

Effect of the River's Flow

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the Spirit of God in the Christian life, and the evidences of a Spirit-filled life, including fruitfulness, stability and character, and a crisis leading to a process of growth and transformation.

Duration: 51:33

Scripture: Isaiah 50:4, Ezekiel 47:12, Habakkuk 3:17-18

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by expressing gratitude for the support of the choir and acknowledging the presence of new attendees. The sermon is part of a series on resources for Christian living, with a focus on the prophecy of Ezekiel. The speaker highlights the importance of fruitfulness in the Christian life, using the imagery of a river of life and trees bearing fruit. They emphasize the need for believers to move beyond mere doctrine and experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with the speaker acknowledging the controversial nature of the series and the careful consideration given to the message for that evening.

Transcript

Good evening everyone. Glad to see you again. I noticed a lot of people are here tonight for the first time.

How many of you, I'll accept the choir in this, take them for granted, not really because I'm very thankful indeed for their support night by night. How many of you, apart from the choir, have been here Wednesday night, Thursday night and Friday night? Would you mind raising your hand? Well done. I could raise mine too.

You've stuck it out, bless you. I have been bringing a consecutive series of messages which are inevitably linked the one to the other, though I trust that those of you who come for the first time tonight will be able to pick up the theme readily, and I invite you to turn with me to perhaps a remote portion of Scripture, but one which has meant a great deal to me, in the prophecy of Ezekiel. Now if you don't know where to find it, I'll give you time.

Ezekiel, find Psalms and go on, keep on going, get to Jeremiah and Isaiah, Jeremiah, and then you're getting near, then you'll come to Ezekiel. Chapter 47, Ezekiel 47. I'm just going to read from verse 6 through verse 12.

And he said unto me, son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees, on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, these waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea, which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.

And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth which moveth, whosoever the river shall come, shall live. And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither. For they shall be healed, and everything shall live, whether the river cometh.

And it shall come to pass that the fishers shall stand upon it from En Gedi, even unto Englem. They shall be a place to spread forth nets. Their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.

But the mighty places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed. They shall be given to salt. And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed.

It shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because there waters the issue out of the sanctuary. And the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. Now let us pray together.

We thank you, dear Lord, for the reminder this evening that it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh upon each one of us. Speak to our waiting hearts, we pray.

Speak, Lord, in the stillness, while we wait on thee. Hush our hearts to listen in expectancy. Speak, O blessed Master, in this quiet hour.

Let me see thy face, Lord, and feel thy touch of power. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Our subject in these three evenings has been resources for Christian living. Tomorrow night, I'm bringing a message particularly for young people and Christian service. Of course, I hope that everybody will be present, but it will be specially beamed for young people seeking to know the will of God for their lives.

But for tonight, as well as last night and Wednesday, we have been thinking about resources for Christian living. And each evening, we've based our thoughts upon this same passage of Scripture, this vision, this dream of Ezekiel, this picture given to him of a river that came out of the temple, the threshold of the temple, and everything lived whether the river came. Here we have a wonderful Old Testament picture.

And by the way, the Old Testament is God's picture book. I don't mean to suggest to you that it isn't equally inspired to the New Testament, it is. But often in the Old Testament, you get pictures of New Testament truth.

The Old New Testament is illustrated in the Old. And often you get wonderful, wonderful illustrations of New Testament truth and twentieth-century experience in the Old Testament. And such we find in this chapter here before us, these nights.

Resources for Christian living, the thing that can put joy and reality and power into the Christian life, which is so desperately needed these days. The average conception that people have of the Christian life is

conveyed to them by what they see of it in our lives every day. And we have to admit that very often we're below standard and subnormal.

So when I speak to you about resources of Christian living, I'm speaking about the normal Christian life. By the way, there's a very good book with that title, written by Watchman Nee, I hope you've read it. A man who was brought up among the brethren and blessed by that background, but growing up and seeing something more than mere doctrine and coming into life.

And he wrote on the normal Christian life, the life of the Spirit of God indwelling every believer. Not by might, nor by power do we live our Christian lives, but by his Spirit. I told you that before we began this series, it would be controversial.

