

Experience of the River's Depth

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the necessity of experiencing the fullness of the Holy Spirit for true spiritual growth and victory in the Christian life.

Duration: 1:06:52

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 4:5-8, Romans 8:2

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the desperate state of some Christians who are struggling to live a genuine Christian life. He emphasizes the need for revival and a stirring of God in their hearts and ministries. The preacher encourages believers to not only rely on the death of Christ for forgiveness but also to tap into the power and resources of the living Christ for victory in every situation. He highlights the importance of taking God seriously and seeking His face for real revival and blessing in the church.

Transcript

Good evening, everyone. Thank you very much. Nice to see you tonight.

I was telling some ministers to whom I spoke yesterday morning that at one time, several years ago, while I was in the pastorate at Moody Church in Chicago, my friend Stephen Alford was at the Calvary Church in New York, and we used to phone each other up every Sunday evening. He did one Sunday, and I did another, just to see how we'd been getting on and how the battle was going. And I remember one Sunday he said to me, you know, we've had tremendous revival this week, been absolutely terrific.

And I said, why, that's tremendous. I said, you must have a terrific, you've had a wonderful blessing. He said, yes, it's been terrific.

I said, how many people have you added to your church roll? He said, added? Added? He said, we've had some wonderful subtractions. Well, just by the attendance tonight compared with last night, I suppose we're moving into revival. I can only hope that is the case.

We have about 50% of what we had last evening. Now, if you think it's difficult to listen, I can assure you it's difficult to preach when it's hot, especially the kind of preacher like me who gets so excited at what I have to say. And probably you find listening very difficult.

But you know, the answer is in what we heard just now, when God speaks. And when God speaks, it's for you and me to answer him. And when God speaks, it's for you and me to follow his word.

So let's ask him, the Lord of creation, the Lord of our salvation, to speak to our heart today. Let us pray. We thank you, dear Savior, for all that already we felt of your touch in this gathering tonight.

We thank you for the privilege of being here. And in this hot, steamy evening, we trust that the fresh breeze of the Spirit of God may blow upon our hearts, quickening us into life, refreshing us, and taking from us any sense of exhaustion or weariness, and giving us that readiness and willingness and eagerness to hear what God shall say. Lord, O thou God of creation, speak to my heart, I pray.

Some of us perhaps don't realize our need. Some of us may sense only that we are here and that we might be listening to a sermon or preacher, and beyond that we haven't any sense of need. Lord, disturb us, we pray tonight.

Shatter our complacency and help us to see that we're in desperate need of a breath from heaven upon our soul. And some of us here this evening are hungry, disillusioned, empty, in great sense of failure, great sense of a new touch of the reality of Christ in our lives. Whatever the need of our hearts may be, Lord, meet that need tonight, and speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now would you turn with me to the same portion which we read together last evening.

By the way, how many of you were here last night? Would you mind raising your hands? Thank you. How many of you weren't here last night? Thanks very much. About 50-50.

Ezekiel chapter 47 is the chapter upon which we're concentrating on these three evenings, Wednesday, tonight, and tomorrow. On Saturday evening we are considering the question of a challenge and call to Christian service. Saturday will be specially geared for young people, musically and also in message.

But of course, we don't want to be entirely confined to young people. Everybody is needed. Ezekiel 47, I'm just going to read the first five verses.

Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house, and behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward. For the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house at the south side of the altar. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward.

And behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the lime in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters. The waters were to the ankles.

Again he measured a thousand and brought me through the waters. The waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand and brought me through.

The waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass over. For the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.

We began a series of messages last evening on this thrilling portion of scripture in the prophecy of Ezekiel, under the heading, Resources for Christian Living. We are going along the assumption that Christian living today is substandard. It's below normal.

Something's gone wrong. That's not to be unkind or censorious, it's merely to face reality and face facts. When you speak to Christian people today about a life of victory, they give you, many of them, a sickly sort of smile, which indicates, they suppose, that you're a little bit peculiar in speaking of such a thing.

