

Seasons of Refreshing

by Fred Tomlinson

The greatest need in the Christian community today is for a fresh experience of the transcendent life-transforming Holy Spirit of God.

Duration: 55:08

Scripture: Genesis 1:2, Joel 2:28, Matthew 27:46, Acts 2:15-16

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor describes a powerful experience he had while listening to a preacher. He was moved by the passion and fervor in the preacher's voice, especially when he prayed for God to do something great again. The pastor also shares a story about an emperor's tomb being opened and how everything inside turned to dust when exposed to the outside air. He relates this to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, emphasizing that God wants to do something extraordinary in the lives of His people. The pastor concludes by stating that Pentecost was not a new plan of God, but rather a new phase in His plan, highlighting the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

To you, a very precious passage of scripture that you all know, or many of you know by heart, I should think. Acts chapter two. It's wonderful, isn't it, how these great events recorded around this area, and not least in this chapter.

Events that are pivotal, pivotal events in the plan and purposes of God. It's interesting and very significant how, for example, the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus took place right on the day of the Passover feast. Fulfilling the types and shadows that are made very much clear to us when we read in the story in the New Testament.

And certainly the same is true here. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come. Of course, there was very special significance to that day in the Old Testament.

But this was going to be the Pentecost of all Pentecosts. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind.

And it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. Now, when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled saying one to another, behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how here we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born, Parthians and Medes and Elamites and dwellers of Mesopotamia.

And in Judea and Cappadocia, in Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, in Egypt and in parts of Libya about Cyrene. And strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed and were in doubt saying one to another, what meaneth this? Others mocking said, these men are full of new wine.

But Peter standing up with the 11 lifted up his voice and said unto them, ye men of Judea and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you and hearken to my words. For these are not drunken as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

And I'll break away from the reading at that point. Amen. I was listening with great interest and with my own heart saying, amen, amen, amen.

As David Beltrami prayed earlier. You may remember what he was praying for. Maybe you found an amen in your heart.

I believe with everything that's in me that the greatest need that exists within the context of what we call the Christian community is for a fresh experience of that transcendent life transforming Holy Spirit of God. Here lies the greatest need. I say the Christian community, but the Christian community is comprised of men and women, men and women such as you and me this morning.

There's absolutely nothing that can take the place of the presence and ministry and power of the Holy Spirit. When he is given the opportunity, he will accomplish what we cannot accomplish, either in our own hearts, in our own lives, or in course of ministry. I know this, that impressive steeple houses, of course, we don't use that expression here.

That's a George Fox-ism from the time of the Quakers. Impressive steeple houses, we have our versions of them here. They create burdens and often diversions they can't produce what the Holy Spirit can produce.

Worship, worship as we call it, but really in so many cases it's morphed into a kind of entertainment and is no longer worthy of the word worship. And preaching, preaching can be completely biblical and orthodox. It can be powerfully presented, but apart from that untamable Holy Spirit, it amounts to nothing.

And that's a hard, a hard lesson for us to learn, especially if we're preachers, but for whosoever really. The Holy Spirit has that ability to penetrate into the very depths of the human soul. The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, we read, able to divide even between soul and spirit.

That's something we can't do, He can. That's how deeply He goes into our hearts with that penetrating, convicting, life imparting, ministry that's uniquely His. There's a verse of a hymn that came to my mind last

night.

I actually texted it to Pete. Pete and Sharon are not supposed to be here. Well, he said they are supposed to be here, but they've been hundreds of miles away and I didn't think they were gonna be back this morning.

But these are the words. It's like a prayer, but it's part of a hymn. Breathe on us, mighty breath.

Unleaf and naked clod. Breathe all the church's creeping death, the pulsing life of God. Can I read it again? Breathe on us, mighty breath.

Unleaf and naked clod. Breathe all the church's creeping death, the pulsing life of God. There are a couple of us in the room this morning that were raised in the context of the Plymouth Brethren, or Christian Brethren as they preferred to be known as time went on.

Many years ago, an open letter was produced by the leaders of the Christian Brethren. And it was published in a magazine that once upon a time was published by that group called The Harvester. It read like this, bear with me.

It is doubtful whether in the history of the world there has previously been a period of difficulty so complex in character and so widespread in its effect as that through which we are presently passing. A feeling of uncertainty and instability prevails in every circle. And the future seems to hold no sure promise of either peace or prosperity.

It was never more true that, and here's a quotation from Jesus' words, never more true that, quote, upon the earth there is distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. In the midst of change and unreliability, spiritual values alone remain immutable. And there never was a greater need for the reminder of their reality, security, and stability.

