew 11:2-6, Luke 4:18, John 9:6-7, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Evangelism", "Sanctification"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of taking action and not just receiving the word of God. He uses the analogy of mud being applied to one's eyes and the need to wash it off. The preacher highlights that while Jesus' work of redemption is finished, His work in and through us is ongoing. He encourages personalizing the program of spreading the gospel and emphasizes that evangelism is a vital part of Christianity. The sermon references biblical passages such as Luke and the mission given by Jesus to His disciples.

Transcript

Anybody who thinks being a Christian is dry and dull and dead and dreary ought to be here in this meeting tonight, it seems to me. We are having a time. I think about that dear brother down in my country who got into an exciting meeting one night and the next morning he went back to the service.

They asked him to lead in prayer and he never had come down the mountain top from the evening before. He said, Lord, we just certainly had a wonderful time last night. We do thank you for that service.

And then he waxed eloquent and said, Lord, you just ought to have been there. Well, the Lord has been here and he is here. Now, I was here two years ago.

They let me come back every two years. They figure it takes about that long for me to get up to more sermons for the next time. But I can remember, I told it two years ago, I can remember the first Founders Week here when they had R.A. Torrey, James M. Gray, Gracia Machen, and William Jennings Bryan on the program.

That was a Founders Conference, I tell you. And I've been coming back in one way or another ever since I liked this place. We don't stand for cheap Christianity here.

We believe salvation is free, but it's not cheap, because God is Son, because the Son is life. And if you mean business, it will cost you everything you have. We've got a lot of cheap preaching today in some quarters.

I heard of a preacher back in the days when haircuts were 50 cents apiece. A barber in the congregation said, I'll cut your hair and I'll take it out and preach on you, you don't have to pay me. The preacher said, I'll have you to know I don't have any 50 cent sermons.

That's all right. The barber said, I'll come several times. We don't believe in marking the prices down around this place.

I breezed in in 1922 from the Deep South. I didn't even apply for admission. I just arrived one afternoon.

They had me up before the superintendent of men a little later because I had an extra beat in my piano playing. But I tell you, the superintendent of men was a wise man. He didn't bang the table and say, Don't you touch that piano.

They had evening vespers, and he said, Why don't you go down tonight and play for vespers? After he'd given me a nice little talk about some of the errors of the kind of playing I was doing. So he took me down and I marched into that meeting with my head thrown back like Napoleon crossing the Alps. I tell you, I was on victory side.

He knew how to treat a young fellow who didn't mean any harm, didn't know much. I not only didn't know anything, I didn't even suspect anything. But they were patient with me then.

They've been patient with me ever since. I appreciate all that. Oh, this meeting's blessed my soul already.

Tomorrow, the Lord willing, I'm not going to try to preach a sermon. I just want to talk to you out of my heart about six months of heartbreak and bereavement and sorrow that I've been through. I trust that I may be able, under the hand of God, to comfort others to some extent that the comfort wherewith I myself have been comforted of God.

This dear lady sang right to my heart tonight, Jesus is all you need. I sort of wish she'd sing that again tomorrow, maybe work it in some way. Because my subject's now thee alone I seek.

I'm 72 years old, and it took me a long time to learn some things. You learn some things in the dark that you never learn in the daylight. I know there are many troubled souls today, and I wrote a book during all this trouble.

Go, I walk through the valley. It's coming out later on. You made a reference to that, too, walking through the valley, in that precious song.

Thank you so much for it. The New Testament begins the former treatise that I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began, both to do and to teach. There's an old spiritual that says, My Lord's a-workin' all the time.

He didn't come down here just to say something, he came to do something. He was a worker. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.

I must work the works of him that sent me. The night cometh when no man can work. He came to finish a work, and he came to begin a work.

There is a finished work of Christ, and there's an unfinished work of Christ. He came to die for our sins, and to give his life a ransom for many. And when he died, he said, It's finished.

Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. For Christ also at once suffered for sins, that just for the unjust that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. Many years ago a teenager on a holiday, when the family was away and with nothing to do, went into the library and upset a basket of pamphlets, and selected a tract on the finished work of Christ, and read it later in a halo, and wrote still much later, There dawned upon me the joyous conviction that since the whole work was finished, and the whole debt paid on the cross, there was nothing for me to do but fall on my knees and accept the Savior, and praise him forevermore.

He was Hudson Taylor. A lot of dear people are trying to finish something that's already been finished. You don't have to add anything to Calvary.

All your tears and prayers and good works and high resolves cannot supplement what was wrought out there. Could my tears forever flow? Could my zeal no respite know? These for sin cannot atone, thou must say, thou alone. Sin has been dealt with, and it's a finished work.

Once for all, O sinner, receive it. Once for all, O brother, believe it. Cling to the cross, the burden will fall.

Christ hath redeemed us once for all. But there's an unfinished work of Christ, and he's still at it. It's the greatest piece of unfinished business in all history.

The book of the New Testament is sometimes called the Acts of the Apostles and sometimes the Acts of the Holy Spirit. It's certainly the Acts of Jesus Christ. It's a continuation of that unfinished work begun in Luke.

You remember when he went back to the old hometown to preach, he read the scripture, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. In other words, I've come to minister to the brokenhearted and the bound and the blind and the bruised.

And he's still at it. You remember that when John the Baptist was in jail, he sent a delegation to ask of our Lord, art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Now, that was a big drop for John the Baptist. One thing to stand on Jordan and give it, and another thing to stay in jail and take it.

And the picture had changed. That rugged preacher in his leather suit and living on grasshopper salad on Jordan, facing that motive to call to repentance, and I'm so glad my Lord didn't send him a cute little tract on how to be happy in jail. Instead of that, on the very day that John the Baptist said the poorest thing he ever said about my Lord, my Lord said the best thing he ever said about John the Baptist.

That's just like my Lord. And then he said, go back and tell him that I'm running on schedule. The blind received their sight, and the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf heard, the dead were raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

And then he followed it with what I like to call the forgotten beatitude. Now, we know the other beatitude, but here's one that nobody seems to know. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Blessed is the man who doesn't get upset by the way I run my business. That's what the Lord has said. My dear wife, the sweet little lady who traveled this country for 33 years with me, went home to heaven last September 2nd, passed away at 3.15 in the morning, and I preached at 11 a.m. I didn't know whether I could or not, but by the grace of God I did, and I had prepared a message on this very text, not knowing the circumstances under which I would use it.

But oh, could anything be more appropriate? When trouble comes, we sometimes want to bombard heaven with, why, why, why, why did this have to happen to me? Lord, why did you have to take her when I'm getting old and need companionship as never before? Why? Like Martha, you're tempted to say, If thou hadst been him, a brother had not died. But my Lord spoke back to my soul and said, I'm not finished with you yet, remember. I'm making disciples, and you're my disciple, and I'm working on you.

I'm not just saving sinners, I'm trying to make saints out of sinners. There's instantaneous sanctification and there's progressive sanctification. There's position and there's condition.

And you are a saint, but you're becoming a saint, too. You're a being and a becoming, and I'm not finished. And this is part of my unfinished work, and I'm not finished with her either.

There's more to come, thank God. Down in Charleston, South Carolina, two years ago, when we were in meetings at that old First Baptist Church, I snapped a picture of her out there on the walker front, and then it didn't finish the roll. And for a year and a half, that film roll lay in the darkness of the camera.

And a few weeks ago, I thought of it, and I had the roll developed. And there she came out again, and it impressed me more than almost any other picture. And then this thought came to me.

That just as that roll has lain for a year and a half in the darkness of that camera, just so her dear body lies in a quaint little Quaker graveyard in North Carolina. But one of these days, the great photographer is going to turn negatives into positives. Thank God.

