

Terms Are Costlier Than We Think

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon highlights the urgent need for personal commitment in discipleship and the costly terms of following Christ in a rapidly changing world.

Duration: 54:33

Scripture: Genesis 22:1, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:30-31, Philippians 3:10, Hebrews 11:6, James 2:17

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that the world is smaller than we think, and therefore the task of spreading the word of God is greater than we realize. The speaker shares a personal experience of feeling afraid and sinking, but being saved by calling out to the Lord. The speaker also highlights the importance of recognizing the power of the Holy Spirit in overcoming challenges. The sermon concludes with the speaker reflecting on the need to prioritize a relationship with God over worldly pursuits and knowledge.

Transcript

May I, may I just say two things to you before I speak, if that isn't being very Irish. The first is, um, there were two Scotsmen and two Welshmen, two Irishmen and two Englishmen, who were, um, cast up on a desert island and lost for six months. At the end of the six months, when they were found, the two Welshmen were singing, the two Irishmen were fighting, the two Scotsmen were talking about home rule for Scotland, and the two Englishmen, well, they weren't speaking to each other because they hadn't been introduced.

Now, we're inclined with what we think to be reserved, other people think being snooty, and it'd be a great help to me if you took the initiative and came up and said hi, when I'm having meals, or see you from time to time, because I want in these two days to get to know you as much as possible. And the other thing is that though I was in Chicago for nearly 10 years, I, during that time, my British accent got a bit, uh, liberated, but I'm conscious that it's been sharpened up again, and I hope you don't have too much problem with what I'm saying and understanding it. I hope it won't be more than half and half, anyway, and that, uh, I'll try and make it quite simple.

Now then, let us turn to read a portion of the word in a very familiar portion. One of the, while you're looking it up, it's Matthew 14. Matthew 14.

One of the most amazing things to me about the Bible is that when you've read a portion of it, say, hundreds of times, you really think, well, you know it all. Then suddenly it begins to live and take life to you all over again. This happened to me just recently in regard to this particular portion, and it's from my experience of it that I want to speak to you today.

Matthew 14.22. And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray. And when the evening was come, he was there alone.

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, it is spirit.

And they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water.

And he said, come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid.

And beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, all thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, of a truth, thou art the Son of God.

May we just bow our heads and hearts in a word of prayer. And would you echo in your heart the prayer which I would offer on your behalf and mine. 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.

I just want to say a word to you about what I have in mind for this week. It is certainly not to be an hour when you are taught more doctrine. There are others here far more able than I am to do that, and you're in classrooms all day and every day.

But I want, if I may, in these few mornings, just to speak to you heart to heart concerning the problem of communication. The communication of our faith. The priority task of the whole Church, of every Christian.

I'm basing it all on the fact that every one of us here this morning, right now, is either a missionary or a mission field. You don't become missionary because you get a visa and go abroad. Right now, either a missionary or a mission field.

If your life is rightly related to the Lord Jesus Christ, you're a missionary. If it isn't, you're a mission field. And then our whole theme will center around that focal point of our personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

For this is the key to everything in our lives. And as our thinking together on the subject of the priority task of the Church, I want to say just four very simple but very important things that we should bear in mind. First, the world is much smaller than we think.

Actually, it is no more than just a neighborhood. I left Glasgow in Scotland in May. One Saturday, had lunch with my wife at the airport and rang her up from New York when she was just sitting down to her evening meal.

You see, it has shrunk into a mere neighborhood. The world is smaller than we think. And because of that, the task is greater than we think.

Because all cultures of every nation have been crowded together with the inevitable tensions and conflicts which arise out of that fact. And also, of course, because of the tremendous population explosion which has taken place in the 20th century, about which I don't need to say anything, you know it all. But this all makes the task far greater than we think.

And third, the time is shorter than we think. I think one of the most thrilling spiritual exercises is to read your daily newspaper alongside your Bible. And you see unfolding all that the Lord Jesus said would happen in these last days.

