

Christian Growth 2

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the critical role of faith in achieving spiritual maturity, illustrated through the story of the Canaanite woman.

Duration: 1:10:50

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 15:23-24, Matthew 15:28, Matthew 15:36, Philippians 3:1

Topics: "Christian Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of a woman who approached Jesus for help. He highlights four different responses Jesus gave to her, which were denial, discouragement, disillusionment, and deliverance. The preacher then shares a personal experience of witnessing a powerful prayer session led by a missionary. He emphasizes the importance of faith and perseverance in seeking God's help. The sermon concludes by encouraging listeners to trust in God's process of refining and transforming their lives.

Transcript

I want you to turn with me this morning to Matthew chapter 15, and we'll read a portion, and then we'll pray together. Matthew chapter 15 and verse 21. And Jesus went away from there, and was due to the district of Tyre and Sidon.

And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, Have mercy on me, O Lord, son of David. My daughter is severely possessed by a demon. But he did not answer her a word.

And his disciples came and begged him, saying, Send her away, for she is crying after us. He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But she came and knelt before him, saying, Lord, help me.

And he answered, Did he prepare to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs? She said, Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the sons that fall from the mouth of David. Then Jesus answered her, O woman, break with your faith. Do it unto you as you desire.

And her daughter was healed instantly. This is the word of the Lord. Shall we bow together for prayer? Just to ask you to be quiet in the presence of God a moment.

Be still and know that there is God. The greatest of meetings becomes the smallest when Jesus is there. And the smallest becomes the greatest.

May we all be conscious of this day. Thank you, dear Lord, for this beautiful morning. May the sun be shining.

Have pride, may the sunshine of your love blaze in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit have complete control of all of us. Without you, we're helpless.

We can do nothing. Thank you, Lord, for being such. Holy means in this and other lands to many people.

Thank you, you are central to it all. We pray that the impact that this movement has made may be greatly increased as a result of these days in your presence. And therefore we pray.

Speak, Lord, for thy certain healing. Speak just now. Some message to meet my need which thou only dost know.

Speak now through thy holy word and make me see some wonderful truth thou hast to show to me. For Jesus' sake, amen. I hope you're hearing me all right as I speak about that volume.

Okay. If I speak too quietly, you can't hear, just raise one hand and I'll speak a little louder. If I speak too loudly and nearly blast you out of the building, which is much more likely because I get excited, just raise two hands in horror and I'll quieten down.

It's wonderful how the Lord keeps the good wine till the last. And he certainly has been bringing my wife and I to this great convention. We have spoken, needless to say, to some that are bigger and some that are smaller.

But I don't think I've ever been conscious of speaking to one which is more strategic and an immense privilege. It's a great responsibility. Doesn't help the Lord speaking at night.

But with a burden on my heart to discharge from him to you, we are continuing a series of messages under the general theme of Toward Spiritual Maturity. It's really based upon the text of the Heritage of Programmes. We who have unveiled faith, contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.

That text was not chosen by myself. But that's our theme, transformed into his likeness. The text I was thinking of is in Ephesians chapter 3, for his great prayer to that church that they might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Filled with the fullness of God, transformed into the likeness of Jesus. That's the goal of Christian living. And Toward Spiritual Maturity is really meant to show us that there are various areas of our lives in which we must grow to attain that maturity.

We have to grow in faith. We have to grow in suffering. We have to grow in obedience and many others.

And we shall be dealing with some of these as the week goes by. But this morning we're commencing with a lesson on faith. Last evening our subject was, we want to remain holy.

Do you really mean that you want God to make you spiritually mature? How far do you want Jesus to go with you? The mathematics of spiritual breakdown are 99% commitment to Christ. Is it 100%? Hey, or have we reservations? Well now the first thing is to consider growth in faith. And I'm taking this morning this fascinating story this incident in the ministry of the Lord Jesus which took place in a vital moment in his ministry.

It had become clear by now that the Jew had rejected him as their Messiah. And at verse 21 Jesus he departed into the coast of Tyre and Sidon seeking rest and solitude. And this departure brought the rejection of the Jewish people of Christ right into full view.

And it introduces us at the same time to the first Gentile convert. A Canaanite woman, as verse 22 tells us, marked in his account of this incident in chapter 7 of his gospel says she was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician woman. And therefore she was a direct descendant of those people who were outside.

