

Christian Growth - Part 6

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the necessity of the Holy Spirit for spiritual maturity and living a victorious Christian life.

Duration: 1:09:00

Scripture: Psalm 1:3, Isaiah 44:3, Ezekiel 47:1-12, Matthew 5:6, John 14:16-17, John 16:13, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Christian Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jacob from the Bible. Jacob had lived his life independently of God, making mistakes and facing the consequences. Eventually, God brought Jacob to a point of surrender and Jacob confessed his need for God's blessing. The preacher emphasizes that true life and authority come from submitting to the lordship of Jesus Christ. The sermon also touches on the controversy surrounding the Holy Spirit and the importance of being filled with the Spirit in our hearts.

Transcript

Now, toward spiritual maturity, and if you will turn with me this morning to a portion in the Old Testament, in the prophecy of Ezekiel, chapter 47. Ezekiel, chapter 47. We'll read first twelve verses, and then we'll bow our hearts and heads before God, and we'll quietly, reverently sing that chorus, Father, I adore you.

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east, so the temple faced east. And the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me round on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east, and the water was coming out on the south side.

Going on eastward with a line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water, and it was ankle deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was knee deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was up to the loins.

Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen, and it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. And he said to me, Son of man, have you seen this? Then he led me back along the bank of the river. As I went back, I saw upon the bank of the river very many trees on the one side, and on the other.

And he said to me, the water flows toward the eastern region, and goes down into the Arabah, and when it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes, every living creature which swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there that the waters of the sea may become fresh.

So everything will live where the river goes. Fishermen will stand beside the sea from En-Gedi to En-Iglen. It will be a place for the spreading of nests.

Its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the great sea. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh, they are to be left for salt. And on the bank, and both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food.

Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruits fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing. This is the word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we would open our hearts wide to you today. Happy are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for the desire for yourself implanted in our hearts by you. Thank you, Lord, that our hearts are wide open and expecting that you will speak through your word today. Lord, uphold me as I would speak to uplift you, and speak, Lord, for thy servitude.

Speak just now, some message to meet my need. If so, let us know. Speak now through thy holy word and make me see some wonderful truth.

For Jesus' sake, towards spiritual maturity, we have just two more sessions today and tomorrow, and I'm more and more impressed by what has not been said, rather than what has been said. I have so much ground to cover, if I don't. The great subject of our theme verse for the whole conference has been that we might be transformed into the likeness of Christ, that we might be filled with all the fullness of God.

But how? And that's our subject for today. Those of you who have responsibilities for ministry, as you all do, will probably understand when I say that quite an amount of time available at night is spent wishing I hadn't said what I had said, and wondering what I'm going to say when I speak again. But fortunately, the Lord doesn't fail when I trust him to give me this day my daily bread.

So hopeless, trying to prepare and settle on a subject for ministry weeks ahead, and then you find it dries up on you. And this only really came to life again in my heart last evening after the service. And to speak to you on a subject, the subject of the fullness of the Spirit of God in our hearts, isn't easy.

Because, of course, the Holy Spirit, who was given by our Lord Jesus, who earned the right for all of us to be enveloped by his light, is the subject of controversy. That's typical of the devil, of course. He attacks right at the center.

And the very one who was sent to unite us is now the subject of a great division, which is very sad. And all I can do, and all I could do, is to say, Lord, well, all I want to do is to speak your word as you show it to me. And as we tread through some controversial areas, may love overcome in every area.

As we've thought about various areas in our lives, there needs to be a constant maturing. We need to think especially about what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Let me quote a very well-known Methodist minister in Britain, who at the Catholic Convention, some years ago now, said, There is no such thing as a once-and-for-all fullness of the Spirit.

It is a constant appropriation of a constant supply from Jesus himself. A moment-by-moment trust in a moment-by-moment filling. And at the moment I begin to believe, at that moment I begin to receive.

That's very simple. It's very wonderful. So, what I'm talking to you this morning about is not a sort of something which puts you on a first-class level, and these other Christians, waving away in second-class experience, the Holy Spirit is not an optional extra.

He's a divine necessity. You can't live without him. And it's a subject which thrills my heart, because he's the one by whom we live.

Now you might wonder why I should turn to an obscure Old Testament passage like this, when there must be many areas of the Bible where there's a lot of teaching about the Holy Spirit. You know them all too well, particularly, for instance, in John 14 through 16. And there are many other areas.

