

Occupy Till I Come

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath emphasizes the urgent call for Christians to actively engage in evangelism and discipleship until Christ's return.

Duration: 53:55

Scripture: Judges 7:7, Matthew 5:14, Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, Revelation 1:5-20

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the story of Gideon from the Bible and how God used him despite his ordinary status. The speaker emphasizes that it is not our own strategies but God's strategy that brings extraordinary results. The sermon also highlights the importance of being in the spirit and having a revelation from God. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the church's responsibility to occupy and preach the gospel until Jesus returns.

Transcript

The book of the Revelation chapter 1 and beginning at verse 9, Revelation chapter 1 beginning at verse 9 and reading from the Revised Standard Version. I, John your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamon and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire.

His feet were like burnished bronze refined as in a furnace and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars. From his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

When I saw him I fell at his feet as though dead but he laid his right hand upon me saying, fear not I am the first and the last and the living one. I died and behold I am alive forevermore and I have the keys of death and Hades. Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter.

As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. May the Lord bless to us his word. When I heard the choir singing that lovely piece in everything gave thanks.

I was specially reminded of my good friend Paul Rees whom you know I think by name, telling a story of a Christian man who was on a greyhound bus in the states, a place called Birmingham, Alabama. And it was a very hot day, temperature was 95, humidity very intense and it was waiting in the bus terminal for departure to Chicago which is a long distance. And presently when he'd been sitting there for a while a lady came and sat beside him and pardon me saying it but she was a rather large lady and she oozed onto his section of the seat.

And then five kids came and joined her, five of her children and sat on top of her and also oozed onto him. Well I have to leave a lot to your imagination but he found it pretty difficult and he just remembered at that point that in that morning's quiet time the Lord had given him that verse, Ephesians 5.20, in everything gave thanks. He said oh Lord what can I thank you for right now? He said I know, thank you Lord Jesus that this woman is not my wife.

Now if you don't like that that's not me but it's Paul Rees. But it's good to be with you for this Advent testimony meeting and let's just have a word of prayer together shall we? Again we ask the Lord to meet us and to speak with us in his word. Speak Lord for thy servant heareth, speak just now some message to meet my need which thou only dost know.

Speak now through thy holy word and make me see some wonderful truth thou hast to show to me, for Jesus' sake. Amen. Would you open your Bible with me at Revelation chapter 1 which was read to us a little earlier in the service.

Revelation chapter 1. One of the last commands the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples when he was here on earth was to occupy till he comes. And I've specially that word on my heart tonight for that is the greatest task of the church on earth. Each one of the four gospels closes with the great commission to preach the gospel to every creature.

I was staying at a home in South Africa some time ago and I preached that morning in the church of this particular city and it found it a very difficult service, a very unresponsive congregation I felt. Maybe it was my fault. And at lunchtime for the sake of conversation at the home at which I was staying I said to the daughter of the home, a girl of about 19, I said tell me I said what outreach have you in this church? And she said we don't have any.

Oh I said really? No she said we don't need any. Oh well you see she said the Lord brings into our church those whom he wants to save. Really I said what do you do about the people who don't come into the church? Oh that's perfectly all right.

You mean I said even people who just don't bother ever to think about it? Oh she said yes. Perfectly all right. The Lord Jesus only sends to hell those whom he wants to go.

So I said my dear young lady that lets you right off the hook doesn't it? Right off with any sense of personal involvement in the great commission. This of course is the result of pressing Calvinistic theology to an absurd limit. It's making a scapegoat of the sovereignty of God and conveniently excusing ourselves

from having any share in this tremendous command that the Lord Jesus left to his disciples, occupy till I come.

And I want to think of this, first of all just let me put some background before we turn to this particular passage. Because I find it so interesting today to imagine, to realize that this world in which we live is much smaller than we think. It's called an overcrowded neighborhood.

Some people have called it a global village. Because you see with the tremendous advance in means of communication you can be from one end of the world to the other in a matter of hours. You can shortly get to New York if you leave Manchester.

In the morning you could get to New York for coffee and be back for lunch if you were so stupid and if you had the money. But it's shrinking you see, shrinking, shrinking, shrinking into just a little neighborhood. Smaller than we think.

Everything therefore, this task of occupying till Jesus comes is so much more difficult, so much harder than we ever imagined it was. Because the result of a shrinking world is that you have an exploding population and the clash of different cultures constantly, of all colors and all races and all backgrounds are flung together with all the tensions involved, which we know everything about these days. And the tremendous population explosion, I don't need to underline that, you all know about it.

