

Challenge of Every Christian - Part 1

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the necessity of brokenness and repentance for true transformation and revival in the Christian life.

Duration: 44:42

Scripture: Psalm 30:2, Psalm 51:10, Isaiah 44:3, Jeremiah 2:19, Matthew 28:19-20, Romans 7:18, Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Holy Spirit", "Church Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of revival in the church. He highlights the need for the Holy Spirit to bring life and vitality to the church and its ministries. The preacher encourages the audience to not be complacent or smug, but to have a hunger for God and His presence. He references Isaiah 44:3, where God promises to pour water on the thirsty and floods on the dry ground, symbolizing His promise of revival. The preacher concludes by urging the audience to seek revival now, rather than waiting for it to happen in their own churches.

Transcript

Ah, but you remember, when he was a comparative youth of about seventy, and, uh, that was quite youthful at the time, he had a good way to go. You remember how he left his home, and how he met God, and God promised him everything, and Jacob made his vow, and I would say he was converted, and for twenty-two years he went on, and oh, what a mess he made of it! Formed a business partnership, it was Jacob, Jacob Laban & Co, Inc., and he was doomed to fail from the beginning. And they scindled each other, cheated each other, and oh my, what a time they had! Everything went wrong.

Married the wrong woman, he did, Jacob did, that's God anyway. And there he was, as a believer in God, as a man who'd met God, and for twenty-two years he was on an absolute treadmill, going down the hill. Say, can a Christian live like that? Yes, he can.

How do you know? Because I did. Not for twenty-two years, but for ten. You can be indwelt by the Spirit, but mastered by the flesh.

And that's been my experience for years. Ruined the best years of my life, from twenty to thirty, by living like that. Oh, you can't be, yes, you can be a Christian and live like that.

How do I know I was a Christian? Because I was miserable. Hmm. Before I was a Christian, been thoroughly happy, drinking, dancing, gambling, going to shows, everything, thrilling.

But now I was a Christian, I hate it, but I wasn't prepared to give it up, because the price of discipleship was too great to pay. And here's Jacob, just going to pop, going to pieces. Ah, but when a Christian starts living like that, I tell you, my friends, God lets the reins out, but he holds them in his hand.

He lets his servant out on a long lead, a long lead, and he watched him, watched him. And there came a time when he said, now Jacob, it's got to stop. And he began to pull in the reins, pull in the lead, and said, get back home.

And Jacob went back home, and he met God again at Peniel, and he wrestled with him all through the night. And God said, let me go for the day break. And Jacob said, I won't let you go unless I bless you, till you bless me.

Lord, I can't go on living like this. I've been defeated for 22 years. I can't be a hypocrite any longer.

Oh, God, oh, I won't let you go, except you bless me. And God said to him, what's your name? What's your name? Do you think he didn't know? He'd been watching him for 22 years, play the fool, watching him go deep into sin, watching him fail. As a man, he'd promised everything to him.

Jacob was out of his will altogether, and watched him. What's your name? Say. God wasn't asking him for information.

He was asking him for compassion. And there came a moment, and if I know anything about Jacob's experience, as I think I do, that he looked up into the face of God and said with a tear-stained eye, sorry, Lord, but after 22 years of knowing you, it's still Jacob. What's your name? Cheat, deceiver, supplanter, defeated, worldly, in bondage, beaten, battled, almost giving up, can't stay with it, tough, no testimony, no radiance, no joy, no blessing.

What's your name? He doesn't want your information. He knows all about you, bless you. And he doesn't condemn, but he holds up some nail-pierced hands to you today, and he wants to just take you.

And he wants for somebody here that this morning should mark the end of wrestling with God, and the beginning of nestling into the heart of Jesus. What's your name? Jacob. Friend, you would think I wish you ill, but I wish you well when I say that I want this morning to be for somebody here, a morning when you just feel that you haven't anything left to cling to except God, that you're absolutely beaten from all your self-confidence, and you're brought to the place of self-disgust and self-abandonment, and you hate yourself.