And I had to think very carefully about the message tonight, where we're treading on controversial ground. Let me, however, remind you, for the sake of those who have just joined the cavalcade, so to speak, let me remind you of the tracks which we've been following night by night. We spoke about the essence of the river's power on Wednesday.

The source of it came from the throne of God. The course of it, it came down by the altar, by the way of the cross. The force of it, waters to swim in.

The essence of the river's power. And the Holy Spirit coming to your life, at the time of your new birth, has his source at the throne of God. He comes to your heart in answer to the prayer of a risen, ascended Lord, who prayed the Father that he might receive the Holy Spirit for you and for me, that we might know the reality of Christ in us every day.

And that comes to us by way of Calvary, before you can have a Pentecost, there's a Calvary. And the power, you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come to you. And that's what we all need, power in our lives, power to live the Christian life every day.

And then last evening, we thought about the experience of the river's depth. Ankle deep. He brought me through, and the waters were to the ankles.

This picture of the Christian who's very shallow. You see a lot of him and very little of the river of life. And knee deep.

He brought me through, he measured, and the waters were to the knees. The Christian has gone down, and he's hungry for more of God. And in answer to prayer, God meets with him in a new way.

And then, he brought me through, and the waters were to the loins. And that's the place of strength. And the Christian who is loined deep in the river has made the discovery that the Christian life is an exchange life.

That God does not improve us, but he replaces us with Jesus. And the life of the Spirit of God is the life of Christ, indwelling us and controlling us every day. His strength are not ours.

And then finally, waters to swim in. The man who's totally abandoned and totally committed and gone out of his depth in the will of God. In the fullness of the Spirit in life.

Now today, we're going to think of the last of this series, and that is this, the effect of the river's flow. And the thing I'm driving at is tonight, what would you expect to be the evidences of a man filled with the Spirit

of God? What sort of person is a Christian? I mean, what would you expect to see when you meet a Christian? When you meet the real thing? What were the evidences of the Christian life? What sort of a change would you expect when you look at a man who is a real believer? What are the evidences you would find in his life? Well now, this is a tremendously interesting subject. It's controversial.

There are all sorts of movements going around today, claiming to have the life of the Holy Spirit, and claiming all kinds of experiences, which alas, can't be supported from the New Testament. You may be shocked when I say this, but since I was last here in Adelaide, I think I've been round the world more or less about three times. Travelled in many different countries, South Africa, the most thrilling country of all, might I say, the most misunderstood country in the world, but that's an aside, you needn't listen to that if you don't want to, but that's what it is.

I've been there for months, out in the Far East, in the United States, five months in the continents of South America, and this has been a thrilling experience to travel so widely. Very tiring, but very wonderful. But there's one thing quite clear to me, that the real breakthrough in the world today, from the spiritual point of view, has been made by the Pentecostal Church.

Everywhere, there are evidences of tremendous moving of the Spirit of God in Pentecostal churches. South America, Far East, South Africa, Britain, all of them, you see movements of the Spirit there. Now, whenever you get a movement of the Spirit of God, you always get counterfeit.

And what amazes me is that people get so afraid when they see the counterfeit, that they steer clear of the real thing. And if I was to ask you honestly, what you think about the Holy Spirit, you're a bit scared. And maybe some of you have been listening to me with a little bit of reservation and a bit scared about what I'm going to say about the Holy Spirit.

You're afraid of Him. Why should you be afraid of the only one who can live the Christian life? The one who has come to us from God, who can enable us to witness and to live to the glory of Jesus. Why should we be afraid of Him? When I've travelled in these countries and seen the evidences of the Holy Spirit working in Pentecostal churches, I've rejoiced.

But I've noticed the counterfeit. And I've noticed over and over again that so many of them demand that as an evidence that a life is filled with the Spirit of God, you should be able to speak in an unknown tongue. You must have the gift of tongues in order to claim that you have been filled with the Spirit.

Now, I'm quite sure that in the course of your life you'll come across this sort of thing. Well, I recognise the gift of tongues. It's there in the Bible.

I recognise this. And I thank God for those who enjoy this gift and who practise it in the scriptural way, using this gift for personal and private devotion. But where I find myself in a difficulty with it is this.