It puts a sense of urgency into our feet, into our mind, and into our heart. The time is shorter than we think. We're not responsible for the evangelization of the generation that has gone, nor responsible for the evangelization of a generation yet to be.

But we are responsible for this one. And the time is shorter than we think. And fourthly, the terms are costlier than we think.

It's going to cost us a great deal more than we ever imagined. This generation will never be won to Christ. No city will be won to Christ through mass evangelism.

Now please don't take your pencil and postcard and write to Billy Graham and say that I'm having a crack at him. I'm certainly not. Because during his crusade in Chicago, I was vice chairman of the committee and backed him 100%.

I would do the same again at any place at any time. But he actually said to me in those days in Chicago that if the church was doing its job, I would be out of work. He's quite right.

When I left Moody Church in 1962, I left behind about 40 people who were in a discipleship class, all of whom who had been converted at the Billy Graham crusade. I rejoiced in it. Many other pastors in this city could say exactly the same thing.

This was tremendous. But supposing every member of Moody Church in 1962 had one, just one individual for Christ. I'd have left behind 2,500 people in a discipleship class.

You see the difference is as big as that. To have an evangelistic crusade, a mass evangelistic crusade in a big city, would cost half a million dollars. To have what the church really needs wouldn't cost a cent.

But it would cost every one of us everything in terms of personal commitment to Christ. And it's that that I'm concerned about in these days. The terms are costlier than we think.

So here then you will bear in mind during these mornings, these simple propositions. The world is smaller than we think. The task is greater than we think.

The time is shorter than we think. And the terms are costlier than we think. And I'm going to approach this theme from five different angles.

And our first one this morning will be a relationship which must be restored. And that brings us straight to the message, to the portion of scripture which I read to a few minutes ago. As I was reading this portion, the words of the 30th verse of Matthew 14 came home to me with tremendous personal force.

Matthew 14 verse 30. Let me read it to you. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried saying, Lord save me.

Just those three words went right home to my heart, because they spoke to my personal experience. Here they are. May the Spirit of God ring an alarm bell in your soul this morning, beginning to sink.

How graphically those words, when they lived to me afresh, spoke to my own personal spiritual experience. I wonder if they don't do exactly the same to you today. Somehow there's been a loosening of our hold upon God, a slackening in our devotion to him, a carelessness in the cultivation of our inner life.

Whether that sinking is sudden due to some tragic moral breakdown, I wouldn't know. Or whether it's just been gradual. But wherever I go, I find today that people of every age group are involved in a rat race.

They're on a conveyor belt from dawn till night, seven days a week. Too tired to pray, too weary to read the Bible, study, examinations, higher academic standards, the business, the family, the home. All these things spell out for us with tremendous force, the warning beginning to sink.

Old standards have been given up. Disciplines have been abandoned. So much easier to go along with the crowd.

We never thought it would happen to us. We were called into the ministry. We thought we'd be immune from it, but we haven't been.

We've been given places of spiritual leadership and responsibility, and we thought this itself would be an inoculation of this sinking process. But we found there's nothing easier than to lose the word of God in the work of God. Beginning to sink.

And some of you have come to this campus with all its associations and tremendous history, which has been of worldwide blessing to millions of people. And you thought that coming to Moody Bible Institute would be a preventive, but you found it accelerating the process. So much easier, in all the rush, just to abandon the one thing that really matters.

And you know it's noticeable to yourself, because when you begin to sink you get irritable. Your boiling point gets low. You're on the defensive, on edge.

You keep people at a distance from you. You don't want them to know about it. But they do know.

They can see the tensions and the strains and the pressure. They watch you pressing the panic button every now and again. And they wonder what's the matter.

They don't know the reason for it. Beginning to sink. What did Peter do in such circumstances? He cried out to God, Lord save me.

Now that's a very short prayer. But under the circumstances I don't think it could have been much longer. His water was probably up to his chin at the moment.