Did you see in the paper last week I think that it now reached definitely over 4,000 million people. That's doubled in 10 years. That's tremendous.

Tremendous explosion. You see the net increase is about 75 million per year and 60 million people die every year. 60 million people, that's 7,200 an hour.

That's 120 a minute. That's two a second. The relentless march of feet out into eternity.

And Jesus says, occupy till I come. Tremendous responsibility and far more difficult than we imagined. And also, not only is the world smaller and the task harder, but the time is shorter than we think.

That's what this meeting is all about. When he was asked what sort of a world it would be like when he came again, you remember the answer of the Lord Jesus? Read Matthew chapter 24 on your own sometime and there you'd see. He said just the beginning of troubles, not even the end, but the mark of the end coming will be a world that is at war, a world that has food shortage, a world in which the church has grown very cold and lost its first love, a world in which there's an amazing increase in missionary interest, a world in which there are masses of people who couldn't care less.

And it's that kind of world that we live in today. Of course, you might well say these things have existed in history before, that's perfectly true, but I'm not sure that they've ever existed together at the same time to such an extent as they do now. Did you notice or did you watch or hear that program on television sometime ago when a university professor was discussing nuclear energy with about 12 other professors? And he said, what kind of a world do you think it'll be in the year 2000? And 10 out of the 12 of those men said, we don't think it'll be here.

Well, of course, our view of eschatology forbids us taking that view because we believe Jesus is coming to reign. But, but, isn't it amazing that pagan people who don't think about the Lord at all just realize that gradually, and now quicker than ever, bringing the world to destruction. The time is shorter than we think.

Occupy Teraika. And the cost, the cost of doing the job is far greater than we imagined. I don't mean in terms of pounds and pence, but I mean in terms of involvement, in terms of commitment to Jesus Christ.

You see, everybody here is either a missionary or a mission field. You realize that? You're either a missionary or a mission field. You can't be anything else.

If you know Jesus as your Lord, you're a missionary. If you don't, you're a desperately needy mission field. And if you're a mission field, you can become a missionary tonight, right now, by crowning him your king.

But everybody is either a missionary or a mission field. And you see, you can't put your name in the whosoever of John 3 16. I don't need to repeat that verse in a congregation like this.

You can't put your name in that whosoever, unless you're prepared to put it in the whosoever of Mark chapter 8. Perhaps I ought to give you that one, where Jesus said, whoever shall lose his life, shall save it. Whoever shall save his life, shall lose it. Whoever would come after me, let him leave himself behind and take up his cross and follow me.

Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this wicked generation of him, shall I be ashamed before my father which is in heaven. See, he's just telling us that you can't accept the privileges of a relationship without accepting the responsibilities. You can't.

You can't claim to be a child of God unless you accept discipline and discipleship. It's not an option, not an optional extra. It's an obligation upon every Christian.

Your missionary responsibility begins at the moment of your new birth. You don't become a missionary by getting a visa and going out to the Far East, but you get, you become a missionary at the moment you're born again. So everybody is a missionary or a mission field.

And that leads me to put to you just three questions which I've had to ask myself again today. I would like to ask them to you, just in your mind, answer them. Do you believe that the cross of Jesus Christ, the sacrifice on Calvary, is adequate for the salvation of all people from creation until his second coming? Do you believe that? I would say yes to that question.

John 3, 16, God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Yes, the cross is adequate. My second question, do you believe therefore because of the cross of Calvary that everybody will ultimately be saved? Give you time to think about that.

My answer to that question has to be no. I would like to be able to say yes, but I can't because if I did, well, I'd have to tear the book of Revelation out of my Bible and most of the gospel of Matthew and whole chunks more. Oh no, the cross of Christ is adequate for the salvation of everybody, but it's effective only in the lives of those who repent and believe.

Adequate for all, effective in those who repent and believe. Then my third question, that being so, can anybody be saved without hearing the Word of God? And once I'm right in the middle of Romans chapter 10, and my answer has to be no. Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, but how shall they call on him in whom they've not believed, and how shall they believe in him heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? No, nobody can become a Christian without hearing the Word of God.

I'm not suggesting by that that everybody should serve the Lord overseas, but I am saying with all the authority behind me of the Word of God itself this, that I have and you have no right to settle down to a good, comfortable, cushy job in a welfare state like Britain, without first of all satisfying yourself that the circumstances in which God has placed you justify you staying at home. For two and a half thousand million people have never heard the name of Jesus. That's a pretty searching thing when Jesus says, occupy till I come.

