

(A Living Challenge) How Badly Do You Want It?

by Dale Gish

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a clear vision of Jesus and the need to crucify the flesh in order to see Him.

Duration: 1:23:26

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Ephesians 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Hebrews 10:25, James 4:8

Topics: "Spiritual Desire", "Victory Over Sin"

Description

The sermon titled 'How Bad Do You Want It?' emphasizes the importance of having a clear vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. The speaker highlights that this vision leads to power over temptation, victory over sin, answered prayer, and being filled with the fullness of God. The sermon encourages listeners to examine their desire for experiencing the mighty power of God in their lives and compares it to their other desires. The speaker emphasizes that having a strong desire for the testimony of Jesus Christ and divine intervention in one's life is crucial.

Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the freewill offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. We greet you this evening in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the way that we would like to meet this evening and for these meetings that are before us. Whatever it takes to do that, that's what we'd like to do. Because, brothers and sisters, there's a guarantee that comes from the Scriptures when we gather in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And it's when two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. I mean, what a foundation for these meetings, amen? I don't know anything that would change these meetings more than that. Than the reality of the presence of Jesus Christ sitting right beside you.

And our desire tonight is that by faith we could see Jesus. Brothers and sisters, Christians need to be visionary people. Christians need to be able to see the invisible.

That's a little bit what faith is. Faith is not sight. Faith is evidence of things not seen and without it, it's impossible to please God.

Christians must be visionary people. That's our desire this evening, is that by faith we could see Jesus. And I want us to know that there are some things on our part that we must do for that to happen.

You know, there were some Greeks one time who went to Jerusalem desiring to see Jesus. And it just so happens that they came on the very week that Jesus was to be crucified. And they found some of the disciples and they said to them, Sirs, we would see Jesus.

And Andrew went and found Philip and Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus, They said, there's some Greeks here who would like to see you. And Jesus gave them the strangest, most unusual answer. He didn't say anything about Greece.

He didn't say anything about being Gentiles. He didn't say, okay, I'll come and see them. Jesus, there's some Greeks here who would like to see you.

And Jesus said, accept a corn of wheat. Fall into the ground and die. It divideth alone.

Now, is that a strange answer or is there a message in it for us this evening? I believe that there is a message in it for us this evening. And it's simply that if we want to see Jesus, the flesh must die. I don't know really if there's any Greeks here tonight.

But I've got a pretty strong feeling there's some Germans. And probably some Irish and Swiss and Italians. Really, we're just a bunch of Gentiles tonight desiring to see Jesus.

But I want us to know that the formula has not changed from the week that Jesus was crucified until tonight. The flesh must die. If you won't forgive your brother, if there's bitterness in your heart and some fellowship with the world, you'll never be able to see through all of that to get a vision of Jesus Christ.

It'll never happen. If the flesh is alive and well, it will distort your vision of Jesus Christ so much that He won't even be beautiful to you anymore. And that's amazing.

And that's disastrous, brothers and sisters. I mean, beautiful Savior! Blessed Redeemer! The altogether lovely One, so distorted by the flesh that we don't even desire Him anymore. But it happens all the time.

And if you're here tonight to find fault with a brother, if you're here tonight somehow to exalt yourself in the Kingdom of God, you're never going to see Jesus. And there's a lot of people that say they would like to. Wanted to see Jesus bad.

Long time desired to see Him. But when He finally stood before him, all he really wanted to see was a miracle. And Jesus would not do one.

Because God does not reveal Himself to that kind of heart. He will withdraw Himself. So, I challenge us this evening.

Are we free? For God to reveal Himself to us tonight? Or is there something in our life that would cause Him to withdraw? I have a title for the message this evening. I would like it to be in the form of a question. I would like for the title to be, How Bad Do You Want It? How bad do you want it? And that's going to be referring to a clear vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A life changing vision of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's going to be referring to power over temptation. And victory over sin.

And answered prayer in your life. And being filled with all the fullness of God. How bad do you want it? Not, do you want it? I tell you I could ask this assembly tonight.

Do you want it? And all the hands go up. But when I say, how bad do you want it? Every heart must pause in meditation and consider, What are you willing to do to get it? That's what we'd like to do this evening. We'd like to search our hearts.

Let's begin with a word of prayer. Holy Father tonight, God we come before you and we know that there's no way that we could ever see through the flesh to get a clear vision of our God. We know, Father, that there's only one formula to take care of the flesh.

And that is crucifixion. It is death by crucifixion. None of this brushing the flesh aside, Father.

It will always show up in another way. I pray tonight, Father, for the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ by which Paul said he was crucified to this world and the world was crucified unto him. I pray for the reality of that tonight, Father, so that we would be free to get a clear vision of our Lord Jesus Christ.

O God, I believe that there's higher ground for us tonight. We have not attained. The Apostle Paul had not attained, but he pressed on.

And tonight, Father, we desire the grace of God upon our hearts that we could press on, that we could get a vision, that we could be renewed with a fresh invitation of God, Father, to the promises of the Word. I pray that the reality of the promises of prayer will overwhelm us this evening, Father. O God, have Your way tonight, Father.

We're here to meet with You. We're here to meet with You, Father, on Your terms. Have mercy upon us.

I pray for it, Father. In Jesus' name, Amen. I want to challenge us greatly this evening on the motives that are in our heart.

How bad do we really want God? But first, I would like to speak a word on behalf of our Heavenly Father. I just believe that God would have me to say this evening to each one of us that is here, Welcome. I believe that's the atmosphere that God would have for us to come together into this place.