He was desperate. So desperate indeed that he just had time to cry, Lord save me. How I thank God for short prayers.

We're not heard in heaven for our correct evangelical phraseology. We're heard because of our confessed sense of peril and danger. Prayer that shoots like an arrow right to the heart of God from my heart.

It goes straight to the throne in heaven, Lord save me. A confessed sense of need. One great hindrance to the operation of miracles in life is the absence of any sense of need.

Faith works best in the context of desperation. I never read in my Bible that God removes an anthill, but I do read that it removes a mountain. I don't read that he deals with a mild headache, but he does deal with impossibilities.

Faith works most convincingly when there's no other way out. Not much use believing God if all the time we leave just a way of escape in case he doesn't work. But here's Peter shut up to a miracle.

Now it's a horrendous thing when you get to that place in your Christian life, when you've got just no other way out. When you cry, Lord save me. How often I've prayed like that, when pressures were overwhelming, when it was impossible to frame words, when I was too tired to think, oh Lord save me, keep me sane, Lord save me, don't let me make a wrong decision.

And when the enemy comes in like a flood and attacks me, Lord save me. Now what intrigues me about this passage of scripture is to notice how the Lord goes about answering the prayer of a man or a girl who's desperate. The fellow, the girl who just knows they haven't got any other alternative and they're shut up to God and to him working miracles.

I trust that there are many in that category here this morning. It's a wonderful place to be. Do you notice the divine pattern of deliverance? First of all, do you notice that Peter's doubts were rebuked? Verse 31, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? The first thing the Lord Jesus did was to expose the real cause of his sinking, and firmly but lovingly he goes and penetrates to the root of the whole cause of sinking, a breakdown in his basic relationships with God.

Wherefore didst thou doubt, unbelief? Without faith it's impossible to please God. When you begin to doubt God's ability to save you in a particular situation, it isn't that you stop practicing the principle of faith, but rather that you put your faith in something or someone else than the only one who is worthy of it, the only trustworthy object, and you begin to sing. Everybody lives by faith, everybody.

Life can't exist without faith at any level. A friend of mine who happens to be a minister in the Church of England was traveling recently from England to Australia, and he decided to go by ship, a sensible man, but got some relaxation. Took him about six weeks, but when he got aboard the boat, he imagined that he had reserved a single cabin.

But he found that there was someone else occupying it, another man. And he began to unpack his belongings, with one eye on his luggage and another eye on his traveling companion. And the more he looked at him, the less he felt he could trust him.

Then just after a moment, the other man went out of the room, the cabin, so my friend took the opportunity of his absence to wrap up all his personal belongings in a little case. And presently the other man came back. So my friend went out with his valuables to find the purser of the ship.

And he found him and he said, I'm sorry to bother you, but I imagined I had a single cabin reserved on this boat, but I find I haven't, and there's another man in my cabin. And the more I look at him, the less I feel I can trust him. Would you mind looking after my valuables on the voyage? So the purser said, Certainly sir, I'd be glad to.

And he took them and locked them up and turned round with a smile, and he said to him, It may surprise you, sir, to know that your traveling companion has just been here and said exactly the same thing. You see, it is absolutely impossible in any situation to exist without faith. It was unbelief which drove our first parents from God.

But half God said that thou shalt not eat of the fruit of every tree was the question which Satan sewed into the mind of Eve, with disastrous results to the whole human family. It wasn't that she stopped practicing faith, but she put her faith in the wrong object. Instead of believing God's truth, she believed the devil's lie.

And unbelief led to rebellion, and that's the root of all sin. And therefore the path which God has decreed to the way to restore a broken relationship with him is belief unto the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Wherefore didst thou doubt? Why has your confidence in God ceased? I suspect very strongly, in Peter's case, it was because of winds and waves.