And then gleaming through that dark moment, you see the face of Jesus. Just four years ago, I was flat on my back with cerebral hemorrhage. Couldn't speak, couldn't walk.

My ministry apparently was finished. Preachers often say from a pulpit, we should never ask why, only what. Lesson about to learn.

I asked why. Lord, why is it taking me out of a busy church? Why is it when this church apparently is getting blessed, and we're full, why should I have to go through this? Why? And at that time, there came to me such thoughts for which I dare not speak, of which I feel intensely ashamed. Impurity, bad language,

low boiling point.

My wife and family all suffered from having a husband and a father who would revert it to type. I had no defenses. My prayer wasn't anything.

My Bible meant nothing. And in sheer desperation, I said one day, oh God, get me out of this. Get me to heaven right away.

Don't let them remember me as a cabbage. Man lives like this. Just take me right home.

It seemed to me that the Lord Jesus drew very near and said, you've got this all wrong, you know. The devil hasn't anything to do with it. I did this to you.

I had to do it. I had to do it. To make you see and really believe that this is the kind of man you are, with all your thoughts and all your impurity.

And you'll never be any different. And it's what you'll always be like, apart from the grace of God. I looked up my sermon records when I began to preach again, because then at that morning when it seemed that he spoke to me like that, I said, thank you Lord, I understand.

And I found in my sermon records that I had preached 52 times on the text, Romans 7, 18. I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I've never dared preach on it since.

Because I knew it then as a theory, and now I know it as experience. The living letter's translation of that is this. I know that in my sinful nature is rotten through and through.

And oh brother and sister, as the Lord just took me right down the corridor of memory, and I looked back over 33 years of ministry, and I saw that I'd put work in the place of worship, and I'd lost my first love, and I saw the absolute corruption of myself. What a wonderful, wonderful moment it was to put my heart, as it were, oh just to nestle into the heart of Jesus, and to find that from that day, from sinking sands he lifted, with tender hands he lifted, from shades of night to planes of light, O praise his name, he lifted me. Do you think that any medical person here would like to come and tell me that he knows I've had a stroke? God has done a miracle.

But he didn't do it in a flash, he didn't do it by instant healing, he did it by putting me right down on my back, and I couldn't be lower, and teaching me lessons, then, oh I don't profess that I have attained. In fact, I've been amazed at the things I still have to learn, deeper and deeper, for the making of a man of God never finishes, until we get to heaven. But I'm telling you, if you want revival, you've got to come from being Jacob into Israel, and that means going through brokenness.

My time has long since gone, Jacob, and what's it going to take to break you? I'm not saying that you have to come my way, no, but I'm saying that if you want revival somewhere in your life, and you know about it, you know about it right now, there's a price to pay. Thy name shall be no more Jacob, but Israel. It didn't all happen in a second, but the Israelite prevailed, and triumph, and it happened in a second.

But I'm telling you that God may put you this morning on a new track from which you'll never go back, until that day when he presents you as Jeshurun, the man who is mature, the righteous one, the man who has been made like Christ. John Wesley once prayed, Lord, cure me of my intermittent piety. Make my religion to be my regular diet, not medicine to be taken as necessary.

Lord, don't let me go on another moment in any sin of which I haven't thoroughly repented. I will pour water upon him that's thirsty, and floods upon dry ground, my spirit upon thy seed, thy children, and my blessing upon thy offspring. What a promise for us who are mums and dads right now.

And you can have revival now, at this moment, if in your mind you'll draw a circle where you sit, and put everything of yourself in that circle, and say, Lord, right now, I'm willing, any place, any time, any cost, revise me, let's pray. Which I shall never forget. You probably, many of you have seen it.

It is entitled, Moments with Lincoln. And you sit in a kind of theater, and there Lincoln, an effigy of him, sits on his presidential chair. And suddenly, with remarkable lifelikeness, he stands up erect, and he speaks with amazing authority, and quotes from one of his presidential speeches and says, I have no fear of this great American continent ever being overcome from without.