And it is only for a few people, ministers or missionaries, and certainly not for them. Some people are a bit afraid of it. Some people are afraid of being caught up in fanatical religion, fanatical faith.

We've completely failed to understand, many of us, what this Christian life is all about, and what God can do in and through the person who's prepared to take him at his word. We desperately need Christian people who are living in the light of the New Testament. It was Dr. Graham Scroggie, that great Scottish preacher, some years ago, who said the trouble in the Church today is that many Christians are on the right side of pardon, but the wrong side of power.

The right side of forgiveness, but the wrong side of fellowship. The right side of Easter, but the wrong side of Pentecost. They're out of Egypt, but they're not in the land, just roaming in a spiritual wilderness of defeat.

I heard him say that, and it rang a bell in my heart, an alarm bell, because that's what I was, when Graham Scroggie said that. I didn't know anything different. I simply thought that you received Christ, and then sweat it out, and do your best.

And that landed me in no man's land, in a life of absolute despair and frustration, until I discovered something of the resources for Christian living, in the fullness of the Spirit of the living God. Now, this is pictured for us in this prophecy in Ezekiel. And our thoughts last night were concentrated upon the essence of the river's power.

This river, which flowed its source, was at the throne of God. It came from the threshold of the temple. And when I receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God at my new birth, I receive a life of absolute authority and absolute power, a life that's absolutely victorious, the life of Christ himself, not in influence.

And I often hear people in church prayer meetings referring to the Holy Spirit as it. It's not an it, he's a person. He's Christ's representative here, he's the one whom Jesus has sent.

When he went away, he said, I will never leave you or forsake you, and he was just about to depart for heaven. But he had previously said, I will send you another comforter, and he will be with you and in you forever. And this is the life that every one of us who know Christ as Saviour and Lord have received, a life of absolute authority, a life of victory, a life that cannot sin, a life that knows nothing of defeat and failure.

That life is in your heart right now, if you're a child of God, a life of authority. And you notice, we saw last evening, it comes by way of the cross. We saw the cross of the river.

It came by way of the altar. And that life of victory only comes to us if we really get back to the cross, if we meet God at Calvary. That's how the Holy Spirit comes to us.

Before we can have a Pentecost, we must have a Calvary. And then we saw something of the force of the river, waters to swim in, a life of absolute dependence upon the living Christ to do in us and for us what we can't do ourselves. So last night we thought about the essence of the river's power.

This evening we're going to think about the experience of the river's death. And you notice in these verses that I read to you, Ezekiel is brought through a progressive experience of the fullness of blessing. Three times we read in these verses, he brought me through.

I wonder how far he's brought you through. I wonder how far he's brought me through. He brought me through.

Where do I fit into this picture? Where do you? Well, let's look. Verse three, he brought me through and the waters were to the ankles. Now this suggests to me, it doesn't need any imagination, but it suggests to me the spirit which has claimed salvation by faith, and you have received Christ, but you've only had a very shallow experience of him, only ankle deep, only paddling in the stream, not sort of launching out, not really getting involved.

He brought me through and the waters were to the ankles. Still a very big show of myself, not much evidence of the life of the Spirit of God. Now of course there's a perfect picture of this in the New Testament.

It's the picture of the carnal Christian as seen and described for us in 1 Corinthians chapter three. Let me just read it to you. This Corinthian church, by the way, which was so proud that it had all the gifts, which had especially proud that it spoke in tongues, was the most carnal church in all the New Testament.

Paul says in chapter three, I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with meat, for hitherto you were not able to bear it, neither yet are you now able. For you are yet carnal, whereas there is among you envying and strife and division, are you not carnal and walk as men? The Christian who is never growing up, who has only the shallow experience of the Holy Spirit, if I may put it this way, he's indwelt by God, but he's still mastered by himself.