The people who had been just swept away in the divine economy of the past because of their sins. In order that God's plan of redemption could be fulfilled through the Jewish people. And this woman was outside the covenant of Israel.

She was this pagan god. Yet, Mark tells us in 7th chapter verse 24, from such a person Jesus could not be heard. That's an interesting statement.

A pagan woman, worshipping heathen gods. That Jesus could not be heard. Of course, if he so desired he could be heard from anybody.

Just make a note of your note, in your note. And I'm trying to speak a little more slowly because we do take notes. I didn't realize that last night.

I'm sorry. We are taking notes and listening. And I would suggest that you just make a note.

In John 8 verse 59 we read, He hid himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst and passed by. Jesus always hides himself from intellectual pride. An orthodox tradition.

But he never dealt with two people alike. How he hides himself from orthodoxy and tradition. But he never deals with two people in the same way.

Never heals more than one blind man in the same way. Never passed out demons from people in the same way. His approach was always different.

A tremendous illustration in his ministry of the variety, the mass of human needs. And of his absolute capacity to meet it all. Comparable for all our Christian service.

But though his approach to people was different, our approach to him, if it's to prevail, if it's to be vital, if it's to make a real contact, is always to be exactly the same. There are two ways to the Lord. This one.

The way of faith. The way of Christ. It's possible to be a believer but not to be a Christian.

I hope that doesn't horrify you. In fact I hope it does. It shakes you.

Because you can believe all of that and your Bible is from cover to cover. You may have been baptized, christened, confirmed, vaccinated, all the rest. You can have had everything done for you and yet never,

never truly be born of God's Spirit.

There's a tremendous difference between belief and Christ. And these are ways in which I must contribute. But I'm not interested really in the technicalities of this day.

I am interested in it as a tremendous revelation of the triumph of this woman's faith over every discrepancy. Her refusal to be put off. It's a record of faith holding on to the Lord in sheer desperation.

Clinging like a drowning man clinging to the lifeboat with not a thing to hold on to. Recognizing that there wasn't the least bit of hope anywhere else. None but he could save her child who was so feverishly, so severely possessed by a demon.

It's a record also of her faith overcoming obstacles which Jesus put in her way. Overcoming obstacles which Jesus put in her way. How absolutely impossible it was for her to understand what he was doing with her.

But she held on until her need was met. Have you realized, have I, that faith works best in the context of desperation? Just take a moment to judge this. It does.

It works best in the context of desperation. After all, what's the use of a kind of faith that trusts so far but leaves away the faith a loophole in case Jesus doesn't work? Sometimes we are, I have been, absolutely bewildered, absolutely perplexed by the way he's dealt with me. But it's a good thing to look back upon the time of testing and begin to understand.

Of course, that will never be completely true until we reach heaven. Then we shall understand completely as we can't possibly understand right now. Then perhaps we'll begin to appreciate so clearly the reason for it all.

I want you to notice to begin with that there are four times in this account. We read, he answered her. Verse 23, he answered her not a word.

That's the answer of denial. Verse 24, he answered her and said, I am only sent to the lost sheep of Israel. That's the answer of discouragement.

Verse 26, he answered and said, it is not fair to take the children's bread, to throw it to dogs. That's the answer of disillusionment. Verse 28, he answered and said, O woman, great is your faith.

Be it done for you even as you desire. And her daughter was healed from that very hour. That's the answer of deliverance.

Have you got that? Let me just give it in to be sure because I want you to come travel along with me. A convoy can only go as fast as the first ship. And I want to be sure that I have everybody with me.

And leave nobody behind. First, he answered her not a word. The answer of denial.

Then, he answered her, I'm only sent to the lost sheep of Israel. That's the answer of discouragement. Then, verse 26, it isn't fair to take the children's bread and to throw it to dogs.

That's the answer of disillusionment. Verse 28, O woman, great is your faith. Be it done for you even as you desire.

And her daughter was healed from that very hour. That's the answer of deliverance. See? Towards spiritual maturity.

Often achieved by denial. Often by discouragement. Often by disillusionment.

But in the end, always by deliverance. And he just found a most unlikely case of a living faith in an extraordinary circumstance. In surroundings from which orthodoxy, religion, had withdrawn in condemnation.