But I don't know any way there is such an intrusive teaching ministry upon what the Holy Spirit does, and who he is, as is given to us here in Ezekiel 47. You see, the Bible is a book written in the land of the Middle East, a land that knew barrenness, dryness, wilderness, and therefore its metaphors and illustrations are drawn from the background of that kind of situation. That is why you have phrases in the Old Testament such as wells of salvation.

Streams in the desert. Rivers in the wilderness. The godly man, says Psalm 1, the godly man, is like a tree planted by a river, whose leaves never wither, and who bring forth fruit in its season.

And whatsoever he does, prospers. A godly man. And, of course, that imagery is taken over into the New Testament, where, for example, the Lord speaking to the woman of Samaria by the well, says to her, If you go on drinking of that water, which has its source in the ground, you'll go on being thirsty.

But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. For the water that I shall give him shall be in him not a well, but a fountain, springing up into everlasting life. And a little later on in the same gospel, in chapter 7, and verse 37, at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Lord Jesus stands at the gate and says, If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

And out from his heart shall flow not a trickle, not a stream, not even a river, but rivers of living water, divine sufficiency. And you could take the imagery right through to the very end of the Bible, the book of Revelation, the little glimpse we have of heaven. I wish we had more, but that's enough for now.

Perhaps that's all we can take. But in heaven, there's no night, there's no moon, there's no sun, there's no sea. I'm rather sorry about that.

I love the sea, but it may be the sea marks separation. But there's a river, a river as clear as crystal, that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. And so right through the Bible, here's your picture of a river.

And John, to explain what the Lord Jesus said about streams and rivers of water flowing through us, said this, he spoke of the Holy Spirit, who they that believe in him should receive. And so it is with that authority

that I turn to this passage this morning to describe to you the growing maturity of an experience of being filled up with all the fullness of God. Let me ask you therefore, remembering homiletics in this situation, let me ask you to look first of all at what I would call the essence, the essence of the river's power.

The essence of the river's power. Notice the source of it, and the course of it, and the force of it. The source of it, that's one.

He brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east. And the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. The source of it.

The river had its source in the temple of God, in the place, the highest place of heaven's administration, heaven's authority on earth. And when I receive the Holy Spirit in my life, and when do I receive him? When I'm born again. Let me be quite clear about that.

You cannot be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit. You can be a believer without having the Holy Spirit. I hope that doesn't shock you.

As a matter of fact, I hope it does. You can believe all the facts, and your Bible from cover to cover, and be a thoroughgoing evangelical, but not a Christian. A Christian is not being a believer.

He's someone who has paid, repented, and received the gift of God's Spirit, and born again of the Spirit of God, and whose life is marked by a dramatic change of behavior. And a great speech preacher, C. H. Spurgeon, used to say, if your faith does not lead you to a drastic change of behavior, it will never change your destiny. That's most unpopular preaching these days.

But that's true. My faith must lead to a dramatic change of behavior if it's going to change my destiny. Therefore, when I receive the Holy Spirit at my new birth, that life comes from the throne of God.

The Holy Spirit was not given because 120 people met for a 10-day prayer meeting. Between Calvary and Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came because Jesus said to his disciples, you remember, I am going away from you. It is better for you that I should go away.

I can imagine that must have taken somebody. It's better for you to go away, because if I go not away, the whole comforter will not come to you. Now, don't let me start and be awkward right from the beginning, but I don't like that word comforter.

Advocate, counselor, that's better. There's a tapestry in the Tower of London which depicts on it the wars between England and France of several centuries ago. And the tapestry shows the British troops going in to attack the French and King William in charge of them with a long spear in his hand, long, long spear on horseback, prodding his troops into action, pushing.

And the caption of this tapestry says, King William comforted his soldiers. Some comfort. And I find the Holy Spirit to be the most uncomfortable comforter you can know.

Oh, yes, he comforts. But my, he prods. He pushes.

He protects. He chases. He gives me enough time.

Thank the Lord he does. I think the biggest thing that I marvel about is God's patience with me. I would be heretical if I said to you that God's patience with his children, even to me, seems to exceed his everlasting mercy to the uncontested.

Because after all, his people ought to know how to behave. And ought to behave differently. And there ought to be something unique about them.

And yet we cuddle along on low-level Christianity so much. No wonder he has to prod. But when he comes to us in our hearts, he comes from the throne of God in heaven.

For our Lord Jesus ascended to the throne and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. And he comes to us from the throne. At the moment of your new birth, you have throne life.

