

Testimony: Pastor Ernest O'Neill

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I always look forward to this night because I can honestly say now that it is a delight to give my testimony. I could not always say that and I sympathize with any of you who feel that way because it's a new thing to me, at least over the past fourteen or fifteen years. It's new and it's still new. So, those of you who are bored with it, I just say go to sleep because I'm going to enjoy it. I know that God will speak to us.

I'd like to testify as one who has been delivered from carnality. I think that it's important for you who have listened to the presentations over the past few weeks about carnality, it's important for you at least to see how one miserable soul was delivered, and that he was just a person like you were.

I was born in Belfast in Northern Ireland in 1934, so I am forty-four now and I feel twenty-two. So, I don't feel forty-four at all. But, I was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, into what we would have called probably really a working class, middle class home. My father was an electrician and became a foreman electrician in a shipyard in Belfast. We lived in very ordinary circumstances. And, I know that if I had not been able to get a scholarship to University, I would never have been at University because in Ireland it's impossible to work your way through University as it is possible here.

So, during the first years of my life, I went to a Methodist Church. And, it was a fairly big church and had a cross section of society in Belfast. Probably, it had a cross section as far as theology was concerned, too. You had dear old saints who really did believe the Bible and then you had modern type liberals who were uncertain. And, I came up in that kind of situation.

The first move I ever made towards God was probably during the Second World War when the German bombers would head over for Belfast because of the shipyards that were there. I knew my dad would be down working there and looking after things. And, I remember treating God as someone who would protect him and could keep him safe. And, I remember those nights when we'd hear the bombers and when we'd see the flames of the city. I remember praying very seriously to God that he would protect my father and my mother and my brother. That was the extent of my concern at that time. During those early years up to thirteen, that's the way my religion was.

At thirteen, at Sunday school, one Sunday afternoon, the Sunday school teacher talked about the "lake of fire". I saw it as very real. I have no question that it was real. I had no question from the words of Revelation that it was real and it really existed. And, at that time he asked did anyone want to stay afterwards to pray and to ask God to forgive them their sins. Well, I certainly wanted to stay. He told me all the verses about sin, but I didn't really understand them. You know Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fallen short." I didn't really understand all that, but I knew one thing was uppermost in my mind. I wanted to be on the same side as the one who owned the "lake of fire" or who had power over the "lake of fire". And, I wanted to be on the side of the strongest one.

And, so, I really think that I was declaring myself a theist. I believed in God and I wanted to

please him. From that time on, I tried to pray and read the Bible at night very sporadically. And, I believe that really on the whole all I was was a believer in God. A believer that there was a Creator and that he probably had good attitude towards me, but I had no real notion of sin.

That was what I believed until about seventeen when I went to University. And, I became aware of the whole problem of moral impotence especially in regard to the whole sexual relationship. And, I began to see that there were things in my life that I could not change and that I could not control.

Now, it was then that a friend who was going into the Presbyterian ministry said to me, "What does Jesus' death mean to you?" And, loved ones, I knew all about Jesus' death. And, I knew that he died for my sins, but really Jesus was never very important in my faith. Now, he was important and was an example and as God's Son, but he wasn't vital to me. And, so, when he asked what does Jesus' death mean to you, well, I put him off with some kind of semi-theological answer, but I really didn't feel Jesus' death was vital to me at all.

And, it was then that I began to read people like Thomas à Kempis and others of the saints who dwell upon the death of Jesus. And, at that time, I began to give up my ordinary prayers for my mother and my father and my examinations and all the rest of it and I began to concentrate just on this business of Jesus' death. And, I tried to think of it in my mind. I tried to grasp that it was a historical fact. And, I tried to distinguish between thinking of Jesus' death and thinking of myths and stories that weren't real.

And, gradually, in meditating upon the death of Jesus and realizing that there was some piece of ground in Jerusalem that had actually had the foot of his cross stuck into it, I gradually began to realize this really did happen. And, somehow as I thought about that over days and weeks, I began to sense that Jesus was transcending history and he wasn't just looking at the Roman soldiers and saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," but he seemed to be looking down at me in Ireland in the 20th century and saying, "Father, forgive him for he knows not what he's doing." And, I really think it was a miracle of God that he enabled me to sense that Jesus had died for me.

