

Loss and Recovery of Spiritual Power

by Alan Redpath

Christians can recover their spiritual power through repentance, seeking a place of repentance, and praying for restoration.

Duration: 42:40

Scripture: Genesis 27:38, Psalm 51:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:37, Romans 8:32, Ephesians 1:3, Hebrews 10:28-29

Topics: "Spiritual Power"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the current state of the church and the need for repentance and revival. He emphasizes the importance of prioritizing God's work and not being consumed by the distractions of the world. The speaker highlights the danger of treating the blessings of Christ lightly and the consequences of neglecting one's spiritual birthright. He urges individuals to examine their own hearts and seek repentance in order to experience the fullness of God's blessings.

Transcript

Lord, strengthen me that while I stand firm on the rock and strong in thee, I may stretch out a loving hand to wrestlers with their troubled feet. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

I would just like to take one second to thank you, for many of you here have been praying for me daily during the past month. And the fact that I am here at all is a testimony to the fact that God has heard your prayers. My doctor has said to me before I went to Keswick, speak quietly, don't get excited, and don't take more than 20 minutes.

I said to him, but nobody would recognize me. If I have to speak more quietly than usual, that may be a blessing to some people, you may be thankful for it. But if I do, I want you to know it is not that the fire has gone from my heart, but I seek to be articulate in the burden which God has given me during these past months.

And in reading my Bible, I came across one verse which became daily the prayer of my heart. And as I turned to the study of the word, the context of it, it became the message from God to my heart to you this morning. In Genesis 27 and verse 38, Genesis 27 and verse 38, And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And Esau lifted up his voice and went. I truly believe that we meet at Keswick this year at a most momentous hour in the history of the church. Pressures of every kind are being brought to bear upon Christian people, which I believe are all symptomatic of the fact that Jesus is coming soon.

On the one hand, there is the open, devastating opposition of the devil expressed, for example, in the tragedies which have taken place since last we met here in the Congo. I read in one missionary magazine lately that there are more Christians who have paid the price of their lives for the sake of the gospel in this generation than in any other in the history of the church. That seems almost unbelievable.

But it's true that many a postscript has been written to Hebrews 11 in this past year, and 30 years ago we were all saying that kind of thing doesn't happen now. And on the other hand, there are the much more subtle pressures brought upon us by those who are the advocates of unity at any price, and who seem to believe that the answer to all our problems is the creation of a world church. My friends, I believe that unity, true unity, commences at the center and not at the circumference.

And it can never be created by adding a mass of unregenerate people to redeem society. The true church is already united by the Holy Spirit, and shares the life of Jesus Christ. And for that fact, Keswick stands as a clear testimony, all one in Christ Jesus.

But all is not well with the evangelical church. Living in the midst of a generation which has discarded Christian standards, and where every man's conscience is to be his only guide, somehow we seem strangely inadequate to face this challenge. And the confusion in the minds of some regarding the charismatic gifts of the Spirit have successfully diverted us from the priority task of rescuing a generation from hell.

We are strangely lacking in power, strangely lacking in authority, strangely lacking in conviction. And I wonder if we are not at Keswick this year, bewildered, even humiliated. It was said at the Edinburgh Convention Conference, rather, in 1910, we have lost the eternal youthfulness of Christianity, and aged into calculating manhood.

We seldom pray for the extraordinary, the limitless, the glorious, the miracle. If that was true then, it's a thousand times more true now. Mr. Len Mould, the secretary of the World Evangelization Crusade, is quoted in a recent issue of the Christian as saying, is it possible that the Holy Spirit's hand for commission is lifting off the people of Britain, and falling upon our African brethren? I saw Africans weep as they pray for the unsaved in Tibet and Brazil.

I saw 800 Africans stand to dedicate their lives to God for service anywhere. At Keswick and Kali, people stand to make similar dedications, and I'm glad of it. But in so many cases, something goes wrong between the call and the boat sailing.

Something is wrong. That reminded me, if I remember correctly, of the statement of beloved Fred Mitchell, made from this platform in my hearing, that of every a hundred people who offer their lives for God's service on the mission field here, only five apply to mission recited, and of those five, only three take the matter any further, and only one is accepted. One in a hundred.