I mean, yes, we are here to meet with God. Yes, we're here to crucify the flesh. Yes, we're here to climb upon the altar and lay our life down upon the altar.

We're here to meet with God on His terms. But welcome. Have no fear.

I believe that God is here in our midst and I believe that His arms are reaching out to each one of us this evening. Welcome. I heard a man say one time that he looked that word up in the dictionary.

Welcome. And in the dictionary that he looked in, in English, it said that welcome is a contraction for two words. Will come.

Welcome means I will come. And it's just simply when there's been an invitation sent out with great desire and you respond to that invitation and you say, I will come. And that creates the word welcome.

It's just an atmosphere of I really want you to come combined with an attitude of I really want to be there. And it's the fellowship of that kind of reality that creates the word welcome. And I believe that's exactly where we are this evening.

Because I believe there's an invitation from the heart of God to each one that is here this evening to come to the house of God and meet with God because His presence is here tonight. We need to believe that. And each one of us who are here tonight have said, I will come.

But I want us to know whenever you say, I will, I will come, that's an act of your will. And whenever there's an act of your will, there is a motive involved. And we need to search our hearts many times.

We need to know what makes us do what we do. And brothers and sisters, many times, and I've seen this, when we come together sometimes into the house of God and we begin to sing, and the singing is just a little slow. It's a little bit draggy.

It needs more spirit. It needs more life. It needs more hands in the air.

And when they're not there, I'm just going to tell you, you didn't come to sing. There must have been some other reason. And when the word of God is opened up, and the words of life come before us, and the promises of God and the commandments of God are laid before us, and we're just a silent congregation, I mean, there's no amens.

There's no praise God for that. There's no thank you lords. We're just a silent congregation.

And when that's the case, I'm going to tell you, you sure didn't come to rejoice in the word of God. And when it's time for prayer, and we're on our knees, and we come before the throne of God, and we pour out our petitions before God, but you're sitting there and your eyes are open, and you're looking around, and there's other thoughts in your mind, I'm going to tell you, you didn't come to pray. There's another motive somewhere in our hearts.

And when it's time for the altar, and the call of God is before us, and the altar is open, and there's no response, I'll tell you this, you didn't come planning to meet with God. And sometimes, brothers and sisters, we need to do that. Sometimes we need to put some oomph into our singing.

Some amens to the Scriptures. Sometimes we need to close our eyes and go to the throne of God, and let the grace of God become real to us, and let the things of His heart grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. If we want to see Jesus, we need to do that.

There is something on our part that we must do for that to happen. So, I want to challenge you tonight. Why did you say to the invitation of God, I will come? And I challenge myself with that question.

You know what it makes me think of? Something you're all very familiar with. It makes me think of Leadership Seminar. Those of you who have been there, you know that that place is a live audience.

Amen? I mean, when it's time to sing, those men sing. I mean, they came planning to sing, I believe. It just seems like the Holy Spirit of God comes down and gives all the brothers there a double portion to sing, and they use it too.

There are times when I can't even hear myself singing in that place. Why is it that way at leadership? And when it's time to preach, I mean, that place is instant with loud voices. Amen! Preach it, brother! Hallelujah for that! Sometimes all the way through the message.

Why is it that way there? And when it's time for the altar, many times the altar is clear full of men weeping and praying unto God. Why is it that way at leadership? Let me tell you why I believe it's that way at Leadership Seminar. Because at one point, there is an invitation that is sent out.

And the men that are there received that invitation, and they said in their hearts, I will come. And they said it with conviction. And they said it with commitment.

They said it willing to make a sacrifice. I mean, those men rearranged their schedules so they could be there. Those men postponed their business appointments so they could come.

They sacrificed being with family. They sacrificed making more money so they could be there. And when those men came, I tell you, they came praying.

And they came fasting. And they came planning to meet with God. They did.

Those men had already gone to the altar in their mind before they even got to that place. You know how I know that? I know that because that's the kind of comments that I hear at registration at the beginning of the week. I hear comments like, well now, why are you here? Well, I'm here because our family is going through some really big things right now.

Big decisions. Big changes. And I want to be real close to God when we go through those changes.

So that's why I'm here. And why are you here? Well, I'm here because I don't get well. I've been slipping away from God.

I've been growing cold in spiritual things. And I need to let God get a hold of me. And I need to let God work me over.

And I'm going to let Him do it. And that's why I'm here. And brothers and sisters, at the registration at the beginning of the week, hasn't even been a sermon preached yet.

Doesn't have anything to do with the preaching, I tell you. And they're already under conviction. And I want to show you something tonight.

When you go anywhere that way, God is faithful. Whether you go to leadership seminar, or whether you go to your closet to pray, or whether you go to the mission field. If you go that way, God is faithful.

Or if you come that way to church this evening, God is faithful. And God was faithful in leadership seminar when He met with those men. My mind goes back especially to one evening a few years ago.

I believe it was on a Thursday evening when Brother Gerard Detroit preached that message, I tell you. The altar was packed. Clear full of men.

As you know, that's a big altar over there. No more room at the altar. Men began to kneel in the aisle on the way to the altar.

And they were just there weeping and praying softly unto God, and some of them not so softly. And it just brought down a holy atmosphere upon that place. It did.

And I want to tell you something about that sermon that Brother Gerard Detroit preached that Thursday evening. It was not that great of a sermon. And what I mean by that is that it was a wonderful, Holy Spirit-filled, anointed message of God.

But it was no better than the sermons that you hear right here in this church house every Sunday. Brothers and sisters, I tell you, it didn't have as much to do with a sermon as it did with the motives that were in the hearts of those men. All sermons are in one scriptural category.

