

Christian Growth - Part 4

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual maturity, humility, and prayer for Christians, and highlights the power of prayer to bring about change in the world.

Duration: 1:03:42

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-2, Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 6:33, Mark 1:21-34, Luke 11:9, John 4:23-24, Hebrews 10:25

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Christian Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the state of the world and compares it to the biblical verses that describe a lack of justice and salvation. He specifically mentions the tragedy of Vietnam and the lack of outcry over the injustice that occurred there. The speaker also contrasts this with the dedication to prayer and commitment to God in countries like Korea. He then shares his experience at a Christian event where there was a focus on entertainment rather than deep spiritual ministry. The speaker concludes by expressing his hope that during this week together, God would bring about a transformation in the lives of the attendees, leading them to discover new standards and priorities.

Transcript

Toward spiritual maturity, our goal to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, to be filled up with all the fullness of God. How far do you want him to go? All the way? I trust so, without any reservation or hesitancy. The will of God for your life, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.

And if we're going to grow toward spiritual maturity like that, the Lord has to deal with our faith and cause it to mature, to be able to stand up to all the testings through which he puts it. And we've got to learn humility. A Christian never really gets up because he refuses to go down.

As Dr. Barnhouse used to say, the way to up is down. And we've got to learn, I must decrease, he must increase. Maturity in faith, growth in faith, growth in lifestyle that breaks us at Calvary.

And now, perhaps the most important, and certainly for me the most uncomfortable of all, growth in prayer. And I'm just inviting you, if you will, to turn to two verses, and then keep your Bible open at the second of them. The first, Ezekiel, Ezekiel chapter 22 and verse 30.

Ezekiel 22 and verse 30. And this, believe it or not, is the Lord speaking. And I sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy

it, but I found none.

Isaiah 69, verse 16. Isaiah 59, 16. He saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no one to intervene or no intercessor.

Then his own arm brought him victory and his righteousness upheld him. You often read in the Bible, both in the Old and the New Testament, of the need for each one of us to seek the Lord and search for him. There would be many dicks which would flash to your mind, I would think, immediately I say that.

For instance, Luke 11, verse 9, ask and you shall have, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. And going back to the Old Testament, Jeremiah 29, verse 13, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. But here, in these two verses, everything is in reverse.

It's the Lord seeking for a man, not man seeking for God. The Lord seeking for a man, and he's always doing that. Not for a group of men, not for a committee, not for a drama group, or a beat group, or a singing group, or any other kind of group, of which there are thousands today.

Not that. How, as I think I said to you one session this week, Christian entertainment has taken over. And British people will remember this.

You, dear folks, probably haven't got so far down the line as this, but oh my. Just before Easter, I had a week at what we call Spring Harvest. There were about 3,000 people there in a holiday camp, a Christian week.

And it majored on music, with, of course, ministry added. I was simply there to take the Bible readings in the mornings. I spoke on Jonah for four mornings.

Then I'm Jonathan. Mind you, there was a two-generation gap between me and everybody, or most people there. And in the evening, the first evening, I went and sat in the platform, as I was told to.

But I was right in front of the first drummer, who made an incredible row. And I could not hear a thing. And I pleaded, for some excuse, and sat in the congregation for the rest of the week.

And there was one solid hour of Christian entertainment every night, followed by a tremendous ministry from men of God, who really preached the Word. But I found myself getting a bit critical, and wondering why we needed to endure this noise. On Good Friday morning, a lot of people had left, but there was a communion service.

I stated it, took part in it. And there they took an offering for missionary causes, pre-missionary causes. There would only be about 1,500 people present at that.

And I heard, it was told and announced about half an hour later, the offering that morning had amounted to over 8,000 pounds, that's \$16,000. And that was from people who were mainly teenagers, and many who were redundant, unemployed. And that shut me up.

I may not like the music, I may find ground for criticism upon it, but I learned to keep my mouth shut. And I'm just telling you, I'm not criticizing it. But I'm saying that Christian entertainment has taken over in our country in an alarming way, to replace preaching of the gospel.

Not in all cases, of course, but in many. But the Lord is not looking for that kind of thing. Of course, the argument behind it is, we must get on the wavelength of modern youth.