And this marvel will put on immortality and corruptible, will put on incorruption, and death will be swallowed up in victory. And I'm having a rough time waiting until that picture. That's part of the unfinished work.

But I'm thinking about the unfinished work of evangelization. A lot of dear people are puzzled today. They're saying, Lord, what's happened? There are more pagans today than ever.

The world isn't being converted. Well, beloved, he never started out to convert the world. He's taking out a people for his name.

And God's not out saving civilization. Civilization is not going to be saved. I used to say civilization is going to the dogs.

I quit saying that out of respect for dogs. There are people tonight doing plenty of things beneath the dignity of any dog. I heard of a hog that got hold of some liquor in the swill somewhere and got drunk and called the hogs together later and said, if you'll excuse me for acting like a man, I never will do it again.

Oh, there's an unfinished work, and he's still at it. Now, there's a twofold character to that work. He came to do and to teach.

Notice, beloved, he came first to do. Some people teach and don't do, and their talk gets ahead of their walk, and their tongues get ahead of their feet. Dr. Dale said Jesus did not come to preach the gospel, but that there might be, first of all, a gospel to preach.

When he hung on the cross, they said, let him come down from the cross, and we'll believe him. That's what the world is saying today. We're not saved by how he walked in Galilee.

We're saved by what he wrought on God that day. The world would take him without the cross, but a crossless Christ would mean no more than a Christless cross. The world is saying, give us the teacher, give us the example, give us the paragon, but not the propitiation.

We don't want the scandal. We don't want the reproach of the old rugged cross. We must deal first with what he did on the cross, and then learn what he has to teach.

Come unto me, and I'll give you rest. But in the very next verse, learn of me, and you will find rest. I thought he was going to give it to us.

It's both. It's an obtainment and it's an attainment. We have rest through what he did, and attainment as we follow what he teaches.

Of course, the cross is vertical and it's horizontal. There's the God to man and man to God relationship, and there's the man to man relationship. And you're not ready for the horizontal until you've done something about the vertical.

We're hearing a lot today about right wing and left wing. One of our greatest black preachers today says, I don't belong to the right wing nor the left wing. They're both flapping on the same old bird.

Ah, you are ready for this outreach only when you're rightly related to God. Then he gives us two commissions, preach the gospel to every creature, make disciples. You notice we're taught to do something.

All over the country, I read the great commission in churches, and after I finish, I leave out two words on purpose. You'd be surprised how few people ever notice that I left them out and don't know what they were when I asked what words did I leave out. I always leave out on purpose the two words to observe.

Teaching them not all things commanded, indeed we must teach that, but our business is not just the dissemination of information. Teaching them to do it, to observe all things commanded. A lot of Bible teaching today reminds me of swimming lessons on dry land.

You never learn how to swim on dry land. You must make the plunge. Thy word is a light to my path, but that light's not to look at but to walk in.

You stand out on a sunny day and stare at the sun, and the very sun that gives you light will take away what light you have. It'll blind you, and it's possible to be blinded by an excess of light. John McNeill, famous preacher of a generation ago, speaking on the man whom our Lord sent to wash off the clay that the Savior had put on his eyes.

He said, Some of you have had the mud applied, and you've had the mud applied, and you've had the mud applied, and you've never done anything about it. You've never done the next thing and the next thing, and that mud has caked and hardened, and you're blinder than ever. Our Lord's work for us in

redemption is a finished work, but his work in and through us is an unfinished work.

We are his representatives, we are his witnesses. He didn't say bear witness, he said be witnesses. We are to proclaim his finished work, we are to perform the unfinished work.

Back to that Nazareth sermon again, he said, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he hath sent me, and then as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. There was the anointing of the Spirit for his work, and there must be the anointing of the Spirit for our work. We're all his missionaries, whether across the sea or across the street, and every Christian is supposed to be in full-time Christian service.

