

Power of the Ministry Pt 1

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath emphasizes the essential role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers for effective ministry and transformation in a troubled world.

Duration: 1:13:11

Scripture: Psalm 1:3

Topics: "Power for Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by referencing the story of Jacob in the Bible, who encountered God in a dream and saw a ladder connecting heaven and earth. The preacher then poses the question of how deep the spiritual river is in people's lives, emphasizing the need for a deeper connection with God. He suggests that the lack of spiritual experience may be due to a focus on knowledge rather than heartfelt faith. The preacher then turns to Ezekiel 47, which symbolically depicts the resources for Christian living through the analogy of water. He concludes by highlighting the importance of the Holy Spirit and the need for believers to be equipped with power for ministry in a world filled with revolt and anarchy.

Transcript

No, we're just going to sing a chorus I know you all know. And sing it as a prayer, Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. That's it, let's sing it together, prayer play.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Break me, melt me, mold me, and fill me.

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Just once again, shall we? Spirit of the Living God, Spirit of the Living God, break me, fill me, Spirit of the Living God, for Jesus' sake, Amen. Would you open your Bibles tonight, and then we'll sing a chorus at the finish.

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Ezekiel chapter 47, and while you're finding the place, may I just say that I'm very sorry that I haven't been more available to speak to folk personally, as so many have asked for time for a word together. But after the service tonight, I'd be happy to be available.

I don't quite know where, if there's to be a film here, but probably across the road somewhere, to speak with you and share with you. And my wife also would be glad to speak to any ladies who may desire to talk to her. So please, make use of that time if you'd like to.

Maybe just before we leave tomorrow, there'll be further opportunities as well. I shall never forget the joy of these couple of days with you together. Ezekiel 47, I'm reading from the King James Version tonight.

Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house. And behold, waters issued from out from under the threshold of the house eastward. For the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house at the south side of the altar.

Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, had led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward. And behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man had the line in his hand, went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits.

And he brought me through the waters, the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand and brought me through the waters, the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand and brought me through, the waters were to the loins.

Afterward he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass over. For the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. And he said to me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me and caused me to return to the brink of the river.

Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea, which, being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live.

And there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come hither, for they shall be healed. And everything shall live, whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass that the fishers shall stand upon it from En Gedi, even unto Eneglaim.

They shall be a place to spread forth nets. Their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the mire places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed.

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

It shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary. And the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. This is the word of the Lord.

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, that you came. Holy Spirit, won't you teach me more about his lovely name? Thank you, God, for sending Jesus.

Holy Spirit, won't you teach me more about his lovely name? Once again. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, that you came.

Holy Spirit, won't you teach me more about his lovely name? Just a moment or two of silent prayer. Here in all the comfort and the beauty of the surroundings. And enjoy tremendously our fellowship.

We're not here in a sort of holiness huddle. We're here to face a world in revolt, and to be equipped for the task. We think of millions of people tonight who've never heard the name of Jesus.

Ninety-one percent of Christian work done among nine percent of the world's population. Lord, what would you have us to do about all this? Let your Holy Spirit reveal our risen Lord to us tonight afresh, as we worship and praise him together. One moment, just in quiet, that you may express the burden on your heart to God.

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

May we see thy face, Lord, and feel thy touch. In Jesus' name, amen. We have been thinking together in these sessions of some things to do with ministry of the Word, of preparation for the ministry.

Things that we must face ourselves individually, if we're to be effective for the Lord Jesus. And if you like, the pattern for the ministry this morning, the kind of people Jesus needs today. And as a result of prayer this afternoon, I feel that I should, the Lord wants me to concentrate these last two sessions on the theme of the Holy Spirit and power for the ministry.

I've been thinking such a lot today about the world in which we live and how easily we can forget it. But I believe that we've come for this wonderful time together, that we may be equipped and prepared to face it with a new sense of authority. If you think about it, the whole world is in revolt, revolution, anarchy everywhere.