When they come up to me and say, have you got it? And I say, what do you mean, have I got it? Oh, have you got the gift? Have you got it? No, I said, I haven't got it. But I've got Him. It's not in it I'm looking for.

It's a person, the living Christ. And I've got Him in my life. Now, they will say, well, of course, it's very nice, but you have to go further than this.

For if you're going to be filled with the Spirit of God, you must be able to speak in tongues. Now, then I say, now, show me that in the Bible. Because quite frankly, it isn't in the Bible.

It's amazing, really. If you take, and I think this is fair, if you take the prominence in Scripture of a particular doctrine, that is the amount of space it occupies in the Word of God, as an assessment of its importance, then I remind you that the fact of the gift of tongues is only referred to in one New Testament letter, that is the Epistle to the Corinthians, and then only in three chapters, and then always with a view to dampening it down. Now, I recognise the value of the gift.

I'm not decrying that. But I am saying, be careful that you don't confuse a gift of the Spirit with the fullness of the Spirit. God gives people various gifts, all sorts of gifts, administration, helps, we can all get in that one, management, preaching, evangelism, pastors, all sorts of gifts.

Nobody can have all the gifts. But you can have all the character. God distributes the gifts of His Spirit according to His will.

So some have one gift, others have another. But His desire for all of us is that we should all be filled with the fullness of the Spirit of God. Therefore, if I may just leave it there, I hope I haven't got anybody's back up the wrong way.

I don't want to do that. I'm simply saying what I believe the Word of God says. And I say, in pressing in for all that God has for me, I'm not pressing in for a gift, I'm pressing in for Christ, for Jesus, that I might know more and more of Him in my life.

And I find when I do that, that the evidences of the filling of the Spirit in a life are absolutely marvellous. I'll give you them from this portion of Scripture. I'll give a threefold evidence anyway.

The first one I'd say is fruitfulness. Do you notice verse 7? Behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Verse 12.

Whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary. And the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. Now do you see that lovely picture? Here's this river of life pursuing its way and attracting growth to its banks.

Very many trees are there and they've dug their roots into the riverbed and are drawing constant strength from its waters. Now here is one evidence of a man who's filled with the Spirit. There's something about that man's life that is attracting people to it.

Not to him, but to Jesus. People see reality, the evidence of life, that he's not just a church member, but he's something more than that. He's got life, and they see life, see reality, see Christ in him, and they begin to be drawn to that life.

And here's a fullness that doesn't fade, that goes on all through the journey of life. You remember in the Psalmist, as I referred to you this on Wednesday, the first Psalm says that the godly man is like a tree planted by the river of water, that bringeth forth fruit in his season. His leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

And the Lord Jesus talked about it too. In John 15 and verse 16, I have chosen you and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit shall remain. Not just a flash in the pan, not just a short emotional upheaval, but increasing likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in your heart.

Now here's a very, very real significant test as to the reality of our Christian faith. Is it making us daily more like Jesus and less like ourselves? Are our reactions becoming more Christ-like and less self-like? Do people see this in our lives as they watch us day by day? I mean, where once I blew my top, now have I learned patience? Where once I was bad-tempered, as Jesus made me meek, are the fruits of the Spirit being revealed in my life. Galatians 5.22, love, joy, peace, long suffering, goodness and gentleness, so on.

That's character. That's Jesus in me. And one evidence of a Spirit-filled life is not an emotional outburst, but it is development of stability, character.

And that means that the fullness of the Spirit in a man's life is a crisis which leads to a process, a crisis which opens our eyes to the New Testament principle of Christian living, which most of us have not, haven't seen. That the Lord Jesus has come to live in his life, in us and through us. It's not our effort or our life, it is.

And then we see this principle of Christian life, that he has come to live this in me, and by faith I begin to appropriate that, and that's the process. How would Jesus react in this situation? How would he show himself here? And when somebody comes and, oh you know, talks unpleasantly, unkindly to you, how would Christ react to that? And by his grace, I react like that, you react like that. This is the Christian being filled up with more and more of God.

So every moment he's displaying Christ, instead of displaying himself. Some years ago now, my wife and family and myself were traveling from Southampton to New York on what was then the world's largest liner, the Queen Elizabeth. And I'm sorry to say that it's only a, it's only a sort of floating hotel now, being driven from Fort Lauderdale in Florida to Hong Kong.