Aren't you supposed to live for the Lord and serve him every hour of the day, every day of the week, every week of the month, every month of the year? What's that but full-time Christian service? We're all in it, or we ought to be, abiding in his finished work, anointed for the unfinished work, abounding in the unfinished work. 1 Corinthians 15 deals with the finished work, death and resurrection. But how does it end? Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in that unfinished work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

There's always the danger that the work of the Lord will become impersonal and big business. It's just a matter of one person telling another person about another person. You remember when Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, I like to say it, he brought him to Jesus.

Just three people involved in that. It's personal. I never get much excited over a missionary program somehow.

I can go to sleep listening to almost any kind of a program of that sort, but a missionary person will keep me awake. That makes a difference. When I was a pastor years ago of a country church, I went to one of our denominational meetings one day, and no matter what denomination, you don't need to tell anybody, but some of our denominational meetings can be mighty dry.

And that one was, they read reports all morning, and every report got a little drier than the report before. I felt like the little boy in church, bored to death, and the preacher never would quit. And he asked his mother, what's the flag up there in the pulpit with the stars in it? She said, that's the service flag for those that have died in the service.

He said, the morning service or the evening service? Well, I felt like that. And finally noon came. I thought it never would, but it did.

And I walked around in the woods just to get the taste out of my mouth. And then they came back in for more reports in the afternoon. And then some brother read an appendix to the last report, and I was in favor of an appendectomy right away.

Then all at once a sure enough missionary got in. He didn't look much, but he began to talk about how he had fought mosquitoes and liquor and the devil and built little churches in a neglected part of the country and how homes had been reunited and lives had been made over and drunkards had been converted. And as he told the story, he breathed a breath of life into it, and that meeting became a living thing.

He did not present a mere program. He personalized the program. You are called upon to personalize in your own life and experience the program, the unfinished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, it begins with a person, it ends with a person. All authority is given unto me. I'm with you unto the end of the age.

We're in it, too. Go ye, lo, I am with you. Evangelism is to Christianity what veins are to our bodies.

You can clip Christianity anywhere and it will bleed evangelism. Evangelism is vascular. It's our business.

Talk about majoring on evangelism, you might as well talk about a doctor majoring on healing. That's our business. Our Lord said, He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.

There is no such thing as an inactive church member. If you're not drawing people to Jesus by your very inactivity, you're driving people away from Jesus. He that gathereth not scattereth abroad.

We sing Jesus paid it all, but remember what the next word is? All to him. We are debtors to the Greek and the barbarian, to the wise and the unwise. We owe it to him and we owe it to them to get the gospel out, to pray it out and take it out and send it out by person and by prayer and by provision and by proxy.

Get it out. During the Second World War, you remember how Hitler's Air Force went over London again and again and that little handful of the RAF rose to meet them and Churchill said, Never did so many owe so much to so few. When I think of lost millions and how few real Christians there are today, I feel like saying never did so few owe so much to so many as we do now.

Now, just because it's a finished work doesn't mean we just celebrate it and enjoy it. James Anthony Froud criticized Hudson Taylor for a do-nothing attitude. He said this talk about everything being done already and finished sets a premium on indolence.

Well, Froud should have checked on the life of Hudson Taylor. Nobody ever accused Hudson Taylor of being indolent. There never was a more prodigious laborer for Jesus Christ than Hudson Taylor.

And Paul, whoever believed and preached more the finished work of Christ than whoever labored more in the unfinished work of Christ. It's the only answer to this situation today. Everybody's talking about the situation now.

We're not going to meet it by holding conferences about it. There are symposiums aplenty, but there are symposiums where we pool our ignorance and that's not going to solve the problem. If panel discussions could have saved the world, it would have been saved a long time ago.

If committee meetings would have done it, it would have been saved. I heard some time ago how they got worried in a certain place about overlapping committees. Too many committees.

Guess what they did? They appointed another committee to study the overlapping committees. We're not going to meet the situation that way. We're not going to meet it by being critical of it, just that.