You remember when he leapt out of a ship to come to Christ? He had no problem with winds and waves, he just forgot about them all. But he came, became increasingly conscious of the waves and wind which had troubled him on the boat, still troubled him, when he trusted the Savior. And he began concentrating on winds and waves, then he began to sink.

Now this isn't only Peter's trouble, my friend, it's yours and mine. Why have you begun to sink? Why did I begin to sink? I know, because we gave our time and our concentration to battling with life's problems and storms and pressures, until our spiritual horizons grew so dim that they almost ceased to exist. Tragic that that can happen to a Christian, but it can.

Absorption with storms and winds drove us off our true center and removed us from the source of strength and power which alone could stop us sinking. And we found ourselves living within the limited resources of our own strength, and the battle was too much for us, and we began to sink. And we lost the sense of the presence of the One who had power to control the storm.

Wherefore did you die? There's the Lord exposing the basic trouble, the basic cause of sinking unbelief. But do you notice in this verse, not only did the Lord rebuke his doubts, there came a moment when he reversed his defeat. Immediately, verse 31, that is, immediately Peter cried, Lord save me.

Immediately Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and the downward trend, the sinking trend, was reversed. A new power, another person had taken over, and Peter found himself in the hands of one who could lift him up and deliver him from the storm. Jesus had taken over him.

Now that's exactly what you need and what I need today. Not just a visit to church, not just three years at MBI, not a mild dose of religion, not a correct understanding of doctrine merely, but a God, a Master, a Lord who can take hold of me and lift me up above the storm. Enable me to triumph.

Forgive me using a very childish illustration, but I hold in my hand a Biro pen. Interesting enough, when I bought it here in Chicago, the advertisement said that this pen will write on butter or will write in your bath. Well now, that was quite interesting, because I don't usually write on butter and certainly never in my bath, but I was very grateful, I have been through the years, for the times when it's written on paper.

And look, I'm holding this pen in one hand, and I want to make it stand upright. You watching? Now I'll try and make that pen stand upright, and I just can't do it. Nothing that I can do, it would fall, collapse.

I can't do it. There's only one thing that can make that pen stand upright. It's when another hand comes on it from above and then holds it steady.

See? And then it's upright. That hand can't do it, and the more it tries, the more it goes on falling. But there comes a moment when I acknowledge that that hand can't do it, therefore another hand comes and takes over, and the pen is now steady.

It's upright. Now that's exactly your trouble, and mine exactly your need. As long as I go on trying to stop myself sinking, I go on going down.

But when I acknowledge I'm beaten, and a total failure, and never can be anything else, then God comes in from above. And when I begin to say, Lord save me, because I can't save myself. Lord save me, because I'm helpless with this storm, and with this problem, and with this battle.

Then he comes from above, and he makes me stand. But you see, he must be Lord. He must take control.

A predecessor of mine at Charlotte Chaplain, Edinburgh, was the famous Dr. Graham Scroggie, of whom many of you may have heard, you've probably read his books. He was once speaking to a lady, a young lady, after a service, and he said to her, why don't you trust Christ? She said, Dr. Scroggie, I'm afraid of two things. He said, what are they? Well, she said, I play the piano in a jazz band.

I'm afraid the Lord might ask me to give it up. And what's the second one? Oh, she said, I'm afraid God might call me to a missionary, and I'd have to go through life without a husband. So Dr. Scroggie, wise old owl that he was.

Scroggie, wise old owl that he was, just opened his Bible at Acts 10, 14. You remember the verse? Where Simon Peter was having a little siesta on his rooftop at Joppa, for lunch. And he felt hungry, and in his dream, he was asleep, he saw some strange apparition coming down from heaven, loaded with food of all kinds, and a voice that said to him, rise Peter, kill and eat.

And he said, not so Lord, I never. Now just pause a minute to say that it's a desperately dangerous thing to say never to Jesus. Don't you try it.

Not so Lord, I never eat anything common or unclean. Dr. Scroggie pointed out to this lady how absolutely contradictory it is to say in one breath, not so, and the next breath, Lord. Now he said, take my pen, and I go out to the office here, and I'll come back in ten minutes, and cross out one or the other.