Sad to see a ship with a mission becoming a hotel. However, there it is, it's had its day. But when we went on it, it was a ship, tremendous size.

And one morning out in the ocean, we looked behind and we saw, coming along behind us, a cloud of smoke which gradually got larger, and the captain of the ship was watching it from his, with his eyeglasses, and the message was sent round the passengers. For the first time in her life, the world's largest liner was being overtaken at sea by the world's fastest liner, the United States. In a few hours, she overtook us, unnecessarily near.

And as she went by, the captain of the United States sent a message to the captain of the Queen Elizabeth, which said, you look very beautiful, but you're very slow. The reply wasn't published. About eight weeks later, we were returning on the same ship, and having a cup of tea with the engineer, who was the man from Glasgow where the ship was built, and he said to us, you know, exactly the same thing happened a few weeks ago on our return voyage from New York, as happened when you were with us.

He said the United States overtook us, but he said the old man was ready for him. That means the commander. And when he sent a, when the United States sent a telegram to us, which said, sorry to pass you, the master of the Queen Elizabeth replied, that's perfectly okay.

It does not meet for the royal lady to travel in fast company. Well, I thought that was a pretty good answer. And then he said to me, would you like to come down and see the engines? Oh, I said, rather.

So I went around and down to the engine room, 12 steam compressed boilers there. Then we went down still further, down in a little elevator, and then out into a gangway, long below, way below surface. And we walked on that gangway right to the end of the ship, the stern end of the ship.

And alongside us on both sides, there were two huge propeller shafts. And he told me they were 450 feet long, 150 yards of steel. And we walked between them.

We came right to the skin of the ship and saw the place where those four giant propellers went through the skin into the water. And I heard the thrash of these four propellers driving an 82,000 ton hotel across the Atlantic Ocean. Quite terrific.

When I came back into his cabin, I said, well, thank you so much. I wouldn't have missed that for anything. Tremendous.

And then for the sake of conversation, I said, well, I suppose those propellers are going at a colossal speed. And he laughed at me. He said, you're no engineer, are you? I said, no, but why? Well, he said, if you were an engineer, you would know that I could get those propellers going so fast that they would only make a hole in the water and the old lady would slow down and stop.

He said, I have 48 men in the engine room and their job night and day is to calculate the ratio between revolutions per minute in the engine room and, listen to this, steadiness at the point of drive. Not speed I want from those propellers, it's steadiness. And then with a touch of justifiable Scottish pride, he said, you know, we've been going across this pond for 20 years.

We'll probably go across it for 20 more. And he said, we've never been late. We're never late.

Sometimes we're behind schedule, but we always make it up. He said, we've been going across it in wartime when we're threatened with bombs and torpedoes. And we're going across it in fogs that are so thick that you can't see one end of the ship from the other.

And we've gone across in hurricanes and winds and storms, occasionally in calm weather. Always on time. Because, he said, we at Cunard, the ship company which operates the vessel, we have discovered the secret of, listen to this, steadiness in the storm.

Oh my, I pocketed that one, because that is the distinctive mark of a spirit-filled Christian. When the storm hits him, when the bottom drops out of his world, when everything is shattered and goes to pieces, when he begins to ask himself, is there any God after all, and does God care, if so, why does this happen to me? He doesn't panic. He's learned the secret of steadiness in the storm.

That's the kind of fruit for which Jesus is looking. So many, many people never come to church, never would think of it, spend the days on Sundays bowling or golfing or doing the garden or anything, never think about going to church. But I tell you, if you're the next door neighbour, they're watching mighty hard your reactions when trouble hits.

When something comes and tears your life apart, do they see somebody who presses the panic button? Or somebody who, by the grace of God, stands and in the storm is steady. The fruit of the Holy Spirit, fruitfulness, character, Jesus, his reaction in the storm. That's one evidence of being filled with a spirit.

And to that kind of life, people are attracted. Don't think me being rude, but so many of us as Christians are so thoroughly orthodox in doctrine, but thoroughly unpleasant in life, thoroughly unattractive. I don't mean physically, but I mean spiritually.

