

Christian Growth - Part 1

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath emphasizes the journey toward spiritual maturity and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's intervention in believers' lives.

Duration: 15:00

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, Proverbs 29:18, Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 6:33, Mark 4:24, John 5:1-4, Romans 12:1-2

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Holy Intervention"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of waiting for God to intervene and perform miracles in our lives. He compares the audience to a mini pool of Bethesda, where people with different needs and struggles gather, all waiting for a miracle. The speaker acknowledges the responsibility of ministry and expresses a desire for the Holy Spirit to work in their lives. He also addresses the personal struggles and lack of growth that some individuals may be experiencing, urging them to seek a fresh touch from God. Overall, the sermon encourages the audience to prioritize their relationship with God and rely on His intervention in their lives.

Transcript

In these sessions we have chosen, I believe, by the direction of the Spirit of God, the subject of Toward Spiritual Maturity. Toward Spiritual Maturity. Thank you.

And this will be the main theme of our ministry these days. And I want to begin tonight by underlining the main goal that we're striving after. And as a basis for what I want to say to you, I may say that, session by session, I'm not here to tickle your intellect.

I'm not here to enlighten your mind, necessarily. But I am here, I hope, to enlarge your heart in the love of Jesus our Lord, that you may know him more perfectly, and that, to quote the text which is on our program, we who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory. Transformed into his likeness.

Toward Spiritual Maturity. Like Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus in chapter 3, I bow my knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. This is Spiritual Maturity.

That we might be filled with all the fullness of God. That's the objective of our redemption. And I've sought to make that the subject of our messages these days.

I'm trying to say, I'm going to begin with a very familiar passage of the word tonight. I hope more briefly than I usually will be, because you must be tired after so much travel. And you'll find it in the fifth chapter of St. John's Gospel.

St. John, chapter 5. And as you open your Bible and find the place, let us just take a moment to lift our hearts to the Lord together in prayer. Will you echo in your heart the prayer which I would offer on your behalf and on my own? A moment's silent prayer, first of all. Speak, Lord, in the stillness while I wait on thee.

Hush my heart to listen in expectancy. Speak, O blessed Master, in this quiet hour. Let me see thy face, Lord, and feel, and feel thy touch of power.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Now, St. John, chapter 5. Reading together the first few verses of that chapter. And reading from the King James Version.

Which I won't be using at each session, but I'm using it tonight. Thought that might be very tactful. And St. John, chapter 5. You know, quite seriously, it used to be a wonderful thing to begin a message and ask the congregation to join in the reading of the scripture aloud.

If you do that today, it's chaotic. You think they were speaking in tongues, and of course that would never do. But I hope and pray that we've had all the translations we will ever have.

We've got plenty. St. John, chapter 5, in the King James Version. After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now, there is at Jerusalem, by the sheep market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda. Having five porches, in these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, blind, half-withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water.

Whoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said to him, Will thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.

But while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus said to him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked.

And on the same day was the Sabbath. We're introduced here, aren't we, to a New Testament healing pool, where there was a great multitude of people. And did you notice that in four ways they were all different? But in one way they were all alike.

Some were impotent. Some were blind. Some were hoarse.

And some were, a chattering word, withered. A pool with a great multitude. Some without power, impotent.

Some without sight, blind. Some without an effective walk, limp. And some with no growth, withered.

Four ways, different. But one way, absolutely alike. They were all waiting for the moving of the water.

Waiting for God to intervene. Waiting for a miracle to happen. Shut up to a miracle for anything worthwhile.

Waiting for the Lord to intervene. Now let me bring that right down to where we are. I recognize the tremendous responsibility of ministry to a group like this.

I really do. It makes me, like Balthazar, knock at the knees. For a different reason, I'm sure.

But it does. Because I have been for some time thinking, praying, preparing, together with my dear wife, for this week. And seeking the message in mind of God as to what he would have me say to you.

And as I increasingly got pressurized by the Spirit into this opening message, I wondered if I might come and find ourselves together as a mini pool of Bethesda. In four ways, quite different. Some of us without power.

If I could be close enough to you and near enough to you, more than physically, but maybe spiritually too, to unite and be honest together, I wonder how many of you would say that describes me at once. A Christian, but a powerless one. And my story for years has been a story of tragic failure.

Impotent, powerless, and blind. Yes, a believer, but somehow I never grasped the reality of the Word of God. I want to teach it to others, but find I'm blind when I turn to it for myself.

Like one of old who kept many vineyards, but his own he neglected. And we devote our time in speaking to a minister, to other people, but somehow, somehow, for freshness, for reality, for that touch which makes any ministry worthwhile, that touch from heaven upon our hearts in his Word, it's been months since he opened our eyes to something new, something fresh. Blind.

Impotent, blind, and haught, oh my, limping badly. On Sunday night, you know, after a wonderful evening of fellowship together, a Bible study fellowship, really on cloud nine, for the next morning not fit to live with, like a yo-yo. Up, down, up, down.

If I spoke to you and said, how are your Christian lives getting on, which I wouldn't, but if I did, you'd have to say, well, it's very up and down. Up and down, up and down, yes, it's not meant to be up and down, it's meant to be in and out. In for worship and out for work.

In for surrender and out for service. In for orders and out for obedience. In, out life, that's a Christian life.

But yours is not like that, it's up, down, up, down. Limping. And, uh, withered.

Oh, that's an awful word. Never growing. There was a time when I did seem to grow, you know, and the Word of God filled me.

There was a time, you might say to me, well, things were going so wonderfully, and it was really great. And, uh, just, Jesus was so real and alive every moment of every day, but somehow, somehow, it's withered. And I'm conscious that there's been no growth, and I'm very, very ashamed that I feel I'm just in the kindergarten after all these years as a Christian.

Poor age. But one way, or the like, I hope, all of us longing for the intervention of God in our lives. Longing for a miracle.

It's a wonderful thing when we are shut up to a miracle. And I believe with all my heart that's exactly where we are right now as Christians. For anything worthwhile.

The trouble is so often we substitute programs for the Holy Spirit. In our churches, He hasn't a chance. Because we're too busy.

So many activities. It's dear old Dr. Tozer, such a friend of mine, and such an encourager in Chicago days, who says in one of his books, I believe it's, um, in Pursuit of God, or in The Knowledge of the Holy, I forget which one, he says, if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from our churches today, 95% of what we do would go on, and nobody would know any difference. Whereas if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference.

That's pretty straight-talking. So it's a devastatingly true. Sheargold.

Absolutely shut up to a miracle. But so often afraid of the Holy Spirit, afraid of being extreme, afraid of getting caught up in some, some instant, instant experience, and caught up to fanaticism, and we push the Holy Spirit aside, not recognizing that he is the divine substitute on earth today for the bodily presence of Jesus 2,000 years ago. Forgetting also that in every letter to the church, to the churches in Asia, that letter closes by saying, he that hath an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, let him hear.

It is the Spirit who is heaven's master, and it's he whom we crowd up, and it's he of whom we're afraid, and it's he who needs to intervene in our lives, in our fellowship, right now. It's as if it's going to mean anything to us. An interesting mini-poll at Bethesda, I think, multitude of people.

Quite a good crowd. Wonderful crowd. Many more coming now since you introduced them.

I should perhaps do that for you, but I don't know who they are, but you can do it at the end, maybe. But it's wonderful to see them. A great multitude, yes, but some are powerless, and some are blind, and some are hot, and some are withered, but all waiting for a miracle.

What a tremendous situation in which to have the privilege of ministry. But our attention is immediately drawn, as so often is the case, for a man.

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