And the biggest farce of all, not our worst enemy, but the biggest farce in society is communism, which at the opening part of this century was offering everybody freedom. And all men should be equal and free. It's failed miserably, and everybody knows it.

The trouble is with society today, that communism having failed, what alternative is there? A Christian doesn't get too excited or too thrilled about any suggestions, because he knows that any alternative is just as bad, if not worse, as the previous one. And there's only one hope apart from the coming of our Lord, and it is for Christian revolution. Revolution under the authority of the Spirit of God.

Worldly revolution can do a lot, but it can't change the human heart. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. The Holy Spirit let loose in your life and in mine is the answer.

And I believe that this may well be the last opportunity the Church will have, to rise to it and get out into the attack where the action is, and to let people see the reality of our wonderful Lord Jesus. And it's that that's very much in my mind as I'm directed to the ministry of these last two days together. The Holy Spirit is not an optional extra that you add to your car.

The Holy Spirit is an indispensable necessity for every child of God. He is the substitute on earth today for the bodily presence of Christ 2,000 years ago. When Jesus was here, heaven opened to him more than once.

And the word was, this is my beloved son, hear him. Not now, the Lord says now, he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Holy Spirit says to the churches. You find that in every one of the seven letters in Revelation.

And the trouble is that most of our churches have crowded him out and substituted program. And indeed, most of our Christian lives are so well organized that we have no time for him. And if this conference is going to achieve anything, it won't be just simply through one or two messages here, but it will be as we go

back under determined that we make room for the Holy Spirit in our lives afresh.

Not to bless our plans, but to show us what is his strategy for days like these. And in his name to go out and take action. But I find so often that I meet so many Christians who are discouraged and defeated and disillusioned.

Some are in business and they have, of course, heavy responsibilities. And the pressure of it is just too much. And their testimony has suffered.

Some are in the ministry and the burdens and strains and claims of people have caused us to snap under the strain. And in spite of seminary training, and in spite of college training, somehow we haven't got what is required. Others are housewives.

And you who have children, especially, know the pressure. And sometimes we husbands don't understand. And I mean so many students at universities who are on the edge of giving up, facing only the humiliation of unemployment.

They thought that university training would meet their need. They're stuffed, full of knowledge, bursting with it. But spiritually, it's dry as dust.

Now, if that description is at any rate accurate, and certainly it is as far as Britain is concerned, I wouldn't know so much now about this country. There's an urgent need for us to take stock and search our hearts. Why is it that we believe so much and experience so little? Why? Why is it that our heads are so full and we're so clever, but our hearts are empty? Ezekiel 47 has the answer to those questions.

I better be careful just to be sure that you know I'm sound, that I'm not unmindful of the future fulfillment of this chapter in the Millennial Edge, when our Lord Jesus will reign in glory and his kingdom will be established. But, in symbolic language, there's a picture here of resources for Christian living, like no other picture in the Bible, a graphic illustration of it. You see, the Bible is an Eastern book, and the pictures and analogies in it have an Eastern setting.

The people of the land knew the value of water and the need of it. The ground was often like iron, and heaven like brass. And the picture in Ezekiel 47 is that of a great river.

Now, it is rivers which make cities and establish countries. There would be no London without the Thames. There would be no Rome without the Tabor.

There'd be no Egypt without the Nile. There'd be no New York without the Hudson. And no Chicago without Lake Michigan.

The difference that a river can make is the difference between desert and garden. It is not surprising, therefore, that much is made in the Bible to illustrate this truth of rivers. Do you remember phrases like these? Springs of water.

Wells of salvation. Showers of blessing. I will pour water upon him that's thirsty and floods upon the dry ground, Isaiah 35.

In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert, Psalm 46. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. The first Psalm and verse 3, the godly man is like a tree planted by rivers of water.

That bringeth forth his fruit in season, and his leaf never withers, and whatever he does prospers. And the Lord Jesus, if you go on drinking of this water, said he to the woman of Samaria, you'll go on being thirsty. But if you drink of the water that I shall give you, that water shall spring up within you like a fountain.