You may not know much about the victory, but you have the victory. You don't have to battle against sin. Your battle is to trust and to believe that in you dwells the one through whom we are more than comfortable.

The battle is not mine, but his. But at your conviction, at the moment when he comes to dwell within you, you have the victor, the source of life at the throne of God. He comes to you from the throne, and he comes to you by way of the altar, by the place of sacrifice.

The Holy Spirit was not given in Jesus' lifetime because the sin question hadn't been dealt with. But when it was dealt with and removed and the penalty had been paid, the way was clear for heaven to do the most thrilling, exciting thing that it ever could do, and that was to give to a new humanity the life of Jesus, to indwell, to control, and to fill them. He comes to us from the throne, but he comes by way of calvary, and he comes by way of the place of sacrifice.

The price has been paid, and the way is clear now for the Lord to bring on earth a new humanity which no longer is living independently of him in rebellion, in revolt, but whose joy it is to submit to the Lordship and the authority of Jesus Christ himself. You have received, therefore, life that comes from the throne, and it comes by the way of the cross. And it's natural for that life to be in authority, but it's also natural for that life to submit.

It's a life of absolute power, absolute authority, but it's a life of absolute submission. I'd better just clarify this. A few years ago, by way of illustration, I was walking down Regent Street in London to Piccadilly Circus.

It was summertime. It was desperately hot. Temperature was just over 70, and everybody was wilting.

And the thing that struck me was the traffic jam. Crowds of London buses, double-deckers, all lined up and none of them moving. I wondered why.

And being an accountant by nature, I began to count the horsepower under the hood of those buses. I soon lost count. Thousands and thousands of horsepower.

And I wondered why they were all stuck. When I got to Piccadilly Circus, I found the answer. The traffic lights had broken down.

So, in an emergency, a rather fat, a very fat London policeman had come on duty. He was actually rather small. Normally, a London policeman is over six feet, but this man was certainly not.

And he was put on the job to look after this colossal traffic jam, and he was standing with one arm on his hip, with the other hand in the air, and his back to all the traffic. He wasn't even looking at them. He just stood there, with his helmet on the back of his head, pointing it out.

And I stood and looked at that man, and I was absolutely fascinated. And I said to him, well, I didn't say to him, but I thought in my mind, I said to him, you know, you think you're no end of a guy, don't you? I guess you've got a wife and five kids, and you're probably a bit trapped in Junction somewhere. And what I would like you to do is to go home and take off that uniform and put on a suit of clothes like I've got on, and come there and stand and take a piece of surface and do that.

In half a minute, you'll be in hospital, if you weren't dead. Those horses under those hoods and those drivers at the wheel of those buses didn't care a scrap for a fat London policeman, but they cared a mighty lot for the authority of his uniform. He was in control of the whole situation because he was under the authority of Scotland Yard, headquarters of London Police Force.

You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Dynamic, dynamic. You'll receive dynamite when he has come upon you.

And he comes to exercise the authority and the sway of his kingdom in my life. And if I'm prepared for total submission to his absolute authority without any reservation, a mark of humility, then, in any situation, I'll be in charge. I don't mean boss, but I mean Satan hasn't got a look-in.

I love that verse from James. You believe there's one God? You do well. The devil believes and trembles.

That's the A.V. I found. Is there another version? Which shall we name it? Another version? Put it this way. You believe there's one God? So do the devil, and he shudders.

That's an interesting change. So I thought I'd look up the Greek New Testament and find what the word really is. And do you know, it only occurs once in the Bible.

And do you know what its real meaning is? If I translate it, if we translate it, it would mean this. You believe there's one God? You do well. So does the devil, and his hair stands right on end.

That thrills me. And brother and sister, let me tell you, let me tell you this. I don't care what your situation is, what your circumstance, where you're going back to, what your home, what your ministry, what your condition.

If, if all of your life is under the authority of a risen Lord, you have the devil on the run. K.O.P.D. Keep on kicking the devil hard. And he's beaten.

Oh, he won't lie down. And he won't admit defeat. But he has an unearthly chance in the presence of a Christian who's under the sway, the domination of Jesus.

And therefore, he's in charge. He's got the dynamite. You know, this is this.

All authority is given unto me, said Christ. And I'm not passing that authority under anybody else. It's mine.

Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel. The authority is his. The dynamite's mine.

In answer to my submission, there's authority. Forgive me for getting excited. The essence of the river's source.

Huh. The throne. The essence of the river's power, rather.

The throne. That's the source of the river. How wonderful.