We must get into an area which they understand. They understand and respond to Deacon Rock, Elvis Presley, Tip Richards, and so on. They must.

We must get on that wavelength. Well, I'll buy that. But there's one area in which the Christian has no competition whatsoever from anybody.

And as I mentioned to you earlier this week, in all the letters in the book of Revelation to the seven churches, they end with the statement, He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Just one man who will listen, who will take time to get off his evangelical rat race and out from the conveyor belt and take time to wait upon God and hear what He wants to say. And in the frantic rush and feverish activity of our church programs, often with a very good objective, the Lord hasn't a chance.

He doesn't even get a vote. And I wondered, as Isaac says, that there was no man to intervene, no one to intercede. How can a Christian intervene in society today? How can he? There isn't a single area in which we Christians can make an effective impact upon society, upon world situations, except one.

And that is intervention through prayer to the highest throne in all the universe. And in this respect, it's a tremendous comfort to me to remember this verse in the Bible, For if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my faith, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. 2 Chronicles 7 verse 14.

And that verse is still true. And I would say it's very significant that in the West, in our own country, and in yours, there are those to whom God has spoken about this, and who are now being used as intercessors. You probably know of Evelyn Christensen, what an impact her ministry has made, not only here, but in Britain.

Two weeks ago, I was in Northern Ireland, tragic country, much misunderstood, not a religious issue, not except in the case of some extremists. It's a communist issue. The IRA is not the Irish Republican Army, it's the International Revolutionary Army.

Wanting a united Ireland under communist rule, knowing perfectly well if they can do that, that's the backdoor into Britain. And in that situation, I found myself in churches packed, absolutely packed, with shooting and all the rest going on in the streets, but packed with people pleading with God for revival and renewal, and the church healthy. I know very well a man of the name of George Verber.

You may know him. He's the founder and director of Operation Mobilization, worldwide, with two ships, Loch Ness and Duloc. It's a thrilling organization to go with.

He was a student at the MBI when I was part of the church, and I saw him begin to take off, spiritually. It was thrilling. He used to come and see me once a month, and he brought a long agenda of things he wanted to talk about.

And we used to have, in successive weeks on a Friday, we had at one time seven successive nights of prayer, because we were facing, as so often in the church, a crisis. And, oh, those nights of prayer I shall never forget, because George Verber really, really led them. As a young fellow, he was absolutely, absolutely fired up.

And I used to say to him, George, the Lord has a tremendous thing for you. You'll probably make some big mistakes, but the Lord has a wonderful thing for you. And he used to go to the faculty meeting.

The MBI would knock on the door and say, Gentlemen, I'm conducting an open air service in Chicago Loop. I expect you all to be there to represent the faculty. Well, that's a bit dangerous, but he did it, and introduced it, but couldn't contain it.

Tremendous fellow. And when I go to speak sometimes, there's invitation at the conferences they have every year, in Belgium, sometimes in London, wherever one may be. Always they have a night spent waiting upon God.

Fellows who go to the OM really face a real test. They go to have lectures on anthropology and all the subjects as they go out to different countries. And having had their lectures, they simply bed down on the floor and sleep there and have lectures the next day.

And that goes on for a whole month. And their food is, well, it's primitive. But they mean business with the Lord.

And I go to a country like Korea, and at five o'clock in the morning, a bell rings, a church bell, calling the nation to pray. And hundreds of people meet every day to wait upon God for two hours, that he would give us, give us in the world before Jesus comes, one totally Christian nation. And out of a population of 38 million, they already have 12 million committed Christians.

Church growth in Korea is fantastic, absolutely fantastic. But these are exceptions, exceptions to the pleading and the burden of the heart of God. He sought for a man.

Of course, that's used in the generic sense. I mean, he would not say no to a woman. He sought for just one person.

And I love these words that I quote to you from an author, George Liddell. Listen to them. Give me a man, one man, whose faith is master of his mind, and I will right all wrongs and bless the name of all mankind.