Foolishness of preaching. That's what it is. And there are souls that are saved by it.

And we are going to do it. But I tell you, when the motives of the heart are open to God, when the motives of the heart and the brothers and the sisters come to fellowship that way, I tell you, God moves! And we wanted to move tonight, don't we? I believe that He's here. I believe that if we could see Him, if we could have the veil taken off of our eyes, God would move.

So I challenge you this evening. Why did you say to the invitation of God, I will come? You said you would come. But I want you to know that God said, I will come too.

He is here tonight and He is not going to miss a meeting where He has liberty to do whatever He wants to do. He's not going to miss a meeting like that. And I believe that He is here tonight.

So what are you expecting God to do? What have you given Him liberty to do? What did you prepare your heart for last week for Him to do tonight? Some of these things take preparations. What kind of week did you have? I tell you, brothers and sisters, if the only kind of week we ever have is a hard week and things didn't go too well, and we got a little wrapped up in the things I've heard, and I had a little problem with anger, I lost my temper a couple of times, I said a couple of hasty words, we were too busy, family devotions didn't go too well, we didn't have enough time for prayer, if that's the only way we ever come together, I tell you, we will not! We will never go forward in the kingdom of God with power. All we're ever going to be able to do is just barely make it.

We'll just barely be able to keep our head above water. Barely be able to maintain a little peace among ourselves. You put a sinner in the midst of that kind of congregation, and they're not going to see a whole lot of difference between you and them, because they had a tough week too! And they're not going to get converted.

I want us to know something. The kingdom of God is not a just barely making it thing. We need to get that out of our mind.

The kingdom of God is not a just barely making it thing. What is it? I tell you this tonight, if that's what it is for you, and I want to say this carefully, but if the kingdom of God for you is a just barely making it thing,

you might not be in it! You read the Word of God and tell me this thing is just barely making it! No! It's a Lazarus come forth thing! It's a rise, take up your bed and walk thing, brothers and sisters! It's a love your wife like Christ loved the church, brothers! It's a be in your place, sisters! A prayer and submission before God! We're not just barely making it. All the power of heaven is behind us.

We need to believe that. And when we come together having had that kind of week, amen, I mean when there's fresh repentance, when there's a fresh anointing of God, when there's a fresh testimony of answered prayer, when you've been in the Word of God and you've been on your knees before God, I tell you, you come together that way, and when it's testimony time, all the hands go up, and there's a sinner in that congregation, he's going to know that he's been in the presence of God. And you can say, well, Brother Dale, I've been a Christian for 20 years.

I've given my life to God. I've confessed my sins so many times. I think I've sold out to God.

I've heard all the sermons preached several times. We've held so many seminars in this place that I don't think we could hold another one where I didn't just hear the same thing again! But it's hard, Brother Dale, to just maintain that fresh anointing every single Sunday. You know, like I had when I first got born again! When I first saw who I was without Christ! And then I experienced the fullness of His dwelling within! And the burden lifted, and sins forgiven, and hallelujah! It's just hard to maintain that fresh anointing every single Sunday.

And I say, I see. So the longer we walk with God, the more we learn of Him, the more we experience of answered prayer, the more truths that come forth out of His Word, the harder it is to maintain a fresh anointing. Is that where we're at tonight, brothers and sisters? Is that where we are this evening? I tell you, if that's where we're at tonight, we need faith to be able to see Jesus! We need to get a vision! I believe that faith will do that for us! Because it will let us see the invisible! That's what a vision is! If we could get a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, I don't know anything that would rearrange our priorities more than that.

You know, it's interesting to me, you can go to the Word of God, and you can look at men in the Word of God who got a vision of God, and they were never the same again. And I'm not just talking about unbelievers. I'm talking about men of God.

I think about old Brother John, a man out there in the Isle of Patmos, there's about as sanctified a man as you could get. I mean, he was as righteous as you could get. He had walked with God.

He had seen the miracles that Jesus had done. He had seen the woman touch His garment and become healed. His life was covered by the blood.

He was sold out to God. He was sanctified. He had been at the cross of Calvary.

He had taken care of Jesus' mother. He was about as sanctified as a man could get. But I'll tell you, one day, out there in the Isle of Patmos, old John got a vision! He heard a great voice behind him, and when he turned around and looked... I'll just give it to you in John's words.

John said, righteous man, and when I saw Him, and when I saw Him, I fell at His face as dead. You think about it. Here was a righteous man who should have just rejoiced to see his Lord.

But he didn't just ease himself down and show some reverence to the One he loved. All the strength of his life went out from him when he got a vision of his Lord. Is that not reality to us tonight? Is that all saved for

a future day? That's what a righteous man did.

And he didn't need to get born again. He's already born again. And I believe I'm speaking to born-again people here this evening.

But we need to get a vision of God. And I'm going to tell you something else that I believe we need to get a vision of. And it's not only who He is, but it's who we are without Him.

We need that vision. I tell you, there are men in the Scriptures who have got that kind of vision too, brothers and sisters, and Ezra was one of them. Ezra one day got a vision of the sins of the people.

And when Ezra saw the wretchedness of sin as God sees it, he plucked every hair out of his head, every hair out of his beard, and he ripped his mantle and tore his garment and sat down astonished all day until the evening sacrifice. And then he fell on his knees and spread out his hands before God and said, I am ashamed and blushed. I mean, picture it.