Oh, my. I mustn't allow myself to get diverted. But isn't it wonderful that our crucified Lord paid the price in order that this might be true of all his people.

And he rose, triumphant God, perfect man. And he'd won the life to us, for us to live again in his power, by his strength. That life comes to us by the throne that's tamed by way of the cross.

And, and, the force of it waters the swimming. Now that's God's purpose for his people. Yes, let's get on.

The second thing this morning is this. Not only, not only the essence of the river's power, but the experience of the river's depth. Did you notice, repeated in this chapter, several times, this little phrase.

So three, going on eastward with a line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through, and he was ankle-deep. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, and it was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, and it was up to the loin.

Again he measured a thousand, then it was the river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen deep enough to swim. You notice? Over and over again, he led me through. He led me through.

He led me through. He led me through the water and it was ankle deep. What does that suggest to you? There's an awful lot of the man who's still dry.

There's an awful lot of the man who never got under it. There's an awful lot of the man still in view and he's simply paddling in the river. My mind flashes to 1 Corinthians where Paul speaks of three types of people, there are only three types of people in the world.

The natural man, the carnal man and the spiritual man. The natural man who's only two thirds alive. He's got the nerve to suggest the Christian is not all there.

Bless his heart, he's only two thirds there himself. He's got physical life, he's got mental life but he's no spiritual life. The natural man, he doesn't understand the things of God.

The carnal person, oh he's a Christian, sure. Brethren, says Paul, I could not see you as spiritual but as a carnal. And there's so much strife and division among you, are you not carnal? You can't even see yourself from the word of God.

You're like little babies who have to be fed with a bottle. Carnal Christians, you've never grown up. You're only ankle deep in the river.

The experience of the river is that he brought me through and the waters were to the ankles. Let me ask you a personal question. Can you remember the day in your life when the river began to flow? Can you? It doesn't really matter.

Not to move from the natural to the carnal and then to the spiritual. Very often it is the natural, the spiritual and then the carnal. And it's not how I begin life that matters, it's how I end it.

And the bigger of the rise of the tide, the greater can be the disaster of the fall. But for the grace of God, there's nothing that can prevent it ending up dry, stale, out of touch, out of you. That's what Paul said when he said to Corinthians, I buffet my body, need it blow upon blow, let heaven forsake the rules to other people.

I should be disqualified. Not lose my salvation but lose my touch with heaven, my fellowship with Jesus. He brought me through and the waters were to the ankles.

Remember the day of your conversion? I remember mine because I happened to be there at the time. In a public house, a tavern in the northwest of England, in the northeast of England. I was training to be a chartered accountant, what you would call a CPA.

And I was one of 60 people in the office who were training for the same thing. But one of the 60 was different from all the others. I'd never met anybody like him.

Everybody else thought he was a religious maniac. But he made us mad. He was horribly consistent.

He kept on arriving on time, never took time off for coffee or something stronger. Never took time off for lunch other than the allotted time. Never wanted to get home about 3 or 4 to play golf.

Never leaving till about 5 o'clock at night. Whenever we got round to tell stories that were very questionable, we couldn't do it when he was around. He didn't tell us not to, but they were out of place in his company.

And it was impossible to be neutral. You can't be neutral in the presence of a spiritual Christian. You've got to take sides.

Yes, everybody can be neutral when you're around, but an average friend does something wrong with your testimony. You'd rather make people mad or glad or sad, but they can't be neutral. And that chap made us all mad.

My employer told me that I had to go and work at this particular village in Northumberland where there was a huge paint factory right away out by the Roman Wall because of the smell of paint. And so I had to go there and stay there for three weeks. Night and day in a little pub with one guest room.

And I had to go and work with this religious maniac. So a week before I went, I took all my friends out and over a glass of beer vowed I'd knock the religion out of him in a week's time. So they wished me well.

And we set out, and the first night together in the same room, two separate beds but the same room, at eleven o'clock at night, he knelt down to pray. I thought to myself, now what on earth do I do now? I've never seen anybody do that before, except occasionally in church. Let's see, I'd better do it myself, I suppose.

So I followed his example. And do you know how long he stayed there? When I was timing him? Fifty-two minutes. Oh, I ached.

Every bone in my body, wooden floor, no mat. Fifty-two minutes. And then, oh, I wish he'd get up.

And in fifty-two minutes he got up. I stayed down an extra minute, just to impress him. And then I went to bed, and I thought, oh, I put up a good show tonight, that's good.