A little later on, at the Feast of Tabernacles on the last day, as we were reminded earlier in John 7, Jesus stood on the steps and cried, if any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. And John, explaining what he meant, said, this he spoke of the Holy Spirit.

Whom they that believe on him receive. And you remember too, don't you, that the Bible closes in the last chapter of all and describes what heaven is like. It doesn't say much about heaven.

I wish we knew a bit more, but of course we'll know more one day. But I know now that in heaven there's no moon, there's no sun, there's no sea. I'm sorry about that, actually.

I love the sea. But there's no sea, but there's a river. A pure river of water of life, as clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

What do you think is the significance of all that? Ezekiel records that God said that everything shall live where the river comes. Put that all together. God's promise is linked to our longing.

Everything shall live where the river of the Holy Spirit comes. My Bible comes alive. My prayer life begins to be fresh.

My devotional life begins to take meaning. My witness to Jesus becomes effective. Everything lives where the Holy Spirit comes.

Oh, that the desert, the barrenness, which may well be in somebody's life here tonight, but thoroughly disguised and thoroughly covered under your cleverness to hide it all. And only God sees into the real man and woman that you are. Oh, that the barrenness and deadness that's there, though you wouldn't let anybody know about it, they live today.

That's my concern. Not only for you, my dear brothers and sisters, but for myself. He satisfies the longing soul and fills the hungry with goodness.

Not madness, but goodness. And that's what God is longing to do. The great prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesian church was that he bent, bowed his knees before the Lord, that we might be all filled up with all the fullness of God.

What a prospect. Follow me then. And don't worry, I shan't be too late.

And what I don't say tonight, the Lord help me, I'll say tomorrow. I'll never get through it tonight, because there's so much burning in my heart, so much that's come alive in this chapter. Let me ask you to look at what I would call, and you can jot it down if you like, bless you, the essence of the river's power.

E-double-s-e-n-c-e, the essence of the river's power. You notice in verse one, the source of the river. It proceeded from the threshold of the temple out from the mercy seat, from the very throne of God, the highest place of authority of heaven on earth.

And every true blessing, real blessing, that any of us can ever know, owes its origin to that source. What assurance it brings to our lives to know that the flow of the river of life, the life of his spirit, has its origin today from a throne to which Jesus has been raised, where sin has been dealt with, and no promise has ever been broken, and where he has received from his father, the promise of the Holy Spirit. Where, as I mentioned to you before, the disposition to sin, the demand for man's independence, the refusal to accept a life of dependence on God, where that life was cancelled out when Jesus came, as he lived moment by moment in complete dependence upon the Lord, and therefore God raised him from the tomb and he ascended into heaven, God's perfect man, and he won the right for us to live in the power of his Holy Spirit.

So, the fact is, I don't know how many are here, but you're all born again, I presume, and you all have throne life. Indwelling you now, life that comes to us, each one of us from the very throne of God, the Holy Spirit himself. And you notice the course of the river, verse 1. The water came down at the south side of the altar.

The only way this life-giving stream can reach the world is by way of the cross, by way of an altar. The Holy Spirit was not given till Jesus was glorified. He proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

He comes to my life not by chance, but because the blood has been shed, because sin has been dealt with, and therefore he is in us as a necessary outcome. It's all of grace that it might be all of faith, but I will seek for his presence and his power in my life in vain until repentance and faith has brought me to Calvary. The cry of so many people, again, I'm speaking the background of Britain, in prayer meetings is, Lord, give us Pentecost.

Give us another Pentecost. And somehow I feel the Lord Jesus saying, I must have Calvary before you can have Pentecost. One precedes the other.

We cry for one, but we're unwilling for the other. Sin is arrogance. Salvation is submission, the source of the river.

And look at the force of it in verse 5. You've got it clear, I hope, that you have within you a life that comes from the throne, absolute authority, a life that's been to the cross, absolute submission. That life dwells in you and in me tonight with a resultant force. You notice in verse 5 that this river grew in power and depth until only a mile from its source it was too deep to cross, waters to swim in.