And it's possible for years to live like that, for God to have me, but I not to have him. I use sometimes illustrations from my experience and from our family life. You must excuse me about that, because I find that that's the sort of illustration that lives to me personally.

Some years ago on a Monday morning in London, I was reflecting about the ineffectiveness of my preaching the previous day. Ministers have Monday morning feelings just like you. And it had been a pretty bad day, I felt, hadn't got anywhere, and I was sitting in my study thinking about it, and I heard my wife say to my two daughters, run upstairs and tell daddy breakfast's ready.

Well they both came pounding upstairs. One of them was age 14, the other was age four at the time. That was the postscript of the family.

They both ran upstairs and the one with the long legs got there first. And she rushed into the study and rushed across the room and sat, jumped on my knee, put her arm around me and said, daddy breakfast's ready. And postscript came a few minutes later, puffing and panting upstairs and arrived at the study door and took in the scene and immediately big sister said something very catty to her.

You don't need to come any further, I've got all there is of daddy. And I saw a lip begin to quiver and a tear came in one eye, so I stretched out a spare arm and stuck out a spare knee and said, come on darling, hurry up. She ran across the floor and jumped onto my lap and I hugged her tight.

And I shall never forget that she said to her big sister, not in a very Christian spirit, but she said to her, and she was only about six inches away, she said, you may have all there is of daddy, but daddy's got all there is of me. Oh now, that lets me into something that I'm after tonight in the word of God. You have all there is of Jesus.

You don't receive Christ on the instalment plan. You get a complete Saviour and Lord, a life in your heart right now. But the question is, does he have all of you? And the carnal Christian is a man who has God, but God hasn't got hold of him.

He still is indwelt by the spirit, but mastered by the self-life. Has the new life, but mastered by the old. And he gives evidence of this, gives himself away, betrays himself everywhere he goes, because you find the carnal Christian is always resentful and touchy and jealous and unkind and bitter and unloving in his speech.

He's like a baby in the kindergarten. And how many of our churches have people like this, who've been like that for years? Mind you, let me say something to you. This is not something that you grow out of automatically, nor is it something that you grow into after your conversion.

It's not the experience of a young Christian, necessarily, immediately after their new birth. Perhaps you couldn't go back, as I said to you the other evening, in your experience in your mind to the day of your conversion, and you can recall it, and you remember the time and the day it happened, and you know that at that moment there were no reservations. You received Christ without any question or query, and you welcomed him as your Saviour and Lord, and you were so happy.

Everything was wonderful that day, and was maintained being wonderful for months. But then, maybe, he began to put the screws on, and he began to speak to you and say to you, not that way, but this way, not that friend, but this friend, not that career, but this career, and God began to order and direct your life, and you began to kick and resist and say, no, I don't want that, I want this, and so God didn't have his way with you, and you lapsed into carnality. You can, for years, go on into spiritual maturity, and then end in a carnal experience.

Romans 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 are the most statesmanlike presentation of Christian life in the Bible. Justification, sanctification, the indwelling Christ and the life of victory, but that isn't the normal biography of a Christian. There are many of us who have leapt into Romans 8, the law of the spirit of life has set me free from the law of sin and death.

We've leapt into it, soon after we were saved and we rejoiced in the Lord, but we have gone back into Romans 7, the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I hate, that I do. Oh yes, not necessarily, not necessarily the experience of a young Christian, sometimes the tragedy is, it's the experience of a man who's been on the way, and a woman who's been on the way for many, many years, but through all sorts of circumstances, they've lapsed into defeat and failure. Now let me ask you, he measured, and he's going to do the measuring tonight, not the preacher, he measured, and the waters were to the ankles.