And within a few minutes, he began walking across the bedroom and sat down on the edge of the bed and said to me, excuse me, Red Cross, he said, but do you ever think about anything seriously? I was known to be the one who whipped up all the nonsense. I said, what do you mean? He said, do you want to be saved? Hmm, that's a diplomatic approach. I find it in Six Easy Lessons on soul winning.

And, uh, do you want to be saved? He knew his man, you see. And I just let him have it, with every barrel from every gun that I could fire. What do you mean? Save me? I'm not in the Salvation Army.

I'm not so bad as some people. I'm worse than others. Why should I bother about that? Nothing to do with me at all.

I'll be deterred, not again. In fact, every week, when I was at school, I had to go. So, what's the matter? Then he said to me, when I'd dried up, Do you know anything about victory over sin? I was glad it was dark, because I was conscious of going red.

I said, no. Did you want to? I said, yes, but it's impossible. And then for the first time in my life, at the age of about 21, he told me about it.

About the life he lived and the death he died, and the tomb from which he rose, and ascended to heaven, and the Holy Spirit he would give to live in me. And I received Christ that day. But, of course, I had three weeks to go.

And he took me every night to a different meeting. And talked to me endlessly. And I began to be thrilled and got excited.

I really did. And then, of course, I had to get home. And I went home.

And I was due to start playing rugby football that day. And my parents said, they phoned you up from the club. They want you to turn up today for practice.

And I said, no thanks, I'm not going. I'm going to read my Bible. And the look on their face suggested psychiatry.

Quickly. I went out and sat beside the Roman wall. Oh, lovely face.

And read my Bible with tears. The reality of it just thrilled me. It had come alive.

But the Monday morning I had to go to the office. I went there. All my friends were waiting.

Have you done it? I said, done what? Have you knocked religion out of you? Well, not exactly. You mean you've got religion? Oh, no, nothing like that about me. Oh.

Come have a drink. Uh. No, I'd rather not.

You what? I don't think so. You don't think so? What's the matter, ill? No. Come have a drink.

No, I don't think so. You're religious. No, I'm not.

Yes, you must be. Come and have a drink. No, I won't.

Get off my neck. Come and have a drink. Oh, get off my neck.

Okay. So I went. And didn't have one, but six.

Two days later, a young lady, not my wife, I didn't know her then, called me on the telephone and said, what about a date? That's how they did it in Noget. And I said, well, no, thank you, because she wasn't doing me any good. And she said, why not? Well, I'd rather not.

Oh, but we haven't seen each other for a long, long time. I want you to take me to a dinner. No, I don't think so.

Aren't you well? Yes, very well. Well, what's the matter with you? Nothing. Well, come on.

So I came on. And those two decisions cost me seven wasted years of Christian living. For six, for three weeks, I'd been a spiritual Christian.

At my new birth, at your new birth, He filled me to my capacity, and I was rejoicing in the Lord and my Bible. I'd come alive. But a test from the enemy was too much, fear of being unpopular, fear of losing people that really were doing me no good, fear of losing friends.

And I descended to the depths of carnality. Went to my friend and said to him, no more religion for me. I'm not coming to any more of your meetings.

All right, you said those two decisions. You'll never be happy. You're right with God.

Oof. I qualified as a church accountant. Got a good job in London.

Plenty of money. I wasn't married. Those two facts are connected sometimes.

And I had a good job and plenty of cash, and I picked it up. Dancing, shows, nightclubs, everything. You can't be a Christian and live like that.

Don't you think so? How do I know I was a Christian? Because I was miserable. I used to enjoy it all, but now I hated it. Absolutely miserable, but I didn't know the answer.

I did, but I wasn't prepared to take it. For six years, seven years, I lived like that. During that seven years, my friend came down to see me in London.

And the friend had led me to Christ. He didn't talk to me about Jesus at all. Just chatted about business things and then said, goodbye now.

Nice to see you after all these years, but don't forget, will you, it's possible to have a saved soul and a wasted life. Hmm. Saved soul, wasted life.

That was a Friday. That night I was due to travel up by sleeper train to play rugby football for one of our counties in the north of England. And every click of the wheels, saved soul, wasted life, saved soul, wasted life.

Went out onto the field to play, 20,000 people there, tremendous match. Every step I took, saved soul, wasted life, saved soul, wasted life. I went to the team dance that night.

And the orchestra were playing just the same thing, saved soul, wasted life, saved soul, wasted life. Hmm. I couldn't get away from it.