But I don't see that any tributary had been added to it. It wasn't reinforced by any other stream. It owed its growth and power to the constant springing up of water from the sanctuary.

The streams of this world could add nothing to it. God gives the Holy Spirit without measure to a man, to a woman, to a church. Wherever he can find a channel ready to receive him, we can add nothing to his power.

As dear old Dr. Terza, who says in his book, *In Pursuit of God*, if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from the church today, 95% of what we would do, what we do goes on, would go on and nobody would know any different. But if the Holy Spirit were withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95% of what they did would stop and everybody would know the difference. That's tragic, but it's true.

And it's true of each one of us. You know, or do you know, that God doesn't expect you to live the Christian life, whether it's in business, in a pastorate, in Christian leadership, in your home, anywhere, in

your own strength. You can no more do that than you can save your own soul.

But the fact is that the Lord Jesus Christ has provided in the Holy Spirit one who is altogether adequate. In my early years as a Christian, I sat in a service where my oldest Christian friend, Ian Thomas, was speaking. In the course of his message, he said, what do you think God expects of you? And I sort of curled up, because I thought, well, he's probably going to say I'm some terrific person, some, you know, wonderful saint, and I think, and it's hopeless.

And after a moment's pause, he just said, what does God expect of you? Nothing but total failure. And at once I got really excited. I'm a candidate, right on the job, a candidate.

Lord, that's me. A total failure? Yes. But God has given you the Holy Spirit that you need not fail.

Not that you cannot fail, but you need not fail. And from that moment on, I began to take on a new meaning to the Christian life altogether. I saw that it's not by might, nor by power, but by His Spirit.

I saw that it was hopeless for me to try to improve myself, polish up the flesh. I could do nothing about it at all. But the answer was the release of the Spirit of God in me day by day.

I have received, and you have received forgiveness by faith in a crucified Lord. And at that very moment, when I received forgiveness by faith, I was baptized by the Spirit into the body of Jesus. Baptism of the Spirit is always initiation.

Something that happens at the beginning. And there, He sealed me, and He indwelt me by His Spirit. And He had come to meet every demand that could ever be made upon me in answer to my faith and to my obedience.

Yes, my dear brother and sister, the Holy Spirit is God's answer to your discouragement, to your defeat, to your disillusionment, and to your despair. He's the answer to a pastor's personal problems and personal life. He's an answer to the businessmen's pressures.

He's the answer to the mother at home with cares for the children. And I don't mind how thorough your study for your ministry may have been. This is something that no college can ever give you, or seminary.

If you have the greatest academic training that any country could give you, and you and I have never learned to tap the resources that are yours in the indwelling Christ, sooner or later, all your hopes, all your ambitions, and your dreams will be shattered in ruins. For, said Jesus, without me, you can do nothing. Got it? The Lord always reduces every one of us to a minimum in order that he might do through us his maximum.

And as Dr. Barnhouse used to say, the way to up is down. The essence of the river's power. But now look just a verse or two on in this passage to what I would call the experience of the river's depth.

In obedience to the divine leader, Ezekiel is brought in his dream through a progressive experience of the fullness of blessing. Do you notice that three times in these verses we read the phrase, he brought me through. Let's look at these and ask ourselves, how far through has he brought me? Where do I fit into this picture? I'll find myself somewhere here.

Verse three, he brought me through and the waters were to the ankles. Now that suggests to me at once, the spirit of the man who has been enabled to claim salvation and to receive the Lord, but he's only ankle

deep, only had a very shallow experience of the river's depth. There's still a very big show of himself that has never, never been under the water.

Very little evidence in this man's experience of the flow of Holy Spirit life. It's really the condition of the carnal Christian described by Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth. You remember, there were three types of men, the natural, the carnal, the spiritual.

Natural man, only two-thirds alive. He's got physical life, mental life, no spiritual life. Only two-thirds alive.