Ezra got a vision of sin as God sees it. And that's what he did. He pulled all of his hair out out of his head and his beard, and he ripped his garment and tore his mantle and sat down astonished until the evening sacrifice and spread out his hands and said, I am ashamed and blushed.

Brothers and sisters, has your sin ever impressed you that way? Has the sins of the people ever impressed you that way? I want to tell you something. If that ever happened to you, if you ever did that, you would never be the same again. No way.

There's no way. But that's what a vision does. And it doesn't matter how righteous you are this evening.

If you got a vision of God like John got on the Isle of Patmos, you'd never be the same again. You know what? We wouldn't be bashful anymore. We would run to the altar weeping.

We wouldn't care who was there. We wouldn't care who was revealing our sin. We would just run to the altar crying to God for mercy and for grace.

And He's here. He's not a mean God. He's a loving Father.

And His arms are stretched out. But we would respond if we got a vision of Him. Even if you're skeptical and uncommitted tonight, you would do that.

You know, like the children of Israel, I think about that often on Mount Carmel. Elijah was there with them and he said, How long will you halt between two opinions? And they answered him not a word. They weren't talking.

They were skeptical. They were uncommitted. They were just holding back.

They were a little too embarrassed. They were a little too bit bashful. They couldn't commit themselves.

How long are you going to halt between two opinions? What I want to tell you tonight is when the fire of God came down and it consumed the altar and the sacrifice and the stones of the altar and licked up the water that was in the ditch, all of a sudden they were willing to talk and all they could say was, And I want to tell you, we would have that same chorus right here in this church house tonight if we would get a vision of who He is. They got the veil taken off of their eyes. They did.

And they saw God. Brothers and sisters, that's what a vision is. Nothing changed.

Nothing came that wasn't already there. The veil came off. And then you can see what was there all the time anyhow.

You know, I think about the servant of Elijah. Elisha. When they were completely surrounded by the enemy, there was a point there where they couldn't see anything but enemy.

And the servant of Elisha cried out and he said, Alas, Master, what shall we do? And Elisha told him, he said, Have no fear. They that be with us are more than they that be with them. What do you mean, Elisha? And Elisha prayed.

God, open his eyes that he may see. And God answered that prayer. He opened his eyes and he saw the whole mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

And there's something in my heart that wants to pray for each of us tonight, myself included. God, open our eyes so that we can see. That's what a vision is.

Nothing changed. It's the veil came off. And they can see what was there all the time anyway.

Always available to us. And by faith, the veil comes off. You can say, but Brother Dale, the fire of God doesn't fall anymore.

Visions, fire of God, miracles, that's Old Testament and Bible times. That doesn't happen today. And I want you to know that if that's God's will, I say amen.

I say amen to God's will. But I want to challenge you tonight. How did you figure that out? The fire of God, miracles, visions, they don't happen anymore.

How did you figure that out? Is that something you've heard all your life, and so now that's just the way it is? Is that something you observed by watching Christianity in America? I challenge you tonight to go to the Word of God and show me where that is the heart of God for it to be that way. And what are we going to go by? What we've always heard? What we've observed in America? Or what the Word of God tells us, brothers and sisters? That's a challenge before us tonight. And it's not as far away from us as we like to think.

You look at your life and just ask yourself, do I believe it? I'm going to challenge us this way. It may have a whole lot more to do with the fact that we don't want it than it does to do with the fact that God won't give it. Man does not want the fire of God.

Did you know that? Man doesn't want the fire of God, and here's why. Because man does not like fire that burns out of his control. And that's what the fire of God is.

The fire of God always burns out of man's control. You read the book of Acts, and whenever man tried to stop the fire of God, it just spread more than ever. And praise God for that.

But let me tell you something. The fire of God never burns out of His control. Don't let the fire of God get you going so hard that you overlook His commandments.

That's strange fire. And we don't want any of that. We want to be faithful to the Word of God.

But is the problem that God's not willing to send fire? Or that we're afraid of it? And that brings us to the question of the message tonight. How bad do you want it? And man doesn't like a vision of God or to see the power of God. He shrinks away from that.

Do you know why? Because he knows that he'll never be the same again. It's going to destroy his securities that he has built up in life. Man knows that.

It's like the children of Israel on Mount Sinai. You know what they told Moses? They told Moses, don't let God talk to us anymore. Moses, you talk to God and you tell us what He said, but don't let God talk to us anymore lest we die.

In other words, give the vision to somebody else. We don't want it. In other words, we don't want to hear from God.

And those mentalities are not as far away from us as we think they are sometimes. There's a passage of Scripture that I would like to read. Let's turn to Ephesians chapter 1. The book of Ephesians is full.

I tell you, you could meditate on these first couple of chapters for hours. Days. But I want to look at just a little passage here.

Verse 16, ceasing not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you. And I'd like to stop reading there and challenge us. As I read that, I thought, God has something He wants to give to me.

This is not Old Testament visions and dreams. This is New Testament theology. God has something He wants to give to me.

Well, let's read on. That God, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The spirit of wisdom and revelation.

I tell you, brothers, that sounds like a vision to me. That's what the book of Revelation is. It's just a vision that John got on Patmos.

And God wants to give me the spirit of wisdom and revelation. But He doesn't want to give us the revelation that a lot of people get, where God told me to do this, or God told me to do this, or God said I didn't need to do that. That's not the revelation He wants to give.

If you read on, it tells you exactly that He wants to give you the revelation in the knowledge of Him. God wants to reveal to you His Son. He wants to take the veil off of your eyes so that it will change your life.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened. I tell you, it just sounds like the veil came off in that little phrase. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.