She is surrounded on all sides by thousands of miles of ocean, but my one great fear for the United States of America is that she may yet be overcome from within. And that came to me as the voice of a prophet, for that very thing is actually happening as we sit in this conference this morning. I don't pretend to be a prophet, but it's my conviction that Russia never will need to bother about launching nuclear warfare on America.

She can just sit back while millions of America are spending billions of dollars in Vietnam, and sit back and watch a country, a great leading country, being overcome by corruption from within. My dear friend, I don't speak this lightly, but it's not often that a man has the privilege of living long enough in two countries to feel that he's part of the life of both of them. But I've lived for 12 years in North American continent and the rest of my life, however long you may think that is, in Britain.

And what is taking place in America has already taken place in Britain. The greatest missionary country in the world 50 years ago is now the greatest gambling country in the world. Britain spent between Christmas and New Year no less than the equivalent of 1,500 million dollars on alcohol in a country with only 50 million people.

15 months ago I was in the Republic of South Africa. I won't allow myself to be diverted on that subject, but may I say that that is the most misunderstood country in the world. I lived there for five months, and when I came back to London airport within half an hour I felt miserable.

For in London airport I saw about two dozen teenagers swinging away at a neat bottle of whiskey, none of them knowing what they were doing or where they were going. Never saw that once in South Africa, never once. There the churches are full, not all evangelical, but they're all full.

In Britain I'm told by my good friend Mr. Lindsay Glegg that church attendance at the beginning of the century, I wasn't here at the time believe it or not, at the beginning of the century church attendance in London was 80 percent of the population. It's now less than four percent. And Britain is a country which has lost its gold, lost its character.

It's a swing country, drug country, and in that country I live. My heart bleeds for it. Mind you, let me not paint too black a picture, for in every town, every city, you will find one church at least where there is a real work of God going on.

But nevertheless, I've lived long enough now here to watch the same trends, same things happen, and we've got to be on the lookout. For the great call of the hour to the church today is repentance to our God,

forsaking of sin, that even in this desperate moment in history, He may grant us mercy. No answer to sit piously and say the Lord's coming back and all's going to be well.

The New Testament which tells us to lift up our heads for our redemption is drawing nigh, also tells us to prepare for battle, to humble ourselves before God, to watch and pray, to declare war against sin in the church and outside the church. It's so perilously easy to join the anti-communist army, preach against communism, and you'll rake in thousands of dollars. Oh, that's wonderful.

It's terribly easy to do that and to fail to face the sin with which we've become accustomed to live in our own lives, to settle for something less than a full salvation, to go on living in defeat. And my fear for North American continent is not that we may be overwhelmed by Russian power, but by our sheer compassion and sheer sinfulness, we may be cut off from the power of God. People say to us that the great tragedy today is that the church has lost touch with this generation.

Well, there's always a law of cause and effect. My dear brother and sister, the bigger tragedy, the bigger sorrow is that we've lost touch with the Lord. And that's what I want to face this morning and these mornings with you, how to get back to reality, how to recover the sense of thrill, the sense of glow, the sense of joy, the lilt of Christian living, the thrill in it.

I've been to church after church in this last six months, and I'm telling you, I'm sick to death of traditional church programs. The crowd of youngsters who sit inside those churches, you look at them, ninety percent of them are bored stiff. They're wrongly there because they're children of Christian parents anyway, who are in the church, and they're just bored.

They don't care about it, they're not interested, they're not thrilled, they're bored. Do you mean to tell me that when they're old enough to get married, they don't have to be very old these days for that, but when they get married and have children of their own, do you mean to say they're going to bring their children into a church with which they themselves have been bored? No fear, no they won't. And they sit there on their pews on a Sunday with a Christian education program, and it's all streamlined, excellent, but I'm telling you in many cases, they're just dead to the door though.

They're not interested, they're not concerned about it. There's only one thing that can turn the tide of evil. It's the power of the Holy Spirit released through a church living in revival, nothing else.

And I believe, my friend, you don't need to wait till you go back to your church to have that revival, you can have it now, if you're in business with God. And that's what we're going to look at in this portion of Scripture this morning very briefly. The Lord deliver us from complacency and smugness, and give us an earnest hunger of heart for himself.