And God, by his spirit here tonight, measures. He takes the plumb line, and he measures all of our lives, and he sees how deep and how shallow they may be. Has he brought you through, or does he find this evening the waters are to the ankles? Some little while ago, after a morning service, a gentleman came and spoke to me, a very wealthy man judging by the way he was dressed, and he said to me, everything that you said this morning in your message lived to me twenty years ago, it was real, it thrilled me, and I was rejoicing in the Lord, but he said, you know I've had a big business, I've got three hundred men under me, and I leave home every day at six o'clock, and I never get back till about nine or ten at night, seven days a week, six days a week.

My family have grown up without knowing they have a father. He said it's been a tremendous success, I'm a millionaire now. But I'll never forget the choke with which he finished his sentence, the choke in his voice when he said to me, but my God, what a price I've paid.

What a price I've paid. Lapsed into carnality, into defeat, the Lord measured, and after years of Christian living, that successful businessman was a successful failure, and that's a tragic possibility for any of us right now. So let the Holy Spirit measure, let the plumb line measure, let the Lord measure, he measured the waters, and the waters were to the angry.

Does God find you right there tonight? And you know that kind of life, it's so repelling, it's so unattractive, it's so ugly, there's nothing in it that commends Christ, it loses all the magnetism, all the reality, there's nobody attracted to Jesus as a result of it, there's something about it repulsive. Has he brought me through, or is that just finding you out tonight exactly where you are? A carnal, defeated, miserable Christian, with no testimony, no reality, no thrill to your Christian life. Does that describe you? The waters were to the angry.

Verse four, again he brought me through, and the waters were to the knees. Now the man is getting lower, and he's going deeper, and the tide is beginning to come in, the waters are rising. And this suggests to me the spirit of prayer, for when God captures a man's knees, the indications are that the tide of blessing is beginning to flow.

Here's a man who's hungry, dissatisfied with his Christian life, hungry for more of God, desperate for a touch of heavenly life, conscious that he just can't go on as he was before. So he's down on his knees. I never cease to wonder, with amazement, at the story of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, blinded by the vision of a risen Christ, led into the city, and then God speaks to a very insignificant disciple and says to him, Ananias, go into Damascus and restore to Saul his sight.

And then Ananias, quite sure that God was making a mistake, and that he knew his business better than God did, said, can't do that, Lord, you mustn't do that. This fellow was constantly, constantly seeking to kill every Christian he could. It's not safe, he's a bitter enemy of the church.

And then God said to him, Ananias, don't worry, don't worry, behold, he prays. Has the significance of that statement ever made its impact upon your life? Saul of Tarsus, as a religious Pharisee, would pray about nine hours out of 24, all his life. Oh no, not pray, but say his prayers, every day, consistently.

But now he's met the risen Lord, and the angels in heaven fold their wings, and heaven looks down in wonder as they see a self-righteous Pharisee down on his knees. Behold, he prays. I tell you that some of us sometimes get so sick to death of the standard of life we've preached, so disgusted with ourselves and with our attempts to live the Christian life that we get to the point of sheer desperation, and it takes that to

bring us down on our knees and hungry for something more of God.

He measured, and the waters were to the knee. He measures tonight. Where does he find you? One of my great friends in recent years was that great saint of God, Dr. A. W. Tozer.

You may have read of some of his books. I recommend them to you, books like *In Pursuit of God* and *The Root of the Righteous*, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. He was a minister in Chicago for about 35 years.

If you wanted to meet Dr. Tozer on his own and have a chat with him, there was one place and one time that you'd be sure of doing it six days a week. Do you know what it was? It was at the south shore of Lake Michigan, about five o'clock in the morning, any day between April and October, and you would go to a certain spot which I seldom felt I could visit because I felt it was such an intrusion. But I went once or twice, and I have never forgotten the experience.

And I found him literally, literally on his face, full length, on the sand with his open Bible. That's what made him the prophet he was. That's what made him the preacher he was.

Not man simply mouthing things that people expect him to say, but a man coming right down the line to the needs of people where they are and challenging them, challenging the whole church. He was a great man. He's in glory now.

Now, let me quote from a paragraph in his book, *The Pursuit of God*. Listen to it. Oh, for a great soul thirsts for God in the church today.