I tell you, if we comprehended all that, we would have had a vision. To know the hope of His calling and the riches of the glory of the inheritance of His saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of His mighty power. I'm reading this because this is New Testament doctrine.

And I don't know what all this means, but when it says according to the working of His mighty power, it just sounds to me like His mighty power works. It works in prayer. It works in forgiveness.

It works in love. Your wife. It works in being in your place to your husband.

It works! The mighty power of God works! How bad do you want all of that? God has something He wants to give you. How bad do you want His Word to be the engrafted Word that brings power over temptation and victory into your life? There was a very poor man one time. I believe that it was in England, and he did not have a Bible.

And he wanted one bad. He prayed. He wept.

No Bible. Poor man. And he had a wagon load of produce that he was taking to market one day.

And it was all he had to make his living. But on the way to market, he met a man who had one page of the Word of God. And this man had a greater hunger for that page of the Word of God than he did for natural food, than he traded the whole wagon load for one page of the Word of God.

Can you imagine how that man would have read that page? Have you read them that way? Can you imagine how that man would have got his family together and read that page to his family? Have we got together as families and read this page that way? Just stop at the end of that page. I don't care if you're in the middle of a sentence or not. That's all you have is that page.

Get your family together and read it that way. Don't you think that man found salvation on that page? I don't know what page it was. But don't you think that's the way God would work it out when you want it that bad? I believe that.

You know, you and I might read that page and say, well, there's no salvation on this page. But I want to tell you something. There might be for that man.

Because God has mysteries. And God will reveal Himself to someone who seeks with all their heart. How bad do we want it? Let me challenge you with a question this evening.

This is just a simple little question. But it's very convicting to me as I meditated on it and as I got real honest before God. You know, brothers and sisters, conviction comes when we're honest.

It never comes when we're making an excuse or justifying ourselves. I've never seen it happen. Conviction comes when we are honest before God.

And I want to tell you, there is an area of our remnant fellowships where I think we really excel. We do so good that I've wondered at times if there's even any room for improvement. You know what it is? We know how to sound spiritual and say it good.

I marvel sometimes at the testimonies and the prayers that I hear and the confessions. And I love every one of them. But we can say the same thing as other people sometimes and we'll sound more spiritual than them because we know how to say it.

That's just something I've observed. And I'm not saying we are and I'm not saying we're not. I'm just saying we know how to say it good.

But I want to challenge us with the Scripture tonight that the Kingdom of God is not in words, but in power. And Paul said, I will know the power of them that speak. That's what Paul said.

He said, I'm going to find out what's behind those words. And that's all God's interested in. God doesn't look at the outward appearance, brothers and sisters, and that's what words are.

Did you know that? Words are outward appearance. God doesn't look at the words. He looks at the power behind them.

He looks at the heart. So here's the question. How great is your desire to experience the mighty power of God in your life? How great is your desire to be filled with all the fullness of God? How great is your desire to have the testimony of answered prayer, the divine intervention of God in some area in your life, so dramatic that when it's all said and done, all you can say, all anyone can say is praise God.

Only God could do that. You have the testimony of Jesus Christ in your life. How bad do you want that? How does that desire compare with other desires in your life? Is that a fair question? Where does that come in? Okay, yes, you'd like to experience it, but how bad do you want it? Did you know that there's a way to measure how bad you want something? It's irrefutable.

It's very, very accurate. There is nothing that you can say to argue. There is a way that you can measure how bad you want something.

How bad you want something is always measured by what you're willing to do to get it. It's that simple. You can talk all you want to.

You can sound as spiritual as you want to, but how bad you want it is only measured by what you're doing to get it. Like a tremendously overweight person talking about how they have such a great desire to be thin as they bite into a chocolate cupcake about a half an hour before lunchtime. You know, sometimes we need to come to grips with who we are really and what it is that we really want.

Brothers and sisters, that person wanted a chocolate chip cupcake more than they wanted to be thin. That is the truth. And we need to come to grips with how bad we want something.

There are people who talk about how they want to have a godly seed as they tune their radio to their favorite station. We need to come to grips and be honest how bad we really want something. There is a memory in my mind from years ago.

I don't clearly remember all of the details, but I would like to relate it to you this way. It was sometime soon after we were married. I was resting one Saturday afternoon on the sofa.

My young wife was there. I had a couple of young children there. And we had a little black minivan.

And it was very dirty. And I was resting on the sofa. And I was thinking, I sure wish the van was clean for church tomorrow.

I might have said it right out loud, I sure wish the van was clean. And right there, it's like another voice came back to me and it said, Dale, how bad do you wish the van was clean? And I'll just tell you, that became a very convicting little question to me as I laid there on the sofa, perfect health, beautiful day, lots of water, dirty van. I sure wish the van was clean.

Very convicting little question. How bad do you wish the van was clean? Because you see, I knew that if I wanted it bad enough, there was something that I could do to get it. And brothers and sisters, that is exactly where we are before God with His question tonight.

How great is your desire to experience the mighty power of God in your life. There is something that we can do to get it. The promises of God are real.

God didn't write them things in here in His book for His people and then disregard them. They are for us. And God means it when He says He wants us to be filled with all the fullness of God.

That's not a right statement. And it's completely available or it wouldn't be a commandment. I believe there's more available for the people of God than we are experiencing.

I tell you, brothers and sisters, there are prayers that we have not even prayed that God would love to answer. There are prayers we have quit praying because we didn't want it bad enough. There is higher ground and we may not be experiencing it, because spiritually speaking, we're laying on the sofa, half asleep at least, altogether too comfortable to rise up in the spirit of revelation and take hold of the promises of God by faith and do something about it.

