

Lessons on Living - on Abundant Living

by Alan Redpath

The abundant life is a life filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit, where we experience the power and authority of God in our lives.

Duration: 53:21

Scripture: Isaiah 44:3, John 7:37-38, John 10:10

Topics: "Abundant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by mentioning that in the morning sessions they are studying the book of Jonah, specifically chapter 4. In the evening sessions, they have been focusing on the theme of abundant life, based on Jesus' statement in John 10:10. The speaker then goes on to discuss various aspects of this abundant life, including the testing of faith, the challenge of humility, the call to forgiveness, and the priority of prayer. The sermon also references Ezekiel 47 and John 7, highlighting the imagery of water flowing from the temple and Jesus' invitation to come and drink. The speaker concludes by mentioning that they will be discussing the call to love in the next session.

Transcript

Our portion is from the Old Testament this evening in the book of Ezekiel, chapter 47. Ezekiel 47. I should say in the morning sessions we are considering the theme the training of a disciple and studying together the book of Jonah.

The last chapter of that book, chapter 4, we will be considering tomorrow. In the evenings we have been following the text behind me on the wall where Jesus said, I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. And we have been considering together some aspects of that abundant life that all of us must face if we are going to experience it day by day.

We began with the testing of faith and then considered the challenge to humility and the call to forgiveness and the priority of prayer. And this evening the claim to abundant life. Tomorrow, God willing, is our final study, the call to love.

Ezekiel 47, the first 12 verses, and then our prayer chorus before the message. And 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.

For 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 from the outside to the other 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.

It was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. And he said to me, certain man, have you seen it? 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, this 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, they become fresh. So everything will live where the river goes. Fishermen will stand before the sea, beside the sea, from En Gedi to Enniglion.

It will be a spreading of nets. 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 banks and both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit 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 us bow our heads and hearts before God and sing, Father, I adore you. I adore you.

Spirit, I adore you. I adore you. One moment of quiet prayer.

Let us each one ask that God would speak to our hearts this evening. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our prayer to you tonight would be, speak, Lord, in the stillness while I wait on thee. Hush my heart to listen in expectancy.

Speak, O blessed Master, in this quiet hour. May I see thy face, Lord, and feel, and feel thy touch of power. In Jesus name, Amen.

As we come to consider this subject tonight, of the abundant life. I am come that you might have life, and that you have it more abundantly. I sense and very conscious of the responsibility.

But I also, I'm sure, of the tremendous priority of this subject in Christian circles today, and the tremendous need of it, and also, very often, the neglect of it. You see, in society today, there are two revolutions going on, side by side. One atheistic communist revolution, the other spiritual revolution.

The one with its goal of world domination. The other with that goal achieved, but to be realized. The same goal.

And both of them accomplished by the same method. Total, absolute, complete abandonment to that goal, at any cost. And this is the element which we neglect.

Because it is only by that element, that Christian revolution is released in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is not an optional extra. He does not exist in order to produce a super deluxe Christian or two in a generation.

He comes as watchman, he would say, to enable us to live a normal Christian life. A life that's filled with his presence. Anything less than that is subnormal.

Communist atheistic revolution hasn't a hope of success. Because it touches the periphery, but never reaches the center. It cannot change the human heart.

Can't possibly. And as long as we have humanity governed by pride and selfishness, you first, after me, as long as we have that, we're doomed. But when we have Christian revolution, and we have the reality of the power of the Spirit of God released through every child of God born of the Spirit, that changes human hearts, revolutionizes human lives.

And it is that message, that gospel, that revolution, that each one of us who profess to be born again Christians are responsible for letting loose in society today. Now you might think it's strange that I should turn to such an obscure portion of scripture as Ezekiel 47, when so much is taught in the Word of God in the New Testament, especially in John 14 through 16 and other portions on this subject, this controversial subject alas. I only do so because, well, this chapter in allegory, in picture, in type, contains the most beautiful symbol or picture of Holy Spirit life that I know in the Bible.

That's why I would bring it to you this evening. Look in my diary of former years. I was here in 1973.

In the 1973 I took this portion. I don't remember what on earth I said. But I have a feeling it'll be somewhat different this evening, at least it ought to be, after nine years, though the basic fact that fills my heart will be there all the time.