We need never expect it in the world unless first it comes to us. But where is it? Christians are content with past experience. They have no wish to be disturbed and have settled for an easy Christian life.

Everything is made these days to centre upon the initial act of the acceptance of Christ. We are not expected thereafter to crave for any further revelation of God. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we found him, we need no more seek him.

This is set before us as the last word in orthodoxy. And the hot theology of a great army of fragrant saints is rejected in favour of a smug interpretation of scripture that would have sounded strange to Augustine, Rutherford or Brainerd. Oh, that the language of John Samuel Mansell was in our hearts.

I hunger and I thirst. Jesus, my manna be, ye living waters burst out of the rock for me. For still the desert lies, my thirsty soul before.

Oh, living waters rise within me evermore. And my heart echoes amen to that. He brought me through and he measured.

Are the waters up to the knees? Are you tonight a Christian in whose heart there's real hunger for God? After all, the test of life is appetite, isn't it? If you're hungry, you're well. If you've lost your appetite, you're sick. And that's equally true in spiritual things.

If I'm hungry for God, well, I'm healthy. But if I've lost my appetite, there's something wrong. He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry with goodness.

He's not going to waste his Holy Spirit power upon people who don't care. He will meet us always at the level of our desire. Now, let me ask you, I wish I could ask each one personally, but I trust the Holy Spirit

will, how's your appetite tonight? How's your appetite for the Word of God? How's it been today? Has your Bible lived for you today? Have you got some new thought from it today? Have you found it thrilling today? Have you found something to note and underline? Has it fed you today? Where I live, up at North West England, near the Lake District at Capenray, our nearest neighbours are 50 cows.

We live in a park. I'm surrounded by 50 cattle. And, you know, I'm not a farmer and I don't know a thing about cows, but they're awfully interesting creatures.

I was out very early one morning, just about 5 o'clock, as the dawn was coming, and I noticed all those cows get up, one after another, and they began to eat. And they all walked in the same direction, and they ate and ate and ate, and they, I don't know how they could consume so much, but they went on and on and on for at least a couple of hours. And then they sat down.

And they sat down there for quite a while. And then I noticed suddenly, without eating any more, one of them began to chew. And then the next one began to chew.

And they all began to chew. And then they stopped. And after a while again, chewing again.

Now, I don't know anything about cattle, but they tell me that there's a particular part of a cow's anatomy which enables to eat food, tuck it in, bring it up again, chew it, and then tuck it in. And it's called chewing the curd. And it's a wonderful thing to watch, but my word, spiritually, it's a wonderful thing to know in your life.

I don't like reading my Bible on the snack bar principle, the cafeteria principle, merely having a little snack with my Scripture Union portion, and that's over for the day. No, I've got to have a good meal and tuck it in, and then during the day I can mull it over, chew it over, bring it up, talk to the Lord about it. And my Bible lives that way.

Has it lived for you today? How long has it since you spent half an hour with an open Bible and really letting the Lord talk to you out of the Word? You're hungry for Christ, hungry for more of Him, are you? He measured, He measured, and the waters were to the knees. I wonder if God has brought into this meeting tonight on this hot evening in Adelaide somebody, someone, some fellow or girl who's absolutely reached the point in spiritual things of desperation. Just sheer desperate, you can't go on living the kind of Christian life.

You're a leader in Christian work. Such things are expected of you. And you can't because you know it's only a sham.

You hide all sorts of things from other people, but you don't hide it from God. And you're desperate. You've got to keep a show and keep on doing things, and yet you know in your heart it's all empty.

There's been no growth, and the water is only ankle-deep, and there's been no... Ah, but there's a hunger because of the consciousness that you can't keep up the pretense much longer. I've seen men have to resign the ministry because of that. People are to give up teaching in a Sunday school, give up preaching because their hearts have been so empty of reality.