But they came a time soon after that, when in desperation, I said to the Lord, Lord, for seven years, I've had you. Thank you for making me miserable. You've never had me take possession of you.

That wasn't a second blessing. Now, I believe in a second blessing, of course, because I've been in a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, seventh million blessings. But that was a crisis.

When, for the first time, I, who had been spiritual and descended into carnality, was lifted up into a new understanding, a new experience of the grace of God and the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. Oh, that's not a final thing. It's happened many, many times since.

And I come back to my question that I asked you a little while ago. How deep is the river right now? Anchor deep. And there was a time when you were swimming in it.

But today, if you're honest, the tide's going right up. He brought me through. He brought me through, and the waters were to the knees.

Ah, that's better. When God gets a man's knees, things begin to happen. There's less of the man's feet now, and more of the river.

The tide is coming in, hallelujah. It's getting deeper, and the man's going down. And, if I may say so, he's getting desperate.

I don't know a thing about you, dear folks, except that you've been such a wonderful group. I know that much. But I wonder, if the Lord answered a prayer which I prayed and my wife prayed too, give us people at this conference who are desperate.

People who are saying, I just can't go on any longer. I have no right to be a leader. My life's in a mess, and I'm failing desperately, and I'm right down.

The tide has gone right up, and the things at home are wrong, and the situation everywhere is seeming in collapse. And I said, I'm quoting you, I said before I came here to my husband, or we prayed together, or I said to myself, Lord, if you don't meet me during this week and revolutionize my life, I'm resigning. I'm quitting.

I just can't go on maintaining a pretense. Oh, I can do homiletics. I can do the things I'm supposed to do.

And I know the rules. I know it all. There's nobody better than me from the point of view of intellect and understanding, but I know the things in all theory, and somehow there's some dimension drastically missing, and Lord Jesus, I am so desperate.

Like Jacob. What a remarkable character. Didn't leave home till he was nearly 70, and he's staying at home till he's nearly 70, but of course he's got halfway to go.

I'm so glad the Lord has shortened our last friend. Annette, Bethel, you remember the first night away from home when he was running away from his brother and he truly cheated? The Lord met him, and Jacob saw the angels coming down with heaven's supplies and going up again with Jacob's prayers. And God spoke to him.

He said, Jacob, if you'll trust me, I'll care for you. I'll take you on a journey, and I'll bring you safely back home. And so Jacob made his covenant with God.

He feared the Lord. He worshipped him. Those are two evidences of real conversion which are often lacking, and therefore I would say that at that moment Jacob came to know God and trust Him, and he set out on his journey.

But what a mess he made him. How he blew it. He married the wrong girl, didn't he? Got in business with an unconverted man, an ungodly man, and he found people cheating him the same way as he'd been cheating other people.

And he blew it for 21 years. And then God spoke to him and said, Jacob, come on home. I've had enough of this.

So he gathered together his wives and all his guns, set out to go home. Then somebody told him, your brother's coming to chase you. Ooh, fine.

And he stumbled on ahead of him, and he went up alone beside a brook. And there wrestled the man with him till the breaking of day. I have no doubt at all that this was one of the many pre-incarnation appearances of our Lord Jesus.

And Jacob found himself in his grips. And a man wrestled him, and said to him, let me go, because the day is breaking. And the cry came from a heart that was absolutely desperate, Lord, I won't let you go except you bless me.

I can't go on like I am. I've got to stop. I've got to be a new man.

I've got to live reality. Lord, I won't let you go except you bless me. And how did the Lord answer that? Watch him end.

You mean to tell me he didn't know? Of course he knew. He'd watched him for 21 years. Watched him mess it up.

Watched him get into the wrong marriage. Watched him go into the wrong kind of business. Watched him do it all.

As long as he thought he could go it alone, well, the Lord had to teach him a lesson. But there came the time when God said, I've had enough of this, and brought him home. And now Jacob is in God's grip.

And great God says to him, watch him end. He wasn't looking for information. He was looking for confession.

And so in the grip of God that day, Jacob lifted up his face and said, Sorry, Lord. It's still Jacob. Deceiver, supplanter, unreliable, not trustworthy.

It's still Jacob. After 21 years, the Lord smiled at him and said, that's what I wanted to hear. And I was waiting for the moment when you would come clean and be honest with me and tell me exactly what you are.

But I'll tell you something, Jacob. Because of that condescension, your name shall be no longer Jacob, but Israel. As a prince, you followed God and you prevailed.