And he has the nerve to say a Christian is not all there. He's the one who isn't all there, bless him. The natural man, the God of this world has blinded the minds of men.

That man you can't argue into being a Christian. He's a missing dimension, which needs a miracle to replace. And there's a carnal man.

Are you not yet carnal? Said Paul in writing to the church at Corinth. I speak to you as babes, living selfishly, little concern for others, no evidence of growth, no ability to feed on the word, only the milk, always being spoon-fed by the preaching of others, living on a very worldly level, superficial level, light-hearted, touchy, very resentful. Meet a person like that and you're much more conscious of him than you are of the Lord.

There's an awful lot of him still there in evidence. He's very critical of other people, very jealous of the success of others, very unloving in his speech. Is that all that God has for his children? Heaven forbid.

To stay only ankle deep in the river of life is to misrepresent utterly to the world what the fullness of God's blessing is and the possibilities of Christian experience. It's so unattractive, so repelling and so ugly. It's possible to be all this and yet to be indwelt by the Spirit.

As Paul says in Romans 7, indwelt by the Spirit, mastered by the flesh. The carnal Christian. Galatians 5. The Spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit.

These are contrary to one to the other. You cannot do the things that you would. He brought me through and the waters were to the ankles.

Has he brought you through that? May I be careful to say something? That is not the experience of 90% of Christian people at their new birth. It is often the experience of Christians years after the conversion. The natural progress of a child of God is not from being the natural man to the carnal man to the spiritual man.

The progress so often is first being natural and then spiritual and then leaping back into carnality. Do you remember the day of your conversion? Be lovely to hear about it. Perhaps you don't remember the day.

Doesn't matter very much as long as you know you have one. But I remember the day because I was there at the time. I was studying to be an accountant in the city of Newcastle on time.

I was about 20 years of age and I said, what do you mean? He said, Redpath, he said, would you like to be saved? See, that's the initial approach, of course, in all methods of soul winning. And would I like to be saved? And I let him have it on every gun I could fire, with the usual excuses. When I'd finished, he said to me, do you know anything at all about victory over sin? I was glad it was dark.

I went as red as a beetroot. I said, no. Do you want to? Yes, but it's impossible.

Oh, no, it isn't. And for the first time in my life, I heard the story of the virgin birth of Jesus, of his spotless life, atoning death, his resurrection from the tomb, the outpouring of his spirit that he could come in indwelling, if I trusted him. And within 20 minutes, he led me to Christ.

For the next three weeks, we were there. He took me, believe it or not, every night to a brethren meeting. And for 21 nights, I had the most amazing teaching of the Bible.

And I was thrilled. I went home. When I got home, my parents were waiting for me.

And my father gave me a card and said, look at this. It was an invitation to play in a trial game for one of our counties at rugby football. I said, thanks, I'm not really interested.

Oh, why not? Well, I said, as a matter of fact, on Saturday, I think I'm going out with my friend and I want to read the Bible. And my father looked at me and looked at my mother and I could see them saying, send for a psychiatrist immediately. They didn't.

And he went out with my Bible. And my friend went to a country that you don't know, the boundary of the Roman Empire, actually, boundary of the Roman war. And I sat there on a beautiful sunny day and I read Romans 1 through 8 and wept my heart out with sheer joy.

Like a Christian in pilgrim's progress, I could just give three leaps for joy. Was I carnal then? No. Was I filled with God's spirit? Then yes, up to the limit of my capacity.

There wasn't a touch of carnality about me. I just rejoiced in the Lord and praised him with all my heart. But I had to go to the office the next day.

And when I got there, six of my friends were waiting for me. They said, have you done it? I said, done what? Have you knocked a religion out of you? Well, no, not exactly. And they looked at me and said, are you religious? No.

Come and have a drink. No, thanks. Why not? I don't want to.

You're religious. No, I'm not. Come and have a drink.

No. Get off my neck. Come on.

You're soft, you're sissy. You've got religious. Oh, shut up.

