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THE OLD-TIME RELIGION

Dr. W. A. Criswell

[Acts 8:8](#)

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[Dr. Homer Lindsay, Jr.]

And down through the years, Dr. Criswell always took time to write me a little note, encourage me, and I am so thankful that we are able to have him tonight. My dear dad is in glory with Jesus, and as I saw Dr. Criswell come in and sit down my heart just sort of gripped, and it was just like my dad being here. And this is a very, very precious night for me, and I believe it's going to be a precious night for all of us. [applause]

[Dr. W. A. Criswell]

All right. All right. Thank you. Bless you son, you dear boy. Oh dear! Thank you. Thank you. Oh dear! Thank you. Thank you. I have never been more intimidated in all of my life than I have been tonight. Our church, the First Baptist in Dallas, is supposed to be the largest of our Southern Baptist congregations, but it is nothing like this. Our church looks like a little mission compared to this great congregation.

I loved Dr. Lindsay, this boy's father. I have preached many times in the old church—held a revival meeting there. I look upon this boy as one of my own, and I am so grateful to God that he has been carrying on and out the marvelous ministry of his father and his sainted mother [applause].

Dr. Vines has been an untold help in continuing that glorious ministry of Dr. Lindsay. So he wrote me a note, and he said, "Some time ago I heard you preach a sermon on 'This I Know,' and I thought you might preach it when you come to our conference in February." Well, I took it to heart, and I thought and prayed, but the more I did, the more that subject of "**The Old-Time Religion**" came into my soul. This coming year I will be ninety years of age, ninety years of age [applause]. And as I thought through the wonderful fellowship of these godly men and the attendance from all over America, I thought I would just go back through those years and speak of "The Old-Time Religion."

And our background text will be in the eighth chapter of the Book of Acts that describes the ministry of Philip, who left Jerusalem and went down to Samaria and preached the Gospel unto them. "And with one accord they gave heed to what Philip had to say . . . and there was great joy in that city." Great joy in that city: The Old-Time Religion.

When I was growing up, I could buy a hamburger for a nickel. When I was growing up, I could buy a lavish dinner for twenty-five cents. When I was growing up, I could buy a big sack of popcorn for five cents. When I was growing up, I never paid more than one dollar for a tie. When I was growing up, I never paid more than nineteen dollars for a suit. When I was growing up, I never paid more than five dollars for a pair of shoes. As I began my ministry as a pastor and a preacher when I was seventeen, I bought a Chevrolet car, a new Chevrolet, and I paid three hundred dollars for it. When I bought a gallon of gasoline, I paid nine cents.

And the whole world out there before me was so different from what it is now. I was grown before I ever saw anybody divorced. I never saw the front door of a house locked. I never knew what it was to think of an athletic contest on the Lord's day, on Sunday. If I were asked, "On what day of the week would you suppose the Super Bowl game will be played?" I would say, "It will be played on Sunday." It's a different world in which we live now.

And as I go back into those days, and I think of the church, I never saw a church that didn't have a pot-bellied stove. And on this side of the river, the fire would be kindled with wood. Way out there in the Northwest where I was fetched up, it was a fire made with coal. And when you went to church, all of the men, it seemed to me, chewed tobacco. And when they were about to drown in ambeer, they would go to the stove, lift up the lid, and put out the fire.

A pastor of real thought bought some cuspidors and after a while took them out. And one of those ambeer specialists went to the pastor and said, "I miss the cuspidors." And he replied, "That's why we have taken 'em out, because you missed them."

Every one of those churches had a conference on Saturday afternoon once a month. And always, as you have in your church, there is somebody there who is in the kickative case and in the disapproving mood. So one of the men stood up in the conference and said, "I make a motion we buy a chandelier." And that kickative member stood up and said, "I'm agin' it. For one thing, we don't have anybody to play it. For another thing, I don't want to think of buying something the name of which I can't spell, and what this church needs is more light!"

Another fellow stood up and said, "I make a motion we build a fence around the cemetery." And that kickative member stood up and turned to him and said, "Do you know anybody on the outside that wants in, and do you know anybody on the inside that can get out? Then why build a fence around the cemetery?"

The services in that old-time church were everlastingly interesting and moving. They were filled with people who shouted. In the little town in which I was fetched up—three hundred citizens—when the Methodists would have a revival meeting, I have seen them pour out of the church and shout all over the little town. Can you imagine a Methodist church like that today? And when I preached as a boy, world without end did members stand up and shout the praises of God.

I was invited to hold a meeting in a county seat town, and when I got through preaching that morning, the pastor stood up to receive those who had responded. And as he stood up, down the aisle came a fine-looking woman. She was the wife of a leading citizen of the county. She came forward and stood before two young men on the front row. She put her hand on top of one of the boys and said, "Today I prayed God would give me one of my boys." She put her hand on the other boy and said, "But God has been better to me than my prayers. He has given me both of my boys." And up and down the aisle and across and back again, she began to shout the praises of God, "Oh, glory to God! The Lord has given me both of my boys. Praise His name forever!" That's the kind of religion I grew up in as a boy.