The whole thing was just a show, and I wonder if God has brought to this meeting just one person like that tonight. And he's measuring you, and the waters are to the ankles. But he's measuring you also, and the waters are getting to the knees because in sheer desperation this is driving you to the Lord in prayer.

And you're saying again in the words of that hymn, My hunger and I thirst, Jesus, my manna be. Ye living waters burst out of the rock for me. Oh, Christian, down, down on your knees.

If the church is to see real revival, real blessing, it'll only come when people take God seriously and really seek his face. He brought me through. Again, in verse four, He brought me through, and the waters were to the lines.

Now this picture's to me the place of strength. The man's deeper in the river now. And God having captured his knees and showed him some things in prayer, this man has discovered the secret of power.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, or more correctly, shall exchange their strength for his. No longer I but Jesus. I can do all things through Christ whose dynamites or strengthens me.

This is the revolutionary discovery that the Holy Spirit within me is there to meet every demand that God can ever make upon me. Not my struggle, but his power. Not my feeble effort, but his energy.

Colossians 1.29 puts it this way in the Revised Standard Version, I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me. I said to you last evening an important thing, so important that I want to repeat it. God expects nothing from me but failure, but God has given me the Holy Spirit that I need not fail.

And every demand upon the will of God, upon God's plan for my life, is met by this person in my heart. That's a wonderful thing. I'll share with you the little thought that God gave me today.

John 1.17, do you know what it is? The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Grace and truth. Truth that makes demands upon me which I cannot possibly meet.

Truth which will never lower its standards. Truth which will maintain the standard all the way through, but grace will meet them all. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Isn't that wonderful? My Saviour is the one who dictates the terms in heaven and keeps them by His power in my heart. Grace and truth. Truth makes demands.

Grace meets them all. Not I, but Christ. That's the discovery.

That's the thrill of Christian living. Have you discovered it? He brought me through. He measured and the waters were to the knees.

Has He measured tonight? Does He find some of us here rejoicing that we've forsaken our false strength and discovered His power, His dynamic, His strength in every situation? That's the kind of thing you only discover in answer to prayer. As out of the hunger and desperation and need of your empty heart, you come to God and tell Him, Oh Lord, I just can't go on like this. I can't live anymore in that home, in that situation, that church, and do the kind of work I'm supposed to be doing.

It's all such hypocrisy. Nothing in it doesn't mean anything to me. I can't put on the show any longer.

And as I pray and seek the Lord in sheer desperation, then He shows me that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. I hope you've made that great discovery, dear friend. Not I, but Jesus.

It comes when you pray. And if I make a confession to you, it would be this, that if I only prayed when I felt like it, I would hardly ever pray. If I only really went to God when I felt like praying, I doubt if I'd pray more than once a week.

Many, many days I'd drive myself to pray in the sheer barrenness and sense of dryness and dullness and emptiness in my heart. And I realized that's all that I am but for the grace of God. Empty, nothing, useless.

But oh, when I go to Him like that, then He fills me with Himself and I find grace to meet that emptiness. His fullness meets my need. When I go to Him just as I am and tell Him that I'm dry and dead as I can be, by Jesus Christ, His life and power.

He brought me through and the waters were to the loins. Just one more thing, in verse 5. The waters were to swim in a river that could not be passed over. Now the man's out of his depth.

He's borne up by this river. And excuse me for fanciful interpretation, but when a man swims, he's invisible except for his head. And the head of every man is Christ.

And here indeed is fullness. Where self is forgotten and unrecognized and it is Jesus only. Just flung in at the deep end, out of his depth, committed to Christ.

And the only thing you can see is the Lord. You know, Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus that he might be filled with all the fullness of God. That was his prayer for the Ephesian church.

And in writing to the church at Colossae, he said, in Him, that is in Jesus, dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and you are complete in Him. And what I'm talking to you about tonight is not some strange emotional outburst. It's not some strange experience of the Holy Spirit.

But I'm talking about a fullness which is Jesus himself. You can have no more than Christ. None of us can have any more than Jesus.