Get off my neck. I'll come. So I went.

And I didn't have one. I had half a dozen. Two days later, a girlfriend rang me up.

Not my wife. I didn't know her then. And this girl, who wasn't doing me any good at all, said to me, what about a date? That's how they did it in those days.

And I said, no, thank you. Aren't you well? Oh, I'm very well. Well, I haven't seen you for a long, long time.

Come on. I'd rather not, if you don't mind now, come along. You're being silly.

Come on, do. I'd love to hear how you've been getting on when you've been away. I haven't seen you for a long time.

Do come. So I came. And those two decisions cost me seven wasted years of Christian living, from which I can never recover.

Seven years. Oh, I never, I told this fellow, I've never come to your meetings anymore. I don't like them.

I qualified as a CPA, went down to London, got a good job, plenty of money. I wasn't married. Those two factors are often connected.

And I had a good, lots of money. And I just whipped it up. Dances, drink, everything.

You can't be a Christian and live like that. Oh, yes, you can. How do I know it's a Christian? Because I was miserable.

I used to enjoy it, but I hated it now. I loathed it. But I went on doing it.

And wasted seven years. My friend who led me to Christ came down to London. It was in London I was living then.

Took me out to lunch. Very nice hotel. We had lunch.

He never spoke to me about the Lord. And at the end of our lunch, he looked at me and said, well, Redpath, good to see you after these five or six years. But he said, don't forget, it's possible to have a saved soul and a wasted life.

That hit hard. It was a Friday. I was going up to the north of England to play Rugger football for one of our counties.

By a night train. I had a sleeper. I didn't sleep a wink.

Every kick of the wheels. And then I went up to the field. Tremendous match.

20,000 people there. Crowding up the ground. Yelling their heads off.

But every step I took. Saved soul, wasted life. Saved soul, wasted life.

And I went to the team dance at night in the Central Station Hotel in Newcastle. The orchestra were playing the same tune. They jazzed it up.

Saved soul, wasted life. I just couldn't get it out of my mind. And I wakened up the next morning.

Strange to say, I remember the room. I've been there since. I wakened up this next morning, wondering where I'd been.

And I said, Lord, for seven years, I've had you, but you've never had me. Help yourself. I'm through.

And in his mercy, he came afresh. Spiritual? Huh, yes. For three weeks.

Carnal? Yes, for seven years. And spiritual now? Who knows? Only God and myself. How long ago is it since you put your feet, so to speak, in the river of life? And you are baptized by the Spirit, and indwelt by the Spirit, and sealed by the Spirit, and you belong to Jesus.

How long ago is that? Some of you perhaps would say, well, five years. Some maybe more, much more. My question to you, with all love and concern of my heart for every one of you, is this.

Not how deep was the river five years ago, but tonight, in October 84, how deep is it now? Has the tide gone right out? I wonder. The Lord knows. He brought me through, and the waters were to the ankles.

And therefore, verse four, again he brought me through, and the waters were to the knees. Oh, now. He's getting lower.

He's going deeper. The tide's coming in. The spirit of prayer is suggested.

For when God captures a man's knees, things are beginning to happen. I don't want to take a Bible passage further than it ought to be taken, but surely here is a tremendous picture of a man who's dissatisfied, empty, hungry for more, desperate for a touch of heavenly life, and conscious that I can't go on any longer. So, he's on his knees.

You remember Jacob? Never left home till he was over 70. First night out, spent at Bethel. Oh, heaven opened to him as he lay asleep.

And he saw a ladder which reached right down to where he was, going right up into heaven. Going up with Jacob's needs, coming down with heaven's supplies. And God said to him, Jacob, as you go on your way, I'll watch over you.

I'll take care of you. I'll bring you safely back. Trust me.

And Jacob went on his way. I believe it would be New Testament language to say at that moment he was born again, converted. But oh my word, like me how he blew it.

He married the wrong girl to snow with. Then he got involved in partnership in business with a heathen, his uncle. And for 21 years he was no different.