There is something that we can do. I believe that. I believe the Word of God tonight when it says the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of those whose hearts are perfect before Him.

He's here tonight. I wonder if I could do it here and He'll pass on by until we become a barn of ass and just cry out, Lord, have mercy on me. There is something that we can do.

What can we do? I'll tell you, brothers and sisters, I don't think not knowing what we can do is the problem. I think how bad we want it is the problem. I'm being honest.

Let's be honest before God. We know that we can pray earnestly. We can pray fervently.

Have you read the promises of prayer lately? I challenge you to read them as though it were the first time you ever read them and the only page you had of the Word of God. Read the promises of prayer. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we could ask or think.

Do you believe that? Or is that for somebody else? God wants to bring this home to us tonight. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And I know that we know that Scripture, but sometimes we forget the power of heaven is backing it up.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And what does much mean? Well, it means that big changes are going to happen when you pray like that. It means something clicked in heaven.

I don't care if your prayer is on hold. You know, lots of times we think our prayers are on hold with God. He's not hearing.

But I say, fine! If God has you on hold, don't hang up. Keep praying! The effectual fervent prayer, the importunity of a prayer warrior gets results. And it's going to produce big changes here upon the earth.

That's what much means. It just doesn't mean no one will know the difference. It availeth much.

But folks, I'm going to tell you, that Scripture is not for everyone. Did you know that? It's the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. Don't overlook that little phrase.

There's something on our part that we need to do. That's where the promise is and the power lies is in righteousness. I would like to turn to John 14 and read a little verse here.

In reading verse 21 of chapter 14, it says, He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him. Well, what does manifest mean? It means make known. He'll reveal Himself to you.

Now, we know that our righteousness is our position in Christ. We never want to get away from that. It's Christ in you, the hope of glory.

But it is also our everyday walk of holiness. Those two go together. Don't try to separate those two.

Prayer after prayers are hindered because people try to separate those two. Look in this same chapter at verse 13 and 14. It says, And whatsoever you shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. Wonderful promise of prayer, but don't stop reading that. Let's read one more verse.

If you love Me, keep My commandments. And brothers and sisters, if answered prayer and keeping His commandments don't go together, what are they doing together in the Scripture? Let's just take it from the Scriptures tonight. I challenge you with that.

As you know, there are people today who will not keep the commandments of God unless they have a conviction for them. Unless they gain a little understanding. They're willing to do it, but they're not going to obey God until they get a conviction for that.

And I want to challenge us tonight. Where in the world did that ever come from? Since when do we have to understand everything about God before we obey Him? That's not faith. Full understanding, that's sight.

Faith is not sight. You know, Abraham, he didn't have a conviction to move out of the Ur of the Chaldees into a land that he'd never heard of. He just had a conviction that he was going to do whatever God said, whether it made sense or not.

And the blessing of God was just poured out upon his life. Let's obey God that way. That's the plea.

The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man. Availeth much. And that's when God will love you and will manifest Himself to you.

Isn't that what we want? There is something that we can do to get it. How bad do you want all the fullness of God? There's more that you can do. These are basic little steps, but you can fast and pray.

You know, I don't know if you ever thought about it, but you can pray pretty comfortable. You can pray on a soft carpet. You can pray on a full stomach.

You can pray in an air-conditioned room. But when you fast, you begin to make a sacrifice. And when you make a sacrifice, you begin to make an expression to God of how bad you want this thing.

And the longer you fast, the greater the sacrifice, the more clear expression you make to God. How bad do you want this thing? I don't know if you ever noticed this, but it's hard to fast when you're hungry. It's hard to fast when your focus is on food.

You know why? Because your body loves to eat. And when your desire for food is greater than the thing you're fasting for, you're not going to fast very long. I guarantee you.

That's why if you really don't want something very bad, you're not going to fast for it. Because you have a greater desire for food and the body loves to eat. But I want to tell you something this evening, when the burden gets great enough, when the desire gets intense before God enough, you can deal with the hunger.

So we need to be honest. If it's hard for us to fast, it's because we don't want it bad enough. How bad do you want the mighty power of God in your life? I want to think about Jesus for just a minute.

I was just thinking about Him on this point. The Bible says that He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for a reason. And it gives you the reason.

Do you know what it is? To be tempted. Amen. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted.

The Spirit of God led Him there. And when Jesus knew that temptation was coming, He wanted power over temptation. He wanted it bad.

He didn't want to fall down here. He knew temptation was coming. And He fasted for 40 days and nights.

What an expression to God that He wanted power over temptation. How much are we like Christ in this area? Jesus wanted victory over temptation way more than He wanted food. And when the thing that you want is 40 days and 40 nights of prayer bigger than your desire for food, you can fast.

And Jesus was no less hungry than we would be if we fasted for 40 days. You know, sometimes I've heard it said He could do that because He was God. He was no less hungry than you or I would be if we fasted for 40 days.

It has nothing to do with being less hungry than made Him fast. It has everything to do with how bad He wanted victory over sin. There are other things that we can do if you want it bad enough.

You can intercede for others. You can come before God, leaving yourself out of it, and intercede on behalf of someone else. You read the Scriptures, that really gets God's attention.

When someone does that, it gets God's attention. And I want you to notice something. When Jesus did that, God poured out His Spirit upon Jesus even more than on the ones He was interceding for.

Isn't that amazing? That's encouraging to me. You just can't bring the grace of God into someone else's life without bringing it right into your own. You just can't row someone across the river without going there yourself.