Do you understand in the light of all this, the burden that rests upon me, and I trust you? And in the context of Keswick 1965, do we not lift our hearts to God and say, Lord, has thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, my father. That is my prayer for Keswick this year. Perhaps if we admit that

something is wrong, and as Keswick can believe that one of us would deny then perhaps the way into fullness of blessing is to discover the root of the trouble.

And no matter what it costs us to face it, I mean that, no matter what it costs to face it, for ourselves personally, never mind about the people next to you, but make your prayer now as I speak to you, bless me, even me also, my father. When I read that verse, I began to think about the context. Who was it that came with this plaintive cry to Isaac, there is a rejection here that was final, and it was made by Ethel.

An exceeding great and bitter cry, says verse 34. You know him well. In the 25th chapter of Genesis, you read the story of the tragedy of his life.

He was the man who despised his birthright. A man with many splendid qualities of character about him. I imagine a very attractive man on the human level, an athlete.

Yet one who was, as the Bible says, a profane person. A worldly minded person, who cared little for the things that are unseen and eternal. Who put priority upon the things that are of time.

He didn't care two pence for the covenant blessings of God to Abram. He never cared that he was to be the spiritual leader of his family or home. To him, a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush.

The immediate mattered far more to him than the future. The gratification of the flesh meant much more than life in the spirit. And he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage.

Let us well bear in mind that he didn't do it on the spur of the moment. It is Alexander White, the great Edinburgh preacher, who said, he who sells his birthright publicly, sells it many times in his heart before he takes it so openly to the market. He bewhistles it, cheapens it, despises it, and did it right to himself long before he sells it so cheaply to someone else.

A Christian never has the tragic experience of a public breakdown until he's had some private bargaining with the devil. He so has shown his contempt for his birthright, no doubt many times before now. And if you had been a member of his family or you knew him well, you knew he cared little for it.

You would have known that it was the simplest thing in the world for somebody to make an offer and to get it. Isaac knew, and Rebecca knew, and Jacob knew. They had heard him jesting about it, talking laxly about the blessing.

He had often given himself away before he actually took the fatal step. And once the deed was done, he did eat and drink and rose up and went his way. Thus he despised his birthright.

The consequences of that transaction were soon known. More and more he entered into the company of heathen communities which surrounded the people of God, the people who looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. Soon he entered into a heathen marriage with two women which, since Genesis 26 and 35, were a grief of mine to Isaac and Rebecca.

Oh, he lived bitterly to regret his choice. Just put alongside, if you will, the picture of his animal contentment with a mess of pottage. And of his despair when he wailed, hast thou but one blessing.

He found out his mistake. A sense of the preciousness of the thing that he despised woke in him. But it was too late.

There are consequences of every false choice. Youth has gone. Nobody can alter that.

Opportunities have gone and they can't be recovered. Habits are formed and associations are determined and character is formed. And as the writer to the Hebrews says, for he knows that afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected.

For he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. Does that all seem very remote to Keswick, 1965? Perhaps you think it is. It isn't to me.

For in a very real sense, God has burnt into my heart that this is the clue to what is wrong with the church. But don't let's talk about the church as a whole. Let us search our own hearts personally as he has done mine, preparing this message.

Think with me a moment about, not a rejection that was final as it was in the case of Esau, but about riches that we have forfeited. Tell me, have we sold our birthright? What is the birthright of a Christian? It couldn't be expressed more clearly than perhaps Romans 8, 32, he that spared not his son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Or perhaps Ephesians 1, 3, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Or perhaps in 1 Peter 1, 3 and 4, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath forgotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not in way reserved in heaven for you.

Perhaps it might be difficult to define in a few words, but the birthright of a Christian which has been purchased for us with the precious blood of Christ at infinite cost, introduces him to an untold area of blessing, in the enjoyment of which alone he is able to fulfill his God-intended function of communication of Holy Ghost light to other people. Right at the very heart of that birthright upon the enjoyment of which most other blessings of the Christian life depend, are three for which this Kizzik Convention seeks to proclaim as the secret of victorious and useful Christian life. People say Kizzik is, oh, a pious holiness convention.

People say it is right off on left field, as they say in America. I say that the truth of this convention, when it's understood, is the gateway to revival, is the very key to recovery of blessing, is a secret to the Church going out again in power and in victory. First of all, there is a life of constant cleansing in the blood of Christ.