Yet the church, which should be proclaiming the glorious news, seems totally inadequate to meet the need. Generally speaking, the lives of Christians do not differ to any great extent from the lives of other folk around them. They share the same fears, express the same doubts, feel the same uncertainty, show the same disconcertion.

The peace of God and the joy of Christ are little in evidence. The dynamic power of the Holy Spirit is not appropriated. Unparalleled opportunities present themselves, but there seems a moral and spiritual inadequacy to respond to their challenge.

If there is to be a revival of spiritual life and power, it must originate with the individual believer. And there is a great need for a personal searching of heart and exercise of soul in this matter. The sin which is spoiling the life of the Christian must be judged and put away.

The selfishness which is robbing Christ of the love and devotion which are his due must be confessed and removed. The ambitions and desires which are hindering the work of God must be uprooted and thrown on the refuse heap. A renewal of blessing is dependent upon the restoration of communion and reconsecration of heart and life.

And if you're asking me, I think that's very profound and very fitting for this moment in time. That was written probably no less than 30 years ago. And yet it's so relevant today.

I'm sure you'll agree. It's interesting, we're speaking about a fresh move of the Spirit of God. There are different sort of names and titles that may be given to that particular act.

It's interesting with the word revival that is quite close to our hearts. It's true as with really any word. When we're looking for its definition, it's important to note how it is currently being used if we're to properly understand what someone is intending to communicate.

The fact is that we may have today the same word that was used 50, 60 or 100 years ago, but it may have a completely different meaning today to one degree or another. I think this is true with the word revival. In many cases, not universally, thank God, but revival was a word which was certainly known and used around the beginning of the last century.

And many of you are well aware of some of the events that took place around that time on different continents where beyond any question, God was moving. If I'm not mistaken, in many quarters today, the same word is used, but it's used to apply to experiences which are really quite different from those that were known and understood and experienced those many years ago. I've told some of you of, in the early days of any speaking that I was going to be doing, a friend of mine, he must have been a friend to have invited me to do this, a dear Welshman living in Aberystwyth, he took me to a church further south in the country of Wales, to a little church, and I was there to preach.

And that was a never-to-be-forgotten experience for a variety of reasons, not least because most of the service was in a language with which I was completely unfamiliar and used many more letters in the words than they did in my language. I remember sitting near to the front somewhere, facing the front, awaiting my time to stand up and speak, and there's a period of open prayer, and I remember someone, I didn't know who it was at this point, I did turn round to look at one point, but somewhere near to the back of the church, a man was praying, and he was praying in Welsh language, and I needed to turn round and see him because there was such fervor in his voice as he was praying. It almost, you know, gave me goosebumps.

You know, it was one, it was different to anything I'd ever been familiar with. The passion that I sense in his voice, and then, to my great pleasure, he broke into English, and he was praying that God would do it again. They were his words used over and over again, do it again, Lord, do it again, do it again.

It was after the service, when I was leaving the position at the front, the pastor had come to me, and as we were walking up the aisle, I remember, he just paused and pointed down to the pews, excuse me, those who've heard this a dozen times, and he pointed to indentations in the wooden benches, and he said, what do you think, what do you think caused these indentations here? I said, I really don't have any idea at all. And he said, well, when the revival was taking place here, he said, many of the men who were miners, they'd come from the mines straight from their work, and they'd come here into the church, and he said, they'd climb up onto these benches, and they'd dance before the Lord on the benches. And I could tell you some more, even about the old man.

Tragically, eventually he was run over, I believe it was by a bicycle, but he was killed. But not before we were able to bring him up to our fellowship in Liverpool, and he was overjoyed to see how God was moving in so many of the people, which were principally the young people in those days, even I was one

of those. In the book of Acts, there's a verse here in chapter three.

If I just, it's necessary to break into the flow of what is being said here, but Peter is saying in verse 14, but you denied the Holy One and just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and kill the Prince of Life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses. And his name, through faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you now see and know. He says, the faith which is by him has given this man perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

And it reads on until I read verse 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. The word revival doesn't appear in the New Testament, although we find several references to it in the Old Testament.

But I'd like to suggest that here is the word, seasons of refreshing, which certainly seems to be teaching more or less the same thing. Perhaps the word revival is more helpful to us in one sense because of the unique and particular implication of the statement. Because it comes from the idea of reviving.

True revival is something which may take place among people who have already been quickened, who've already been brought to life. In other words, strictly speaking, revival is not something which affects people who are dead in trespasses and in sins. Revival, first and foremost, primarily, is a work of the Spirit of God that takes place in the lives of people who have already known and tasted something of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus.