How empty is intellectual knowledge without faith. Five years in a seminary won't give you what you really need, necessarily. You may have your head filled with knowledge, but your heart emptied of fire.

Emptied of reality. My apologies to any seminary professor who might be here. Please come and talk to me about that afterwards.

But the point I'm getting at is this. That the Lord is able to make a strong faith exist where there's little knowledge. Little to encourage.

And where the surroundings are absolutely dry and barren. The greatest of Christians can live in impossible surroundings. Our Heavenly Father has children everywhere.

But see how He trains them. Why? Because being our Father, He wants us all to have a family likeness. A family likeness.

He made me here. A year or two ago, just to give you a break from taking notes. A year or two ago, my wife and I were visiting Florida.

I think about this time of year. Excuse me, how many teachers get down there in January? We're looking forward to being there in a couple of weeks' time. At the Moody-Keswick grounds.

And we were shown around an orange juice factory. Of course, it was the world's largest. Three million gallons of orange juice.

Sent from that factory throughout the United States. Every week. I guess you know that Tropicana is its name.

And the slogan of Tropicana is, if it's not in the orange, it's not in Tropicana. At that time of year, masses of oranges were coming into the factory and being dumped. In trucks.

And this, of course, seemed a season for the production of them. And we were shown around the factory. It was really quite amazing.

The first thing that happened to those oranges, they were all put in huge piles in the factory. There was an enormous machine on a sort of conveyor belt that came along the line. And it stretched out about a hundred arms, each of which grabbed an orange.

Then it went a little way further along, fully loaded. And stopped above a tank. And those arms began to squeeze and squeeze and squeeze to put the pressure on.

Until every drop of juice had been extracted from those oranges. And then it went a little further. And had an amazing capacity to shake itself free of pits and skin.

And you really think I'm kidding you. But I'm not. Do you know what they were used for? Pits and skin.

Cattle feed and ladies' perfume. Quite a remarkable combination. And a few moments later, I met the director of that factory.

And I said to him, Sir, he's a Christian. Sir, when an orange looks at you, it must turn pale and say, I've had it. And he smiled and said, oh no, you've got it wrong.

When an orange looks at me, it smiles and says, at last, I'm going to be useful. So, the pressure, the testing, the crushing, the breaking of the juice. Now the Lord is after each one of us this day.

Today is this very day in January. He's in business with that process to produce spiritual material. Exciting.

Producing a family likeness. Let's see, therefore, how this took place in this woman's life. Verse 23.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David, my daughter. Mark puts it rather more intimately and says, my little daughter. My daughter is severely possessed by a demon.

Silence. What? Crying? Silence. She'll cry like that.

It almost seems to contradict the whole message of the gospel. She'd thrown herself at his feet. The need was urgent.

Her heart was tender. But he passed her by. Was that silence a denial? How often we've assumed that it is.

How often? How often we've said in similar circumstances, let's see you just cry. There's not a sign of an answer ever. Prayer doesn't work.

Nothing seems to happen at the other end of the line. What's the use? Prayer doesn't seem to reach higher than this feeling. Situation, unsafe.

But wait a minute. How did she come to Jesus? Now, son of David, she'd appealed to him as the Messiah of the Jews. And as a Gentile, she had no claim on him.

And that's a fact of it. Was that why he was silent? Or was it he was so delighted, so free? So, may I say, Reverend, she's so excited by her faith that he's determined to test it. And to see if she came out like she'll go.

I don't know. Probably the answer is in both, doesn't it? But this much I do know, that God's silences are never denials. Never.

He never has engaged, busy, on his door. He does have files in his cabinet marked pending. But they're not the best.

It's often his way of discipline. And always wanting infinite experience. It may be true that we have come to him on the wrong ground.

And we have to remember that there's only one ground, all our land, of approach to him. That is Calvary. The blood of Jesus.

The atonement. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 19. Having, brethren, boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, and having a high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

That's the way. It's the way to our life. It's not just the way to be saved, it's the way to maintain salvation.

I don't come to the cross as a sinner, seducer. I meet God and Jesus at the cross to stay there. It's not that the church today needs to get on to prejudice.

No, it's to get back to Calvary. And if the church gets back to Calvary, Pentecost is inevitable. And that's the way for any of us to come.

God forbid, my dear friend, that you and I, any of us, should think we've become too big to go that way. You know, we've been 40, 50 years on the road now, and we really know quite a lot. You know, we've got a position of leadership in the church after all, and people must respect it.