What about the lands that never have been occupied? And you may say missionary work has ended and the celebrates, certainly not. It's more open than anything else. There's hardly a country in the world closed to the gospel if you're prepared to go and never come back.

I firmly believe that the years of one year furlough and four years on the field are coming to a conclusion. I say this thoughtfully. My own daughter and her husband and children are in Africa and they have written to me and said we may have to face the fact that we're here to stay and become citizens of our country and remain or be turned out.

The idea of help from the West is no more thought of in other countries. So I have to be prepared and you have to be prepared to satisfy the Lord. The burden of proof is at my door that the circumstances in which he's placed me right now justify me staying at home.

And you may say that I should be addressing a young people's meeting. Well I know I'm not. Forgive me saying that but I mean it's obvious.

But what I'm saying has its personal application to everybody. Nobody is excused. In the last eight years I've preached the gospel in about 48 different countries.

In every country I've been in, I've found people who have taken an early retirement and who are serving the Lord as engineers, bookkeepers, accountants, teachers, nurses, radio operators, technicians of every kind. Many of them arrived on the mission field when they're over 60 years of age. Everybody is including this with a great burden of fulfilling the command of our Lord Jesus to occupy.

Till I come. And it may be well that this, it may well be that this is the last generation that will have an opportunity to obey that command. Personally I don't believe our children will ever see old age.

I believe the Lord is coming soon. There's room for disagreement on this. Don't let's quarrel about it.

I'll tell you what I believe, I don't suppose it makes any difference to you, but I believe that Jesus may come any day. I always begin the day by thanking the Lord Jesus for giving me a good night's rest and thanking him that I may not need another one. He'll come any day.

Now if you don't agree with that please don't let's quarrel but leave it till we get to heaven and then you'll say well after all you were right. If you'll excuse that piece of spiritual arrogance. We'll now occupy.

But where and how and when and what? How would you do about it? To obey this command. And Revelation chapter one has the amazing picture which will answer some of these questions for us. First of all concerning a call that came to John in verse 19 of this chapter, write the things which you have seen.

That was the call to take up arms and for him to occupy. He was at the time a prisoner in a little Mediterranean island of Patmos. He was there because as the living Bible puts it, he told what he knew

about Jesus Christ.

I think that's lovely. That's a very graphic rendering. Do people get get put into prison camps for that today? They do.

When I was young, long ago, people said that would never happen again. Now we've got a democracy you know it's utopia and never again will people suffer. Oh there's more people pay the price of their lives for witnessing to Christ in this generation than any other in history.

The persecution is on. We're in the hot seat and the Christian has to prepare to stand up and be counted. And that will be more than ever true before very long in this land I'm sure.

And John was the only Christian alive at the time who had actually seen Jesus. He was about 90 years old. That's a time to be called to Christian work, to have his call renewed and his next job assigned to him, write the things which you've seen.

He was the dangerous enemy. He was dangerous to every enemy of the gospel because he'd seen Christ and he had to be locked up and put away and confined in a most unlikely place simply for telling what he knew about Jesus. I stood two years ago on the border of communist China near Kowloon in Hong Kong and I was with a wonderful Chinese preacher.

I personally, it's my opinion, you never hear a preacher really until you hear a Chinese preacher. They're absolutely tremendous, absolutely tremendous and this one Philip Teng, his name is, is a great man of God. Makes you feel just like a little worm beside him.

And we stood on the communist border and we looked over into that vast country of mountains and valleys and we saw the river over which thousands of people have tried to escape and been shot in the attempt. And he said, that's my country. And he said, Pastor at Perth, you know the church is twice as strong as when Chairman Mao took over? And I said, really? Yes, he said, and there isn't a hypocrite left.

Oh, I got the message. Under pressure, the phony had quit. The person who is, oh a dreadful word, the person who is a nominal Christian had just quit.

The person who had the real thing, life in his heart, the Holy Spirit indwelling and controlling him, he'd stood. You see, the extraordinary thing about the Christian when he knows the Holy Spirit as his Lord and Jesus as Lord in his life is this, that he counteracts the law of physics which says that everything contracts under pressure. Christian doesn't, he expands.

Amazing, isn't it? I mean you put four or three men with unpronounceable names into a burning fiery furnace and in the process they meet one like a little son of God. Is that contraction? Oh, I should think not. It's expansion.

