

Just For Openers January-December 2026 1

A Just For Openers Public Service: The Filth & Evils of 1915 Saloons by Don Thornton

Evangelist Billy Sunday, preaching at a Patterson, New Jersey tabernacle on May 2, 1915, shouted out that “saloons are nothing but a recruiting office for hell” and predicted that within 10 years Prohibition would shut them down.

“This great country of ours will have a wave of prosperity that will delight everybody when it goes dry,” Sunday was quoted as saying in an article in the *Newark Star-Ledger*. “This cry of the liquor interests that if the saloons are closed up it will be followed by a business panic is all tommyrot. They don’t do anything for us now but ruin our young men and fill the jails and insane asylums and give work to the hangman and electric chair.”



William Ashley Sunday, 1862-1935, (yes, his name really was Billy Sunday) was considered the nation’s most influential preacher in the early 20th Century, going after saloons and shouting out his support for Prohibition. He was a professional baseball player who left the Philadelphia Phillies in 1890 after eight years in the National League and converting to evangelical Christianity.

Sunday’s prediction that “within 10 years you’ll not see a licensed saloon in America” came true. Prohibition went into effect five years later in 1920, prohibiting the production, importation, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages.

Its impact, before it was repealed in 1933, was staggering. Bootleggers, speakeasies and organized crime mobsters emerged. There also was corruption in law enforcement and local governments. And in the JFO world, it had repercussions for then and future collectors as the alcohol beverage branding of church keys and bottle openers dribbled down, although there was an increase in soda branding.



Just For Openers January-December 2026 2

A Just For Openers Public Service: The Filth & Evils of 1915 Saloons by Don Thornton

The May 3, 1915 *Star-Ledger* article had a sidebar with Billy Sunday's rants against saloons. As a JFO public service, it is reproduced here, suitable for framing.

SOME OF THE THINGS SUNDAY THINKS ABOUT THE SALOONS

- The man who runs a saloon is as bad as, if not worse, than a thief or murderer.
- You'll always find the devil and saloon keeper pulling on the same rope.
- The saloon will damn and rot anything it can touch.
- The saloon is the sum of all villainy.
- If the church is not against the saloon it will go to hell.
- Seventy-five per cent of **insane** people come from intemperance.
- Personal liberty murdered Abraham Lincoln.
- There isn't a church in the country that wouldn't have an endowment fund if everybody gave a tenth of what he has.
- Love is not blind. Love has eagle eyes.
- God turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt and the cows of Sodom have been licking her ever since.
- What America needs is a tidal wave of old-time religion.
- There are no men that have a monopoly on God but God has a monopoly on some men.
- The saloon is a murder mill and poison factory.
- The saloon is going to be knocked into hell by the man with the dinner bucket.
- Every fifth home has got to furnish a boy to be a drunkard.
- There was a jubilee in hell when lager beer was discovered.
- A man that goes into a saloon gets a free pass to hell when he dies.
- You might as well try to regulate a powder mill in hell as regulate a saloon by a high license.
- Within ten years you'll not see a licensed saloon in America.
- The saloon is the world's anarchist.
- If you want to enlist the prayers of Jesus in your behalf, keep His commandments.
- This is the last dispensation that God Almighty will speak to this old world.
- If culture stands between you and Jesus Christ then to hell with your culture.
- The whiskey business has not a leg to stand on.
- Whiskey is all right in its place, but its place is in hell just as soon as you can get it there.
- There is no place outside the brothel where the atmosphere is more saturated with filth than the saloon.

***Just For Openers* January-December 2026 3**

A Just For Openers Public Service: The Filth & Evils of 1915 Saloons by Don Thornton