Cross out either not so, or cross out Lord. And he went away. Ten minutes later he came back, looked over his shoulder.

The Bible had been stained with a tear. But the words not so, had been crossed out. And Jesus was Lord.

From that moment, her life had passed out of her own hands. She now recognized that she belonged to another, not to herself. Incidentally, that lady lived for 30 years to be a missionary in India.

Incidentally also, she got a husband. But can't guarantee that. But we do know that the will of God is good, and acceptable, and perfect.

But a slave never dictates his terms to his master, not so Lord. Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, said Peter. Why is it that some Christians live in victory, and you can tell by looking at them, they're rejoicing in it.

And some live in hopeless defeat for years. Why should that be? It isn't that some have the Holy Spirit, and some have not, because all have. Every Christian, born again, has him.

The difference is simply this, that some have recognized he is there, and some haven't. Some have a theoretical Christ, some have a doctrinal Christ, some have an experimental Christ, and they know Christ as Lord in their hearts. And they have crowned him as their King.

Has that ever happened in your life? Some people have Jesus, but they're still their own masters. Some people have Jesus, and he is their master. We in Britain have a very strange form of government.

We call it a constitutional monarchy. I'll explain that in a minute. In June it was, I think--oh yes, June the 2nd, it was my wedding anniversary--1953.

Our present Queen was crowned in Westminster Abbey in London. It was the day forecast by the weather prophets as likely to be the finest day of the year. Actually it poured from dawn till dusk, like it can only do around there, streamed down.

But those of us who saw that ceremony on television will never forget the moment when the Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the Church in England, with the crown in his hand, turned to about 4,000 people in that ancient historical building and said to them, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you your rightful sovereign Elizabeth. Do you assent to pay her homage? And just one word rang out and echoed through that vast building in London at that moment. The word I and 4,000 people representing every stage of life in Britain had acknowledged her to be their rightful sovereign.

And he turned and placed the crown on her head. And that day she was our Queen. We all love her.

She's a Christian, born-again Christian, and we respect her. But listen, never from that day to this has she made one decision. Never one.

Harold Wilson and company do that, for better or worse. You see, we have a government who make all the decisions. And we strange Britishers, at least the English part of Britain, sort of like it that way.

A Queen who is above every party and who signs every document that the government presents to her and puts a signature, a rubber stamp to it, and then a government who make every decision. That's a constitutional monarchy. Very strange.

Very, very strange. That that has somehow or other infiltrated itself into twentieth-century Christianity. In which, I mean, supposing I asked you folk here in this auditorium, is Jesus Christ your Lord? You would say, yeah.

Well, I come back at you, very lovingly, but I trust with Holy Spirit penetration, and I say to you, who makes the decisions? Who chooses your life partner? Who chooses a career? Who chooses how you spend your money, if any? Who makes the decisions? Listen, God refuses to be a rubber stamp to anybody. Sanctify Christ as Lord, Lord Saviour. And immediately, the downward trend is reversed, and Peter experienced the thrill of the upward pull of the living Christ, who gave him power in the moment of defeat.

But he must be Lord. A relationship which must be restored. Is that so with you? Why is that so essential? What happened? Forgive me if I use just another illustration to illustrate, to show you what I mean.

You all know my good friend, I'm sure, Stephen Alford. I was speaking at his spiritual life convention recently, and after one meeting, I was traveling back to Chicago, which was my home at the time. It was a very foggy night, snow was falling, wintertime.

When I got to Kennedy Airport, all the planes had been canceled. So I hung around for a couple of hours, and eventually, somebody said, one plane flying to Chicago, and everybody made a dive for it. So I managed to get in, in the last seat, right at the back, right at the very back.

I don't know, but I suppose there'd be about 160 others, people all swarming in, sitting down. And the snow was falling like it's nobody's business. And outside, as I looked out through my little window, there were four men on the wings, soothing it off, defrosting them.