An elder of a Baptist church in New Jersey called me on the telephone at Moody's Church in Chicago one day and said to me, we're looking for a pastor. Have you got anybody around, you know, in the Chicago area who might consider you coming? And I thought, and gave him the names of three friends of mine. And then he began to ask me questions.

I'll never in my life forget the conversation. It went on for 45 minutes. I didn't mind, he was going to a call.

I said, oh boy. You know, this is the conversation. Now, tell me just a minute about my number one.

What school did you attend? What college did you then go to? And what university? And what degrees did you get? And what did you major in? What were your special gifts? On and on and on like this. And he answered the questions as best I knew how for all three of those fellows. And then he said, after three quotes, and I will thank you very much, Pastor, but none of those men are big enough for our purposes.

Hold it, sir, hold it, just before you go off the line. Are you quite sure you don't mean they're not small enough? Fancy being too big. Not big enough.

I believe we get too big to grant the uses. Because we're always wanting 10% of the commission. 10% of the glory for ourselves.

Having said that, however, make sure, won't you, that God's silence to your prayer, it's not because you come to Him on some other grounds than Calvary. Make sure of that. He may be cast in you, but He will never deny you if you come to Calvary again.

It's through the Lord Jesus and faith in Him alone that we have access into the adequacy of the grace of God in which we stand. So I forbid that any of us should ever be too big to come that way. God's silences are not denial.

The funny thing I notice here is the answer of this condition, verse 23 and 24. His disciples came and begged Him, saying, Send her away. He's crying after them.

He answered, I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Isaiah. Those disciples rather present a picture which becomes uncomfortably close. To them, this woman was just a nuisance.

Peter, I would imagine it would be he, I apologize to him that I'm wrong, one day, that he was used as a spokesman. He would probably scowl at her. John became impatient, and the rest thought her very presumptuous.

Send her away. She cries after her. Now Peter, hold it.

Don't think yourself so important. Don't imagine you're somebody because she isn't crying after you at all. It's very tricky when the disciples think that people come to hear him.

Who cares for our poor talking? It's Peter's idea. And if I don't get him out of these beds, I've got nothing. I simply have a few sermon notes.

Won't do me any good. And how often I've repelled and threatened other people with cold words, unkind behavior, unsympathetic treatment. But she didn't let any of that keep her from pressing her friend on ground.

And dear friends, please follow her example, won't you? Don't let the treatment you receive from the hands of other Christians keep you back from Jesus. I'll just say that again. Don't let the treatment you receive at the hands of other Christians keep you back from him.

But even Christ's answer was discouraging. It did seem to cut her off from every bit of hope. She was not for the house of Israel.

No, she wasn't. But she was one of the lost sheep. And Jesus said in John 10 and verse 16, other sheep I have, which are not of this fold, them also I must bring.

Maybe she'd heard him hear that, say that. And she was screaming for those few words. And she cried, Lord, help me.

As one of your lost sheep, Lord, please come out of the fold. And just help me. May I just cut on Sinai for a moment? Well, obviously, I mean.

I'm not predestined to eternal life. What to our Lord was sent only to the house of Israel, was the house of Israel after the flood. Not after the flood, but after the sea.

And therefore this woman was included when she thought herself cut out. Election is so taught in Scripture. But your election, my friend, is in Jesus.

There isn't anybody, anybody, anywhere who's come on the ground of the blood of Jesus to God, who's ever been in Jesus. He is not willing that one should go. And at that moment, at that moment, when I put my faith in Him, at that moment I pass from the non-election to the election.

But C. H. Sturgeon, that great Baptist preacher, a couple of generations ago, he said, when you come up towards the gate of heaven, you'll notice written on the outside, whosoever may come. And when you get in, and look around, you see written on the inside, Sturgeon and him from the foundation of the world. Tremendous truth.

Ask me to think? Can't. Ask anybody to think? They can't. They can't.

If God could be understood, small enough to be understood, He's not big enough to work. And there are some things, some tools, that I don't understand. Many of them.

And that's endless. But I'm so thankful this morning to say the depths of my heart, I know, I know that my salvation does not rest upon a decision I made for Christ. But yes, in fact, for some reason He chose me.