There's nothing at all to attract somebody to us as though we reflected Jesus. That's what God is looking for. Is there that evidence in your life or in mine? Very many trees on the one side and on the other.

Do other people find themselves refreshed, comforted, strengthened, made to recognise the reality of the living Christ as they see him in you? But just a minute. On a calendar that was given to me some time ago, there were pictures of Scotland. I don't know whether you've ever been to Scotland, a very lovely country.

It's perhaps a bit more beautiful than England. It rains a bit harder in Scotland. It's a bit colder and wetter, but very colourful and very beautiful.

At midnight, you can read a newspaper by daylight in the month of June. It's a long way north. But this calendar showed me several pictures of Scotland.

And one of them was of a river and a glen, what they call a glen, a valley in the county of Perthshire. And this little river was tumbling over the rocks of this river. And I thought, what a wonderful example this is of Ezekiel 47.

River so fresh, tumbling away there in this lovely picture. And then I saw that it was taken in wintertime and there was no sign of life. And I supposed that, after all, it wasn't such a good picture of Ezekiel 47.

For this chapter records that the leaf shall not fade. But no, again, for when the trees are bare and there's no sign of life, the barrenness of wintertime is only a preparation for spring and summer, an essential part of the growth in fruitfulness. Verse 12 of our chapter, it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months.

And I thought, how true this is of the Christian life. Do you remember the years, the days after your conversion? My, it was all blue sky then. Everything was wonderful.

All things were made new. The sky seemed to be blue and the birds were singing and burdens are lifted at Calvary and there's sunshine in my soul today. And it was all so thrilling and so wonderful.

Did it last? Has it always been like that with you? If it has, would you come and tell me? For I've never met anybody quite like you, if it has. If you're the kind of person in whose life there's never been problems, never been difficulties, you've never doubted your faith, God has never seemed to depart from you, no fruit, no evidence of blessing. If you don't know anything about that, you come and tell me.

Because I don't understand that kind of person. Every Christian I know, and certainly in my own heart, has known something of autumn and winter, when fruit departs, when leaves are bare, when it seems that God has forsaken you, and in your ministry you're stripped of any semblance of fruit. Nothing seems to happen anymore.

Jesus is far away, seems remote, and your Bible doesn't seem to live, and your prayer life doesn't mean anything. Oh, that's a grim experience, especially grim, if somebody has deluded you to thinking that the Christian life is a sort of happy little picnic, and it'll always be wonderful, and always the skies will be blue. My, but this doesn't mean everything is wrong.

As a matter of fact, you can bring greater glory to God and blessing to people in your spiritual winter than you can in summer. Verse 12 says the leaf is for medicine, and the margin says is for bruises and sores. And the ability of a Christian to help somebody else whose life is bruised, and sore, and wounded, depends upon having learned the lesson of wintertime.

Some people in the Bible learned that. Do you remember Habakkuk? Listen to him, what he said. Though a fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labor of the olive shall fail, the field shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the God of my salvation.

And listen to Isaiah speaking of the Lord Jesus in chapter 50. The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to them that are weary. I give my back, I give my back to the smiter, and my cheek to them that's plucked off the hair.

I hid not my face from shame and spitting. What a winter. Oh, what a winter.

You ever read any of C.S. Lewis's books? I think his best book was the first one he wrote, the book called *Scruteb Letters*, a great allegory describing the warfare that Satan rages against the Christian here on earth. Let me read you an extract. Be not deceived, Wormwood.

Wormwood, you remember, was his nephew, the devil's nephew, who's responsible for strategy here on earth. Be not deceived, Wormwood, writes *Scruteb*. Our cause is never in greater danger than when a human being, no longer desiring, but still intending to do the enemy's will, the enemy being God, looks around him upon a universe from which every trace of the enemy's existence seems to have vanished, and asks why he's been forsaken, but goes on obeying.

Get that? Get the thrust of that? The fruit of the Spirit. Evidence, evidence in fruitfulness, evidence in steadiness, evidence in a man's ability to take a spiritual winter. Are you only a summertime Christian? You're only prepared to obey the Lord if he gives you nice feelings, and you can sing happy choruses.