In the passing of the years, for example, in our church in Dallas, at the end of the ministry of Dr. Truett, a woman in the congregation began to shout. His brother-in-law, Dr. Oscar Marchman, ran over to her and was escorting her out. And Dr. Truett raised his hand and said, "There, there, Oscar, leave her alone. She's just happy in the Lord." O God, what a day, what a day!

I am reminded of a young fellow that happened to attend a liturgical church, and the preacher way up there in the pulpit said something good about Jesus, and he said, "Amen!" And the preacher lost his place. As the time continued, he said something else good about Jesus, and that young fellow said, "Praise the Lord!" And that time he really forgot his whole message.

So the usher came to him and patted him on the shoulder and said, "Shut up! Don't you see

you're bothering our preacher?"

And he replied, "But I am just praising the Lord."

And the usher said, "But you can't praise the Lord here."

And the young fellow replied, "But I got religion!"

And the usher said, "Well, you did not get it here. Shut up!" Shut up—oh dear! Oh dear! How the days have changed in the years and the years of my life.

So way back yonder, the preacher came from our county-seat town to hold revival in our little village, and he stayed in our home. Every night mother would give him a glass of fresh-churned buttermilk. And as he sat, he would talk to me about Jesus. Upon a weekday of the revival, I asked mother, "Mother, could I be dismissed from school and attend the service?"

"Oh yes," she said.

So I went to the church, the little white crackerbox of a church house. And I happened to be seated back of my sainted mother. When the invitation was given, she turned to me and was crying with many tears, and said to me, "Son, today would you give your heart to the Lord Jesus? Would you take Him as your Savior?"

I said, "Oh, mother, yes."

And with many tears I stepped into the aisle—could hardly see the preacher for crying. Upon my confession of faith, I was baptized and became a member of our blessed Baptist communion.

As I said, when I was about seventeen years of age, I began to preach and to pastor my little country church. It was named Pulltight, and it didn't have a church house. They met in a schoolhouse. But they had a campground and a tabernacle. And on the fourth Friday before July, when the crops were laid by, the people from the ends of the earth came there to attend that tabernacle revival and the camp on the ground. We had a prayer meeting before the service. The women met in the tabernacle, and the men met in a grove, a grove prayer meeting.

I never, in all of my life, heard such testimonies as those men gave in that grove prayer meeting. One would say, "I was plowing with a pair of mules, and the Lord sent a fireball from heaven and struck me to the ground. And how long I lay there I don't remember, but when I came to" Then he described how the mules looked, how the plow looked, how the field looked, all the things that had come into his heart.

Again one of the men stood up and in his testimony spoke of an angel God sent from heaven to tell him the way of salvation. And sweet people, I came to the conclusion that I was not saved. I had never seen a ball of fire. I had never seen an angel who instructed me in the way of the Lord. And you won't believe this. For a long, long, long time, I would prepare my sermons to be delivered to the little congregation, then I would cry to God, "O God, help me! Please God, send a sign from heaven, an angel or a ball of fire, that I may know that I am converted, that I've been saved, my name in the book of life."

And a miracle happened. God looked down from glory and saw me in my agony, and I had an experience I could hardly ever describe. I dreamed that the saints of God were marching in, and I assayed to join their number. And when I got to the pearly gates, the Lord stopped me and said, "By what prerogative do you enter My beautiful city and walk on My golden streets?"

And I said to Him, "Dear God, I know I'm saved. I know I'm saved. I saw a ball of fire fall down from heaven and strike me to the land.

And Satan there laughed, "Hah, hah, hah, hah! He saw a ball of fire fall from heaven. I sent that ball of fire just to deceive him, just to fool him." And he drags me down to perdition and damnation and hell. What could I say? What could I say?

Or the great throng is marching into the New Jerusalem, and I assay to join their number and the Lord stops me, and He says, “By what prerogative, by what right, do you enter My beautiful city and walk on My golden streets?”

And I reply, “O God, I’ve been saved. I know I’ve been saved. I saw an angel from heaven come down to instruct me in the way of life.”

And Satan, standing there, laughs, “Hah, hah, hah! He saw an angel. I transformed myself into an angel of light just to deceive him.” And he seizes me and drags me down to perdition and damnation and hell. What could I say?

Then God spoke to me. When I assay to enter that beautiful city, and the Lord asks me, “By what prerogative and by what right do you pass through My pearly gates and walk on My golden streets?” and I say to him, “Lord, when I was about ten years of age, my sainted mother, with many tears, asked me to take You as my Savior. And Lord Jesus, that day I gave my heart to Thee. And Lord Jesus, I’m just depending upon You to keep Your Word that You’ll never leave me or forsake me.” [applause] O God!