Now, loved ones, I didn't understand how and I was at that time bent on thinking everything out intellectually and analyzing everything. And, yet, I knew that I couldn't explain in what sense Jesus had died for me, but I reckoned that's what they meant by taking it by faith. You didn't know what relationship it had to the forgiveness of your sins. You just believed that God had done something in Jesus on the cross that enabled him now to forgive you for the things that you were doing wrong in your life. And, so, I confessed my sins and repented. And, I asked Jesus to come into my life. And there was a definite conversion at the age of seventeen and I sense from then on a drive inside me to read the Bible and to pray and to want to share about Jesus with other people.

And, around that time I had known that I ought to go into the Methodist ministry. And, yet, I knew that it was economically impossible because my parents had no money and I had no money. And, so, I accepted a teaching scholarship to Queen's University in Belfast. And, I began the University career. But then, after about a year, I knew I had to go into the Methodist ministry.

And, so, at that time I began to take examinations and connect with the ministry and meanwhile complete my arts degree in English literature. Then, after three years there, I went to teacher training college and came out. Now under the government scholarship regulations in Ireland, you had to teach for two years something like some of the regulations we have in the States.

So, I went back to my old high school, which was kind of a Mr. Chips kind of school, you know, we all wore gowns. And, I was an assistant Chaplain, so I wore a clerical collar and taught Shakespeare and Milton and really enjoyed that whole life. It was a boarding school, so there were maybe twelve or fourteen of us resident masters who lived there. Then in a very beautiful castle-like building across the grounds, the lady teachers lived with the girls. And, so, it was a dignified, I suppose, kind of experience of education and an enjoyable one and very satisfying.

And, then, after two years of that I went into a seminary, to HL Theological Seminary. It's still there in Belfast. It's the Methodist theological seminary. And, I did my theological degree through the same Queens University. And, then, came out at the age of 26 and was ordained in Dublin in 1960 to the Methodist ministry. Then, I spent a year in Donegal and then sensed that God wanted us, oh, then I married, then I married. I'm glad my wife isn't here and I hope she never watches this tape.

We met at Queen's University. She was doing dentistry. It was a wild situation. I went into the university student politics on a Christian vote. We were at that time trying to mobilize and there was only one girl on this student committee and she was the one that was arguing for a bar in the university and that was my wife! And, so God just miraculously, I won't go into that, but God miraculously and graciously led us together and we were married then. I think I was about 28 at that time and it was about a year after ordination and we spent the year in Donegal and then sensed that God was leading us to London. We went to London, England, and spent probably a year, year and a half there. I taught math in a school in Surrey and I pastored a Methodist church in London.

And, then, loved ones, all this time my spiritual life had been deteriorating. It really was deteriorating. It was deteriorating in this way that my Bible study and my prayer, very soon after the age of 17 and certainly right through teaching years and right through seminary years, became more and more sporadic.

And, I sensed that there was something in me that did not want to be a Christian. And, did not want to be a minister and did not want to be good. And, the things that had driven me to Jesus were actually still in my life. I just kept confessing them to God and receiving forgiveness but, of course, the more you do that, especially over a period of years, the harder it is even to take yourself seriously and that was the situation in my life.

I was gradually becoming more and more skeptical about myself. And, I would read Thomas a Kempis and I would read St. Teresa and would read William Law and the others who talk about a higher life. And even would read John Wesley, who seemed to continually talk about some life that was better than the one I was living.

We in the Methodist church were very clever and we never talked much about that side of John Wesley. We just talked about the side that was like ourselves. Never talked too much about the whole victorious gospel that he preached. But, during those years, I would say my life was just gradually becoming more and more schizophrenic, except that anyone who has a kind of strong mind or a strong will can at least hold it together on the outside even though on the inside it was becoming more and more spread-eagled.

And, so, in London, really I came to a kind of crisis because I didn't know which way to go. And, I don't know about you, but one of the marks, I think, of a carnal life is there is a dreadful lack of

direction in it. You're tending to go in all directions at once and you are never sure of which way you are going and that was me. I was always playing for more time and trying to back my way into more space and all the time backing myself into more and more of a corner and never knowing for sure.