And I trust it may also fill yours. You see, the Bible is an eastern book. And all its pictures and all its metaphors come from the land of the Middle East, which knew constantly the experience of barrenness and dryness and wilderness.

Therefore you have in the Old Testament, for example, such places as these, wells of salvation, streams in the desert, rivers in the wilderness. I will pour water on him that's thirsty and floods upon the dry ground. The godly man is like a man like a tree planted by the river that brings forth its fruit in season and its leaves never wither, and whatsoever he does prospers.

And you have the same picture carried right over into the New Testament. And you have the Lord Jesus meeting the woman of Samaria by a well and saying to her, if you go on drinking of that water which has its source in the ground, you'll go on being thirsty. But he that 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 that springs up into everlasting life. A little later on in the same gospel, in chapter 7, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood at the door to the temple and cried, if any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink. For out of his, he that believeth in me, out of his heart shall flow not a trickle, not a stream, not a river, but rivers of living water.

And you find that picture carried on right through to the book of Revelation, where they have a very limited glimpse into heaven. I will tell you more about heaven. I shall do shortly.

It will be wonderful, won't it? I hope you're looking forward to it. Have you got your notebooks ready to take up then? I have. With all the questions I don't understand.

Of course, once upon a time I thought I knew all the answers, but now lots of things I want to know. I'll probably lose it on the way up. But I've got it in my mind, things I want to ask the Lord.

I won't tell you what they are, quite a lot of them. Oh, I'm sure when I get there I'll understand them without asking. But do you notice that in heaven there's no moon? There's no night? There's no sea? At first thought, I'm a bit sorry about that, because I love the ocean.

I do dislike flying on planes. It's lovely to travel from New York to Southampton in England on a ship, but you can't do that now, except at a colossal price in midsummer. No sea? No, but there's a river, and the book of Revelation tells us that that river is as pure as crystal, and it flows, it flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

And here in Ezekiel 47 is the picture of a river. A river whose source, in verse 1, issues from below the threshold of the temple toward the east. And the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold, south of the altar.

The source, the throne, the course, the altar. The book of Revelation, the source, the throne of God, the course, and of the Lamb. The river, whose source is the very highest place of God's authority in all the universe.

It comes from the sanctuary. And let me say to start with, that when you receive Holy Spirit life, and in case you think the picture might not be sound, let me assure you that you receive Holy Spirit life at the moment that you receive Jesus. You cannot be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit.

You can be a believer without having the Holy Spirit. Thoroughly fundamental, and dispensational of course, and thoroughly correct, and thoroughly orthodox, but dead. If you've only got doctrine, what good is that? The Holy Spirit brings life.

And when I receive the Holy Spirit, I receive from life. The Holy Spirit was not given because 120 people met for a 10-day prayer meeting between the crucifixion and the ascension. The Holy Spirit was given because Jesus said to his disciples something that they must have found very hard to believe.

It's better for you that I go away. For if I go away, if I do not go away, the comforter will not come. Now just a moment, that the comforter, that's not a good word.

It really isn't. I mean, no. In the Tower of London there's a tapestry, and in the picture of this tapestry, it depicts Anglo-French wars of several hundred years ago.

The French and the English are always fighting with each other. And in the picture you have King William driving the English troops into action, and fighting the French. And he's on horseback with a long spear in his hand, long, long spear.

And above the tapestry is the caption, King William comforteth his soldiers. Some comfort. And I can only say in my life that I have found the Holy Spirit to be the most uncomfortable comforter I know.

He prods, he pushes, he just won't let me get off if I seek to disobey him. He comes after me on the track, and constantly prodding and pushing. Oh no, the word is advocate, counselor.

If I go not away from you, the counselor will not come to you. But if I go away, I will send him to you. And he'll be with you and in you forever.

And listen to the language of Acts chapter 2. Listen to it. This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men, but God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. This Jesus, God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses, being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this which you see and hear.

All the explanation of what happened at Pentecost was a risen Lord, God's perfect man, ascended into heaven, there bearing the marks of Calvary. There in all the skies, there in heaven, because utterly obedient at any cost to all the will of God, and receiving therefore the right for humanity to live, to snatch them from death, and to give them the right to live under his authority. And the life that I have when I receive Jesus comes right from the cross, from Jesus himself.

And it comes by way of the cross, by way of the altar. It's a life of absolute authority, because it's a life of absolute submission. And his obedience to the Lord, to the Father, gave him the right to possess life for me and for you.