We don't need any more. He satisfies completely. And any experience of the Holy Spirit which any of us profess to have, which takes us away from Christ, is not authentic in the New Testament.

The Holy Spirit delights to magnify the Lord, to make Him wonderful, to bring a Savior who has been far from us and make Him more real. If you want to magnify something, you either use a telescope or a microscope. A microscope makes little things big.

A telescope makes distant things real, near. Jesus is never little. But a telescope makes a distant object come near.

And Jesus has been distant and remote in all of our lives. And the Holy Spirit delights to come to the surrendered heart and make Jesus come near. How wonderful He is when He does that.

He brought me through the waters to the ankles, to the knees, to the loins, then waters to swim in, and my life is filled with Christ. Only a mile from its source, and this man is swimming. My dear Christian friend, let me ask you thoughtfully and earnestly, how far are you from the source of your Christian experience? A week? Six months? A year? Ten years? Twenty years? Thirty years? How long? How far? And how deep is the river? Can it be that some of us have been thirty years and more on the way and we're only ankle deep? Today finds us only ankle deep, full of self, little of Him.

Oh, by the grace of God has He brought us through disaster, tragedy, sorrow, trouble, anything. But tonight, tonight, by the grace of God, we can say, I am complete in Christ. He fills my life.

I believe that the church today needs this more than anything, a new spirit of expectancy as to what God can do. We're so satisfied with what we've already had, we cease to desire or experience any more. I noticed a sign in my motel room today, which is to put on my door if I want to, and it says, please do not disturb.

I don't want to be unkind, but I venture to suggest, of the vast majority of church members today, you could put that sign, don't disturb us. Oh, preach the gospel, get the people converted, we'll come to church and watch it happen, we'll just be spectators of the program, and we'll pay you to do it, that's what they'll say to the minister, and we'll watch. But don't disturb us.

Don't disturb us. No Christians like to be needled, like to be made feel uncomfortable. Don't disturb us, we've just got exactly where we want to go, as much faith as need be to get us into heaven.

I believe with all my heart, the Holy Spirit needs to disturb and shatter and break, and make us long for reality, and that Jesus himself will draw near. In other words, I remind you of what Jesus said, I am come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly. And if you're a child of God, you have life.

But my question to you is, have you really abundant life, overflowing life? Is it waters to swim in? Life! This spake he of the Holy Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. For out of his inner man shall flow rivers of living water. Life! The trouble is, of course, that when you begin to speak like that, people say, well now that man's a holiness man.

He's a crank. Strange, we're so afraid of holiness. I wish we were as afraid of a sin as we are of holiness.

We're scared stiff of being thought a little peculiar. He's going too far. You know, afraid of him.

Oh, well, all I can say is, if you're asking me do I believe in a second blessing, I would say come down with a firm hand and say I do. Because I believe in a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth, and a million blessings. And a day without a blessing is a miserable day.

Of course I believe in a second blessing and a third one. But I'm telling you this much, for I'm only speaking from experience from my heart. Ah, but, but, but.

What I have experienced, I'm sure, is confirmed in the word and confirmed in the lives of many, many people. Sometimes years and years after conversion, a man suddenly sees the secret of victory, the power of the life of Jesus in his heart. And that's a crisis.

A crisis much more real to him and shattering than was his conversion. Ten years I lived as a Christian. Miserably defeated life.

Oh, desperately failing. And one day, incidentally, through the ministry of Ian Thomas, I saw the truth that I had within me one who could undertake to live his life through me if only I'd let him and yield to him and let him have his way. And I did so that day.

And to me, that day was a crisis far more real than my conversion. D.L. Moody once said, in Glasgow, Scotland, one day in New York, oh, what a day, I can't describe it. I seldom refer to it.

It's almost too sacred an experience to name. I can only say that on that day, God revealed himself to me. I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand.

I went to preaching again. The sermons were no different. I didn't present any new truth, but hundreds were converted.