And, those of you who are married will know it when your dear wife says, "Well, Love, what are we going to do?" and you're supposed to know and you don't know. And, you feel really, oh, what good am I at all. It was in London that I sensed, no, we shouldn't go back to Ireland and I prayed and asked God, Lord, where do you want me and really began to seek God zealously for the first time in a number of years.

Zealously, I mean, in the sense of praying a long time. I mean I had always sought God but not for hours at a time, and I began to seek him for hours at a time because at that time my life was like many of ours. I used to tell the loved ones in London, my wife used to go to dental office and she would be working hard all day, and I was a pastor and she asked me, "What did you do all day?" and I said, "Well, I watched the ducks," and that's what I used to do. I used to drive my car down to the Serpentine in Hyde Park and watch the ducks and the horse riders.

And, that is what I did and I was worn out at the end of the day, of course. Yeah. She then had to go and buy the groceries to make the supper and that's the way it was going on, so I knew things are bad. Because I wasn't achieving anything and yet it was this kind of wearisome existence. So I sought God and, through in prayer, came America.

Well, I don't know if you all know what we would think of the States, or somebody like me would think of the States over there, but we would think of the States always as the place where there's all kinds of money. And, so, anyone who wants to serve God would always be very skeptical of ever going to America because that would seem a more comfortable place than where you were and so it was very hard for me to accept that seriously, America. But, that's what I did and, for the first time, I believe, I really did act just blankly on what God told me to do.

Now, I don't know if you have experienced the same thing but, before then, I would always filter Gods' commands through my mind and through my own calculations about what effect this was going to have on my future. And, whether people would know me there or not and whether I had a chance of being successful. And, so, I would always filter everything through that and the result was there was very little left of God's commands after I had finished with them. But this one I determined I would act on. So, I just went blankly and bluntly (I would never have done this. I was a miserable Jacob always calculating.), but I went blankly and bluntly to the neighboring Methodist pastor and asked him did he know anybody in America. He said he knew a Bishop who would, by chance, be in London the next month.

So, the next month in 1963, I would say it was, in October, I had dinner with the bishop of Minnesota. And, I ended up out here in the cold in November of '63. And, my wife took another month to close her practice. She had a dental practice in London, and she followed me. And, I thought I was coming to a Blue Earth, Minnesota, at first. There was a Methodist church open in Blue Earth, but I ended up going to a Methodist church in North Minneapolis.

God is so good because one of the first things that I was invited to do by a woman. She came to the church just two or three times but she invited me to go and speak at a little Bible school, a little Bible school in North Minneapolis that I would never have touched with a forty foot pole. I was a

proud liberal, British intellectual and felt that Bible schools were kind of traditional places where you could have nothing that bore any resemblance to sanity or intellectual balance.

So, I went to this Bible school and I shared my own testimony and that I believed that there was a better life. I believe that Wesley talked about the verse, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," and that it was possible to live that kind of way, but I myself was not living it.

And, there was a man in the back, you know, there always is a man in the back, and he came up to me afterwards and he turned out to be the minister of this little church. He told me how he himself had preached that there was a victorious life for years and had been a missionary in Bolivia for years, and been in the ministry and never lived it and, eventually, God had led him into it. And, he began to share with me some of the truths that we have shared over the past years together. It was like water to a dry soul. It was like gems, precious stones. I didn't know there was any way out. I never believed there was a way out.

And, this man suddenly seemed to be saying there was a way out. And, so, there and then I began to seek God's Spirit for what seemed to be some deeper experience of the crucifixion of Christ. And, I began to ask the Holy Spirit, first of all, to get me organized as far as my converted life went. Because, loved ones, I had over those, I was then, I suppose, thirty, I would imagine I was thirty and, so, from seventeen to thirty, for thirteen years, I had lived a defeated Christian life. It was a life that was filled with carnality and filled with rationalization and hypocrisy. And, I asked the Holy Spirit, first of all, "Will you show me what I have to do to?" Well, in the Methodist church, we would call it get into grace, and indeed, you loved ones in the Catholic Church would use the same terminology.