You put Paul and Silas in jail and thrash them and beat them and have them all bleeding to death apparently, and you hear songs in the night. That's not contraction, it's expansion. And when a Christian is put under pressure, he expands.

And that's why I find it so exciting to be alive today, because I can see the pressure coming on the Christian church in Britain, increasingly in coming days. And see a country like this being told that it's time we stop religious education in our schools, for instance. All that kind of thing.

Much more taking place about which you know. I mustn't allow myself to delve into the politics of it all. But the pressure is coming on the church.

And where you have in government, and whatever government we have, you have humanists who absolutely deny God's existence and are all concerned about a society being like that. Then, then the screws are on. Doesn't frighten me at all.

I'm quite sure that in such a situation, it might need such a situation to make the church in this land come to its senses. Because so many of us have gone fast asleep on the job. We fail to occupy till Jesus comes.

So this call came to John in a very unlikely place. And I wonder if I speak to anybody, may I just be very personal for a moment? And you're in an unlikely place right now. You may be the only Christian in your shop floor.

The only Christian in your factory. The only Christian at home. The only one who loves the Lord Jesus in your family or school or university.

And it's very unlikely that God could ever speak to you there. You know. But that's the very place God has put you to test you.

And all the time he's watching you. Not like a policeman, but your loving heavenly father is watching how you react to pressure. How you stand up to the test.

How your quiet time's going in your prayer life, in your Bible study. If you're faithful there now, right where you are, then the door will open for a bigger job. If it isn't, if you're not, then the Lord has to wait until, until you really come through.

I wonder if Jesus sees you occupying where you are. Do your family ever hear about him? Does your workmate ever hear about Jesus? You know? Do you ever, ever speak a word to bring back the King in some heart? Most unlikely spot you're in. Oh no.

A wonderful mission field. A wonderful mission field right now. And the future depends, humanly speaking, and indeed from God's point of view, as to your faithfulness right there.

You see, God is always reducing his people to a minimum. Have you realized that? In order that he might do through us his maximum. Just let me repeat that.

He's always reducing us to a minimum in order that we, he might do through us his maximum. You see, our idea of success in Christian work is from, we want to do something, we must do something big. So the thing is to think up a big idea, and then of course form masses of committees, and get everybody working on them, especially those who have lots of money, and then add a little prayer and Bible study to make it spiritual, and watch the whole thing explode.

And it explodes right now. What's God's method? Well, imagine Gideon. Gideon with his 32,000 men.

God says, take 22,000 away. They're frightened. Now these are with 10,000.

Now he says, Gideon, take 9,700 away. They're undisciplined. So poor Gideon is left with 300.

What does he do? Oh, a very ordinary man, Gideon, does a very ordinary thing, blow a trumpet, with extraordinary results, because you see, the Spirit of the Lord has taken over. And now it's not Gideon's strategy, it's God's strategy. And God has reduced us to a minimum in order that he may take over, and himself do it through us every day.

I think it's exciting to watch that happening in so many areas these days. I could, but I haven't time, give you an example. But let me just press on to show you that this call can come in a very unlikely spot, but it must follow the tremendous revelation that we have here in verse 10.

John says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day. Now that's not Sunday. That's not Sunday.

It's the day of the Lord, often spoken of in prophecy, the day of Christ. And it is as though this man is lifted out from this little island to be a spectator of the great judgment day of God, looking right ahead to that great second coming of our Lord Jesus, placed in the grandstand, if you like, just to watch what takes place at that time. And he heard a voice as of a trumpet.

What does that remind you of? Surely that when Jesus comes, he shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God. 1 Thessalonians 4, 16. Oh, and again, 1 Corinthians 15, 52.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. Yes, here's John taken in imagination, in vision, away from that lonely island and given a sight of things to come.

He saw seven golden candlesticks. Now from verse 20, I realize that these are the seven churches. And seven in the Bible is always the number of completeness, completion.

And here is the whole body of Christ, through all generations, till Jesus comes. Candlesticks, lampstands, very costly, very costly. Indeed, they cost the precious blood of Christ to form and manufacture and make.

Candlesticks, the whole church redeemed, ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, cleansed in the blood. Candlesticks, lampstands, lovely things, but absolutely useless, unless they shine. No light in themselves, but somehow, somehow they're to catch fire and set the world alight.

That's what a candlestick is for. And that's what a Christian's for. Catch fire and set the world alight.