Give me a man, one man, whose tongue is touched with heaven's fire, and I will flame the darkest heart with high resolve and clean desire. Give me a man of God, one man, one mighty prophet of the Lord, and I will give you peace on earth, both with a prayer, not a sword. Give me a man of God, one man, true to the vision that he sees, and I will build your broken shrines and bring the nations to their knees.

The Lord sought for a man. If you ever go to London, don't forget to go to the National Gallery, and in it you'll find a photograph, a portrait of General Bulls, the founder of the Salvation Army. And in that portrait, you see him sitting at his table with an open Bible and a bowed head, pleading with God, obviously.

And one night, the porter of the gallery was going round to shut all the doors, and he went into the room where General Bulls' portrait was, and here was a man who hadn't left with everybody else that day, and he was on his knees before that portrait, and he was weeping with all his heart, saying, Lord, do it again, do it again. And that's a new dimension for us. No matter how good our work is and how good our ministry and how good our organization, that is a dimension that is unoccupied.

Lord, do it again. Give me a man, just one man, and that's priority in heaven. And yet, all of us, all of us, now at least the one who brings and discharges this burden from the Lord to you, all of us would

acknowledge that this is the area in which we are weakest.

A well-known Christian leader, whose name you would know but who would prefer to be anonymous, said, When I go to prayer, I find my heart so loath to go to God, and when it's with him, so loath to stay. We can always find time for the things in life that we think are the most important. I wonder, on our list of priorities, where we put the time we spend with God.

My Jesus, I love you, I know you are mine. For you all the pleasures of sin, I resign. My Jesus, I love you.

When you love people, what do you want to do? Always be with them, be alone with them. The joy of love, the intimacy of love expressed in fellowship together. Honestly, honestly, how long has it been since you spent half an hour with the Lord alone and told him you loved him? Today? This week? Last week? This year? Last month? Or never? The Lord Jesus had a dreadful word to describe such a person.

He said to him, You hypocrite, you worship me with your lips, but your heart, how far from me? I've sought for a man. To most of us, who would draw up a list of priorities, that would mean curtailing the time we spend in prayer. Martin Luther, when asked about his plans for the next day's work, said, Work from early till late.

In fact, I have so much to do, I will spend the first three hours in prayer. That wonderful prophet of God in this country, A.W. Sousa, whose books are best sellers, and now people think of him with highest respect, but when he was alive, thought a bit peculiar, very strange, never mixed with anybody. Oh, what an encourager he was to me.

When I came to America, far too British to come here, really. I had to learn such a lot, to think American. He said to me, he called me on the phone and said, Look, you may find that things are a bit difficult for you in that church.

If you want fellowship, come in a prayer with me any day you like. So I said, Fine, tell me where and when. Oh, he said, South shore of Lake Michigan, any morning in April to October between five and eight, where I joked.

I lived about thirty miles away on the north side of Chicago, a bit early. I didn't go too often, but when I did go, I felt it was holy ground. Here was A.W. Sosa on his face, on the sand of Lake Michigan, with an open Bible, pleading with God.

That's what made him the man he was. And over and over again, I heard him on WNBI, Moody radio station, preaching the word. Ah, with such authority, with such power, with such conviction.

And I tell you, Chicago, United States, and the world, lost something when he departed for heaven. The Lord had given the United States a man. And there are no shortcuts to that.

No shortcuts to ministry, to testimony. No shortcuts to Bible study, fellowship, leadership. No shortcuts to it all, unless God finds in you a man, a woman, who will intervene on his behalf.

If our view of prayer is anything like that of the Lord Jesus, we become more dismayed than ever. Surely, if there's anybody on earth who ever could dispense with prayer, it would be our Lord. Surely He, the Son of God, the spotless Jesus, He didn't need to pray.

Oh, but you look through the Gospels, and you find that prayer was the dominating factor of His life. Over and over again. Take it in Mark chapter 1 sometime.

Read it through for yourself. Saturday in the morning, in the temple, teaching, healing, casting out demons. Later in the day, going to Simon's home, his mother-in-law's home, where she was sick of a fever, and He healed her.

And in the evening, great multitude was gathered, the sick, the maimed, and the lame, and He healed them all, and then exhausted, for He, as a man, knew all our weariness and all our tiredness. In the morning, rising a great while before day, He went up into a mountain. And I read through the Gospels, and I look, and I am ashamed as I find time and time again, and every crisis, and the choice of His disciples, and every great issue in life.