And I suddenly remembered, just the sort of thing you would remember in a moment like that, that the weight of a jet plane, fully loaded with passengers and gas, was 250,000 pounds. And I looked right away into the distance, and saw the back of the pilot's head. And I said, oh Lord, bless him.

I wasn't fearful, but certainly prayerful. Presently, the engines began to turn over, and we trundled to the end of the runway. And we stopped.

And when we'd stopped, I looked out the window and wondered why. Here were the four men back, with the ladder, on the wing, sweeping away the snow, defrosting it. The whole situation was most unpromising.

But suddenly, there was a tremendous roar. And if you travel economy class in a jet, you know what it's like. It was a roar.

And that plane gradually took speed, and with a flurry of snow, went along that runway. And when it had reached a speed of about 150 knots, the pilot pulled a stick, the nose went up in the air, and it began to soar, and soar, and soar, and climb, until it reached 35,000 feet, in a brilliant moonlight, starlight night. And in less than two hours, I was back in O'Hare Field.

Was that just something that happened by chance? Oh no. Is it something that might happen, or might not happen? Oh no, it must happen. Why? Well, you see, this reason.

At a speed of 150 knots, another law came into operation. Until that moment, the law of gravity had held that plane on the runway. But at 150 knots, the law of aerodynamics began to take over, and the sheer thrust of four jet engines inside the plane was so tremendous, that it overcame the law of gravity, and kept it in subjection.

And the plane soared through the storm. Recognize this verse? The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death. Hallelujah.

When I say, Lord save me, and I know that it's desperate, and I know there's no other way out, except he takes over, Lord save me, at that moment, at that very moment, he stretches out his hand and lifts me up, and I experience the upward pull of a living Christ. Do you know that in your life? Do you? Or are you defeated? Are you still your own master, managing your own business, trying to run your own life, trying to do your own studies, and you haven't discovered that in Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, and you are complete in him, and he is in you today? If every one of us knew that, not as a theory, not as a doctrine, but as an experience that each one of us has God in our hearts, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, it would revolutionize Christianity. Every one of our lives would be absolutely revolutionized if we believed, not theoretically, but experimentally in our hearts that we carry God inside us, and all he wants is to be God in us.

For you and I to get out of the way, and let him get into business, and into control, and take over, Lord save me, and until I get to the point of desperation, until I, as long as I think there's some other alternative, that after all I'm not so bad as the Bible says I am, I'm prepared to give him 95 percent of the commission, but I want five for myself, as long as I go on talking about it like that, I go on thinking. Now just a word in conclusion, which isn't easy to say from this platform, but which I want to say to be honest. Do you notice Peter's doubts rebuked, his defeat was reversed, and then his dilemma was removed.

Verse 32, immediately when they got into the ship, the wind ceased. Now you notice the order of this. Doubts rebuked, defeat reversed, dilemma removed.

The last in order of treatment was the first in order of desire. May I repeat that? The last in order of treatment was the first in order of desire. Lord save me, get me out of this mess.

Lord deliver me from this situation. Lord save me, I can't take it anymore. Panic button, and the Lord ignores that, and the first in order of treatment was to rebuke his doubts, and then reverse his defeat, and finally to remove the dilemma.

Because you see the Lord is concerned about dealing with the man, first of all. As long as we're in defeat, the dilemma remains. Situations get worse, the pressures increase, the hopelessness of it all seems to become increasingly powerful and real.

But when we come to the point of trusting Christ completely, the dilemma moves. Moses knew the secret. When he took three million people through a wilderness, he didn't say, Lord deal with these awkward people, Lord get rid of them, Lord send them away, I don't want them, don't want them.

No, they're always grumbling and complaining. He didn't talk about that. The problems were far too big for him.

He just said one thing, Lord, I beseech you, show me your glory. That's all that Moses needed. It's all that you and I need, just a touch of his glory.