That's something that we can do. There are so many things that you can do. You can forgive each other completely.

Set them free. And set yourself free. Did you know that there's a spiritual fog that sets into your life when you don't forgive? It just settles in.

Heaven just brasses over. And you know, you'll never be able to see through all of that to get a clear vision of Jesus Christ that we need so badly. But when you forgive completely, it just opens the door for God to reveal Himself to you.

Heaven opens up. The fog lifts. The Son of God comes out and reveals Himself unto you.

So many prayers are hindered because of this thing. You read Mark 11, verse 22, and it just tells you there when you stand praying, forgive. Or your Father in Heaven won't forgive you.

What a hindrance to prayer! We can suffer wrongfully. What a clear expression to God that we want to get a clear vision of Him when we suffer wrongfully. And do you see what's happening here, brothers and sisters? The more of these things we mention, the more and more like Jesus we begin to be.

We're just getting more and more like Jesus all the time. When you pray and fast and keep the commandments and intercede and forgive and suffer wrongfully, you're just getting more and more like Jesus all the time. And that's what we want, isn't it? By looking to Jesus like Him, thou shalt be thy friends in thy conduct.

His likeness shall see. How bad did Jacob want a blessing from the angel? He wrestled with that angel all night long and he would not go. Finally, the angel tried to get away and said, let me go for the day breaking.

And Jacob said, I will not let you go until you bless me. Brothers and sisters, have you wrestled with God that way? Are we afraid to wrestle with God that way? You know, when Jacob wrestled that way, there was an amazing thing that the angel said to Jacob. I don't know if you've ever meditated on this, but the angel said to Jacob, as a prince, thou hast power with God and man and you have prevailed.

Wow! Have you wrestled with God that way? You know, that's a benediction in one of the epistles encouraging us to wrestle with God. I know we say our prayers sometimes and then our prayers are done, but where's our pleading before the throne of God? Like Jacob that won't let go. I'll just say it that way.

Prayers even for our own sanctified desires. You know, it's not wrong for us to pray for desires that God has placed within our hearts. Casting our care upon Him for He cares for us.

I encourage people to do that. Hannah did it. Hannah wanted a baby.

She wanted a baby bad. You know what the Bible says? She wanted it so bad she was in bitterness of soul. And I want to tell you something about bitterness of soul.

It doesn't just go away. It goes before the throne of God and it just sits there. And it just stays there and pleads and moans and groans and begs before the God of Heaven.

That's what bitterness of soul does. And the priest thought she was drunk. Have you ever gone before God that way and just stayed at the throne? And God heard her cry.

You know what David said about Hannah in Psalm 113? He said she was a joyful mother of children. Her prayer got through. She got a testimony.

And I imagine she used it too. What a blessing! How bad did the Syrophenician woman want healing for her daughter? Bad, right? Very bad! I mean, she was willing to suffer shame and be put down and be completely humiliated to get it. And do you know what? It was all for somebody else.

That's amazing! She literally became a dog for someone else pleading for a crumb from the rich man's food. And you know what? She got it. And what a crumb she got! I mean, I want one too! Praise God! But we also know that sometimes the answer is no.

Leave room for that. Moses wanted to enter the promised land. Bad.

And God said, speak to Me no more of this matter. Paul wanted his thorn in the flesh removed. Bad.

And God said, My grace is sufficient for you. Jesus said, If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but thine, be done.

We never want to get away from that. But many times, brothers and sisters, we think it's a no answer and we quit praying just simply because we don't want it bad enough. There is a pattern in the Scriptures to wrestle with God.

How bad did Ruth want to be with Naomi? Orpho went back, but not Ruth. I mean, Ruth was willing to change churches. Amen? I mean, she was willing to change gods from her heathen god.

And you know what? That heathen, Moabite, Gentile, outcast woman became the seed of Abraham. Because one day, she claimed to Naomi's God, Thy God shall be My God. And she would not let go.

I want to be careful when I say we're willing to change gods. Do you know what I mean? There's a lot of gods here in America. Just leave all them other kind behind and come to the real living God of heaven.

How many women in Israel would have loved to have had that honored place? This heathen, Moabite, Gentile woman? Why did she get in there? All those Israelite women would have loved to have had it. But I'm just going to tell you tonight, they didn't want it as bad as she did. And God honors it.

I guess how bad you want it has everything to do with it. Where is our diligence level this evening? I'm trying to stir us up tonight to a deeper commitment, a deeper, more diligent seeking of God. I'd like to close with John 20.

I would like to turn there and just look at a couple things and we'll close. This chapter is about the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But it's also about Mary Magdalene and how bad she wanted God.

That woman has always intrigued me. She was a wretched woman, brothers and sisters. She was full of seven devils.

I mean, what a mess she must have been. Her hair must have been astray. She must have looked like a witch.

What a mess that woman was. But Jesus Christ came into her life and She opened the door to her heart and He cleansed her and made her new. She was a changed woman.

And the Bible says that after Jesus was resurrected, He appeared first unto Mary. With the list of all of His disciples and all the options that Jesus had, He appeared first to Mary. I don't know how you are, but that says something to me.

That sounds like a very special honor to Mary. Why did Jesus appear to Mary before His disciples and everyone else? Could it be because Mary wanted Him more than all the rest? Let's think about that. Peter and John ran to the tomb.

They ran to the tomb and they found the tomb was empty. They looked it over. They went inside.

He wasn't there. He was gone. And so, what did they do? Let's read about it in John 20, verse 10.

Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. That's what they did. Well, He's not here.