And I dare Satan to lie or to scoff. Sweet people, my salvation is not a matter between me and him. My salvation is a matter between me and Jesus, and He will never let me down. [applause]

Ah! Sing with me:

It’s the old-time religion.

It’s the old-time religion.

It’s the old time religion,

And it’s good enough for me.

May I take, before I am seated, may I take one more leaf out of my life? When I was growing up, I never saw or heard a preacher who doubted that Holy Word, [applause] never in my life, never in my life, never ever.

So, as time went on, I was introduced to another world. Here is a little description of it. There were two mischievous boys who got a hold of the preacher’s Bible and glued some of the pages together. And the preacher stood up to deliver his sermon, and he read his text, “And in those days, Noah took unto himself a wife.” And he turned what he thought was one page and continued to read, “And she was . . . fifteen cubits broad,” [applause] “thirty-five cubits long, made out of gopher wood, and daubed on the inside with pitch.” [applause]

He held up the Book and said, “My brothers and sisters, that’s the first time I’ve ever read that in the Word of God, but if the Word of God says it, I believe it!” [applause] Amen . . . amen, amen. “Just goes to show,” he said, “we am wonderfully and fearfully made.”

So I grew up believing every word of this Book is inspired, inerrant, and infallible. Amen. Amen.

So a young fellow in Dad’s barbership—my father was an uneducated cowpoke, never went to school, learned to read and was an avid reader. But when the barbed-wire fence was invented, a great mass of those cowboys lost their jobs, and that included my father. So he learned to cut hair, and he cut those cowboys’ hair. And on a line camp of the X.I.T. Ranch, “Ten in Texas,” ten big counties up there in the Northwest, in a line camp, he had a little shop. And on Saturday afternoon I would sit down in that shop and listen to the stories of those cowboys.

You know, it’s a funny thing to me. Out of all, all, all of the westerns that you see on television, I have never yet seen one that followed a beautiful Christian story, and I heard them world without

end. And here's one of them.

A young cowpoke came back from the range to get a fresh mount. He came to the corral. He picked out a horse. He put a rope around its neck. He bridled it, he saddled it, he mounted it, and he rode out from the pen. But the pony had not been wholly broken, and it began to buck and to pitch and to sidestep. And you never threw—you never threw a real cowboy. He might fall for some other reason, but you'd never pitch him off of a mount. And what happened that day, as the pony began to pitch and to sidestep, the horse lost its footing and fell back over on the cowboy and crushed him. The pony got up and ran away, but the cowboy was hurt internally and bleeding at his mouth.

Jake, the cook in the camp, had watched what had happened. And he ran over there to the lad, and tenderly picked him up, brought him into the camp, and put him on a cot. But what could a cook do for a boy that was crushed internally, and blood pouring from his mouth?

And as the boy's life ebbed away, he said to the cook, "Jake, you know that big black Book that the boss man is always readin' to us. Jake, get that Book and bring it to me." Jake went to the chuck wagon and dug around through the personal effects of the boss man and found the Bible, brought it to the lad. And the boy said, "Jake, can you find [John 3:16](#)?" [Someone shouts, "The Word of God!"] Amen. And Jake went through the Bible and found the Gospel of John, went through John, chapter 3, went down the verses to 16. And the boy said, "Jake, read verse that to me.

And the cook read [John 3:16](#): "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And the boy said, "Jake, take that Bible and put it on my chest just so. Now, Jake, take my finger and put it on that verse. And when the boss man comes in the evening, you tell him that I died with my finger on [John 3:16](#)."

One glad smile of pleasure
 O'er the cowboy's face was spread.
 One dark convulsive shadow,
 And the tall young lad was dead.
 Far from his home and family
 They laid him down to rest
 With a saddle for a pillow
 And that Bible on his chest.

I have announced from the pulpit that when I die, I want them to take my Bible and put it on my chest. And when the people pass by to see me for the last time, I want them to see me with a Bible in my hand. O God, O God [applause], O God, O God, O God!

Sing it with me:

Give me that old-time religion.
 Give me that old-time religion.
 Give me that old-time religion.
 It's good enough for me.

It was good for Paul and Silas.
 It was good for Paul and Silas.

It was good for Paul and Silas,
And it's good enough for me.

It will do when I am dying.
It will do when I am dying.
It will do when I am dying,
And it's good enough for me.

It will take us all to heaven.
It will take us all to heaven.
It will take us all to heaven,
And it's good enough for me.

Sweet people, would you stand and sing it one more time. And this time raise your hand to heaven. Sing it now:

Give me that old-time religion.
Give me that old-time religion.
Give me that old-time religion.
It's good enough for me.

It will take us all to heaven.
It will take us all to heaven.
It will take us all to heaven.
It's good enough for me.

Give me that old-time religion.
Give me that old-time religion.
Give me that old-time religion.
It's good enough for me.

Precious, I'll see you here, there, or in the air. I'll meet you at the feet of our precious Jesus before the throne of God. Amen, and God keep you. You may be seated. [applause]. Amen. Amen. [applause]