He went away. He departed from the multitude. A great crowd came to see Him and listen to Him, and He withdrew from them, drew back from the crowd, and went to be alone with His disciples.

Mark 1.35, Luke 5.16, Mark 6.46, Luke 9.28, these and many other verses tell us that. And I find myself reduced to having no excuse. Both Paul and Our Lord made it clear that real prayer is not merely having a nice little chat with Jesus.

It'll be right, all right. But it's Galat who said, All vital praying makes a drain on man's resources. True intercession is a sacrifice, a bleeding sacrifice.

Jesus performed many mighty works without any outward sign of strain, but of His praying, it is recorded in Hebrew, sacrifice. He offered up prayer and supplication with strong crying and tears. Of course, there is one requisite, prerequisite of all true prayer, and I find that in Isaiah, Isaiah, sorry, chapter 58.

Let me just glance at that chapter with you, the opening verses. Try aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sin. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that did righteousness, and did not forsake the ordinance of their God.

They ask of me righteous judgment, the delight to draw near to God. Why have we fasted, and thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and thou takest no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers. Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight, and to hit with wicked fists.

Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high. These people, Israelis, were complaining that in spite of continually fasting and performing all necessary religious functions, they weren't enjoying the blessing that God had promised them. And God's answer was to point out to them that they were going the wrong way about it.

He turns the whole responsibility upon them. And if they accuse him of inactivity, he points to their sinfulness. Chapter 59, verse 2, Behold the Lord's hand, that one is not shortened that he cannot say it, or his ear dull that he cannot hear.

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he does not hear. What a plight to be in! What a plight! They shut their eyes to his law, and he shut his eyes to their deliverance. And that's repeated over and over again today.

Look at the language of verses 9 through 11 in chapter 59. Therefore, justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us. We look for light and behold darkness, for brightness, but we walk in gloom.

We grope for the wall like the blind. We grope like those who have no eyes. We stumble at noon and twilight among those in full figure.

We are like dead men. We all growl like bears. We moan and moan like doves.

We look for justice, but there's none. For salvation, but far from us. For our iniquities, our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us.

For our transgressions are with us, and we know, we know our iniquities. Every word of those verses, every word of them could be repeated over and over again today. Don't you think the language of those verses could be applied almost to the last word in the tragedy of Vietnam years a decade ago? I spoke to Stephen Arthur after he'd just been there, and he'd seen and talked to General Abrams because he was visiting on behalf of the forces and ministering to the people at the invitation of the chaplain.

He spoke to General Abrams, and General Abrams said to him, If I had my own way here, I could finish it off in two weeks. But his hands were tied. What happened? Well, Vietnam comes in and crushes South Vietnam and wipes them out.

Anybody squeal about it? No. A few little noises, but no protest. Same things happened in Afghanistan.

Same things happened in Poland. The Soviet Union getting right away with the whole business and daring to say they have the thing to do with it. I wondered that there wasn't a man who would intervene and intercede.

But then, why is God so inactive? Why does it seem to go on as though he was dead? That should make me think. But it's not only true, beloved friend, nationally, but it's also true personally because a wrong relationship with him, no matter what else is right, inevitably pulls the curtain to his promises being fulfilled. Let me say something to you that hits hard.

I found in life that the supply of God's adequacy, his adequate grace, never is in conflict with the demand of his holiness. But I just repeat it, not only for your sake, but to my own heart. The adequate supply of the grace of God is never in conflict with the demand of his holiness.

And God puts the blame for his inactivity fairly and squarely where it belongs. He's not dead, this one. But if we want him to hear us, every barrier's got to go down.

It comes between him and us. And that means genuine repentance. And that means being sorry enough to stop it.

I don't go on repenting or shouldn't go on repenting of the same thing year after year. There's no sign of spiritual growth there. But because spiritual growth is desired in heaven more than anything else, as I grow, the Lord opens my eyes and opens my heart to fresh areas of truth concerning which I need to repent and turn to him.