I've checked it out. I've said my prayers. If God says no, I'm going home.

I'm being a little bit hard here on these men, but I'm making a point. And the point that I'm making is that there was no way Mary was going. There was no way.

Let's read on. But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping. And as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulcher and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

Now she's seeing angels. You know, the disciples could have stayed. It was their decision.

They didn't have to go home. Mary stayed. And now she's seeing angels because she would not leave.

Verse 13, And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they have laid Him, and I want Him. You know, Mary didn't have this attitude of He's been dead for three days now. By now He stinketh.

She wanted her Lord no matter what. And I was looking at that and I was just thinking there's a lot of people today who want God if He will bless them. They want God if He's beautiful.

They want God if He'll make them rich. They want God if He'll answer their prayers. But Mary wasn't that way.

She wanted Him no matter what. Mary couldn't stand it. Mary was confused and weeping.

Jesus saith unto her, verse 14, And when she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, O woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if you have borne Him hence, tell Me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. She wanted her Lord.

And Jesus said to her, Mary. I just want to challenge each of us. Put your own name in there.

He's here tonight. Put your own name in there. Why did Jesus appear first to Mary? Did it have to be a woman? I tell you tonight, it had nothing to do with being a woman.

It had everything to do with how bad you want Him. And it doesn't matter if you're the pastor or one of the chosen twelve or a drunk in the gutter. God sees the heart and the desire stirring in your heart of how bad

you want Him.

And that's who He will manifest Himself to. God is no respecter of persons. What He's done for others, He'll do for you.

And what we've read there, you've just seen about half of Mary's diligence. You want to see the other half? Look at verse 1. After these things, the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early when it was yet dark unto the sepulcher, and seeth a stone taken away from the sepulcher. She came while it was still dark, while the others were still sleeping.

She was there early. She couldn't sleep. She was weeping.

I'm sure she was praying. I'm sure she was confused. But she came while it was still dark.

She was there before anyone got there. And she was there after everyone went home. Maybe Jesus appeared first to Mary because she was the first one at the tomb.

Maybe Jesus appeared first to Mary because she was the last one to leave. I just want to challenge you tonight. Is that the way you are at the throne of God? I think one of the most convicting things that could happen to me is to stand before God and He would show me and give me clearly a vision of what He would have done, what He wanted to do with my life if I only would have shown more diligence before Him.

If He would give me a vision of what He would have done with me, that would be one of the most convicting visions that I could see. Just to show me in a vision that, Dale, this is what I would have done in your family if you would have just come to the throne while it was still dark. These are the souls that I would have saved in your church if you would have just forgiven your brother completely.

These are the prayers that I would have answered if you would have obeyed my commandments even when you didn't understand. This is the vision that I would have given you if you would have stayed after all the others went home. What would a vision like that do? I know that it would bring conviction to every heart.

But it's not too late for us tonight to open up our hearts to give God that liberty. I believe God is here tonight. What do you think it means when He says, I am there in the midst of them? He's here tonight.

Oh, that God would take the veil off of our eyes. Nothing would change. But we would change because we saw the reality of how it is.

May God give us the spirit of revelation to show us what He will do for us when we want Him so bad that we will do whatever it takes in prayer, that we will do whatever it takes in fasting, that we will do whatever it takes in intercession and forgiveness and set our brother free completely, that we'd be willing to do whatever it takes to suffer wrongfully in obedience to His Word because we want the reality of the mighty power of God in our life. May God draw us unto Himself tonight is our prayer. Turn it over to you, brother.

Paul said, all those things that were gained in me before I knew Christ, I count it as dumb, as rubbish, as nothing, that I might win Christ and be found in Christ, in Him. How bad did he want it? Oh, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. My heart is challenged, convicted.

I wonder tonight, how bad, how bad do we want Him? Not an it, not a religion or a system, but Him, to know Him. It's my heart's desire and longing, but yet I have to face reality. Am I willing to be the first one there and the last one to leave? Maybe tonight you need to do business with God.

Maybe you want to just open your heart, admit and agree with God where you're at. We want to give that opportunity tonight to just open up the altar, to respond to the Lord, to come by faith and lay hold on God and not let Him go till He blesses, till He meets our need. Can we have a song of invitation, Brother Jeff? 371 Lord, have Thine own way I am Thine mold me and make after Thine whiter Welcome.

We'll come. We'll come, yes. God is saying, will you come? And we say, yes, I will come.

God says, He that cometh to me, I will no wise cast out. Is there someone else who needs to come? You know God is speaking to you. He's knocking on your door.

We'll sing one more verse. You respond to the Lord. Go ahead, Brother Jeff.

When, Lord, have Thine own way Amen. Those of you that have responded here at the altar, we would invite you to go downstairs. Some counselors will meet you there.

Open up your heart, confess, confess together, one with another, confess faults and sins and pray one for another. You may be healed. So we would encourage that.

I'm not saying you have to, but it would be a blessing to have you go downstairs. So if you can rise to your feet, all those of you that have responded and make your way downstairs to the prayer room and the couch room down there, perhaps for the sisters. God bless each one of you.

Counselors could make their way downstairs just to be available as needed. Just want to take a moment to open the meeting here also. If someone would have something to share before we close the meeting, something they would like to share publicly here, raise your hand and we'll get a microphone to you if there is anyone that feels led to share.

And if not, that's okay too. We'll just leave that before the Lord as God leads. We thank the Lord tonight for his word to us and thank you, Brother Dale, for faithfully preaching the word to us.

We're holding you up in prayer and we look forward to what God will do. Thank you, brother. God bless you.

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