He found other people practicing his own deceit that he'd learned to practice at home. Practiced them on it, on him. Desperate time.

Things got really desperate with him until it had gone far enough. And God stepped in and said, Jacob, get on. I've had enough of this.

So, Jacob got his wives together and his cattle and everything else. And he set out for home. And then news go around.

Esau's after you. 400 men. Family quarrels don't die easily.

So, Jacob sent on his wives ahead of him. And he went up to Peniel. And there wrestled a man with him till the breaking of day.

And as Jacob come, come to God and God come to him. God said to him, let me go for the day breaketh. And Jacob in desperation, I won't let you go, except you bless me.

And this afternoon I've been praying. Lord, surely there's someone here, right here tonight who's saying that very thing. I just can't go back to my church, can't go back to my home as I am.

Lord, I will not let you go, except you bless me. Listen, faith always works best in the context of desperation. When I'm at the end of my tether, I'm at the beginning of God.

I'm on the verge of miracles. When I'm saying I just can't go on anymore, God has his chance. I won't let you go, except you bless me.

And how did God deal with him? What's your name? You think he didn't know? Of course he knew. He'd followed him for 21 years and watched him. And all he'd been doing, saw that marriage go wrong.

Saw him get involved in an unhealthy business. So it all, waited his time. He wasn't asking.

For information. He knew it. But he was asking for honest confession.

What's your name? Sorry, Lord, 21 years and it's still Jacob. Deceiver, twister, swindler, that's all I am. I've been waiting for you to say that.

Because now I want to tell you, that your name shall be no longer Jacob, but Israel. For as a prince, you power with God and you pray the hill. And the sun began to rise.

And Jacob got up and found he was limping on his thigh. And for the rest of his life, he bore a mark of that encounter with God. But he went away.

A changed man. Was it a second blessing? Oh no. Do I believe in a second blessing? Oh yes.

Because to believe in a third and a fourth and hundreds of blessings, day without a blessing is an awful day. It wasn't a second blessing. It was a day at last, when not only Jacob had God.

But God got him and he bore the mark of it. And lived the rest his life. My dear brother, I wish I knew.

It's none of my business. Have you got a mark on you tonight? Perhaps nobody knows about it. Or certainly only one or two people that you know came to you when God met you at depth.

And you'd come to the end of your rope. And you said to him, Lord, I can't go on any longer. And he said to you, what's your name? And you told him.

And you have that mark upon you tonight. If not, what about letting the Lord Jesus put it there right now? The water was up to the knees. Just one more thing.

Allow me. Don't we long for a tremendous thirst for God in our lives and in our congregations? We never expected to come in the church until first of all it's coming to us. Where is it? Alas, all too rare.

Most Christians are contented with past experience. Most of them have a sign outside their door when they come to church. Please do not disturb.

They're settled for an easy Christian life. You'll allow me to quote dear A.W. Towson. Today, he says, everything is made to center upon the initial act of accepting Christ.

We're not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our soul. We've been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found him, we need no more seeking. This is set before us as the last word in orthodoxy.

The heart theology of a great army of fragrant saints is rejected in favor of a smug interpretation of scripture which would have sounded strange to Augustine, Rutherford, Brainerd. Oh, that the language of John Samuel Mansell was in our hearts again. I hunger and I thirst.

Jesus, my manna be. Ye living waters burst out of the rock for me. For still the desert lies, my thirsty soul before.

Oh, living waters rise within me evermore. And I hear Wesley coming to us tonight and echoing all that and saying, Jesus, thine all-victorious love shed in my soul abroad. Then shall my heart no longer row rooted and fixed in God.

Oh, that in me the sacred fire might now begin to glow. Burn up the dross of base desire and make the fountains flow. Oh, thou who at Pentecost didst come, do thou my sin consume.

Come, Holy Ghost, on thee I come. Spirit of burning, come. And if anybody dared to pray like that today, they'd be called a wild Pentecostalist, or at least charismatic.