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, 1 John 1 7. But what your God cleanses, he fills. Not for our own pious enjoyment, or to enable us to say, I've got a blessing, and I'm holier than you are, but for the purpose of communication. As Jesus said in John 7 37 38, He that believeth on me, out from his inner man shall flow rivers of living water.

This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. And the experience of his fullness in our lives, with the consequent ability to communicate life, leads in the third place to the life of communion with God. If he abide in me, and my words abide in you, he shall ask what he will, and that shall be done unto you.

You see, cleansing for his use, leads to communication for his glory, and that in turn leads to communion for his enjoyment. That's the very heart of the Christian's birthright, the seeker of authority, the seeker of his power, for the glory of God, for the salvation of man, to the utter discomfiture of the devil. And when we've lost that, we've lost everything.

These blessings are not held out on a plate to us, to help ourselves when we want to, but if we hunger and thirst we shall be filled. If we thirst for fullness we shall find it. The test of healthy living is good appetite, right appetite.

It's interesting that it was food which brought about human downfall. Adam craved something which was forbidden, and he ate it. And it was refusal of food which brought about human salvation.

If thou be the son of God, turn these stones into bread. And Jesus said no. Is it not here, just here, that we have despised our birthright? My friend, I open my heart to you.

How many of us, as we look back over the years that have gone, have to confess sadly and retrace in the bitter experience and fruits of experience moments when we thirsted for other things than God? Perhaps it was some sin that we thought long since had been tamed, and it leapt out at us one day, and attracted by its fascination, down we went. It took us off our guard. Or perhaps it was a slow, steady drift into worldliness, becoming like Esau, a profane person, a worldly-minded person, beginning to jest and to talk lightly of spiritual things.

What's the harm in it anyway, became our dangerous motto? Your family know, they've noticed it, and it is a grief of mine to them. Your fellow missionaries know, and it's the cause of the hold-up of blessing on your mission station. Your church member and your church deacons, they know, you're never at the prayer meeting now, television's more attractive to you.

You don't care like you used to. You're never as an open-ass as others. You've given up your job in the church.

You say you're too busy. Nonsense. If you're too busy for God's work, your priorities are all wrong.

Or perhaps it is the appeal of this affluent society of today, which has tempted us into a spirit of carnality, and worldliness, and prayerlessness. And we've lost our taste for the Word of God. We've skipped our quiet time.

We're hide from Him. We don't want to pray. We don't want to read our Bible.

We skip all that. And like Peter, we found ourselves warming ourselves at the wrong fire. We've despised our birthright.

And the blessings which were won for us lightly, which were won for us by the precious blood of Christ, we've treated lightly. And like he saw, we rise up, and we go our way. The enjoyment of the present had at that moment meant more than the hope of the future.

But of course, we've maintained our Catholic theology, and our Catholic reputation, and our evangelical position, because we simply had to. But there's a strange lack of reality, and authority, and power in our testimony. And somehow, somehow, it's very unreal.

And the Word of God speaks with almost terrifying authority. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose he, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace.

I feel like saying, like the congregation at Pentecost said, men and brethren, what shall we do? Oh, like David, have mercy upon me, O God. According to thy lovingkindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions, and wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For by knowledge my transgression and my sin is ever before me.

A rejection that was fatal. Riches that we, we blood-bought people, have forfeited. But you know, the Lord has said something else to me than that, praise the Lord.

It's not too late, there's a recovery we can find. Did you read an article in the Latin America magazine that was most penetrating, called the Latin America Evangelist, which was written by my friend Horace Fenton, who was director of the Latin America Mission, and has succeeded Kenneth Strachan, a name which will be long remembered for his remarkable work in evangelism in depth in Guatemala and elsewhere. Mr. Fenton's article was headed, It's Not Too Late, and he drew a graphic picture of the last few days of the life of our Lord, when it seemed as if nothing could be altered.

But it wasn't too late for Jesus to weep over Jerusalem. It wasn't too late for him to cleanse the temple. It wasn't too late for him to teach the people.

And in the mercy of God, I believe, at Keswick 1965, it's not too late for a thoroughgoing, drastic, out-and-out repentance. If we seek a place of repentance carefully with tears, there's a blessed contrast between Esau's experience and what may be here. If we long to have the birthright restored to us and the fullness to enter our lives, that longing itself is sure to bring it.