Chosen in Him from the foundation of the world. And yet a moment when He called upon me to repent, change my way, change my behavior, and turn and find me. The answer of this story.

Now the answer of this religion, verses 26 and 27. She came, verse 25, she came and knelt before Him, saying, Lord, help me. And the answer is, it isn't fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.

And she said, yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. The answer of this religion, as I mentioned, that must have been almost worse than the answer of silence. For the Jews, the Gentiles, the dogs, that not only placed her outside any relationship with the Lord, apparently, but it may appear that she was absolutely unworthy in herself of receiving anything from Him.

Please notice that. Not merely outside a covenant relationship with Israel, but absolutely unworthy of receiving a thing from only a dog. And she didn't dispute it.

To Lord, she said, I haven't any merit, I have no right to demand, to suggest what need in my heart and in my life. I know it wouldn't be fitting for one of your children to be deprived of anything in my time. I know it.

Yet when you call me a dog, you're my Lord. Lord. Not only I think it's amazing that she not disputed them, but she worshiped the hand that chastened her and bowed reverently before the one who speaks so severely, firmly to her.

Doesn't complain. Doesn't growl. She worshiped the hand that chastened her.

That's all. And bowed reverently before the one who speaks to her so serenely. I just think she had to hate it.

Thank God for the chastening hands. Wow. Wow.

Wow. Christians are wonderful people when we talk together about our faith, but when we talk together about our troubles, you really wonder if there's any difference between us and those who didn't know Jesus. And all of that I want just to say to you and for you to get hold of it.

Even though I feel you feel as unworthy as she is, as disillusioned as she did concerning any goodness in herself, please remember, your salvation does not rest upon anything that you are at all, or ever can be. Jesus doesn't bless me because of how good I am, but because I've come to him as a beggar, the greatest of saints, or the greatest of suitors. And I've come to him as beggar.

Nothing in my house I've left since the day I crossed. I say, I need to be saved not by myself, but from myself. But then, with this invitation, not merely by myself, but from myself.

For any bits are remaining of comfort, that with anything I can do. Gladly. To what Jesus has done for me.

Oh, what a lesson. It should be simple. But I'll tell you, I'm still in the kindergarten.

Not for me to be empty, but the Lord might fill me. It's for him for me to confess my utter sinfulness, that he may tend me. It's for me to do absolutely nothing, that he may be everything to me.

Never allow the scent of blackness, of failure, breakdown, to keep me from believing prayer. All his dealings with me are designed to show that indeed there is no sin. And faith, as it grows and matures, accepts the verdict of God's word upon myself.

Struggling as a young man with myself. That thing to be a very Christian in early days of Christian life. Striving very hard to improve.

I listened one day in London to my lifelong friend, Ian Thomas, whom some of you may have met. And the course of his message, he says, What do you think God expects of you? And I just cringed in my chair. I imagined that the next word would be, oh, some tremendous person with a tremendous faith and, you know, outstanding ability.

And I thought that wasn't even a candidate. What does God expect of you? And I think he waited for an answer which he didn't get. He gave it himself.

Total failure. And I absolutely shat up both of them. God, I'm a candidate for that.

Total failure. You're a wuss out. Said Ian Thomas.

There's nothing in you at all to commend yourself to the Lord. A total failure. There wouldn't be a cross in history if that wasn't true.

And as I worked that out, I thought to myself, okay, God is never in the self-improvement plan. He's always in the Christ replacement plan. Got it? Oh, if you want to stop and pray, hallelujah.

And how many years could the people spend, even Christian leaders, in trying to make themselves better? And the end result of convincing myself of that is taking that, constructing a sarcastic. Trying to improve the self which it cannot be improved and always remains exactly the same hopeless thing. So I said, listen, Jesus is exactly the opposite to all that I am.

If I could ask you, wouldn't you have a wonderful list to put down in a bit of paper your weakness? Your fundamental weakness in life or weaknesses in prayer. And you wrote that down. My word, if you told the truth, what a shock that would give to conscience.

Wouldn't it? So listen, you don't have to be afraid of it. Just recognize that Jesus knows all about that. All about it.

And he's exactly the opposite to all of that. Is your weakness in pure thinking? It's holy. Is your weakness criticism and kindness of other people? It's love and gentleness.

Whatever it is, he brought it and all he wants to do is to say, and excuse the apparently reckoning, yes you can, but get out of the way and let me get right in. And that's it. It's producing the opposite in you.