For in picture form here in Isaiah 44, I see God's promise of revival. The great covenant blessing of the church in verse 3, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy feet, and my blessing upon thine offspring.

You notice that the promise of the first part of that verse is explained in the second. I will pour water upon him that's thirsty, floods upon dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon thy feet, and my blessing upon thine offspring.

Here is God's promised gift of the Holy Spirit. Now you and I need to realize today that he has already been given, and has never been withdrawn, and never will be withdrawn till Christ returns. He is

permanently resident in his people.

You and I, if we're born again Christians, have God in our hearts every day, every moment of the day. And yet we are lamentably lacking in every evidence of his presence. And I tell you I don't know about your own experience, and your own heart's desire and longing today, but without him we're like a battery that hasn't got a spark to it.

We're like a sailing ship without any breeze. I was in Ethiopia just a little while ago, and at one missionary conference, the missionaries concerned may be here for all I know. They said they hoped to be.

I remember at a little town called Sotu, I went in to have a meal with the missionary builder and his wife. And I think I'm right in saying they'd just had a wedding anniversary or something of that kind, and he'd given his wife an amazing present, or they'd given each other an amazing present for a birthday. Do you know what that present was? I thought it was quite unique.

I've never heard of any husband or wife giving each other this for a birthday. It was a bathroom. Now that's a personal need of course, and it was a very wonderful bathroom.

And I thought how thrilling, because I'd been living in somewhat primitive conditions, and I was facing more to come, and I felt a great personal need of sharing in the benefits of the blessing of this bathroom. So I was just building up my hopes. It was such a lovely bathroom, obviously the work of an expert builder, and all the tiles were green, and the taps were chromium plates and everything, and it was just gorgeous.

I thought, bless the hearts, it's just what I need. When suddenly he said, you know, doesn't it look fine? He said, but then the local council hadn't turned on the water yet, and it won't be on for three or four months. So I departed, my hopes destroyed, and my condition more needy than ever.

Fancy! Fancy! They had everything except the water. My brother, my sister, that's where you and I are spiritually right now. We've got everything except the water of life.

Jesus promised, the water that I shall give you shall be in you a fountain springing up into everlasting life. He that believeth in me out of his inner man shall flow rivers. Not a drop, not a trickle, not a stream, not a river, but rivers of living water.

This beg he, says John, by way of explanation of the Holy Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. And the church today, oh don't let's talk just about the church. You and I have got everything except the water.

I spoke of missionaries in the S.I.M., and I'm reminded so much of one you know very well, the dear man of God who's gone to glory, but whose wife, I believe, is here with us, Dr. Guy Clapper. What a man! He was a member of Woody Church, and in my pastures, I shall never forget he came back, I think I'm right, three times on furlough. And every time he spoke on the same text, I have somewhat against thee in that thou hast left thy first love.

And he said, every time I come back to this continent, I find the church with more equipment but less endowments, with more machinery but less motivation, with more things but less dynamic to move men to God. And I confess to you, after I'd heard it three times, I got a bit nettled with him. What does he mean, I've lost my first love? I'm working here 16 hours a day, seven days a week.

How have I lost my first love? That was how I'd substituted work for worship, and I lost my first love for Christ in the work of the kingdom of God, and lost the unction and the power and the authority of God's Spirit in my ministry. Any missionary can do that, any preacher can do that, and he suffers from it, and I'm telling you that one day God catches him up. And I cannot conceal this from my own heart, for I've often been made to feel it to the humbling of my own spirit, to stand up and face a congregation and know that my wings have been clipped, that the one thing that matters in the preaching of the word is gone.

The thing that carries it with conviction to the hearer, unction, authority, utterance. And you know that, as Sunday school teachers, as pastors, as evangelists, as missionaries. Oh, we say the right things with sound and orthodox and all that.

We've got the right formula, we've got the right sermons, beginning with three points, beginning with the same letter introduction, conclusion. We're all right homiletically. Oh, we've got everything, everything except life, everything except power to move men to God, and power to make men bend before the Word.

That's what concerns me. And yet, yet here is God's promise. Oh, listen to it, I will, I will.