And you see, what I want to say in conclusion, is that the circumstances in which you are sinking are brought about by your Heavenly Father in order that you come to the place of saying, Lord save me. Just four years ago, I was preparing my message for a Sunday, it was that Saturday afternoon, in my study in Edinburgh. As I was writing it out, I suddenly lost control of my hand, and it wandered all over the paper.

I called out to my wife, I found I couldn't stand up. I had some idea of what might have happened, and before long I was sure. In five minutes I couldn't speak, I couldn't walk.

I knew that I'd had a cerebral hemorrhage, which is a stroke, might well have been fatal. I was helpless, and in a few minutes reduced to childhood. Spiritually, I couldn't pray, read my Bible for months.

Mentally, I couldn't think, couldn't concentrate. Physically, I was as weak as a child. This situation lasted for about seven or eight months.

One time I suddenly found that the devil was hurling everything at me. I thought just like him to take advantage of a situation like this, and he began to put into my mind sinful thoughts. Temptation that I thought I'd got rid of for twenty years came back with overwhelming force, and I had no power to resist.

Temptation to impurity, temptation to bad language, temptation to blow my top with my wife and children, and they experienced a father who had reverted to childhood. In the midst of all this, when I was absolutely desperate, I cried out to God and said, Oh God, get me out of this mess. Lord, take me home to heaven.

I can't stand anymore this attack of the devil. Can't lie here like this. I don't want the last memory that my wife and family have of me to be a man who lives like a cabbage and helpless for all his life.

Lord, save me from it. Get me out of it. Take me right away.

Let me die right now. And it seemed to me, though I had no vision, no dramatic sense of God's presence, a conviction came to my heart, born of the Spirit, who said to me, You've got all this wrong. Satan hasn't got the slightest thing to do with it.

You've been blaming the devil. This isn't from the devil. It's from me.

I had to bring you to this point in order that you might understand that this is the kind of man with all the temptations to impurity and sinfulness and bad language and blowing your top, this is the kind of man you always will be but for the grace of God. And I knew in theory, but now I knew in experience, that God is not in the self-improvement business, but is in the Christ-replacement business. He's never been attempting to make me a better person, but he's always been wanting me to get out of the way and make room for him.

And then he said to me, Just take a look and a long big think into the past 30 years. And I went back to the time when I started the ministry in London, 14 years over there, 10 years here at Moody Church, two or three years in Edinburgh. And I saw a building up of a situation which was pressure, problem, work.

Oh, I thought it was so spiritual. For I was working like any slave for the sake of God's dear son. Seven days a week, 14 hours a day, sometimes more.

No time for home, no time for family, no time for anything but work, work, work. And I had substituted work for worship, service for heart surrender. And I recalled how I had spoken to a congregation many times and demanded from them an obedience to truth, which literally I wasn't prepared to give myself.

I had substituted orthodoxy for obedience, so proud of being a fundamentalist. But literally in my life there were points in which I was not obeying God, and I had substituted the Bible for God. So proud of my neat outlines, three points, introduction and conclusion, all points beginning with the same letter.

So proud of it all, built up over 20 years all this, so proud of it. I'd substituted my knowledge of truth for my knowledge of God. You remember Paul's great life ambition, that I might know him.

Not that I might know truth. The one is important, of course, but it's only, it's only the gateway to the other that I might know him. And I saw it all.

And I tell you, though I could do nothing but weep, I wet my heart up, and I knew that I was at the end of my rope. And when I knew that, from sinking sands he lifted me, with tender hands he lifted me, from shades of night to planes of light, oh praise his name, he lifted me. And here I stand before you 100 percent well, restored.

But he brought me to the place when I was absolutely finished in myself. I'm not suggesting that God is going to do that sort of thing with you, but I am suggesting that he will insist on the principle of a relationship which must be restored, and will use anything, and go to any means, until you're prepared to say, Lord, it's no good, save me. Let's pray.

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