Now there's a place for pulpit condemnation of sin, personal and national. And we need prophets. We don't have, I was going to say India, and maybe I'd better leave it at that, to call state and church to repentance.

But I've gone to meetings where all I heard was a blistering, blasting, biting, burning tirade on the times, and I knew they were bad when I went to the meeting, and I knew they were worse when I came out of the meeting. But that's not the approach to the situation. And we certainly are not going to meet it by

conformity to it.

There's a dangerous tendency today, even in evangelical circles, to get with it and borrow the techniques and terminology of the world on the excuse that the end justifies the means, forgetting that the means determines the end. You don't have to dress like and talk like and sing like the world in order to reach it for Jesus Christ. You don't have to look like a clown to witness to a circus.

When I was a pastor in Charleston, South Carolina, I preached just about every Saturday night the rescue mission. I didn't dress like a bum to go down there. Even the bums wouldn't have appreciated that.

There is an obsession going around today, for instance, that the idiom of Isaac Watts does not speak today, and so we have to switch from hymns to hootenannies. Well, it's an insert to the intelligence of the young people of this country. They're still studying Shakespeare in the old idiom.

Pre-med students are still studying medicine in a very difficult idiom. Law students are still reading law in the same old idiom. And if we're not going to meet the situation by conferences about it and by being critical of it and by conformity to it, then how? By just being Christians in it.

I passed by a church some time ago that had on the bulletin board, Why Not Just Be Christians? I titled one of my books just that. That's enough. I heard of a church some time ago that had the sign in front of it, Jesus Only, and they had a storm one night and blew out the first three letters and left us only.

That's what we've got in a lot of churches today. It's not Jesus Only, it's just us only. We don't need anything new today half so much as we need something so old it'd be new to somebody today.

We talk about the old-time religion. I don't care for the term necessarily, because the infinitudes of God never put him in the past tense. He's the great I Am, he's the eternal contemporary.

But if you want to use old-fashioned, the sun is old-fashioned, but without it men grow up in darkness, there's no substitute. Air is old-fashioned, but without it men gasp and die, there's no substitute. Water is old-fashioned, but without it men go mad, there's no substitute.

Jesus talked about the simplest things, bread and salt and water. Some years ago there was a power failure in upper New York State, you read about it, and all night several million people sat there just waiting for the sun to come up next morning. Rather old-fashioned, don't you think? And then they had more smog than usual some time ago in L.A., and a meteorologist said only a sweep of wind will clear up the situation, and there sat several million more just waiting for the wind to blow.

Dreadfully old-fashioned, don't you think? And they had a drought out in the Midwest, and the agricultural expert said, there's only one thing we'll need, and that's rain. There sat several million more waiting for it to rain. Dreadfully old-fashioned.

Thank God I'm dreadfully old-fashioned today in my preaching, because we know what the remedy is and we stand for it here. James Reston said the other day, the craziest notion that's hit this country in a long time is the shortage of gas, beef, and a lot of other things that are bad for the American people. What America really needs is more shortages.

It's not our shortages, but our surpluses that are hurting us. Too much gas, too much booze, too much money, too much noise, and too much newsprint are our problem. We need to cut down, slow up, stay at

home, run around the block, eat vegetable soup, call up old friends, read a book once in a while.

Americans have always been able to handle austerity and even adversity. Prosperity is what's been doing us in. Well, it might cure us of bragging about how sophisticated we are if we have some trouble.

Actually, we're the most gullible generation that ever has come along. We've bought more gold bricks and been sold more white elephants and Indian crabs since Adam, why, even Quixotec was a failure. We got all excited today about pollution and then we built new cars to burn more gas and then ran out of gas.

The prize boo-boo of the season. Somebody said we ought to learn how to ride camels. I can get along on one drink of water a day, but that wouldn't work because the Arabs own all the camels.

So we need to get back to simplicity and austerity. Christianity thrives on it. The Church is rich when she's poor and poor when she's rich.