Jesus accepts nothing but failure. But hallelujah, he's given us the Holy Spirit that we need never fail. Not that we cannot fail, but that we need never fail.

And where some lift and die, since they speak so honestly, openly to you, because I know this mess, because I've been in it, persistently go on struggling to handle our weaknesses and really, really, nearly drive ourselves to climb up the wall in a typing room and all the time, I suddenly discover that my business as a Christian is not, is not to study, to care for my weak points. It is to concentrate on my strong points, my relationship to the Lord Jesus. As I concentrate on him, he cares for my weak points.

Every day in life, they can get better. And by the way, don't you think that the Christian life gets easier when you get older, it doesn't. It's fast.

And every day the devil's on our back, saying to the Lord, what do you think you're struggling about? And what is your reaction? What is my reaction? Just square my shoulders and clench my teeth and fight back calmly. Not now. My reaction is to an impure thought.

Come to my mind, Lord, Lord, this is the life beyond the cross from which you died to save me. Lord Jesus, thank you for your holiness. Right now, I take it.

Lord, I'm about to blow my top with my wife, and let her have it. Lord, thank you for your patience and your love. Thank you, the Lord, for it all.

But I only, only, only know so much of the grace and proficiency of Jesus Christ as I say the purity of faith. And you see, there's no way to find peace with God to refuse to admit the truth of what he says about me. That's what we're trying to do all the time, to refuse to admit.

We're not getting there. I don't want to shout it, but it's the truth. There isn't one sin in the universe that I'm not capable of committing two minutes after this meeting is over with my butt full of grace and joy.

The only good thing about me is Jesus. And that's true of it all. It's an admission to that, and healing to that, and thanks for accepting that.

Thank you, Lord, which has allowed the devil to show me that that gives me the grace and joy. Relief. But do you notice something? Though she didn't dispute, she pressed home her claims, her arguments.

She saw just a little gleam of hope. There are two words in the New Testament for dog. One is a scavenger dog of the street.

The other, a little dog of the household, which sits, and usually at the feet of the children, beside the table, and eats the crumbs of bread and the grass. And this is the word that Jesus used. And so this woman swung herself upon the mercy of the Lord, and began to argue.

I like that. She wouldn't be so rough trying to argue on the basis of that one word. Ooh, what a thing.

So she was never to speak of that, but to argue it. She took the word out of his mouth, accepted his statement, I'm only a little dog. But because I'm a little dog, I have a claim upon you.

It wouldn't be righteous to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs. No. Because the dogs are already provided for.

They eat the crumbs that fall from the master's table. It would be quite wrong to give them the children's bread. They have their own share when the crumbs fall.

Lord, that's all I want, just a crumb. Not children's bread, but just a crumb. Lord, help me.

See how she reacted to the answer of disillusionment. I can take that attitude also. Lord, I accept your verdict.

And that's a good thing in itself. I agree with that. But Lord, I wonder what sound is your word, when if I'm hearing it, really hearing it, can't I be a receiver of it too? I'm your property, I'm your property, I'm your own.

And there's enough of your overflowing mercy for all your children. And Lord, if you bless me, here at Lakeway, you won't be any poorer. You're just as rich as ever.

And just able to cram you there for arguments I can bring to you. From the very depth of my heart, from the sense of desperate, desperate need, faith begins to materialize and shakes off the apparent disillusionment. I can't qualify.

Lord, give me just a crumb. And finally, I remind you that Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians 6, and in chapter 3, when he was halfway through, verse 1, he said, finally, finally. He became the father of all creatures, who, by saying that, indicates they're getting the second wind.

But I won't quite treat you like that, but, oh dear, it's important yet to discharge your frustration beyond the deliverance. In verse 28, O woman, great is your face, be it done for you as you desire, and her daughter will heal instantly. It is just as if the Lord Jesus surrendered to the conquering power of her face.

He gave him. She's gained a friend. Her prayer was answered.

He tried her. Tested her. Crucified her.

And her face, same purpose, here goes. And what a comfort to those people who think there's no hope. Things have gone too far, too bad.

Oh yes, I've paid, but I've given up now. I've attempted reformation in the prisons, but it's been a failure. But I hadn't really started, I acknowledge it, I hadn't really started clinging to the cross.