But repentance means not that I go on sinning. What? Shall we continue in sin, says Paul, that the grace of God should abound God for me? How shall we who are dead to it continue any longer? Repentance.

Genuine repentance means a change of mind and a change of behavior and a change of attitude, which leads me to higher ground.

But instead of doing that, Israel had forsaken prayer. No wonder, no wonder. The Lord was amazed that in spite of the tide of corruption, there wasn't any man bold enough to stand in the gap on behalf of God.

Oh, if only he could find an intercessor. Brethren, said Paul to the Romans, chapter 10, verse 1, Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. Now, notice something.

My heart's desire, my prayer. Have you ever realized, and I confess that it isn't long since this got home to me, there's a big difference between my prayer and my praying. A big difference.

My prayer and my praying. My prayer, the burden. My praying, and there's a tremendous lot of prayerless praying that goes on.

My praying, the words with which I cloak and clothe and express my thoughts, the words which put my thoughts into verbal expressions, but which are carefully guarded so that they will never offend anybody in the prayer meeting. They must be on track. They must be, as the church usually prays, they must be, they must conform, they must be orthodox, and I'm thinking as I pray of words that I'd better forget, and words that I'd better cut out, and things that have been lost for, and I'm praying, forgive me, but that's why it is that our prayer meetings in churches are often just praying games.

You know, oh, how a pastor almost climbs up the wall when he's handed a list of prayer requests. Somebody's toothache. Somebody else's backache.

Somebody else has got foot trouble. Somebody else's flu has got flu. All sorts of physical problems.

Oh, I'm not being unsympathetic. They need our prayers. But I could count on the fingers of one hand the number of times when someone has put in a burden for their life and told the truth.

I'm desperate, and I can't go on unless the Lord meets me on that issue in my heart and breaks my hypocrisy. I'm afraid to pray like that. Afraid? Why? Well, there might be excuses on the roof.

And having read the prayer requests, the pastor then asked, rather so-and-so's a leader in prayer, and boy, does he. He'll pray round the world for about 20 minutes, and the prayer meeting is dead as flat as a door. My praying.

Oh, but when I go into church that's released, and got the Holy Spirit on the move, and the water of life is beginning to flow in, I meet a church that cares, that is loving and concerned and caring. My daughter, our daughter, not in Birmingham, Alabama, but Birmingham, Britain, and she attends an Anglican church, which, oh, don't shoot me down in flames, is biblically charismatic. Biblically.

Not extreme, but biblically. No insistence upon any particular gift, but biblically. It's released from tradition.

And it's called, the prayer meeting is called, Open to God. And after a few choruses like we've had, possibly a hymn, the service is open to God, and to each other. And people go up to one another, if they've been out of fellowship, and apologize.

And pull right what's wrong, or if they can't do it there and then, they'll bear witness to the fact they ought to. And there's confession, honest confession, within the area where fellowship has been spoiled by their

actions. And there's a heart that's broken, and there are tears, and there's reality, and there's pleading with God, and there are no barriers, and heaven seems to open upon us.

I know churches in this country, which are like that. I won't name them. I won't.

No. I'll name one. You know, it's in California, and it was a Presbyterian church, pretty poor, and the man started preaching the faithful gospel.

But if it's pudding, it's heavy. One day a heavy came in, heavy day as it was, and as soon as he came in, everybody moved off, to sit somewhere else, it was a bit ridiculous. And amazingly, he got confessed, wonderfully, because the pastor was a faithful preacher of the Word, and he got soundly saved, he was a drug addict, and he was completely free.

And the pastor said to him, don't come back here. You couldn't talk, which is what we do, but go and tell all your friends what's happened to you. So he went out, and he was so relieved, so free, no, no, no, hang up.

He was absolutely free. And the others who all wanted the same freedom said, what's happened to you, how do you do, I don't know, I don't explain it, Jesus, that's all I know, Jesus, he's coming to my life. You come with me next Sunday to church, all of you, and you'll find out, oh, thirty of them turned up, and they sat in the front two rooms, and they put the feet up, and the heels in front of them, and they put the toes through the communion cup holes, and the congregation were hopping mad.