Laodicea was and is rich and increased with goods. She's secure in danger, but endangered by security. Adversity would be good for the Church.

Material poverty won't kill the Church. Popularity will do it. Prosperity will do it.

Christianity started out with one who had no place to lay his head. He said, take up a cross and follow me. We're not on a picnic, we're on the pilgrimage.

We're not out for a frolic, we're out for a fight. We're not out on an excursion, we're out for execution, death itself, and sin in the world. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

How much have you ever suffered? He says all. He doesn't say most, he doesn't say some. Let's go to him without the camp bearing his reproach.

In fellowship of his sufferings must we be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas. If we told the truth today, we'd say I would be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. Though others fought to win the prize, I'm not so hard to please.

That would be the truth, with altogether too many. That old straight gate's never been widened, and the narrow way's never been broadened, and if you've got a popular brand of Christianity, you've got the wrong kind. When my Lord was a baby in Simeon, held him in his hands, he said, This child shall be for a sign that shall be spoken against.

And when the Jews came to hear Paul in Rome, they said, All we know about your religion is that everywhere they're talking against it. That's a strange note, don't you think? And yet it turned the world upside down. This old concept of a Christian as being a pilgrim and a stranger making his way through an unfriendly world, not a citizen of earth trying to get to heaven, but a citizen of heaven trying to get through this world.

That's out of style. Now you have the Madison Avenue, hail, fellow, well-met, back-slapping preacher that everybody calls by his first name. We could use some austerity today, and some severity, and some adversity, and some discipline.

Some of us lived through one depression. Back of that, we grew up so poor that what are now necessities were luxuries. I remember going to high school fresh from the country.

They put me with a city fellow who had high-priced ties. He hung his on the right side of the dresser, and I hung mine on the left. I noticed immediately there was some disparity between the appearance of the neckties.

I had an inferiority complex for several days until I got in the library and read those lines, because what do we do where hot and gray and fair, only one thing matters. A man's a man for all that, if he's an honest man. I went out with my head high, never dropped it again.

I wasn't going to be tied down by neckties. It's not what's around your neck that matters, it's what's on the inside of the necktie that matters most of all. This present national crisis may be America's last chance to turn to God.

Our biggest business is the unfinished work of Christ, and the very desperation of these times may afford the greatest opportunity we've ever had. But I still remember that A. W. Tozer said, the popular notion that the first obligation of the Church is to spread the gospel to the uttermost part of the earth is false. The first obligation is to be spiritually worthy to spread it.

Our Lord said, Go ye, but he first said, Carry ye. We're trying to stir up half-hearted Church members today to do what they don't want to do anyhow, and it'll just produce more Church members like them. We already have too many of the kind most of them are.

So far below the New Testament standard, you'd have to backslide to be in fellowship. We need more Christian Christians. Alexander the Great had before him one day an A. W. O. L. soldier, and the great Greek looked down on him and asked, What's your name? He said, My name's Alexander.

And he stared at him and said, What did you say your name is? My name is Alexander. The great Greek said, Either change your way of living or change your name. I believe Jesus Christ is saying to a lot of Church members today, Change your way of living or take down your sign.

I've said this all over the country. It's not popular. The first step toward the evangelizing of the world is the Christianizing of the Church.

When our joy is restored and our spirit renewed, then we will teach transgressors God's ways and sinners will be converted to him. I'm amazed today at the fact that although we have Bible study and deeper life conferences and evangelistic conferences and stewardship conferences and prophecy conferences, almost nowhere do I hear the Church being called to repentance, which is the very last thing the Lord said to the Church in the New Testament. We have so-called revivals, which usually drives for more Church members.

The professing Church today is swinging all the way from Rigor Mortis to St. Vitus. Half of the crowd look like they're on their way to a funeral, and the other half like they're on their way to a frolic. And we're headed neither for a funeral nor a frolic, but for a feast.

Our Lord always used the right word. Half are freezing and half are frying. I read in Revelation about a sea of glass mingled with fire.