Rather, if the earth should and storms rage, hang on, carry on. You can't carry it there. What a challenge.

What a challenge to our prayer for other people. Especially our family. She prayed for her little daughter.

How do you pray for your family? Do you? Together? Husband and wife? May I have a church? Christianity Today reported recently. May I have a church in Britain and the States? Is a personal membership ready? Five seconds. Ten percent will exist.

Ten percent never come to church. I'm sorry, ten percent can't attend. Twenty-five percent never come to church.

Fifty percent have no missionary interest. Seventy-five percent never come to midweek service in prayer meetings. Ninety percent never have family worship.

And ninety-five percent never win anybody's approval. Can you win this? Win the prayer to your heart? Ninety percent no family worship? How do you pray to yourself? I won't mention names, of course. All places.

But I went to one place. No, it's a long list. Three o'clock through thirteen in the afternoon she, a rich roaring teenager, came dashing home from school.

Cool down there was the head from school and dashed to the refrigerator, pulled out a can of coke and went to the TV room and never seen her for the rest of the day. No contact with friends at all. And that man a Christian leader in the town in which he lived.

Too busy. Too concerned about dollars and money to care for the family. On the other hand I arrived late at night having traveled a long way.

I was very tired. I went to bed. And the next morning at about 6 a.m. I heard an alarm bell ring.

And a scurry of masses of feet. So I thought I'd better join in the rush. I went downstairs and I arrived in the table tennis room and found the whole family sitting around the table tennis table.

I only was there one night. I'm not quite sure if it was ten children or eleven. Quite a team.

And I squeezed in between number ten and eleven. I was told that they varied in age from thirty-four to four. They all had strange things in their hair.

The girls, I don't know what it was. And the fellas were half-dressed. But they were all there.

And at the end of the table was father and an open Bible. And he read a chapter from the Word. But he gave every one of those children a missionary from prayer.

They came round and measured their prayers and prayed. By the time it came to my turn, I found I was remotely engrossed. It was like a an empty room to heaven.

So of all those children, you exactly where that missionary was, what they were doing, what they were up to. And they prayed in faith. The whole exercise took about three quarters of an hour.

That man was a practicing surgeon. He conducted surgery surgery operation in about an hour's time. He could easily, easily have possessed a robot, but he didn't.

He produced paralysis. And there's no greater priority in Christian life than the faith which prays for our children, hugs them and wipes together, and which keeps a home from evil to us. In Bethany, there's a Church of Satan.

Two months ago, that Church of Satan in Yorkshire had a day of prayer and fasting for the destruction of Christian families. The Church of Satan is where the Canterbury Cathedral, the headquarters of the Anglican Church, much more a museum, perhaps, than anything. A very famous old building where it stands, a beautiful place.

And do you know that exactly opposite to the front door on the opposite side of the street, the Church of Satan has opened a shop for Charlie Delish. That's what we're at against in Western civilization today. How do I pray for others? How do I pray for myself? What a lesson.

And what a great lesson there is here in the effect of faith in blessing. Just look at verses 30 and 31, would you? Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the dumb, and many others, and they put him at his feet and he healed them. So it's a strong wonder when they saw the dumb speaking,

the lame whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing, they glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus had departed from that particular scene. And Mark says this, that he took a precocious root, he was a tepid, and for he's still outside your territory, and the multitude came to him. He healed them.

The same grace for which that woman pleaded, pleaded so hard, came in a tremendous flow. I'm asked. She's wrung out of him a drop, a crumb.

Now, it brushes out in the brain. These are crumbs with a great deal of freedom, very good breath. But apparently nothing, or little action.

So, I can't tell you this, but it excites me. Do you think her faith had proved infectious? Do you think it had created faith in other people? Jesus was no problems in the presence of a living faith. And whenever people come to him with a great big burden and custody of faith, they experience his delivering power, the testing of faith.

And they insist that a faith that isn't worth testing is not worth having. It isn't, you know. Not worth having.

Is your faith being tested right now? Praise the Lord. It hasn't been easy to speak this word to you today, but I thought it was so absolutely essential to spiritual maturity. And I'll tell you why.

Because I must be honest. I didn't come around to just show my extra Christian edge, because I know that my dependence entirely upon God's grace, and that grace would never come to me if I wasn't honest with people. And I first learned some of the lessons that I'm still learning some years ago, long after I'd been in the ministry.