It doesn't matter how late, my friend, or how long you've been living out of the will of God, we can never go to our Heavenly Father in vain with Esau's prayer, Lord, Father, bless me, even me also. I think to realize the truth about ourselves is perhaps the first thing. It's not easy for me to say this.

In recent months, I have been overwhelmed with the revelation of my own heart. Thoughts have poured in upon me of which I am ashamed. Habits of long ago have threatened the invasion of my mind, and the temptation to give in has been tremendous.

I've never known in all my life anything like it. And it seemed to me that as I went through a spiritual agony, it seemed that my Father in Heaven came to me and said, don't you understand, that is all that you are and ever will be, apart from grace. There are some people that say that Keswick teaches sinless perfection, in which case I'd better resign quickly.

Holiness is not sinless perfection, it's sinful corruption. It is the total depravity of the flesh. I know that in me, that is, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

My friend, that to me is not theology, it's experience. To say, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, well, that's theology. But to say I know that in me, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, it's experience.

The only good thing about a Christian is Jesus. And I know that if in desperation, and with hunger, and earnestness of desire, it may be with bitter tears, I pour out to Him my heart and say, bless me, even me,

my Father, He will hear. You can go to your university, and you can go to your theological college, and you can get all the training that you can, and you need it.

Tell me, have you ever found, or met, or heard of, a theological college which teaches you to weep over your sin? I know one that does. It's at the feet of Jesus, alone, in prayer. Bless me, my friend, would you make that, would you make that definite this morning? He knows the blessing you need, the area in which spiritual recovery is urgently required.

Bless me, even me, never mind my friends at church, at home. The need's in my own heart. And I realize it.

The birthright has been despised somewhere, and I've turned from him. And though I may have lost spiritual authority, spiritual tone in my service in the church, or in the mission field, or in the business, whatever my sphere of witness may be, yet, Lord, restore to me the years. Bless me.

Soon before the conclusion of my ministry at Moody Church, a dear man came up to me after service and said to me with tears in my eyes, his eyes, he said, uh, I know all about what you're talking about, every word of it, but now I've made a success in business. I've been up at six o'clock every morning. I've had no quiet time for years.

I've gone out to business, seen my men get on the job, making the money with everything. I've made a colossal fortune, but oh God, what it's cost me. Bless me.

Bless me, oh my Father, make it desperate. The O has gone out of our praying. May it come back again as we realize we can't go on as we are.

We can't, my friend. Make we say like Jacob, Lord, my father, I won't let you go except, you bless me, my father. That's the dynamic relationship of prayer.

When I believed in Christ and submitted my life to him as a young man, a relationship was established which can't be broken. He is my father, he is your father, and using the language of the prodigal, I will arise and go to my father and say unto him, I have sinned and am no worthy, more worthy to be called thy son. Make me, is that prayer yours? Listen, just a word in conclusion.

Do you have your friend, Keswick, a companion, your husband, your wife, your fellow missionary, equally needy, equally dry as you? Will you seek them out? Will you go into some quiet place around Keswick each day this week, perhaps early in the morning, perhaps in the evening, perhaps sometime during the day, and get on your knees together with that friend and pray this prayer, bless me, even me also, my father, and where two of you agree as touching anything, it shall be done of my father which is in heaven. My friend, a lifetime of repentance can't save you, but the blood of Jesus can. And to plead his precious blood is to experience his wonderful cleansing.

And the Holy Ghost always come upon that which the blood cleanses, and flows in reviving blessing. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon dry ground. And once again they will come back to all of us, please God, at Keswick.

The experiencing, the experiencing of cleansing, and the power to communicate Holy Spirit life, and the power to reach out with the gospel, and communion with my father in heaven will be re-established, and the birthright will be renewed. O breath of life, come sweeping through us, revive thy church with life and

power. O breath of life, come cleanse, renew us, and set thy church to meet this hour.

O wind of God, come bend us, break us, till humbly we confess our need. Then in thy tenderness remake us, revive, restore. For this we plead, Lord my father, do it this week, do it today, do it now, do it in me.

And to him be all the glory. Amen. Let us pray.

A moment's quiet that you may talk to your father. Lord, I am thine. Save me, for I have sought thy precept.

Amen. Our closing hymn is number 40. Number 40.

Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, hear my humble cry, while in others thou art calling, do not pass me by. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all now, and until the morning shall dawn, the shadows flee away, and we see him face to face. Amen.

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