Oh yes, Jesus said, I am the light of the world. And then he said to his disciples, you are the light of the world. And in Philippians, that we're reading this afternoon, he said, among whom you shine in a wicked and perverse generation.

How do you think that means? Well, let me illustrate. I was out with my daughter in Central Africa some year or two ago, and we were walking together one night, about eight o'clock. Beautiful night, moon full, stars shining, not a cloud anywhere.

Sort of night that makes people who are in love hold hands, because the moon controls the tide, as well as the untide. And I, I assure you that it was my daughter I was with, and we walked along that jungle path, and as we're doing so, she said to me, Daddy, isn't the moon shining brightly tonight? I said to her, yes, isn't it beautiful? And then I said, how stupid can we be? And she said, what on earth do you mean? Well, I said, you know, don't you, the moon doesn't shine. It's only a lump of lackluster material, which can't

shine.

Our astronauts have confirmed that. But to tell you what it does do, it's in orbit in relation to the sun, and it turns its face heavenward, and catches the glow, and the heat, and the warmth, and reflects the light of the sun into the darkness of the world. Now, you see, that's wonderful, because that's exactly what a Christian is to do.

Marvelous. And you don't have to have a PhD degree to do it, and you don't have to five years at university, you just have to know Jesus. That's all.

To know him personally and intimately as your Lord. And then you see the Holy Spirit goes into business, and he begins to shine through you. And people begin to wonder at you, and see your life, and you begin to reflect Christ into the darkness of the world.

See, that's what happens. And perhaps a touch of vivid imagination, a little, but forgive me for it. In my mind, I see at this moment, right now, at this moment, the oil of God's Spirit.

Oil in the building, bypassing it. But where the Lord finds a heart that says, Lord Jesus, I want to shine for you, I want to occupy, I want to know how I can do this, I want my life to count for you. The oil is diverted, and touches that heart.

And you know enough, or should do, about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world today, that he's doing that over, and over, and over again, in thousands of lives, everywhere. Absolutely amazing. Absolutely.

I've seen it happen. Some people say, well, I mustn't get into controversial territory, except that I'm going home in about half an hour, so you won't catch me. But you know, as I go around, everybody asks me one question.

When every country I go in, the first of all, the first question, you know what it is? Always, without fail, are you charismatic? I say, of course. What on earth use would I be if I wasn't? The word means grace, and if I'm not gracious, well, what's the good? Of course, I'm charismatic. Isn't it a tragedy that the charismatic movement has become identified with the gift of tongues? It's far bigger than that.

Worldwide, I know many people who would be called, in quotes, charismatic, who never speak in tongues. And they don't insist that everybody else should either. That's a dangerous thing to do.

If you are insisting on everybody having your particular gift, you're in for trouble, if you can't substantiate it in the Bible, because all the gifts of the Spirit are distributed sovereignly according to the will of God. But on the other hand, if you are among the people who say, we've got it all, and we don't need any more. Got it all? Well, bless your heart, why are we like what we are, if we've got it all? Oh, I tell you, my heart longs to know the language of John Wesley, O thou who at Pentecost didst fall, do thou my sin consume? Come, Holy Ghost, for thee I call spirit of burning, come.

Oh, that in me the sacred fire might now begin to glow. Burn up the dross of base desire and make the mountains flow. Well, bless your heart, if you begin to talk like that today, you're a wild Pentecostalist.

Isn't it ridiculous? Oh, terrible. Ah, but where God has a hungry heart, someone who's got real concern to reflect Jesus, I tell you, the oil is diverted and comes like a flame, and your life begins to burn and glow

with the reality of Jesus Christ. Candlesticks are of gold, and amidst one like unto the Son of Man.

Oswald Chambers says, that's a fulfillment of the promise of Christ, lo, I am with you all the day. Yes. Personal witness to Jesus must be based on the passion of obedience, not on the pathos of pity.

And the thing that makes a man a witness for Christ is just seeing him as sight of Jesus, the Lord. And only one thing enables us to stand the strain. Listen to this.

Relationship to Christ on the part of a man who has come through the mill of God's spring cleaning until there's only one purpose left. I am here for God to use me as he wills and where he wants. That's it.

My dear Christian friend, has God been putting you through his spring cleaning lately? It's pretty hard, isn't it? I know something of that in my life. Pretty tough. But you see, what we don't realize is that every forgiveness that we have experienced is accompanied by crucifixion.

Got that? Every time, every forgiveness is accompanied by crucifixion. You can't have one without the other. I was telling at Keswick last year about a visit I played January, 12 months ago, to Florida in the States.