He didn't need that life himself. Matter of fact, he lived by the power of it. He was born of the Spirit.

He lived by the Spirit. He resisted the enemy by the power of the Spirit. And all the way through his life, he knew the indwelling might of the power of the third person of the Trinity.

He was there all the time. Oh yes, this right to live was not gained for himself. It was gained for us.

And in other words, you and I might be free, and might have the right to live a life of absolute authority, because a life of absolute submission. Dear friends, I wonder if we really have realized that the life of Jesus didn't finish at the cross. Didn't it finish in heaven? The life of Jesus is to be displayed, displayed on this twentieth century by every born-again believer.

It's perpetuated as he lives in the life of each one of us. All he wants is, let me be God in you. And you want to know how? Submit, and then you'll have power.

His closing words to his disciples, all authority is given unto me. Go and preach the gospel therefore to every creature. And later, you shall receive power, dynamite, dunamis, and the Holy Spirit shall come upon you.

And that dunamis, dynamite, in Christians is dependent upon our submission to exude authority in heaven. May I illustrate? I think you've probably heard this illustration. It comes, unfortunately, from London.

On a very hot summer day, I was walking down--you may detect the location--Piccadilly. Oh, it was hot. Seventy-one degrees.

I was sweating. And there were two rows, side by side, of double-decker buses. And they were all stationary.

None of them dare move. And being an accountant by nature, I began to count up the horsepower under the hoods of those buses. I soon lost count.

And then I wondered why they were all standing still. And then when I got to Piccadilly Circus, I found out why. The traffic lights had broken down.

And a rather fat--in fact, a very fat, rather small London policeman, obviously not the height to qualify for traffic control--had come on duty in a gem, and stood with his hand on his hip like that, and with the other hand up in the air like that, with his back to all the traffic, not even looking at them. And not one bus dare move one inch. Not one horse dare snort under those hoods.

And not one driver dare touch the accelerator pedal, because of one fat London policeman. And I stood at those traffic lights and looked at him, and I said--I didn't say it to him, but I said to myself, you think you're no end of a guy. I expect you've a wife and five kids, you live somewhere in Clapham Junction.

I would like you to go home and take off your uniform and come back and stand there and do that in a suit of clothes like mine. In one minute, you'd either be dead or in hospital. Those horses, those buses, those drivers didn't care two straws for a great fat London policeman.

But I'll tell you something, they cared a mighty lot for the authority of his uniform. He was clothed in a uniform of absolute authority, the authority of Scotch and Yard, headquarters of London police. And the uniform kept him at bay.

A man under authority, where the uniform, wherein the uniform of authority was in complete control of that situation. And Christian, Christian, you and I have a right, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to be in control of society today, if only we submit to that authority. But we're so comfortable, and so cushy, and so affluent, and so full of ourselves, that he doesn't get a chance.

We push our organization, advertise our good, propagate our society, missionary societies, by the hundred. Unnecessary, most of them. But oh God, for the authority of the Holy Ghost in the Church today, that's what we need.

A life under the authority of him, is in control, in every situation. The source of the river, the throne of God. And oh, it fills my heart, it makes me want to leap and jump and praise the Lord.

You know, it may not look like it, but the preacher has that life in him. The life of God, a life that's sourced is from the throne. And the measure in which I know that life, is only the measure in which I submit to his rule, moment by moment in my life.

The essence of the river's power, less than a mile from its source, waters to swim. Oh, the adequacy of the supply, when I have abundant life flowing in me and through me, the very life of God himself. But there's an interesting phrase in this passage of Scripture, which grips me.

Maybe you noticed it, as I read it to you. See, if you do this turn, the three going on eastward with a line in hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through, 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, it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen and deep

enough to swim in. A river that could not be passed through.

Do you notice, afraid, if you haven't noted it, underline it. He led me through. And the waters were to the ankles.

He led me through. The waters were to the knees. He led me through.

The waters were to the loins. And waters to swim in. The experience of the river's depth.

He led me through. And the waters were to the ankles. What does that suggest to you? Surely it doesn't require a vivid imagination.

It isn't for me. To find myself with Paul in the epistle to the Corinthians, the first letter and the third chapter. I cannot speak to you, brethren, as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.