It didn't happen in an instant. Everybody's wanting instant holiness. It doesn't happen like that.

But from that moment on, the Jacob life began to disappear. And the Israel life came out on top. There was a change, a transformation.

Something had happened. Something dynamic had taken place. Your name shall be no more Jacob, but Israel.

And Israel, Jacob rose. And the Lord touched his thigh. And for the rest of the 70 years of his life, he limped.

He bore in his body the marks of the Lord. Has God been putting some marks on you? You wouldn't perhaps share them with many people, if any. But things have taken place, alone with God, that are very precious.

He touched you. And you're limping, spiritually. And you're nervous.

He's put a cross upon your life. The experience of the river's death. Lord, Lord, do it for me.

Today. This week. Before we end.

That I can go back in all the sense of the reality of your presence and power. Teach. Witness.

And Lord, it's not me anymore. Because I'm lame. Helpless.

No strength. But your strength has made perfect in my weakness. Because, you see, the experience of the river's death.

He brought me through. And the waters were to the ankles. He brought me through.

And the waters were to the knees. He brought me through. And the waters were to the loins.

And, of course, that's the place of strength. And they that wait upon the Lord renew their strength. Or, they that wait upon the Lord exchange their strength for His.

Oh, my. What the Lord has to put us through to make us understand that. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. An exchange. Isn't it terrific? 2 Corinthians 5, 21.

He was made sin for us. He who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

Oh, I like the living Bible there. It says, God took the sinless Jesus and poured into Him all our sins. And in exchange, He poured all God's goodness into us.

If you weren't all so respectable, you'd say, Hallelujah. What an exchange. Not a reformation.

A complete switch. And a new power. And a new person taken over.

The experience of a river's death. Oh, God grant that nobody should leave this place without knowing that. In reality.

Of course, it depends upon my willingness to tell the Lord exactly. I know what I am. Forgive me that I never tried to be anything different.

Because that's all you expected of me. Me to be a complete washer. Then in exchange, you give me your strength.

He brought me through the washers of the lions. He brought me through and the waters were to swim in. Forgive me if this sounds fanciful and deprecation, but when a man swims, you can't see him.

The only thing you can see is his head. And the head of every man is Jesus. And when I've got, when you've got the river of life just flowing through completely, that's when Jesus is revealed.

And you see Him. Now I must hurry. Fasten your safety belt.

And let's proceed more quickly. I'm talking to myself, really, and not you. But I'm asking you, oh, you're so wonderful in your concentration.

It's really almost embarrassing, but it's marvelous. And I know you're with me. But I must finish by asking you this question.

What sort of a person do you expect to see when you meet somebody who's swimming in it? When you meet somebody whose life has been just overwhelmed with the river of life and Christ, with the power of the Holy Spirit, what sort of person? Some high-up spiritual authority? No, no. The Holy Spirit is never given to produce one or two extra-special first-class Christians and leave the rest of us second-class. I tell you what he has come for, to enable each one of us to live a normal Christian life, to quote Watchman Lee.

And the normal Christian life is to be filled with the Spirit of God and flimsy. Everything else is abnormal or subnormal. And therefore, I notice some words here that I just draw your attention to very briefly.

And the first word is fruit. First Settlers who went back to soar upon the bank of the river bearing many trees on one side and on the other. And in verse 12, and on the banks and both sides of the river there will grow all kinds of trees for food.

Their leaves will not wither nor their fruits fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruits will be for food and their leaves for healing. Fruit.

John 15 and verse 16, I have chosen you and ordained you that you should bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain. What sort of fruit? Character. The fruit of Galatians 5, 22, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.

Fruit. Character. Character of Jesus himself.

That's Jesus. Filled with all the fullness of Jesus. Love, joy, peace, my relationship to heaven.

Longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, my relationship in the world. Faith, meekness, self-control, my attitude to myself. Fruit.

Now, let me get just for a moment into, I hope not into trouble. Not into any problem, would you? That should never be. But let me just touch on an area of controversy.

Not merely will there be fruit, but there must be also gifts. But no Christian has ever had all the gifts of the Spirit, or ever can, or ever will. I may be very naive, but when I read 1 Corinthians chapter 12, I come to understand where all the fuss is about.

It's as clear, as clear as anything to me, I've got a very simple mind. See, I'm... And that's perhaps, but it is absolutely clear. And what does the Lord say? The gifts of the Spirit are distributed severally according to His will.