Are you that sort of Christian, or can you face winter, loneliness? No other Christian in your office. No other Christian in your home. Nobody understands.

God doesn't seem to be near you. No other Christian in your college or university. Absolutely alone, and you're there to stand for God.

And it's so tough and difficult and hard, because every other standard of Christianity has collapsed today. And it's spiritual winter. What do you do then? Oh, what do you do when wintertime is on? I've always been very interested in the ministry of ONF.

It used to be called the CIM. I remember when they were shoved out of China in 1951 by the pressure of Communism. Their annual meeting was held in London, and one of the missionaries was giving a testimony, Phyllis Thompson.

And she said that before she left China, she addressed two or three hundred Chinese pastors' wives, and she said to them, we're terribly sorry we have to leave you. We have to go because the government insists on it. We know that the pressure from Communism will be tremendous, and therefore we'll be praying for you, that you may be able to stand.

When she finished her message, one of these Chinese pastors' wives came and spoke to her, and she said, would you mind, when you get back to home, telling them there that we know the pressure from Communism will be terrific, but the pressure from the Holy Spirit within will be greater. Ah, that's tremendous. Spiritual winter, the pressure from the Holy Spirit greater than everything.

That true in your life? Doesn't matter what comes, doesn't matter what storms hit you, hallelujah, anyway, Jesus is sufficient. The fruit that God looks for, a man who can stand in the storm, because he has the Lord Jesus in his heart. Now something else I want you to notice here, verse 8, these waters go down to the desert and go into the sea, and the waters shall be healed.

And the next evidence of a Spirit-filled life is the ability of that life to bring healing to a situation. I don't refer necessarily to physical healing. I believe that again is a gift of the Spirit, but I do not believe that anybody has a right to demand that God should heal their body.

Sometimes through physical illness and trouble, there's more to learn from God of his way with us than there are, than there is at other times. Healing is illness, sickness is an immense discipline, and many, many people know years of suffering and how Christ has drawn very, very near to them. I do not believe we should demand healing in that sense.

But oh, what healing power there is in the Spirit of God! What disorders there are in Christian homes! What estrangements in Christian families! What rifts in Christian churches! What splits there are in little groups of believers! This is the kind of healing I mean. What's your church like? Is there a little group in it that sometimes meet together and keep clear of all the rest of the church? Think nobody's quite as spiritual as they are? Is that church a divided church? Is it a church which somehow has got cold, and somehow there's no fellowship, and Christians don't speak to each other? Does that sort of thing happen your way? And yet we profess to love the Lord Jesus. And what about your home? What about the family altar, the place of prayer? What about the relationship between husband and wife, parent and child? Is there estrangement and coldness and hardness? My, what can I do about all that? I'll tell you what you can do.

Let the Holy Spirit in. That's all. Let Him in.

Open the gates. Let Him in. Flood the home, and flood your heart, and flood your church with His life.

Remove all the barriers that are in the way, and ask Him to make you willing to have His power and healing. No time for prayer, no time for your Bible, no concern for other people, undisciplined habits. All these things can get into Christian lives.

How can you heal them? You can't. But you can open the door to the Holy Spirit to come. What a healing thing, ministry, the Holy Spirit has.

Oh, when He has His way, there's a balm and Gilead that makes the wounded whole. There's a balm and Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul. And Jesus can bring healing today into your home, into your church, into your heart.

And what about something else here? Look at it, verse 9. What an amazing picture this is. Everything shall live, whether the river comes. Ezekiel 47, 9. And here's the whole principle of Christian living and Christian growth.

Life, producing life, that's the only way a church can grow, runs right through the New Testament, throbbing with life. Multitudes added, multiplied to the church. I don't mean necessarily success, but I mean when the Holy Spirit's moving in your life, other people are never neutral.

They're never indifferent anymore. They take sides, one way or another. Some are against and some are for you, but they're so thankful that they've met reality.

What a super abundance of life is here. Very many trees, very many fish, everything that liveth which moveth with us, whoever the river shall come, everything lives. See, that's the answer to your life in business and in home.

I knew a man who was an evangelist in Britain, and he was taking a mission some years ago at the East Anglian city of Norwich. And when he went there, he was going to stay with a Christian family, man and woman, lovely people, who had staying in their home a German girl. She was an atheist, or professed to be, and she was learning the English language and doing some work in the house, and she was terribly concerned that she was living in a Christian home.