And I was shown round an orange juice factory, the largest in the world, of course. And there were 3 million gallons of orange juice distributed from that factory throughout United States in one week. Every week.

3 million gallons a week. Right. In trains, special trains.

And I went into one room, which would be about the size of this, and there was just a big yellow iceberg. That was all it was, just a huge iceberg waiting, you know, frozen orange juice, waiting for the time when the oranges didn't produce. But in January, they were dumping truckload after truckload of oranges into that factory.

I saw them being piled up on the floor. And then a machine came along and had about a hundred arms attached to it. And each arm stretched itself out and grabbed an orange and hold it off.

And then about a hundred oranges were taken away over at one side. And then that machine squeezed them, crushed them, and the juice began to flow, came out of them. And then that machine had an amazing capacity to free itself from skins and pips.

And do you know what they were used for? You'll think I was kidding you, but I'm not. They were used for ladies' perfume and cattle feed. And when I saw the president of that company, I said to him, Sir, when an orange sees you, it must turn pale.

It must say, I've had it now. And he looked at me and said, No, you've got it wrong. When an orange sees me, it smiles and says, Now I'm going to be useful.

You got it? Every forgiveness I receive by faith for all my sins accompanied by crucifixion of myself. And I can never escape that principle. Going through God's spring cleaning until there's only one purpose left in my life.

May the Lord use me where he wants and when he wants and wherever he wants. Of course, only one thing brings a person to that. It's a sight of Jesus.

And I want to try, however inadequately, to show you what John saw. I would rather disappear from the pulpit and just let you read this because no preacher can ever convey it. But notice in this one or two things let me pick out.

His eyes were as a flame of fire. That is to say, he has power to read every motive. Knows about our self-centeredness, our desire for self-preservation.

In a way, we excuse ourselves from involvement and say, Lord, I have no gifts. And Jesus says, I didn't ask for your gifts. I asked for your love.

Oh, but Lord, what about my business? I must attend to that first of all. And Jesus comes back at us and says, Do material things matter to you more than spiritual? See? Very a priority. His eyes as a flame of fire.

His voice as the sound of many waters. Are you any of you following me in the Living Bible? Puts it this way. His voice like the sound of the waves thundering on the shore.

I think that's tremendous. Sometimes, you see, God can speak to some people with a still small voice, but to others he has to use a megaphone. We've got so far away from him.

We've allowed spiritual horizons to grow very dim. We've got so preoccupied with other things that God has to literally just shout. He dealt that way with Jonah, you remember, to whom God said, Go and preach to Nineveh.

And Jonah said, No, thank you, Lord. I prefer a Mediterranean cruise. And he, I'm going after Tarshish, right in the opposite direction.

And when he gets down to Joppa, lo and behold, there's a ship labeled Tarshish, just ready to go. That doesn't surprise me at all. Satan always has a ship ready to take us right out of God's will at any time.

And Jonah got on board. He paid the fare, at least he was honest. But my word, the Lord let him off the hook, but he went after him.

And here's the picture, which is not just Bible history, but contemporary truth of a man running away from God and God going after him. You doing that? Have you ever done it? If you have, you'll know it's a painful experience. God let him out on a long leash, but eventually a storm and a thunder of the waves, and sailors about to drown, a ship about to sink, and Jonah thrown overboard and finding himself in a stomach of a fish.

And at the butt of the Mediterranean, he came to his senses and prayed. Thank the Lord, if he can pray there, I can pray from anywhere. And the fish got a bit concerned and upset about it, so it spat him out.

And he landed on dry land, and God spoke to him a second time. Are you ever glad that God gives you a second chance? There's no second chance after death, but there's hundreds of chances before. You can't play on that, on God's grace, but the fact you're here means he's given us a second chance.

It's a wonderful thing. He gave Jonah a second chance. He said to him, Jonah, Nineveh, oh Lord, not again.

Yes, I've no further light for you until you obey original orders. So Jonah had to get up and do what he was originally told to do. What a lot of time we waste, years.

And what a long lot of God's time we waste because we don't obey original orders. And how loudly God has to shout at us to bring us back to the place of obedience. Do you remember when you lost your first love for Jesus? Do you remember when things went wrong in your Christian life? Do you remember when you failed to occupy? Just at that point when you said no to the Lord.

And maybe that's years ago. And prayer hasn't been real, and your Bible hasn't meant much, simply because you said no to Jesus. Well, he may have brought you right here now to thunder in your heart.