We're afraid of the Holy Spirit. We back off from him. My Christian friend, the tide coming in, got your knees wet, you're done.

Down, Christian, down. He brought me through. And then, wonder of wonders, the waters were to the lions.

That's the place of strength. The man's deeper in the river. He's discovered the secret that the way that wait upon the Lord exchange their strength for his.

It's no longer I, but Jesus. I can do all things through Christ. And that revolutionary discovery that the Holy Spirit is in me to meet every demand that the will of God places upon me, but it's not my struggle or my power.

I labor, Colossians 1:29, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. He brought me through. Are you there? And waters to swim in? Verse 5, a river that could not be passed through.

The man's out of his depth now, resting on the promises, so to speak. When a man's swimming, you've lost sight of him, except his head. And when a man has the river of life in his heart flooding him, you've lost sight of the man.

You see, Jesus. One mile from the source. Finish to repeat the question.

In my master's name, how many miles am I? Are you from the source of Christian life? Ankle deep tonight? You don't expect any more. Dare I believe that God can do a new thing in my church, in my home? Dare I? Quoting from D. L. Moody, said in Scotland, Glasgow. Listen, one day in New York.

Oh, what a day. I can't describe it. I seldom refer to it.

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

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

But hundreds of people were saved. I would not be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if he would give me all of Scotland. David Brainerd.

Who, in the shade and cool wind, was wet with sweat as he prayed. Drawn out and grasping God for multitudes of souls in India, so preached that scores of hard-hearted, stoic Indian people were down, bowed before him like grass before a scythe. Hudson Taylor.

Years after being on the field, returned to England for new recruits for the China Inland Mission. Sat on the south coast of Brighton, conscious of failure, suddenly realized and said aloud, it's not what Hudson Taylor does for God that matters. It's what God does in and through Hudson Taylor.

And John Wesley, preaching in the open air, writing afterwards in his diary, which I have read, said, visited Rochdale today. That's a Lancashire town. The people were angry.

They didn't want to hear. They shouted at me. Yelled at me.

Began to throw things at me. So my friends decided we'd better move. We went off.

We went to Oldham. And when I stood up to preach at Oldham, they cursed me. They spat at me.

They knocked me down. They kicked me. And bashed me about.

And then in desperation, I cried, Jesus! And the crowd withdrew. And I stood up. And for 20 minutes, I offered Christ to them.

And many came to know and love it. Oh, you say to me, these are giants. Brother, sister, the Holy Spirit is not only for giants.

And those of us who have disobeyed. And if these are giants, what a tragic commentary it is on the rest of us. We needn't wait for him.

He waits for us. We have taken Christ for forgiveness. Have I really ever taken him for victory? The Christian life? Two empty hands stretched out to God.

Nothing in my hand I bring, simply that I cross. I cling naked, come to thee for dress. Helpless, look to thee for dress.

How, like to the fountain fly. Wash me, Saviour, or I die. Yes, you've held that heart out.

And he has met you and forgiven. What about the other hand? It's full of Christian activity. Full of committees.

Full of hard work for the Lord. You've never emptied that hand. Jesus says to you tonight, son, daughter, give me back my church.

Let me into it. Give me back your home. Let me into it.

Let me take over. Have you ever taken Jesus for victory? If you haven't, would you do so tonight? I remember years ago now, I shouldn't perhaps tell you family stories, but just to close, I've been thinking about, naturally we both have, about our daughters today. I remember one night sitting at home and my older daughter was sitting on my knee and she had her arm around me and hugging me.

And the little one, who is about 10 years younger, came in and the older one from her vantage position looked at her and said, you don't need to come any further. I've got all there is of daddy. And I saw a little lip begin to quiver.

So I held out an arm and she ran and toddled in and jumped onto my other knee and I put my arm around her and hugged her. And she looked at her sister and she said, you may have all there is of daddy, but daddy's got all there is of me. That's what matters.

That's what matters. Make room for the Holy Spirit. We'll continue our study on him tomorrow.

Meanwhile, let's pray. Amen.

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