And the next Sunday, the next Sunday, there was a notice, outside the church, and the church, that notice said, no bare feet allowed. And the pastor said, after the service this morning, there will be a church business meeting for members only. The membership meeting was held, and the church, the pastor said to them, either that notice is removed, or I cease to be a pastor.

Anybody who's a pastor, or a pastor's wife, will understand what I mean when I say, he lost the battle, but he won the war. Some families got the feathers ruffled and quit. I was stuck with him, and soon the church exploded, not physically, but spiritually, and when I got there two years after, oh, they weren't meeting in the building, couldn't get in.

They were meeting in a huge tent, huge tent, sitting about, over 3,000 people, and I squeezed in the back row, and that service was being conducted on a Saturday evening by half a dozen music groups, not speaking in such, but, oh, tremendous music, worshipful music, and all of them, they said to me, how the Lord had delivered them and saved them, and the service started at seven and went on till ten. By nine o'clock, all my 17 hairs were standing right on end with sheer excitement to find 3,000 young people absolutely on fire for this. Ten o'clock it finished, and all went out, and bled so hard.

They went out into little groups with lamps and torches, sat down on the beach with open Bibles, prayed, read the Word till midnight. Oh, that was surreal. That church has a new building now.

You know what happened? 10,000 people attended, twice as many. And you know the program? 2,000 young people, different ones, attend every night for Bible study, nothing else. That's the church program.

Oh, absolutely, absolutely alive. It was absolutely thrilling. My prayer.

Prayer is praying out the window. Church program out the window. Hymn prayer, hymn reading, notice this, choir piece, offering sermon, hymn benediction out the window.

Thrown overboard, cleared out. There they worship God and reality and spirit and the truth. They're all open to God.

They praise Him and rejoice in Him, and they're not ashamed to stand up and shout hallelujah. Why should Christian people be denigrated to sit on a pew and never participate in a service and listen to somebody preach for sometimes 10 minutes or sometimes 60, and then go out and talk about anything except the Lord and never really be concerned and never been moving for God? Why do we do that? Why? God knows. But He wondered that there was no man and wondered that there was nobody to intercede.

My prayer, my praying, my praying, meaningless, dead, but my prayer, the burden of my heart that God has put upon me, the concern, my prayer, my heart's desire for Israel is that they might be saved. But you see, Christians who are uninvolved and not prepared for the sacrifice of time and inconvenience, that that would demand? No, they're not interested. And so the church in these desperate days has lost its attack power and the fire from the devil and every possible hand.

Satan using all kinds of methods and all kinds of things today that he's never even used before. Now the church is hampered because he looks for a man and those willing to commit themselves to Jesus. My! So that warfare, and I don't mind telling you that when I came here I pleaded with God that here at this precious week together the Lord would give us a man, a woman, perhaps more than one, who this week would make these days to be a watershed for their lives.

On the one side of that watershed there are half-developed sense of values, wrong priorities, and a frustrating looking around for spiritual shortcuts to exorcise a sense of failure. And on the other side of that watershed they discovered new standards, new touchstones, and we begin to learn how few things in life are really essential but how essential are a few. And for 50 years they'd be with the right man.

So God knows. Three years in hell found a busy Christian who serves and works for the Lord and programs the whole business seven days a week. Amen, says the devil.

God looked for a man who'd scrap his program and adjust his diary and clean the thing up and put his first thing to bed. But God may find a man. Of course, may I say that we excuse ourselves in this area because, um, well, we can justify it on theological grounds.

After all, is the argument your Heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him. Then why pray? Fine. Matthew 6, 32.

Why bother to pray? If the Lord is sovereign and all things are under His control why should I bother to pray? If He knows, then prayer? I'm interfering with somebody's free will. I'm blackmailing God. I've actually heard people say that.

That's what prayer is doing. You're blackmailing God. Persuading Him to act.

You're interfering with a man's individual personal choice. In my deepest respect that is making a scapegoat of the sovereignty of God. And excuses us from all that travel.

Paul said in writing to Galatians My little children My little children I travel in thirst till Christ be caught. Travel. Paul, as I've already said this bowed his knee before his Father in Heaven and prayed that the church might be filled up with all the fullness of God.