1 Corinthians 12. Read the chapter to get that. You can't have them all.

What sort of a clear person would you have if you had all the gifts? They're distributed severally according to the will of God. And the second thing I would say, the whole body of Christ needs all the gifts. It's nonsense to say that certain gifts are withdrawn at Pentecost, and they're not for today.

The devil must be very thankful for that, because he's putting on all sales to do all he can to bring the church down and make it crawl, and we need all the gifts. But individually you can't have them all. And therefore, I should never be envious of somebody else's.

I should never covet somebody else's gifts. I should never say, I'm not necessary. The foot can't say to the hand, I don't need you, says Paul.

Of course not. We all need each other. We all need each other's gifts.

And we should be thankful for the gifts that other people have, which we don't. But please don't insist upon anybody else having your gifts. There are some people who will speak in tongues.

That gift is not for witness, it's for worship. And many people I know have that gift, but they don't talk about it. And they don't, if they're real, they don't insist that I should have it.

I'm very thankful, because it takes me all my time to speak right with the one tongue I have got. Without wanting any more, I'm ready for it if the Lord gives it to me. But, but, nobody has any right to say, and to say that the gift of tongues is an evidence of the baptism of the Spirit is absolutely unbiblical.

Baptism is always the ministry of initiation into the body. You never read of the baptism of the Spirit in Acts, except in the opening chapter. And then, when the Gentiles had their Pentecost, in chapter 10, and at Cornelius' house, and then when a few queer-looking people from Ephesus, a dozen of them, Paul confronted them, and they didn't know what mercy were doing, what they were, and Paul said, well, baptism you received, always into John.

Well, they were baptized in the Spirit, because they had to be, they had to become into the body. But, but, never, over and over again, they were filled with the Spirit. They were filled with the Spirit.

Time and time again, the disciples were filled, filled, filled, always for witness and service. A lady came to speak to me after service near London, and said to me, what a pity you haven't got it. So I said, beg your pardon, ma'am? She said, what a pity you haven't got it.

Oh, I said, what do you mean? Oh, she said, come to our church and get it. All the gifts are in operation there. Come and get it.

Ma'am, I'm not looking for it. I'm looking for Him. Jesus lasts forever.

Gifts, one day, will cease. Therefore, if there's anybody here who speaks in tongues, praise the Lord. Don't be ashamed of it.

Use the gift in worship. Use the gift in worship, but not in witness. But please don't come to me and say, hmm, you should have that.

Nobody has a right to say that. Excuse me, it's getting hot on that subject. I could go on for a long time, but I won't.

There has to be the character of the fruit and distributed throughout the body of Christ there will be the gift. The gift. Some will have one, some another.

Everybody needs each other. Nobody will say that somebody else has first class or second class. Everyone will recognize the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in the conduct of the life of His body that was glorified in Jesus.

Fruit and gift. And just one other thing here, not merely is the word here fruit, there's the word life. Everything will live where the river goes.

That's verse 9. Everything will live where the river goes. Does that mean to say that wherever I go there will be masses of people come to Jesus? No. Not at all.

Does it mean to say people are going to get converted right and left? No. What does it mean? I'll tell you what it means. Everything will live where the river goes.

My prayer life comes alive. My Bible comes alive. The people with whom I'm sharing they'll come alive.

There comes a new dimension all together. My family life. My prayer life at home.

My prayer life with my children. Everything begins to live where the river goes. Oh.

And when you go home, bless you. If that river really begins to flow and you're out of your depth they'll be saying what's happened to you? Yes. And you'll be able to say oh nothing's happened to me but the Lord Jesus has just met me and filled me and everything has come alive.

I'm not playing religious games anymore. It's like fruit and life and healing. The fruit will be for food and the leaves for healing or medicine for bruises and sores.

That's well. I can't take time to go into this but I don't question but there's a ministry of healing. But I do question that I have any right at all to demand on any occasion instant healing because God is God.

Because he's able to heal anybody from anything anytime but he doesn't always choose to do so. I've experienced divine healing in a wonderful way but it's taken quite a while and I wanted it to be instant. God wasn't having any.

He had to put me aside from Christian work and take me out to the public and just teach me lessons which I could only learn the hard way. How often he does that. But there's the gift of healing and medicine for bruises and sores.

You know that's wonderful. Because that's what you as a Christian leader can do. Just be medicine.

For lives that are bruised and sore and hurt and aching is there anything more wonderful than such a ministry? That's the kind of ministry that God can give you.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5357.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/alan-redpath/christian-growth-part-6/>

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