For as much as there is division and strife and envy among you, are you not carnal? Like babes, you can't feed yourself. You're too fed by others. Are you not carnal? There are only three kinds of people in the world.

Natural, carnal, spiritual. The natural man, he understands nothing of the things of God. But he has the nerve to say that the Christian is not all there.

Bless his heart. He's the one who's not all there. He's only two-thirds alive.

He's got physical life, mental life, but no spiritual life. But the carnal man is alive. He's got spiritual life.

Brethren, I could not speak to you, says Paul, as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. Brethren, oh, he's got life, but I tell you, he's only ankle-deep. And the man whose ankle-deep in the river is an awful lot of him hasn't even got wet.

He's paddling. Just playing religion. Playing games while society goes to hell, but he's just ankle-deep.

Doesn't care. He brought me through. And the waters were to the ankle.

Listen carefully. The biography of Christian people is not automatically to go from natural to carnal and to spiritual. In most cases, I don't say in all, but in most cases, I would say nine out of ten, the progress is from the natural man to the spiritual man and back to the carnal.

Do you remember the day when you were born again? Can you recall the day? The place? Doesn't really matter, as long as you know you are. But I can, because I was there at the time. And you know, I was born again in a pub.

American revised on that, Tavern. And it was in a little village in Northumberland, northern county of England, where I was training in Newcastle to be a chartered accountant, or you called it a CPA. And there was one fellow in that office who was a Christian.

I didn't understand that he was, but that's what he was. I thought he was a religious maniac, and we all did. And he was different.

So different, in fact, that he was very consistent and insistent on being at the office ten minutes before office hours. He wouldn't take more than half an hour for lunch, never would go out for a drink in the

morning, nor in the afternoon, and always wanted to go on working till after six. And he made us hopping mad.

And while we went around telling smutty stories, he let us shut up when he was there. Not because he told us to, but because it was out of place. One day my employer came to me and said, I want you to go to a certain town, certain village in the north of England, and do the audit of some firm's books.

It's away in the country, and there's one little pub with one guest room, and you're going to work with... And he named this man. And you're going to be there for three weeks. And there's no way of getting home.

Oh Lord. All right then. The day before I went, I took six of my closest friends out for a drink of beer.

And round that drink of beer, I swore to them, I'd knock the religion out of them in a week. We got away the first night in the pub. At eleven o'clock, if you please, at night, he knelt down to pray.

I'd never seen anybody do that before. Except occasionally at church. I said to myself, now what do I do now? I know, I must put on a show.

So I knelt down too. And I watched him through my fingers. Do you know how long he stayed down there? Fifty-two minutes.

On a hard wooden floor. Oh, I was aching in every limb of my body. And then he got up and finished.

And I stayed down an extra minute, just to impress him. And then I got to bed, and I was going to sleep, when suddenly his feet walked across the floor. And he sat down on the edge of my bed and he said, Mr. Redpath, do you ever think about anything seriously? I was known to whip up the fun.

And I said, what do you mean? He said, Redpath, do you want to be saved? That's the diplomatic approach. You'll find it in six years of lessons, and so will he. Saved? Me? I'm not in the Salvation Army, and I'll let him have it with every gun I could fire.

When I'd finished, he said to me, thank you. Do you want a picture of us then? I was glad it was dark. I was just ready to be told.

He said, what do you mean? I said, I do want a picture of us. He said, well, I said I do, but it's not possible. And for the first time in my life, he told me the story of Jesus.

Lived a perfect life. Died an atoning death on Calvary. Rose from the tomb, ascended to heaven.

Received his Spirit, that he might come and live in my heart, and transform my life. In twenty minutes, he gave me to the Lord. I never doubted it from that day to this.

That man went to heaven about a month ago. The world was not the same without him. To me.

He took me every night of those three weeks to a different meeting, at a brethren hall of all things. So you see a very good beginning. And then after that, oh, it was tremendous, I went home.

And there was a notice left by my football club. You're expected for training on Saturday at two o'clock. I said to my parents, I'm not going.

They said, don't you? What are you going to do? I said, I'm going out to read my Bible. I saw them look at me, and I saw them look at each other. That stands for a psychiatrist.

They didn't. I went out beside the Roman wall, the Roman Empire, and I opened my Bible, Romans separate, and I began to read. And I'm not ashamed to tell you, I read it with tears in my eyes.