But somehow there's a deadness, there's a bondage, there's a lethargy, there's a distancing that has taken place between them and God. And the freshness and reality of communion has dissipated and gone. And thank God for seasons of refreshing when the Spirit of God comes again, stirring up the hearts.

I need to just add one note, and this is borne out by many who have spoken of revival, that is, the kind of revival of yesteryear. And they, while admitting wholeheartedly that primarily this is a work of God that takes place within the body of believers, inevitably, when this takes place, it spills out and overflows. And that benefit presses itself against the lives of the unconverted, and so many are brought in to the experience of God.

And of course, as we read the various stories, we can see that that is exactly what has been happening. Hearts have been refreshed by the Spirit of God. They've been revived.

They've been reanimated somehow with the life of God. And with that, a new joy, a new sense of blessing, a new dynamic, something's restored in the heart, and inevitably, as the result, there is an impact upon the people around them, and indeed, upon their witness, and thus, then, the fruitfulness of their lives in reaching other people. Glory to God.

You know, the question that seems to come to my mind so often is, well, this is today. You know, we read these stories. I've read so many of the stories of revivals.

A number of you have as well, and we've been encouraged and inspired by them. We recognize at the same time that these are moves of God. This is a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

So he is the author, he is the instigator, if you will, of these moves. And, you know, it's very natural for us to look around the world at this point. We listen or watch the news in these days, and we see things that are happening, and the question may come, well, how in the world is God ever going to be able to do

something like that again? Some of my reading earlier this week was around the verses which first I found in James, and then I searched them in some other scriptures, speaking about early and latter rain, you remember.

And I'm familiar that there was a movement that took place, when was that, in the 40s or 50s, 1950s and so on, called the latter rain movement. And I can't agree with all that I read there and so forth. And so I'm not necessarily encouraging that, but the text and scripture is right.

I think they went across the line and went too far in some of their claims, and that's a brief statement concerning it. But the idea of the early rain, and I can identify with this, that the early rain, I think I've just read to you about the early rain in Acts chapter two, the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit of God, and just as it was known in a very particular way in the Middle East and certainly in Judea, how important the early rains were when the seeds had been planted, and then how critically important the latter rain was, just immediately prior to the harvest. And I'm not a farmer, but I know that much to be true.

And there are those of us who perhaps believe, although we see not the kind of evidence of it that we'd like to see in this Western part of the world, that before the final harvest, there'll be a latter rain, a latter outpouring, a move of the Spirit of God that's just more widespread yet than what we read in Acts two, perhaps. But in that period, in between those two outpourings, the early and the latter rain, it would rain in between. It wasn't always bone dry.

And perhaps that's where the Hemeryser got the idea about showers of blessing, seasons of refreshing. So I want to suggest to you that the real, that it is in God's heart to move in the broadest possible way and impact an enormous amount of people before he returns. How he'll do that, I do not know.

But I think we can find it within our hearts to believe that God might just do that in between. That's today for you and me. We are a people who, I submit again, are in great need of a move of the Spirit of God to refresh our own hearts and reanimate our lives and bring us back to first love and fill our hearts with the joy of the Lord and to know fruitfulness in our lives that is more than we've ever known instead of this sort of meager scratching of the ground to try and make something happen somewhere.

But isn't there something in our hearts that somehow, something deep within our hearts senses that God is wanting to do something greater in our own lives and through our lives and through the ministry even of this little church? And I believe that that's the heart of God. It may not be the great and final latter rain harvest. The latter rain people believe that what was happening with them was it.

And I think that's a presumptuous position to make. I can't make that. I don't know how long the Lord is going to wait before the final harvest.

But I do know this, that at this point in time, God is wanting to do something great and wonderful in the lives of his people and through the lives of his people. And I say with Charles Wesley, and oh my God, might I be one. I was remembering seeing a National Geographic a long time ago now.

Don't know how long ago. It was, Andrew probably can put a date to it. He knows all these things, I don't.

It was to do with the Ming tombs in China. And there's a whole story I won't go into except to say this, that we do know that back in those days, I think probably the 1300s, 1400s, in that area somewhere under the Ming dynasty. And the early emperors, when they were buried in the tombs in this incredible mausoleum, they would be buried with their wives, a wife and the women that were part of their lives at that point in

time, their servants.

The sort of temple staff, their pets, their horses. They were all buried together. That is, they all, the emperor had died.

He's being carried in. The others walked in. And then they, on the inside, sealed the entrance.

The oxygen was used up eventually, and they all died. Make you think twice about choosing for some employment in that department. But the article that I was reading went, and I found it, not in the National Geographic, but let me read this to you.