I had left Moody Church, gone back home to Edinburgh, passed through the Archbaptist Church there. The church was full. I hadn't filled it, so the baptist I had, very good, a strange fellow.

I was just friends with him, and all that. But I had some intent. And I was working hard.

One Saturday afternoon, I was sitting at my desk, finalizing preparations for a message, when suddenly, I lost control of my hands. And I tried to stand up, couldn't. I tried to speak, I'd lost my speech.

The conclusion of the third day on stage, my wife had it, and my older daughter, who has now been 15 years with the African Mission in Central African Republic. She and her husband, and one or two children, I can't remember now, three now, but at this moment she's five-point, were on their way to leave for a very addictive service the following week. And she's a nurse, in Southwark Square, and of course she knew where I had a terrible hemorrhage, or a stroke.

And I had a slap on my back. It is, in my big 50s, from being healthy, just never having had anything worse than flu, to being a cabbage. Useless.

Anyway, I was put to bed for examination. And I reacted in exactly the way I tell people that they should never react. And preach.

And I said, you should never ask why. I asked why. My mind was perfectly clear.

Even though I couldn't express my thoughts. Why? Lord, why have you allowed the devil to do this? Why? Why is that such a question? I mean, how can I help it? Yes? That's what you think. I'm lost for words,

actually.

But why have you allowed it? So long, and I turned completely sour, and I didn't open my Bible, nor did I pray. Prayed about three months. One day, I opened my Bible.

Can't think why. But I opened it, and it fell open. And the first verse I took, I took, was in Psalm 39.

Thine threshold hath consumed me. I am consumed by the glory of your house. And I slept, I thought of it.

And I spent months blaming the wrong thing. Accusing the devil of his deceit against me. The Lord had done it to me.

And I slept. That didn't make me well. But it seemed as if a voice, which had grown strangely unfamiliar in recent months, suddenly spoke to me and said, go through your Christian life for the past twenty years, and just see what's been happening.

Well, of course, I turned to his parents, and I did just that. And I found in God's presence that I could never, never get back to him, unless I was open and honest with him. And I found that words had taken over from worship.

In early days, oh, there had been such a discipline in prayer life. In early days, such a discipline in quiet time. So many hours spent in worship of God.

Oh, God. Often now I recall looking back on Sundays at eleven o'clock and having to say something, but having nothing to say. Often demanding, demanding from a conversation an obedience, a submission that I wasn't prepared to give myself.

And I thought worse before winter. I thought it was so spiritual to work for the Lord Sunday week. Often had cringes.

Came home occasionally to see my wife and family in the early evening, very occasionally. I left home every day from Buddhist church at about seven. Went to church after the day.

Went all through the morning and all through the afternoon and served an endless committee. Oh, dear. I've never been on one for ten years, praise the Lord.

I served an endless committee, one after another. I thought it was so spiritual, it was downright sin. And I sometimes, when I did go home, saw three children in my wife's.

And one or other of the children would say, well, Daddy, you and I should have a meeting tonight. And I knew it was wrong. I have to say, yes.

I put work before worship. I put orthodoxy before religion. So very proud of being pastor of a big American church.

It was so fundamental and just fantastic. I wasn't, but they were. And it was very, very sound and, you know, very proud of that.

Yes. But before worship and orthodoxy before religion. And when I saw the truth, the Holy Spirit, I could only cry.

I spent a week there. A week. In that conscious moment, just crying out, how I had blown it.

Sorry, Lord. I fear not. And from that moment, from thinking back, He lifted me.

With tender hands, He lifted me. From shades of gnash, the pains of life, He lifted me. The specialist who came to examine me said, where has it been? You know.

And Henrich is so lucky to be in such a very critical spot. If you don't work anymore, you can live to be 90. If you start and work again, well, I'll give you 5 years.

Possibly 10. But you certainly won't live to be 70. I'd like to have a word with that man.

Because that all happened 17 years ago. How good is a God? I don't know. But faithful to all, all of that.

Looking back in time, I wouldn't have missed it. And here, there's a man all the more real. He's the one who matters more than anything to me.

I don't say that to sort of to publish a book on humility and how I found it. He'll take personal photographs. I'll tell it to you.

Simply because I want you to know if anybody here is down at Rothblatt. I've been there too. And if anybody is there...

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