The book was living to me. Because I knew the author of the book, you see. He comes to live in my heart.

And the book didn't make sense to me before now. It was alive. It was absolutely alive.

And there is therefore now, ooh, now no condemnation. So I underlined that little word now so hard, that it went right through to the epistles of the Philippians. But it was worth it.

There is therefore now. Say, was I calm? Or was I spiritual? I was spiritual. He filled me up to the limit of my capacity with the Holy Ghost.

Filled me, there and then, at my new birth. That Monday morning, I had to go back to the office. Immediately I got inside the office.

Six of my friends, who I'd taken out for a drink, said to me, Have you done it? I said, What do you mean? Have you knocked the religion out of it? Well, I said, Not exactly. Oh, are you religious? Oh, no, no, I'm not. Are you religious? No.

Well, come and have a drink. No, thank you. Why not? Aren't you well? Oh, yes.

Well, come and have a drink. No, I won't. But you must do.

You're religious. No, I'm not. Get off my neck.

I'll come and have a drink. And I didn't have one, I had six. He said, There's better.

A young lady, who wasn't doing nearly good, not my wife, I didn't know her then, called me on the phone and said, What about a date? That's how they did it in those days. And I said, No, thank you. No, thank you.

Why not? Aren't you well? Very well. Well, come and have a drink. No, no, no.

Oh, do come. I haven't seen you for a long time. OK, I'll come.

And those two decisions cost me eight years of wasted Christian living. I went far away from God, right down deeper into sin than there ever has been before. But as a Christian, nightclubs, dances, songs, everything.

You can't live like that as a Christian. Yes, you can. How do I know? Because I was miserable.

Before, I loved it. Now, I hated it. If I'm speaking to any of you dear people here tonight, and you're trying to get the best out of two worlds, well, let me tell you, you're getting nothing out of either.

And deep down in your heart, though you wouldn't like to admit it, you're miserable. He led me through, and the waters were to the ankles. Got it? May I ask you a personal question? How long has that river been flowing in your life? When did it begin? Five years? Ten? Fifty? Twenty? Thirty? Forty? Fifty? How

long? How deep is it? On January 26, 1982.

I'm not saying how deep it was several years ago. But right now, is it ankle deep? Has the tide gone wide out? And have you got yourself into an evangelical rut? And you go to church, and you sing the hymns, and you look into what's done, and you do it all, quite a week, but nothing changes you. And you're in such a rut.

My dear friend, let me remind you that deeper than a rut is a grave only 18 inches deeper. And it's not how I begin life that's how I end it that matters. And some of us have been on the road so long, and the water's gone right out.

And with no concern for souls, no compassion for the lost, and we never would move an inch next door to speak to our neighbor about Jesus Christ. For I tell you, if the preacher wasn't found, and if he said something that smelt a little bit of charisma, woof, out with him. Paper threats? Nonsense.

You're shallow, carnal, defeated, miserable. But God loves you. And God has given you this life.

And God wants you back into usefulness tonight. He brought me through. The river works the ankles.

He brought me through. The waters work to the knees. Ooh, that's exciting.

The tide's coming in. The river's got to be deeper. And there's less of the man in view.

And when the Lord captures a man's knees, he's got something down on his knees. May I say, I don't think I'd be exaggerating. That's the picture of a man who's getting desperate.

The good that I would, I do not. The evil that I hate, that I do. Oh, wretched man that I am.

Who shall deliver me from this body of sin? I thank God, through Jesus Christ, my Lord. He's going down. And together, as we came this week to Moody Catholic, my wife and I prayed.

Because I'm not interested in conference ministry. I'm not interested maybe in tickling people's minds and intellects about doctrines and things. I'm not interested in that.

But I'm deeply concerned that carnal Christians might get through to spirituality. And that the Christian church might take part in Christian revolution and change society before it's too late. I'm deeply concerned, as Dr. Matt Maramore prayed, that we should not leave this room the same as we came in.

Deeply concerned. And I prayed, and we prayed, Oh Lord, give us some people at Moody Catholic this week who are getting desperate. And God has been answering prayer about that.

Because I've talked with several. And some people have been saying, No, I can't go back home just as I am now. I can't go back to live the same life.

I can't go back to live on the same level. It's all a sham. It's all a pretense.

It's all very well cloaked and covered in a very fine evangelical basis of doctrine and all that. It's right there. It's found in my head.