She hated the whole thing. And when this preacher, evangelist, was about to come, the lady called her to her and said, now look, we want this man to have the best possible treatment, well looked after, so take care of him, look after him, and would you go and order the meat today? Be sure you get to, and she told her exactly the portion of the animal which she had to bring back with her. So this German girl went to the butcher's shop and produced, asked the man for a particular portion of the animal, and she was so particular that the butcher was very astounded, and he said to her, excuse me, but is there somebody very special coming to your house? Oh, she said, no, it's just some preacher rather.

And she took the parcel and she went out the shop. She had a parting shot, and she said, the fuss they're all making, you'd think it was the good Lord himself coming. The butcher was quite surprised.

So the following weekend she came back, and he recognized her, and he said to her, how are you getting on with your preacher friend? Oh, she said, do you remember, do you remember that I said to you that you'd think the good Lord was coming to our house? Oh, he said, I sure did. Well, she said, he came, that's all, he came. And the cynicism and bitterness and scepticism of a German girl was broken down by a man who was absolutely consistent around the family table and in the home and reflected Jesus.

Say, my friend, could that have been your home? Could that have been you? By the sheer Christ-likeness of your life, other people's cynicism is pushed overboard. You don't need to have a PhD degree to do that. You don't need to go to college or seminary, but you do need to be filled with the Spirit of God.

And do you say to me, oh yes, I know that what you're saying is right, and I know that that's the kind of life I need, but how? As I close tonight, I go back exactly to where I began on Wednesday, and I repeat to you the words of Jesus in John chapter 7 and verse 39, where he said, if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink, and out to his inner man shall flow rivers of living water. How may I know this life? Listen, ask him that you may have that life. How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him, ask him, ask him for that life? But asking isn't merely a cold intellectual prayer.

It's this, if any man thirst, that is desire. Let him come, that's surrender, and drink, that's faith. You want the life of Christ in your heart? Listen, do you need him for victory? How badly do you want it? Everything depends upon how you answer that question.

How badly do you want victory? You will have always as much of God as you really want, no more, no less. If any man thirst, let him come, and I'd never come to Jesus if I think I can make it on my own. I only come when I know that I am inadequate for the battle of life.

Let him come, let him surrender, and let him drink, let him take, f-a-i-t-h, forsaking all, I take him, that's faith. Let him take, that's how you may have that life. Well, what's your answer to that tonight? The evidence of a Spirit-filled life.

We recognize that this is the only answer in our churches and in our own lives. Have you, have you today the eagerness, the longing, the surrender, the faith to appropriate that life? Ask him, believe that he never breaks a promise. This spake he of the Holy Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.

Rest on his word, take his promise. A well-known Methodist minister in England said this at Keswick a few years ago. Listen, there is no such thing as a once and for all fullness of the Spirit.

It is a moment by moment cleansing, and a moment by moment faith, in a moment by moment filling. At the moment I begin to believe, at that moment I begin to receive, and as long as I keep on believing, I keep on receiving. I think that's so wonderful, it's so simple.

Well, ask, believe, obey. That's how you may know that life, because he has given the Holy Spirit to them that obey him, and every step of faith and obedience enlarges your capacity for more and more of God. He measured, and he brought me through.

Has Jesus filled you? If not, ask him to do so now. Fill you absolutely with himself. Let's pray together.

Just a moment of quiet prayer. Are these evidences to be seen in our lives? Fruitfulness, a wonderful healing ministry of disorder and disruption is healed when Jesus comes. Can God look upon my heart today and yours and know that he has filled me to my capacity, that it's all of Christ and none of him, none of myself.

Lord Jesus, we want to say thank you so much that tonight you can meet the emptiness of our life with thy fullness. You can come and fill and fill again, and we can know every day the reality of thy presence. Lord Jesus, do it again for every one of us, recognizing our need of yourself this evening.

And as we go out, may it not be just to play at the Christian life, but may folks see Christ in us, and may they be attracted to his life, and may there be fruit that shall remain, which shall be for the glory of God and for the blessing of lives. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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