His voice has the sound of many waters. Oh, that you would hear that voice, and that he would disturb that sort of sleep of death, and speak loudly to your heart, and waken you up, set you on your feet, and start obeying him. In his right hand, seven stars.

And verse 20 tells me that these are the angels or ministers of the churches in his hand. Oh, what a place to be. A place of tremendous security and responsibility.

And out of his mouth, verse 16, went a sharp two-edged sword. Not out of his hand, but out of his mouth. I would expect a sword to come out of his hand, but it didn't.

It was out of his mouth. And the word of God is a sharp two-edged sword. And listen, what God speaks from his mouth, through a life held in his hand, is authority.

Get that? Can I repeat it? What he speaks from his mouth, through a man or a woman, a fellow or girl, held in his hand, that's authority. And that means, to be held in his hand, it means just complete, absolute surrender and commitment to Christ as Lord of my life, and I'm in his hand. And then he begins to speak, through his mouth, through your life.

That's authority. That's what our pulpits need today. And oh my word, my friend, that's what every person on a shop floor needs.

Every Christian in trade unions, every Christian in society, to be held in God's hand, for God to speak through his mouth, through that man. What a picture. And verse 16, the most amazing picture of all, his countenance, his face was like the sun shining in its full strength.

Living Bible, shining with unclouded brilliance. Tell me, have you ever thought about the face of Jesus in your life? You know, we sing, oh that will be glory for me, when by his grace I shall look on his face. I wonder about that myself.

I wonder, it will be worth it all when I see Jesus. One day I shall see his lovely face. I wonder.

You see, I'll tell you why I wonder. Because heaven has no sun, no moon, no light, except the light of the face of Christ. And in heaven, it's lit up.

The whole universe, not just a bit of it, but the whole universe is lit up by the face of Jesus. There's no need of the sun. Finished.

But in glory, the light of it all, the face of Christ. And that's the face, that's the face which Judas kissed and then betrayed. It's the face upon which men spat.

I have to ask myself and ask you in his near DNA, have you ever kissed Jesus on a Sunday and betrayed him on a Monday? I wonder. Have you ever metaphorically spat on his face? Every time you've preferred your own way to his way, that's what you do. Every time you choose another path except what you know to be God's path for you, you're doing that very thing.

I don't know what it'll be like when I see him. I wonder. I'll tell you what effect it had on John.

Do you notice? In verse 17, 17, when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. That's tremendous. I fell at his feet as dead.

That was a surrender which followed that revelation of Christ. Ah, let me, I want to be with it. And I never like being thought of as an old square and a traditionalist.

God forbid I'm not that, I don't think. Um, I don't think I would accept that statement about myself. You know, I like being with it.

I love young people's work. I love being at young people's meeting involved in the students and universities and everything. But you see, there's a lot of, a lot of Christian testimony today which is slush.

It's just lighthearted nonsense, very often. We're too familiar with Jesus. You know, he's just Jesus.

But, but when John saw him, he fell at his feet as dead. It wasn't joy. It wasn't thrill.

It wasn't a sense of excitement. It was fear. Fear! And John fell at his feet as dead.

And I don't think we ever know God until we've been afraid of him. You may challenge that, but I don't. I don't know.

You see, confession, salvation, is not just coming down the aisle and signing a decision card, and then you're ready for heaven. It's not just accepting Christ. It isn't that at all.

It's not just sort of deciding for Jesus, and then living any old how. Oh no, no, no. It's falling at his feet as dead.

It's the end of your right to independence. It's the end of an independent life. It's the beginning of a life of dependence.

It's the end of yourself. It's the beginning of Christ in you. When John saw him, he fell at his feet as dead.

And, uh, it's out of a surrender like that that, that service comes, a call comes. My friend, I've lived around long enough to know that the pathway of Christian service at home and abroad is littered with casualties, erect testimonies because of failure right there. Right there.

Oh, people have given their talents to Jesus, but never their will. They've yielded their gifts, but not their rights, and never shall renounce their rights. The result, over and over again, has been marriage between two people, one of whom is called to serve the Lord overseas, and the other who isn't.

And the result? Disaster. I was picking up in my mind, and picked it up actually before I began to speak to you tonight, in my memory, this lovely hymn, Take My Life and Let It Be. You remember that? That's wonderful.

Take my moments, and so on. Take my hands, that's good. But it's not the real thing yet.

Take my feet, fine. Take my voice, that's good. Take my lips, yes.