And I hope you'll allow me to apply it in a convoluted kind of way. When an emperor was buried in a mausoleum, living slaves sealed his remains, along with his horses, pet animals, household staff, and personal possessions from the inside. When the palace of death was opened, there was a violent rush of air, a wind howling for a long moment as the air was sucked into the tomb.

In that brief second that light illuminated the room, people and animals lay where they fell. The expressions on their faces were still distinct. But when the air of the outside world touched them, they broke into dust, as did the clothes they wore.

The skins of the animals also collapsed. In a moment, it was all over. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

And suddenly, there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing, mighty wind. And it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire.

And it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began. Amen.

I'm just simply turning the story that I've read to you around the other way. What if, just think of this. What if the Holy Spirit of God was to be able to rush into the heart of your life and mine as he rushed into the lives of these on that occasion? Or illustrated in that roundabout way in the story I've read to you.

In the story, everything turned to dust and collapsed. In this story, everything came to life. Glory to God, total opposite happened.

Sound of a rushing, mighty wind. It was indeed the air of the outside world but not this world, of another world altogether. The world of the kingdom of our God came rushing into the hearts and lives of men and women.

And they were animated with the very life of God. They were filled with the Holy Spirit of God. They didn't merely become adherents to a particular church congregation.

They weren't just nice people. They might've been nice people before. I'm sure many of them were.

That wasn't the issue. It's far more than that. Somewhere God needs to expand the horizons of our minds and our hearts to begin to conceive that this is God.

Glory. God, the Holy Spirit wanting to invade our beings. He that is joined to the Lord, says the apostle, is one spirit.

The wonder and miracle of His incarnation. That is God being manifest in the flesh. The wonder, the unspeakable wonder and miracle of God being incarnated in our flesh.

It's beyond my ability to grasp in terms of my mind understanding it. And my ability to explain or describe it is beggared. And I'm lost with words.

Such is the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is not, you will agree, this is not average Christian experience. But let me tell you, this is normal Christian experience according to God.

And God is wanting to do something in our lives. It's not a question of just sort of propping us up with all our weaknesses and problems and sort of stroking us because when we feel disappointed or downcast or whatever. And sort of helping us to make it through.

This is God. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Amen.

That's what happened at Pentecost. Pentecost was not a new plan of God. Let's get that clear.

It wasn't a new plan. It was simply a new phase in God's plan. God's only got one plan.

He's only ever had one plan. He's only got one people and they're men and women of faith. Faith in Jesus Christ, whether they look forward to it or whether they're looking back to it, it's got nothing to do with whether we can, anyone can say, well, Abraham was our father.

Jesus said, listen, God could raise up such from the very stones. And as a matter of fact, to the people he was talking about, he said, you are totally mistaken. These were good Jewish people.

He said, you're totally mistaken. You're of your father, the devil. God's got one people.

They're a remnant of people. They're the people who surrendered their entire lives to God. They're the people of faith.

They're the people who are committed and yielded to him. Amen. So this that we're reading here is just, it's another chapter in the unfolding story of redemption that I find through the entire book we call the Bible.

But here was certainly as a very, a very exciting juncture in the story. Whereas the Holy Spirit has ever been from eternity. He came on the scene.

We knew nothing about it. The scriptures speak of him brooding on the face of the deep. Remember this back in the Old Testament.

He was there. He was there. We find him in different places as we finger through and thumb through the pages of the Old Testament.

We find evidences of him. We hear references to him. He comes into the lives of certain people to enable them to do particular things.

He's there for a particular time, for a particular purpose. But never, never, never, ever in the history of mankind has the Holy Spirit of God come to inhabit the hearts of men and women and bring with him at that point and at this point, all of the beneficiary blessings of Calvary. To reside within a heart.

On this occasion, Jesus said, when he comes, he will testify of me. He'll make the things of mine known to you. He comes to reveal the redemptive power of Calvary and impact it into the lives of believing men and women.

He comes to reside in the hearts of those people so that the apostle could say with such clarity and boldness, Christ liveth in me. Pentecost, we sing in a couple of the songs. They're not Wesley songs.

Give us another Pentecost. Maybe, maybe it would be to our advantage to drop the us and replace it with me. It's more helpful that way.

It's too easy to say, you know, we need you. We do need you. And this is not a taboo on ever praying in this way.

We need him, certainly. We need him. But let's make sure we don't evade the real issue.

And that is, you need him. You, you, you need him. I need him.

He's our greatest need this morning. He's the one that can reanimate. The fact of the matter is that Pentecost, as we look at it here, and it remains the same today, but it was transformational, completely transformational.

We could think about that in a number of ways, which I'm not going to explore very far. But I'm reminded of that word in Genesis. Let me just read it to you.