Because we would believe that to be in grace you need to be up-to-date with your sins, at least. And, of course, I had masses of sins that I had given up confessing and given up repenting of so the first step for me was to get honest with God again about just the sins that I had already confessed and repented thousands of times. And, that's what I did first. I would use the terminology "get back into grace" by bringing my experience up-to-date with God. I confessed and repented of the things that he had shown me were wrong in my life.

And, then, it was interesting, I then thought that I could live at that level. And, so, for the next three or four months, I tried to live at that level as a born again man in Jesus with my sins forgiven and with the Holy Spirit within me. And, of course, my life, in a few month's time, began the old dive again and I began to again have trouble with the things inside that I could not control and then I would confess them and my life would go up a little and then it would go down a little and I would be on that old switchback, up and down life again.

Now, maybe I should explain what I had trouble with. Outside, I was a Methodist minister and, you know, I've joked with you before, in seminary we do smiling courses. We don't. But, we're all encouraged always to smile, whatever you feel like inside. So, I was good at smiling. And, somebody would come in after the sermon and would begin to criticize it and I would smile because that's what you do. But my knuckles would be white holding my chair! Because I would feel, what right has she to criticize my sermon, she doesn't know homiletics, she doesn't know anything about anything. And, so, it was inside things.

I remember way back, even it would express itself outwardly because I remember way back when my mother used to say to me, "Ernest, I thought Christians were supposed to be happy and you're

miserable." And, I was. I was a sad, depressed, worried, anxious little soul. I would say a petty little soul looking back and with selfish ambition.

There's nothing so bad where you're anxious to get on, to be successful, to be well known, to be looked up to and everybody that seems to criticize you seems to be rocking that boat. Well, as the great majority of people are involved in the same thing, of course, it's very difficult to avoid criticism, so your boat is always rocking. And, my boat was always rocking as far as my future was concerned. So, a lot of selfish ambition, a lot of pride. Pride inside. In other words, the problems were inward sin. It was inward sin that was the problem.

Obviously, as a Methodist minister, the best way of getting fired was to drink or do something like that so I have no trouble with that. I have beaten those things. I could control the life outwardly. But, it was inwardly where no one seemed to be able to see, that I had my problems. Lust, the thing that you should preach to everybody else that they should have victory over, I would have trouble with. I would have difficulty with my inward thoughts and my inward feelings. And, of course, again and again, you men and women know, it would spring out into outward lack of control.

Even if you are married, that's what happens. There comes an uncleanness into your life if your heart is not clean. And, all the things that spring from those, the envy when somebody did something better than me or the jealousy when somebody praised some other speaker more than they praised me. Or, the anger that would break out and irritability at home. That's always where carnality shows itself most. You can keep some appearance up on the outside with people if you need just for an hour or so every week, but the people who live with you, they see your real self and so all the impatience with my wife when she didn't come at the time I thought she should come, all the irritability that would wipe out at the one you say you love. You know, you hurt the one you love. No, you hurt the one you want to love. You don't hurt a person that you really love.

But, all that envy and jealousy and anger and irritability and impatience. And, if you ask me what affect it had, it had a debilitating affect on me as far as speaking about Jesus to other people went. Because I'm sure I used the same words as I use now, but you couldn't use them with the whole heart, you know. You couldn't say them with all your being because you knew they weren't true for you. And, so, there was a lack of power in your witnessing. So, I looked up who had I brought to Jesus. I couldn't see anybody I had brought to Jesus. I couldn't see anybody that was blessed particularly by my preaching.

So, I looked at a life that was really pretty fruitless, full of good ideas, bright little thoughts, but no power in it at all. And, as I began, of course, to go down again for what seemed to me the third time, I knew I had to seek whatever this was. I knew the term "the fullness of the Spirit." I knew the term "death to self." I knew that God promised you a clean heart. I didn't know much about terms like "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." I read them in the books. This man put me onto some old books written by old Methodist bishops. There was one particularly by Lowrey, Bishop Lowrey, called "Possibilities of Grace." And, I just turned to the chapters how to get into fullness of the Spirit. I didn't follow what all the introductions said, I just went to His instructions and I began to do what he said.