Take my silver and gold, almost unusual, but very good. Take my intellect, fine. Take my will, that's getting a bit nearer.

Take my heart, that's nearer still, but it isn't there yet. Take my love, that's getting nearer. That's getting pushed into a corner now, but that's not the end.

Not until the last line of the last verse does Francis Ridley Havegill hit the nail on the head. Take my self, and I will be ever, only, all for thee. Have you ever said that to Jesus? That's what's involved in Occupy until I come.

Take my self. You see, it's only surrender at depth like that, which releases the Holy Spirit. Until your surrender reaches that depth, it's the energy of the flesh, and God doesn't bless.

He may appear to, but he doesn't really. When you have come to the end of yourself and said, Lord, take me, take my self, at that moment he lets the Spirit loose in you, and things begin to happen. You live on a dimension then of miracle, and things happen in your life and through your life that have no explanation except that God has gone in business.

Wonderful. I had a letter the other day. You understand that that's a little elastic phrase, I think actually about three years ago.

From a man who was a friend of mine, and he wrote to me from the mission field. He just unburdened his heart to me, and he said, I was considered spiritual on deputation work at home. I was rebuked for being too much serious and having my nose in the Bible too much.

Pastor, it's different out here. I saw more people converted as incidental result of preaching during furlough than I have in years of service here. This is nothing but death and discouragement.

My zeal lags, and my interest wavers. My temper gets sour, and I get spiritually cold. My faith weakens.

My weaknesses multiply. The Bible is so remote. Where's the joy? Where's the fire? Where's the victory? We know the answers.

We know the verses. We've got the doctrine. But problems, problems, problems, and the greatest problem, myself.

Pastor, this takes more than a commentary of Spurgeon's notes. This is total warfare. Yes, and it's total defeat, my friend, unless I hear a voice.

I turn to see. I see him, and I fall at his feet as dead. And he says to me, right, have you ever read, uh, Churchill's war memoirs? That would be a mental exercise.

I haven't, but I've read some of them, and especially I read Our Finest Hour, the Battle of Britain. In the course of that, um, wonderful story, Churchill tells of a day when he went to the RAF base at Ramsgate at night, and, uh, during the Battle of Britain in 1941, and, uh, he saw on the, dimly on the, on the tarmac, just six aeroplanes. He went up to them and examined them.

They'd all got bullet holes, and he said, I don't know how these could ever get in the air. Hurricane fighters they were. Then he went inside, and to the billet, and to the room where the fellows were, and he saw six gunners and six navigators.

They hadn't had their uniform off for three weeks. They were all blood stained and bleary-eyed. They were chain-smoking and drinking masses of coffee to keep themselves awake, and as Churchill was there, just a few moments after he arrived, suddenly a telephone call from RAF headquarters.

Enemy approaching across channel. Estimated strength 500, and in a second, down went the cigarettes, away went the coffee. Fastening on their belts, they went out to those planes, and, uh, six men went up into the air, six planes up in the air to fight 500.

But on their way to the plane, one of the men stopped, and he rushed into the communication room and sent a message back to headquarters. Message received and understood. They're all in here.

It sounds so absurd now to this generation, but some of you are old enough to remember it vividly. It sounds so ridiculous in the light of all that's happened since, but then it was total war. Total war.

It was life and death. Everything in here, and our nation depended on it. Brother, sister, you and I are engaged in total war, spiritually.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, against principalities, against powers, spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. It's total war, and there's no armistice till Jesus comes. RAF headquarters could take the obedience of those men for granted.

Message received and understood. Can Jesus take your obedience for granted? Can you say to him, message received and understood? I'm involved in total war up to the hilt. Occupy till I come.

Let's pray. A moment for you to talk to the Lord, and I trust that you've heard far beyond the voice of a preacher to the voice of Jesus, and that he's been speaking to you about your involvement, about your commitment, about your surrender. You tell him the answer.

He says, occupy till I come. And tonight, maybe you've heard a voice, and you've turned to see. You've seen him.

Have you fallen to his feet as dead? Then he calls you, and his spirit enables you and empowers you for everything in his will. And you know the wonder of the Holy Spirit working, and moving, and filling, and overflowing in your heart and life. Lord Jesus, hear our prayer, and oh Lord, out of this very unworthy presentation of yourself, may all of us have seen our wonderful Lord afresh, and his rightful demand for complete ownership and possession of our lives.

Lay we, may this be the night for some here, who heal themselves and say, take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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