We've got some preachers that are all glass and some all fire. The cold dignity needs to be mingled with wild emotionalism, and both of them changed into a proper balance. What we need is just a return to normal New Testament Christianity, and that means conviction of sin and confession of sin.

It means reconciliation, getting right with people. It means restitution. It means separation from the world, and that's almost gone out in some circles.

It means submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and it means being filled with the Holy Spirit. We've let extremism and wildfire about the Holy Spirit scare us away from a true emphasis on the Holy Spirit. And the greatest energy crisis today is not a gasoline emergency.

It's right in the Church. We've operated in the energy of the flesh, and look where we are. The Holy Spirit went out of business.

A lot of churches never know the difference. This preaching is not popular. I marvel that I have any preaching to do.

The devil told me if I preached like this I'd starve, and from the way I look, some people may think the devil is right, but I'm getting along all right, thank you. Five out of seven churches, my Lord said, repent. Most of our churches can be found in these five categories.

I've not been in many Smyrnas in Philadelphia lately. I've been to Ephesus without its first love. I've been to Pergamum and Thyatira with plenty of Balaam and Jezebel.

I've been to Sardis, and I was reminded that a mortician can make a dead man look better than when he was alive. I've been to Laodicea, and I've remembered that our Lord prefers a cold church to a warm church, because he said so. Rather you were cold or hot, but not lukewarm.

The only two churches that didn't need a revival were Smyrna and Philadelphia, and they were poor and persecuted. It may be that we're entering a period of distress that will produce Smyrnas. And our Lord, in Revelation 3.18, and I really, as many times as I've read it, didn't observe this until the other day, he tells the church what it needs most, and three times he uses, as it stands in our King James, that thou mayest.

By gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich. By white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed. And anoint thine eyes with thysel, that thou mayest see.

What the church needs above everything else is to be rich, not get rich. Be rich. We are rich, if we only knew it.

And our Lord, who became poor for our sakes, that we through his poverty might be rich. We need to be clothed in his righteousness alone that the shame of our spirits or nakedness may not appear. And we need to anoint our eyes with thysel that we may see, because sight is more important than light.

All the light in the world won't do a blind man any good. We need sight. Buy of me.

When you say, how can I buy if I don't have anything? Oh, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters. He that hath no money, come ye buy and eat. Ye come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

And then I counsel thee to buy of me gold raiment. I say, how will I buy if I don't have anything? You have one thing, you have yourself. That's about all you have, but you can give him that.

Have you ever given him that? The Macedonians first gave themselves self-service substance. You positively cannot pay God off with service and substance if you haven't given him yourself. That's the last thing he gets from some of us.

You can graduate from Rudy Bible Institute and still not give the Lord yourself. You can be a successful preacher, as the world measures success without having given the Lord yourself. You can give service and work hard in a church.

And you can give your goods to the poor and never give yourself. A little boy who had no money on Sunday morning wrote on a piece of paper, I give myself and put it on the collection plate. And that was the biggest offering they had that Sunday morning.

I know this is a select gathering of good people. Thank God for it. But you will understand when I ask you from the bottom of my heart, are you dead certain and sure, dear friend, young, middle-aged and old tonight, that you have put yourself on God's collection plate.

And only those who have done business with Jesus Christ on the basis of his finished work are ready to do business for Jesus Christ in his unfinished work. I want to go further with this as it were tomorrow, God willing. I think sometimes we talk too much out of our heads and not out of our hearts.

I've never heard from as many troubled people in all my life. Somehow since word got around that I've been going through a valley. And I know there are plenty of people here now that may be hiding the back of a smile, an aching heart.

Won't you pray for me tomorrow in this meeting? And somehow when we get to that blessed place where we can sing it, and God forgive me for the times I've sung it and lied. Once earthly joy I craved, so peace and rest. Now thee alone I seek.

Just give what's best. God bless you.

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