But my heart is desperately dry and empty and far from God. And I know it's wrong and I know my life is utterly unsatisfactory. It doesn't count a thing for the Lord.

And Lord, I cannot, cannot go on. That's what Kittick is all about. If Kittick doesn't bring people through to that, to a new experience of the Lord, he might as well shut down.

He doesn't run a happy conference every week. He runs to do business with God. And if I'm not prepared to do business with God, what's the point? And this man, I think, is a man.

He reminds me rather of Jacob. You know that story? Very quickly, let me just remind you. Jacob, well, you know it, of course.

He didn't leave home, I think, till he was about, verging on 70. I think he stayed round your mother's apron strings till he was 70. Of course, mind you, he was only half way.

He had a long way to go. I'm glad that the Lord has shortened the lifespan. But at 70, he had a row with his brother.

And he quit, with his brother snarling at him. Anyway, he came to battle. And he slept.

And the first night away from home, heaven opened. And the ladder came down from heaven. And in his dream, he saw angels descending and ascending.

Descending with heaven's surprise, and ascending with his needs. And the Lord was at the head. And the Lord said to him, If you'll follow me, and trust me, and obey me, I'll bring you safely home.

And Jacob said, OK, Lord. I'll follow you, I'll obey you, I'll trust you. And, listen, he feared the Lord and worshipped him.

Two genuine marks of conversion, which are missing in the average, in quotes, decision for Christ. He feared the Lord. And he worshipped him.

And at that moment, in New Testament language, Jacob was converted. But, oh boy, 20 years went by. What a messy day.

Married the wrong wife. Married the wrong girl. Got into a partnership with a pagan uncle of his.

And blew it completely, in his business. And his home life was wrong, and his business life was wrong. And he found that other people were practising on him, the deceit that he had practised on them.

And the whole thing was haywire. Until after 21 years, the Lord spoke to him and said, Jacob, I've had enough of this, come on home. Collected his wines, and collected his goods, and collected his cattle, and set off for home.

And the moment he'd gone on the journey, somebody told him there's 400 people coming after him from Esau. Family quarrels last a long time. So Jacob sent his family on ahead.

And he went away by himself and climbed the mountain. Climbed the mountain by a brook, Jabbok. And, and there wrestled an angel with him until the breaking of day.

Without any doubt whatsoever, this was Jesus. One of the many pre-incarnation appearances of our Lord. Wrestling with this man.

And saying to him, eventually, let me go till the day breaks. And the answer from Jacob, I won't let you go till you bless me. I'm hanging on until you bless me.

I won't let you go. And my brother, my sister, isn't that what you've been saying to me? Lord, Lord, you can't let me go. I won't let you go.

I can't go back home until you bless me, and met with me, and given me the glory and the power of the Holy Spirit in my heart. I can't go on to live the negative Christian life in the rust that I am. I can't believe nothing.

It's a rust of 50 years prediction, followed by the church. And I can't, can't go on. It's nonsense.

We're playing religious games. No, I can't let you go. Except you bless me.

Remember what God said to him? What's your name? Paul. That must have shaken him to the core. Do you think he didn't know? Of course he knew.

He knew him. He knew him at Bethel. Watched him marry the wrong girl.

Watched him get into the wrong job. Watched him blow it in every area. He knew him all together and completely.

But his first question to him, what's your name? Listen, the Lord wasn't asking for information. He was asking for confession. And the Lord doesn't ask information from any of us.

He knows us through and through, completely. But he does say to you tonight, what's your name? Cheat? Deceiver? Surrender? Like Jacob? What's your name? And Jacob's answer? Sorry Lord. After 21 years of knowing you, I'm still Jacob.

And the Lord smiled on him. And loved him. For his openness.

And said, your name will be no more Jacob, but Israel. I'll change your name. And in changing your name, I'll change your character.

It didn't happen all at once. It wasn't a second blessing. Do you ask me if I believe in a second blessing? Of course I do.

Because I believe in a third, and a fourth, and a fifth. Any day without a blessing would be a hopeless day to me. I believe in millions of blessings.

But, but, but, I tell you. And all Scripture supports it. And the experience of many, many Christians supports it too.

There comes a moment in the Christian life of absolute crisis. When I see the folly of trying to run it all on myself. And I hand it over to Jesus.