And the devil's great concern is to keep us from all that. He loves to see us up to the eyes in work provided I don't pray. He doesn't even care our eager Bible study provided I don't pray.

And never applies. He laughs at our toiling hours but he trembles when he finds somebody really really at prayer. It was H.J. Gordon who said, listen I have to say this rather slowly You can do more than pray when you have prayed but you can never do more than pray until you have prayed.

Got that? No, I thought not. Reverse gear. Start again.

Put it down and think it through. You can do no more. Excuse me.

You can do more than pray when you have prayed. But you can never do more than pray until you have prayed. One more time.

Like our choruses three times, right? You can do more than pray when you have prayed. But you can never do more than pray until you have prayed. If only we believe that.

That's why God is so amazed and wonders that there's nobody to intervene. But also that there's nobody humble enough to approach him on the only basis that can make intervention successful. Casting ourselves on the mercy of God.

David cried, O Lord. Isaiah cried, chapter 6 verse 1, O that thou would rend the heavens and come down Hannah in bitterness of heart because of her barrenness, wept and prayed, O Lord of hope. The O has gone out of our prayers.

The desperation has gone. Therefore there's no prayer. We seldom cry, O Lord.

May I point out the most important thing of all before I stop. That in spite of our failure to hold this strategic battlefield God's purposes may be delayed but they can't be thwarted. Ultimately Isaiah 59 and verse 16 will be true.

The Lord saw it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man. Wondered there was no one to intervene.

Then his own arm brought him victory and his righteousness upheld him. That verse will be true and God will have the victory. But I am forced to the conclusion this morning I am forced to this conclusion.

If God can't find an intercessor, can't find people who really put this area of living first, he destroys a nation. Verse 17 and 18 He put on righteousness at his breastplate, a hammer of salvation upon his head, put on garments of vengeance for clothing, wrapped himself in fury as a mentor, according to the deed, so will he repay. Wrapped to his adversaries, requital to his enemies, to the coastland he will render requital.

God's purposes may be delayed but they can't be thwarted. Ultimately he has a victory but even so the cause, the cause his people have failed him strategically on a key battleground of all. God takes things into his own hand and destroys a people and achieves his victory.

My dear brothers and sisters it's a deep conviction in my heart that says exactly where western civilization is today. The nerve center of the Christian gospel is no longer in the west. It's in parts of South America.

It's in parts of Africa. It's in Korea. Hong Kong, Singapore.

The Far East, the third world. Where the church under suffering and under pressure are being released by the spirit of God. Where God is moving in tremendous power and church growth well, that's automatic.

You don't need a program for church growth. Program will kill it. If you've got the Holy Spirit, it's automatic.

You look at the Acts of the Apostles for confirmation of that sweeping statement. They had no program. They had no degrees.

They had no clever people. Just a bunch of nobodies. But there was fire, on fire with God the Holy Spirit who had broken through under his release and was free to move them as he willed and smothered him.

And Jesus. And God is just the same today. But somebody is saying to me this is going to put a terrible burden on us.

This is really, really something else. I can't possibly, a burden like that, hours and spent like that is out of question, out of my curriculum. It's absolutely impossible.

Just hold it. Hold it. I'm finishing in five minutes so don't get around.

But let me read to you Romans 8. Romans 8, verse 26. Likewise, oh, listen to every word may fall upon your heart like a jewel from heaven. The Spirit helps us in our weakness.

For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sigh too deep for words. And he who searches the heart of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit. The perfect Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Oh, has that verse really come alive and hit you? It only has done to me in the last few months. Absolutely alive. Big program, much to do.

Awful lot of prayers needed. Power nurse. The Spirit helps us in our weakness.

We don't know what to pray for as we ought. Why we think about putting in prayer lids and getting something to remember them and then we get them overcrowded and with so many people to pray for. We can't.

But the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sigh too deep for words. See it? It is God who put his burden upon my heart. The burden which I, he wants me to carry.

I don't get it myself. I don't do it by seeing a need. I don't do it if I don't know how to preach.

I don't do it by taking matters of meaning. I do it because God has put a burden on my heart for that crowd, that people. And that burden he expresses through me.