I wouldn't be placed back where I was before that day, before that experience, if you gave me the whole of Glasgow. And David Brainerd, who in the shade and cool wind and wet with sweat, as he prayed, drawn out much and grasping God for multitudes of souls, so preached that scores of hard-hearted Indian people were bowed down like grass before a sign. Hudson Taylor, years after being on the mission field, returning to Britain for new recruits, sitting on the south coast of England at Brighton, absolutely conscious of his failure, suddenly realized it isn't what Hudson Taylor does for God, but what God does through Hudson Taylor.

And W.P. Nicholson, that great Irish evangelist of 40 years ago, was staying some time before he died with my friend Lindsay Glegg in Kingston in London, and he said to Mrs. Glegg, please never disturb me till noon, leave me alone till midday. One day at midday, or soon afterwards, she went into his room, he'd gone out, and she found his sheets torn to shreds, torn to shreds. She thought it was strange, but at lunchtime W.P. Nicholson came to her and said, I suppose you've been into my room, I'm terribly sorry, I'm terribly sorry, but at five o'clock this morning I was in agony for revival in my heart, for revival in my ministry, for a stirring of God in this place, and I pleaded with him.

And that's the result. But you say these men are giants. Yes, they're only giants because they obeyed God and claimed His promise, and if there are exceptions, what a tragic commentary on the rest of us.

Listen. We take the death of Christ for forgiveness. Why don't we take the life of Christ for victory? We take the death of Jesus by faith for forgiveness of all the past.

Why don't we take and lay hold of our resources, of the living Christ, day by day, to live in us and triumph in every situation? Why don't we? That's what's available to you right now. He measured, and during this meeting God has been measuring every one of us, the waters to the ankles, the waters to the knees, the waters to the loins, waters to swim in. Where are you in that picture? You can answer that, and God's answer, but His desire for every one of us in this church is that we should be men and women with waters to swim in, who come to the recognition that just as I receive the death of Christ to forgive my sins, I receive His risen life for victory.

I take one by faith, I take the other by faith, and in every situation it's not I but Him. Let's pray together. This is going to involve for many of us here a new measure of commitment, a new measure of abandonment to Jesus Himself.

It's going to mean that He takes hold of our lives, all of them, so that we may lay hold of His. May there be some who recognize and have seen by the ministry of His Spirit to our hearts that this is the one ray of hope for the future, that apart from it our Christian lives are done, are finished, defeated, but with Him all things are possible. Grace and truth comes by Jesus Christ.

Lord Jesus, we thank You so much that You're not only a Saviour who died for us, but one who lives for us today. And You've been measuring, taking out the line and measuring how far we've gone. Lord, we confess that some of us have only been ankle deep.

Some of us are so desperate that we've got down on our knees and pleaded with Thee for more of Thyself and less of ourselves. Some of us have found the secret of exchange strength. It's not I, but it's Jesus only.

And Lord, we want all of ourselves to be at Thy disposal, that we might know what it is to have living waters to swim in when we are unseen and Jesus only lives through us day by day. Lord, answer prayer and do something new in our lives. Tonight, may this evening, which has been so hot and tiring for us, may it be the night of miracle for some life in this building when they exchange their false strength for Thy mighty power.

When we come to our end, the end of ourselves, and we come to the beginning of what God can do through a yielded heart. We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Once again, I'm departing from usual practice and I'm asking Robin Spence to sing to us a message which I believe will drive home what I've been seeking to say to you this evening. She's going to sing to us Jude's consecration hymn, Take My Life. Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee.

Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of Thy love. Take my feet and let them be swift and beautifully.

Take my voice and let me sing always only for my King. Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from Thee. Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I. Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine. It shall be no longer mine. Take my heart, it is Thine own.

It shall be Thy royal throne. Take my love, my Lord, I bear at Thy feet its treasure store. Take myself and I will be only Thine.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26466.mp3>

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