And he says to me, thank you. I've been waiting for the moment when you come to the end of your rope. I've been waiting for the moment when your struggle is over.

When you know you can't cope by yourself. When you know the things to think for you. I've been waiting for you to say so and tell me.

Now you're prepared to admit it. Your name will be no more Jacob, but Israel. Prince with God.

For as a prince thou hast prevailed with him. What's your name? And God touched Jacob on the thigh. And from that day on he limped.

Have you got a spiritual limp as God has put on you? Have you? Up to his knees. Desperate. A puny.

Concerned. Lord, I won't let you go. Until you bless me.

Here at Moody's. Are you prepared to come clean? Are you? I can see you down in your evangelical rut. I can see you rapidly going down to your grave.

And still in a rut. I want to drag you out. Get you out and use you.

And get you out where the action is. What's your name? Oh, sorry Lord. After 50 years of Christian living.

I'm still Jacob. I've been waiting for that, Jonathan. Waiting for it.

And because I have your condition. I'm touching you. I'm marking you.

Marking you. Branding you. I'll make you bare in your body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

And from this day you'll go out to limp. But you'll carry the name Israel. As a prince you've power with God.

And you've got it. I must stop. I'll just say one more thing.

Ankle deep. Knee deep. Loin deep.

And that's the place of strength. They that wait upon the Lord shall exchange their strength for his. And a man who's on his knees and desperate.

The Lord is ready to show him something that he couldn't possibly show him before. He was really desperate. And it's the subject of this.

It's this. The Christian life is a life of exchange. Where there's no more I but Jesus in me.

And they that wait upon the Lord exchange their strength for his. Oh, thank you, Lord. Thank you.

For years, eight years actually. Years in my life. I tried and struggled and fought.

And praise God, he delivered me out of the rust. And he showed me what it meant. To lay hold of a living Lord Jesus who enveloped my heart.

And counted upon him each day to live his life for me. By his Holy Spirit. I didn't learn the lesson forever.

But I learned it then. And I've had to learn it over and over again. Because we've all got a sort of built-in do-it-yourself kit.

And we all somehow think, when we've been on the road fifty years, we really know something about it. And we really built up a sort of supplier strength that, well, we don't quite need the Lord as we used to. The Lord brings us shatteringly to an end of that.

For he's told me over and over again, Don't you know that my strength is perfected in weakness? And I've only got one ambition today. Honestly, I have. I have no ambition for anything, making a name or anything.

That's over. My one ambition is this. Lord, use my life as a platform on which you can display your power.

Made perfect in my weakness. For when I'm weak, then I'm strong. I remember when I had a stroke fourteen, fifteen years ago.

It's very prohibitive. The doctor tested me with all the usual things. And he said, Well, if you will promise not to do any more work, you might live to be ninety-three.

If, however, you insist on returning to work, well, I'll give you possibly five years. But you won't make ten. And you certainly won't live to be seventy.

I'd like to see that man tonight. For on long paths, both of those, by the grace of God, I don't believe in instant healing. I believe in divine healing.

And I've had it in my life. And I know Jesus can. But he brought me down, down, down to the very depths till I understood that the abundant life is not my strength, it is power.

Religious in me, the power of the Spirit in answer to my faith and to my obedience. You got it? Once again, you want to get out of your rut? Out of your traditional religious rut? Your traditional Presbyterian rut, or Methodist rut? Your traditional Episcopalian rut? Your traditional Bedouin rut? What have you? Southern Baptist rut. That's deeper, because the water's deeper.

But I mean, there you are, in your rut, turning around a little. In your rut, bless you! In your rut! Oh, the Lord wants to lift you from sinking sand and set you free. Give you a new name, a new motivation, and send you out to where the action is.

I, the greatest thrill of my life in the last ten years is to visit weekly Bible translators in most of their fields, in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, over in Indonesia, and see business people who have taken an early retirement and who are doing a tremendous job for weekly, so that Bible translators may be set free to do the thing that really matters. The last time I went in Peru to a jungle camp, the people in our aeroplane were a cow, two cows actually, a farmer, a mechanic, a translator, and an engineer. When we came back, the pilots and myself, and all of them left there to sweat it out for at least twelve months without any touch with home base.

That's the limit of dedication. What's your name? God wants you for that. Anywhere, as in God, anytime.

Let's pray. Father, we love you.

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