And, the first thing I did was treat the Holy Spirit as a person. Loved ones, I don't know how important that's going to be for you in your life, but it was vital for me in mine. I'll tell you why. I introspected a lot over the years, but I introspected as much as didn't matter. Do you see that? You see, your introspection is controlled by your selfish will and, so, you'll introspect like

mad but it'll never let you introspect to the point where it'll do you any good. It'll always take you down just as deep as it wants you to go.

That's what I think a lot of us don't realize. That in seeking to be delivered from the domination of self, you must see that you are at this moment, even as you seek deliverance, you are dominated by self. And, insofar, as the search is under your control, it'll never get anywhere because the self will never let you get anywhere. And, so, the first step for me was treating the Holy Spirit as what Jesus called him, the Counselor.

Now, I knew the Holy Spirit was a person. I knew the theology of it. I knew He was the third person of the Trinity. But never in my life had I treated him as a person. Indeed, one of the things that we as liberals felt was that nobody can do anything inside our life except ourselves. You have control of your own mind. You alone dictate what goes on in your own life. And, so it was completely new thought to believe that some power outside myself could actually show me some things that I couldn't see.

So, the first step for me was treating the Holy Spirit as a person. I prayed to him. I don't think you need to pray to the Holy Spirit. You can pray to the Lord Jesus to send the Holy Spirit to you but I asked the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit will you show me all the dirt and the rottenness that is in my life. Will you show me it?" And, loved ones, it would be a bit, you know, like Oswald Chambers' comment, he said, "I prayed for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the only thing that kept me out of a mental asylum for the next four years was God's grace." And, I would say that was my experience because the Holy Spirit was faithful and my poor wife had a harder time living with me than ever before. That was because the Holy Spirit does that. He'll take you at your word. If you ask him with a sincere heart, show me the miserable sin in my inward being. Show me what is there that God hates. Show me myself as God sees me. Give me Judgment Day honesty. Enable me to see myself through Jesus' eyes. The Holy Spirit will take you at your word. And, he began to show me the mess.

Now, loved ones, I would say that that was only the first step for me because one of the truths that I saw in scripture was that the problem was not the individual sins. The problem was not the anger or the envy or the jealousy or the pride. That's why, you know, I always oppose you when you suggest piecemeal answers to problems of self image or problems of impatience. You're playing with it. You're just playing with it. I, for years, tried that, praying down this thing and praying down that thing. It would pop up again. And, I knew that it was something that at the very "heads of Hydra," that they kept growing again after I prayed them down.

So, I saw that it wasn't the individual attitudes or motives even that were the problem. And, the Bible says, you know, that the problem is that in Romans 8:7, "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to God's law neither indeed can it be." And, I asked the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, will you show me how all these things that I see in my life are tied up to this flesh, this old self that is inside me?" Because I knew enough to realize that the problem was a unitary evil. It was a whole attitude in me of wanting to be God, wanting to have my own way, wanting to defend myself, putting myself first. That was why I found it so hard to obey God because I was always trying to find out how to obey him and how to get my own way at the same time. And, I asked the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, will you show me how real Romans 8:7 is in my life?"

The Holy Spirit began to show me that I was dealing with something that I could not control. That this mind of the flesh was, indeed, enmity against God and it was not subject to God's law, neither, indeed, could it ever be subject to God's law. And, then I saw what I had been so often doing. I was

trying to control this. I was trying to tame it. I was in some way trying to make it better or patch it over. And, I never really did face, until that moment, that this was something that I could do nothing about and, unless God had done something about it, I was lost eternally.

And, then, the third step for me was seeing that God had done something about it. That this was the whole meaning of Jesus' death on Calvary. That that's what Romans 6:6 means, our old self was crucified with Christ so that we might be freed from sin. And, I saw that even though I couldn't understand fully how God could crucify me ahead even of my own birth. And, I saw later how it's possible because time is so non-existent and eternity is one great eternal moment. But, at that time, I couldn't see that but I believed it, that my old self was crucified with Jesus. And that God had taken all this attitude in me that was so rotten and so filled with enmity against him and had destroyed it in Jesus. And, I got to that point.