My prayer sign too deep for words. And that'll mean that most of us will say no to many in invitation. That's why that's why the Lord is putting a stop to my travel overseas at the end of this year.

Clamping down. Because he's put a burden a burden from heaven on me. For the Bible school at which I teach.

For the young folks who come there. For our country which is in desperate need the greatest mission field in the world. 85% of the people in Britain attended the place of worship at the beginning of this century.

2% now. 2% now. Nobody cares.

Violence. Strike. Revolution.

Everywhere. Anarchy. Revolt.

The only answer is the gospel. Proclaimed in the authority and in the power of the Spirit of God. In answer to a sigh too deep for words comes from heaven.

And I find myself answering, Oh God thank you. I don't know what to pray for as I ought but I want to make room for the Holy Spirit to pray in my life and through me dwelleth and lay on my heart the burden which is to be mine from heaven and scrap the rest get out from under the rat race. Because it is the Spirit who makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Putting burdens on you. Oh no. Taking them off.

See it? Burden with many things. Many things. Hundreds of things.

Burden with them yes. Doing them. Working with them yes.

But how many of them have come like a sigh from heaven. And God has burdened for that work that ministry. That which is yours.

And you refuse to touch any of them. Because this is your burden from God and he is making intercession for you with sighs too deep for words. Taking burdens off.

Yes. Rolling them right away. And refusing to accept a thousand invitations and being thought very lazy.

Very unspiritual. Ever to say no to anything. But saying no.

Where I'm not conscious that God has put a burden on my heart. I am happy to be here today. Because in spite of what I've been saying to you.

I know it was a burden to come here. Came not simply from the BFF office. Gracious as they were.

Came from heaven. And if anything happens at this conference which is worthwhile it will be in part at least due to that. And the greatest answer to prayer for it all would be if there's someone who says I see what you're getting at.

And I'm going home and I'm going to examine my calendar and my diary. And I'm going to scrap and say no to this and to that. I don't care what people think.

I can only carry the burden that God puts on me. And I won't be saying evangelical meat prayer. Right correct to praise.

Oh no. At Caponry Hall we have a park. And our nearest neighbors are 50 cows.

And it's a wonderful thing to go out of the door through that 170 acres of ground of Caponry and have a prayer walk. And cows don't understand. But sometimes it goes up from my heart in recent days.

Oh Lord thank you. That's your burden. And I know that is something I can face with absolute assurance of its adequacy.

But if it doesn't take from my heart a burden or a concern I'll say well I don't like to refuse these people fresh answers. They're natural to ask me. So I'll go.

And I'll go with no burden. With no real concern. Happy to evangelise with three points.

Introduction. Conclusion. And that'll be it.

And we'll be home very shortly. And they'll say won't you come again? No. Oh beloved you got it.

He wondered but there was no intercept. No one could God grant he may find many of them right here. Let's pray.

There's much I would like to do right now but there's no time. I would like to have you all wait upon God for a while but we can and some other time for this some quarters I would ask people to hold up their hands but I won't do that. The biggest transactions with the Lord are effected on my knees alone with him.

And because that hasn't happened recently in many of our hearts we'll see that it does happen to this day. And we'll see this day. So the burden we don't sigh too deep for it and let the Holy Spirit intercede and pray through us according to the will of God.

Thank you Lord. We remember that as you prayed Father if it's possible let this cup pass through me never let not my will but yours be done. And the victory was won.

The burden accepted. And he triumphed. And is alive today.

Praise you Lord Jesus that you are alive in my heart, in our hearts. You live and reign in us. Lord carry out your rule in this lump of clay called me and called each one of us.

Administer your kingdom there and Lord teach us to pray in the Spirit and put upon our hearts that for which your purpose I'll act. Lay it as a burden and Lord teach us to refuse anything else and accept only what comes from you. Thank you Lord that you make no mistake as they relax look up to you and trust you.

Have your own way Lord. Have your own way. You are the potter I am the clay.

Mould me and make me up as I will while I am waiting. You live. Thank you Lord Jesus.

Amen. I'll hand over the service to Mrs. Tim.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5356.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alan-redpath/christian-growth-part-4/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net