And the promise is to the man who's thirsty, to the one who's parched and dry. And if there's anyone here at Prairie Bible Institute this morning who thinks themselves well-watered and unconscious of deep need, you're the one person in the whole conference for whom God has got nothing. An unconscious of deep need, you're the one person in the whole conference for whom God has got nothing.

It's upon the life that laments its barrenness, that confesses its deadness, that's absolutely sick to death of itself, that's disgusted with itself, that loathes itself, that God prepared to come. Just a bit of dry ground, that's all. Have you ever read books of Dr. Tozer? He was such a friend to me in Chicago.

You know, I'll tell you a secret about him. If you wanted to find Dr. Tozer any morning between about April and November, you would find him at five o'clock every day on the south shore of Lake Michigan, literally stretched on his face with an open Bible in front of him. That's what made him the man he was.

And I quote from his book, *The Pursuit of God*. Everybody should have it. I hope the bookstore has got it, so that you can get it for yourself.

Listen, everything is made these days to center upon the initial act of accepting Christ. We're not expected thereafter to crave for any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found him we need no more seeking.

This is set before us as the last word in orthodoxy. The hot theology of a grand army of fragrant saints is rejected in favor of a smug interpretation of scripture that would have sounded strange to Augustine, Rutherford, or David Rayner. Oh, says Dr. Tozer, oh that the language of John Samuel Mansell was in our hearts again.

I hunger and I thirst. Jesus, my manna be, he living waters burst out of the rock for me. For still the desert lies, my thirsting soul before.

Oh, living waters rise within me evermore. Strange language these days. But listen, my friend, the test of life is appetite.

If you're hungry, you're well. If you've lost your appetite, you're sick. And here today do I speak to men and women, I believe I do, to many of you who are desperately hungry for God.

Hungry, thirsty, and nothing but Christ can satisfy you. Well, I will, I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. Dear Lord, I'm a candidate for blessing today.

Are you? Oh, I long for him. The more I know him, the more I want him. I trust that you are hungry.

For here's the promise to the hungry heart. And you notice in this chapter, not only the promise of revival, but the product of revival. There's a marvelous stamp of permanence about the work of God.

Verse four, wherever the living water comes, the grass will be sure to follow and everything begins to live. And you know, when the Holy Spirit comes, there will be life in the church, life in the ministry, life in the prayer meeting. Have you ever seen anything so deadly as the average church prayer meeting? Oh, boy.

What's the smallest beating in the week on your church calendar, your prayer meeting? Oh, it's a killing business. And it's broken many a pastor's heart, for he can turn the chairs around and decide to kneel instead of sit, and he can divide them up into groups or into ages. And it's as dead as mutton.

And he knows every time who will pray first, and what he'll pray for, and how long he'll go on praying until the prayer meeting before it started. But when the Holy Spirit comes, there's life in the prayer meeting, and there's life in service, and life in holiness, and life in love. I wonder if I may dare just quote from Charlotte Chapel magazine.

Oh, this is some years ago now, but once that dear church knew revival, soon after the days of what is called the Welsh Revival, and in reporting on it one year, the church secretary says this, I am quoting him, I went back with a hungry heart, for I longed to see that measure of blessing during my ministry. By the time I had got there, it was one of these churches which, whose motto was, as it was in the beginning, is now, ever shall be, nothing must change around here. And oh, dear, I saw the church dying on its feet, because it wouldn't get out to reach people where they are, and the hunger had gone from the prayer meeting, and it was dead.

And then I read this, listen, our sun had been eclipsed, this is the church secretary reporting, the light had gone out of our lives, the joy had fled, our communion was disturbed, our hope was unsettled, our efforts for the good of others were weak and intermittent. What had happened, we dare not tell, but he, the tender shepherd knew, for his keen eye had followed us through the desert of unholy and disobedient lives. He caught us in the thicket of some evil habit, or struggling in the bog of some sinful cause.