And, then, the fourth step for me was Romans 6:11. And, it was easily the hardest one. Romans 6:11 says, "Reckon ye therefore yourself dead indeed unto sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Now, loved ones, that involved two steps in my life. One step that involved being willing to say "no" to myself and to put no confidence in myself and to regard myself as something that had to be destroyed utterly and completely and recreated by the power of the Holy Spirit. And, I asked the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, I believe I am willing to reckon myself dead but is there any way in which I am not?"

He, of course, pointed out to me the inner meaning, I didn't know the Greek word at that time, but he pointed to the inner meaning of reckon. That it was to treat yourself as really dead in Jesus and suddenly I saw, 'really dead in Jesus'. Then my wife is no longer my wife and she's no longer mine to treat as I want. She belongs to God. And, then my body, if I am dead with Jesus, this is no longer my body. I've no longer a right to say, "Rest a little more." or, to say, "Enjoy yourself a little more". I've no longer the right to deal with this body as I choose.

And, then I saw the whole business of the reputation. And, that it was no longer my reputation. But I was to be willing to see myself, Ernest O'Neill, on a grave stone and see myself as ending my life at that moment. And, regarding myself as dead and my life finished with that moment. No longer any right to expect anything more from life. That's what dying with Jesus meant.

Then I saw, in practical terms, it meant being willing therefore for anybody to treat you whatever way they wanted. And, of course, my whole being rebelled against that. I was used to defending myself and striking back. But, I saw that if I was going to be willing to die with Jesus, it meant being willing to be silent as he was silent and to say nothing. And, then it meant being willing to obey immediately, the moment the Holy Spirit spoke.

And, loved ones, I would say it took maybe those next six or seven months, but particularly the last three months of that time. And, then, on a Saturday morning, I knew that faith was not the problem. Now, I don't know if you know that, but faith isn't the problem. The fullness of the Holy Spirit, the crucifixion of Christ, the death to self, whatever way you want to call it, wherever you want to call it, a clean heart, comes by faith but faith isn't the problem. Faith springs up in a willing heart.

It's the gift of God to anybody who is willing to be crucified with Jesus and I knew that. I knew that once I came to the place where I was willing to say "no" to self, the positive side which is, of course, the whole resurrection side, it would take care of itself. The Holy Spirit would pour in its fullness. And, so I edged closer and closer and, like many of you, came to many times when I

felt, yes, I'm willing, Lord, I'm willing to be crucified with Christ.

Now, loved ones, this is why I try to encourage you to be very honest with yourselves. I was glad for the clear signs of anger or irritability or impatience. I was glad of those. Because those showed me that I was only bluffing. Those showed me that I was not really through. And, that's why I would encourage you, be glad of God's clear symptoms. Be glad that he shows you that you're still playing mental games. And, loved ones, I don't know how long -- I don't know what labyrinth of your mind the Holy Spirit has to take you around. I know I had invented and created many labyrinths over those 13 years.

But, the Holy Spirit took me through all the play acting and the pretending to the point where I saw, unless the Holy Spirit takes me onto that Cross, I cannot go. I cannot go. And, there are deeper places that I can't even describe in words where the Holy Spirit showed me that self cannot do this. Only I can. And, I can only do it if you want it with all your heart and that was so difficult, you know, to want it with all your heart, to want to be crucified, to want to be wiped out, if it were for Jesus' glory.

And, then, loved ones, I am as surprised at this as anybody in this hall and probably more surprised than most of you because I have not sat under this kind of preaching at all. I have come from liberal background. But, I have this on a book. On the third of October, 1964, in my own parsonage in North Minneapolis in the morning, I came to the place where the Holy Spirit said, "Would you be willing to be nothing for me?" To be a zero, to be a failure, if it's for Jesus' glory. And, at last, deep, deep down in a part of my being that I don't know how the Holy Spirit goes to, I said "Yes". There was no question that I knew that he had brought me to the ground of my heart and that I was, at last, honest with God. I quietly knew the Holy Spirit had filled me. I didn't speak in tongues, I spoke in tongues maybe a year and a half later, but the Holy Spirit quietly came in and I was filled at last with cleanness.

Now, all of us testify to different things. But, cleanness was what I felt at last. Cleanness inside. And, it was something I never thought I'd feel. And, it was a sense of purity and cleanness that I'd never experienced in my life. I had a divorce problem with one of the husbands, the couples in the church and the Holy Spirit said phone that lady. Well, any of you who are involved at all in marriage counseling know that you're not anxious to get into that, if you can avoid it. And, my usual attitude to the Holy Spirit was, well, wait until tomorrow night and then I'll do it.

But, instant obedience was what the Holy Spirit had worked in me. And, I lifted the phone and phoned. The next morning I got a letter from a contemporary in my seminary who was now teaching psychology in Garrett Institute in Chicago. And when I received the letter from him, he had gone the academic route, which was the way I wanted to go. And, every time I received a letter, I felt discontented with myself and I felt an old envy for him and felt, oh, I wish I had gone that way. The letter came; I opened it, no envy. And, that was the way it was from that day to this.

Loved ones, it was a changed life. It was not a battle against anger, a battle against envy or pride. It was a cleaning out of those things. A cleaning out deep, deep down. Oh, trouble only began then because I started to try to preach this. Now, I was a very, I think, comforting preacher before. I tried to talk people around to see that their sin was ignorance and not really self-will. If they had more knowledge, then they would come to know God.

Then, I started to preach real gospel. And, of course, the Methodist Church that I was in did not

like that and they rose against me. I, as a kind of quiet sort of liberal, of course, was amazed. I'd never seen people rise against someone preaching the gospel before. So, in a way, the external life only became rough and chaotic at that time. Then another two years, I think, I passed in the Methodist Church in that kind of situation. And, then, withdrew from the Methodist Church and didn't really know what I was going to do but, throughout all of those years, from the third of October, 1964, to this night, nothing but peace and heart. Nothing but absolute peace and complete faith and complete confidence that God was in charge.

And, I went through all kinds of ridiculous things. Found myself uncertain whether I would be able even to earn a living here in the States because I didn't know if they'd accept my teaching certificate. And I sensed we should withdraw from the Methodist Church, which we did, and I said to my wife, "Love, you should go to London because at least you can earn money there in dentistry," and she went to London and I was here. I remember being in a little apartment in North Minneapolis with our cardboard boxes around us with our few possessions and yet I had absolute peace and absolute confidence. I did not know really where the next step would lead.

Then, for 3½ years, I had great enjoyment in teaching in Benilde High School, teaching English, in the Christian Brothers' High School. And, just had a great time in Jesus and I remember saying to my wife once, "Love, I don't think maybe I'll ever preach again," and yet peace, great peace, great peace of the thought of maybe nobody knowing me but my wife. And, going to my death in that situation, and great peace all the time. And, great victory with him.

And, then, after 3½ years, in Benilde High School, I began to preach during the same time in Bethany Presbyterian on campus. And, that's perhaps about 10 years ago now and that's where the Holy Spirit began to move among some of you who are here tonight and I shared this truth that God had shown me. Of course, the Spirit began to move among us and then, you remember, about 7 years ago, we started Campus Church.

But, loved ones, you can see there have been many more things that have followed in my life and there has been a great deal more growing that has taken place. And, those of you who are in Fish business are very well aware that I have made mistakes as all of us have made mistakes. But, I know this at last, that I may make a mistake in dealing with some other person but there is none of the bitterness or the pride or the anger that used to be in my heart.

And, it is an eternal life and I would have to say that this life that God has given me over the past 14, 15 years has been glory. I would gladly die tonight and be gloriously happy but the strange thing is I would gladly have died back there in '64 and been happy.

Loved ones, I can only say to you that this is life and life eternal. And, this is what Jesus died to give us. The defeated Christian life and the controlled surrender and the half crucified life is not what Jesus has for us. That's why, of course, I urge you so strongly to settle for nothing less.