Oh yes, he saw it all, the sad detail which perhaps nobody else knew or dreamed of, but he sought us, and he found us, and he restored us, and he led us back to himself. This has been a great year of salvation, a year of victory. The church has been stirring like a military camp on the field of war, alive with martial music and a tramp of fighting men.

Many have been converted to God, and many backsliders restored, and many believers received an entombment of the Spirit. And listen, if you would ask me the secret, I would tell you of the prayer meeting, daily, of forty to sixty people strong, at six o'clock in the morning. We have advertised this, our Sunday morning service will start at eleven, if the prayer meeting stops in time.

And those meetings go on seven days a week, starting at six, and we'll have our service at eleven, if the prayer meeting's over. And it's that continuous, persevering, God-honoring, weekly campaign of prayer that has moved the mighty hand of God to pour upon his people the blessing of his grace in such rich abundance. Oh God, do it again.

Do it again. Do it in your life here this day, this week. Do it in mine.

I believe that the whole of this conference, I believe our principal and president gladly would scrap the whole thing if God would only break through, and do the supernatural, that we'd get out to the rut, and out to the machinery, and really see God move in to bless. Oh I know he's sovereign. I know that where the Holy Spirit works, there's not confusion, but there's order.

But oh Lord, oh God, oh breath of life, come sweeping through us, and revive thy church with life and power. Just like what's happened in Indonesia. Just like what's happening with the little flock in China.

Just what's happening in Latin America, and in Central America. Oh God, has he deserted? Has he deserted the white race altogether? We deserve it, with our strange, arrogant superiority. Has he left us out? Has he left western civilization to its fate? Oh, will he not reign the heavens and come down? Yes, I believe he will.

But my friend, I sometimes wonder if God doesn't take us seriously, because we don't take him seriously. May I just close in a word concerning the pathway of revival? I know that the wind blows where it listens. I know that God could stop me speaking and shut me up.

I know just in the sense that God has broken through, I know all that. But at the same time, there seems to be a clearly defined pathway here in this chapter. Do you notice that the promise of revival is given against the background of judgment? You notice the language of the previous chapter in the 28th verse? Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the perps, and Israel to reproaches.

Therefore, why? Verse 22 of chapter 43, Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob. Thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Are people sick of God? Tired of him? And therefore, verse 24, Thou hast wearied me with thine iniquity.

You know, I only saw that picture, I must have read this portion many times. Against the background of a relationship with God, which is rather like a marriage that has gone stale, where love has died out, God promises revival. I'm tired of him, the people said.

Now let's be honest, are we quite sure that isn't our position? Oh, we're sick of the routine, sick of religion, sick of playing church, tired of programs, churning it up. Some of us find it desperately hard to stay with the call, with our commitment. Oh, it would be so much easier just to pack it up and go to Florida.

You know, take the heat off, get out of this situation quick. Oh, anybody feeling like that today? I wonder how many people would be honest enough, bold enough to stand on their feet, yes, that's me. Yes, I got it.

I'm tired of it. And I'm saying to you that God's answer is all right. I'm tired of you.

I'm weary of your sin, weary of your settlement to living sin, weary of your absence of search for deliverance, weary of you getting used to living in it all. So there's a mutual weariness, mutual tired, and

it's against that background that God says, I will pour water upon him, listen. Oh, I'm so glad that judgment has gone out God's last word.

I've tasted a bit of that in my life, but his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting. And if somebody's going through it right now, and you're almost tired and weary of it, oh, what a tremendous promise this is, that God is promising his blessing along a pathway. And I may be wrong in this, and I stand to be corrected.

As far as I know, this is the only portion in scripture where the three names given to God's chosen people appear. Jacob, Jacob my servant, Israel, whom I've chosen, chapter 44, verse 1. Verse 2, Fear not, Jacob, and Jeshurun. I think this is immensely significant, for in the promise of revival, here is God reminding people of, of the name, the character that he's given them.

Jacob, he saved them from that. Oh, Jacob, I must have started to study of him. At least I know this, that unlike his father, Isaac, who began well, but ended badly, Jacob began badly and ended well.

And it's not how I begin life, but how I end it that really matters. Not many of us begin and end well, but Jacob.

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