And, any of you who sit there and would watch me and think, the guy was born like that -- I was a miserable creature and, a petty little soul. And, a worried, anxious little squirrel. What I am now, the Holy Spirit has done and will continue to do, I believe, as long as I stay on that dear Cross with Jesus. That's why, if he did it with me who was a manipulating, clever Jacob, he certainly will do it with you. He can do it with anyone and if you offer me any personality trait of yours, I'll show you what I had. I had it all worked out. You see, my dad was a worrier, he was.

And, I'm a worrier. I had it worked out so that I was absolutely convinced that even though the Holy Spirit may do things for other people, he could not do them in me. Loved ones, he can do the same in you and I'd ask you to settle for nothing less.

And, I don't know that I have the little book, oh, I have. I'd urge you, don't read a lot. This book is terrible. It's a wretched little thing. But, it gives four steps and it outlines the four steps that the Holy Spirit led me through. And, I'd urge you, if you've never read it, it's called Free to Live, and it's down in the bookshop. Don't get lost in all kinds of books. One of the things that I tried to do was talk my way into this. Or, get somebody to talk me into it. Or, get somebody to pray with me into it. And, it was only when at last I gave up the books and help from other people and looked to the Holy Spirit alone that he was able to bring me through. So, I would say get that and it'll show you the steps or give you some idea of how to begin praying and then go after God and go after him until you find him.

And if you say to me, "I've been seeking for so long." I'd say, "Yeah, okay, but there's nothing else worth entering into. This is the only thing worth entering into so it doesn't matter how long it takes you." When you set your heart after God, God will be fine by you. And, it is not simple. Pascal [French Christian philosopher, 1623 - 1662] is right. Some people say, "I have sought the Lord when they've talked with a priest for an hour or they've read a book, a few pages of a book." And, he says, "No, God is a hidden God and he will only be found by those who seek him with all their hearts." And, I'd urge you to seek with all your heart and the Holy Spirit will come through to you.

Numbers of you say to me, "Brother, I've been at this for how long." Loved ones, it doesn't matter how long. You've to seek to the end of your hope of doing something about it yourself. It's a bit like old Watchman Nee's example that he gives. He said, "we were swimming at the beach and there was one fellow in trouble. Only one of the ones on the beach was a good swimmer and we looked at this guy on the beach expecting him to tear in after the boy who was in trouble. And, the fellow just sat there and waited. And Nee was beginning to get impatient with him and was just about to tell him to go. And the drowning fellow was thrashing and thrashing madly at the beginning, then gradually less and less. Then, the fellow dived in and saved him. And, he said, if I'd gone before he had got to the point of helplessness himself, he would have taken us both down. And, it's like that. You need to strive to the end of your own ability to do anything about it. And, then, the Holy Spirit is able to bring you through. But, loved ones, he will.

I think of numbers of you here who are seeking and there's nothing else worth going for. Nothing. And, never, never, never give up until the Holy Spirit brings you through because there is a place of quiet rest near to the heart of God; a place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God. I praise God that I have found it and I want to stay with it as the Holy Spirit enables me. I pray that you will come into it because I know this is what Jesus wants for you, it's what you need and it's what the world needs.

The world is tired of tired Christians. Tired of tired saints. The world wants to see shining princes and princesses who are victorious in Jesus and that's what God wants for you.

Let us pray.

Dear Father, I would personally thank you again for the miracle that you did in me in '64. I thank you, Lord, that that's the miracle that you offer to each one of us here tonight. Father, that it is

possible to live free from sin. It is possible to live above that willful rebellion. Lord, we'll always make mistakes of judgment. We'll always offend people without meaning to but we thank you that we can be free from knowing disobedience to your will.

Father, we can be blameless in your sight. We'll never be blameless in men's' sight but we can be blameless in your sight. We can come to the place where we, at last, have a clean conscience. Not only sprinkled clean by the blood of Jesus but clean because our will is pure and simple.

Oh, Father, I would pray for my brothers and sisters here tonight. I would pray that You, Holy Spirit, would drag them right through to that dear place on the Cross with Jesus and then into his magnificent resurrection and his ascension to the right hand of the Father, far above all rule and authority and dominion and power. Above every name that is named, not only in this age but in that which is to come. Thank you, Lord.

Now, the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with each one of us, now and evermore. Amen.