Then the Lord God formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul, a living creature. Or a totally different statement from a totally different time. With an Old Testament significance that's not found here in Pentecost, but listen to the statement because the statement is relevant to us.

It's concerning Saul. Remember Saul? First Samuel 10, verse six reads, then the spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man. I note it doesn't say, and you shall become a new man.

I do find that teaching in the New Testament. But the fact is, under the Old Testament, the Old Covenant, at that time, here's a man, the spirit of God was going to come upon him as he would function as a king in Israel. And this statement is made and it's apropos for us.

The spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily and say, yeah, amen, that's what we're seeing here. That's what we're reading about. That's what we're talking about.

And you will be changed into another. Isn't that wonderful? Just think, I don't know quite how to say this. I don't wish, I'm so tempted to use names.

Some of you right here this morning, that would be terrible because you wouldn't speak to me ever again. But what if, you just take this very personally with it, you, okay, I'm speaking to you. Can you just imagine what it would be like if the spirit of God so filled your heart that you just jumped out of your seat? I'm making this up as I go here, of course.

And you just put your arms up and just praised God. You weren't praying for your Uncle Joe and your Auntie Nellie and so forth and there's nothing wrong with praying for them. But what about this? Anyone

can pray for them.

This is worship coming out of your heart. Jesus, I love you. I'm talking about you who never opens your mouth in the meeting.

And some of you do and need to say something like this instead, Jesus, I love you. I love you. You've become a lover of Jesus.

We've been thinking about the gifts of the spirit in the evening. What would happen if suddenly something broke loose in you and totally out of character? You were no longer sitting where you regularly sit. I remember days when Mr. North was at the front.

Sorry, some of you have heard this before. And I've heard him say, you young men sitting here. He said, in the meeting this evening, move further back.

He said, give someone else a chance. Those young men were there because they came so early for the meeting. They wanted to be at the front.

They wanted to be where the action was as they might have thought and so on. Eager. Imagine that.

Those of us who are sort of stuck in a rut and it's not a nice place, be honest. It's not fruitful. There's not real joy.

There's a lot of disappointment. There's frustration. What if God were able to come and invade your heart as that air from the outside world invaded that tomb? That brought collapse and ruin.

But what if the Holy Spirit was a rush into your heart? Are you ready for that? Transformational. The other thing, of course, and perhaps I've touched on it already, but when I read the story of the Acts of the Apostles and this Pentecostal moment, these people immediately became incredibly fruitful. Now, we'll make a terrible mistake if we gauge spiritual development and fruitfulness on the basis of numbers.

And this is, of course, a terrible temptation for people who are responsible for large congregations. And there's a lot of competitiveness in terms of, you know, when pastors get together, it's the two questions they want to ask. I'm trying to think what both of them are.

But one is how many people in your church, you know, and how large is your building? You might ask them in slightly cloaked ways, but they're the two questions and you will be labeled from there on. You're a success or you're one of the others and so on. But that's entirely wrong.

We've just heard about a man who spent 10 years, and we'll hear more from him, evidently, 10 years without seeing that fruit. So let's be careful when we measure fruitfulness because dare we believe that God knows the timing in all these things. And it's not numbers.

Are we interested in numbers being saved? Yes, absolutely we are. But we don't get brownie points. We don't get credit.

It's not going to be checked off when we reach the gates of heaven. I know it won't be like that, but you know what I mean? That's not where it's at. But I know what it is to be in a position and a relation with the Lord where I sense fruitfulness that I'm not measuring by how many are in the church or how many.

It's not that, you just know it, that your life is where it should be and God is using you. And that's exactly what happened. God used these people in incredibly, incredibly remarkable ways.

You know the story, don't you, as the next pages unfold here. In the scriptures, someone once said this, wherever Christians are revived, there will always be the conversion of men. It has a twofold meaning, implying the revival of spiritual life and vigor among Christians and the conversion of sinners.

Amen. Pentecost was transformational. It was fruitful.

But there's another word, I think, to put here, and that is the men were available. We could support this by reading Acts chapter one. But the men there, they were available.

In this second chapter, I read this, they were all, that wasn't just the group who were in the upper room, but they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. All those whose hearts were open. And you remember how the apostle Peter preaching to everyone.

He said this, for the promise, the promise of what you've seen happening here. He said, this is that which Joel was prophesying about. This is what's happening here.

And he said, let me tell you that the promise of this is for you, he says to the multitude that were gathered around, and to your children, and to those who are far off. I'm in that category, because that was far off in my past. I would be far off in their future.

But the promise, in other words, there's the universality of the promise, the provision, whosoever. I prayed earlier, and I thank God for ever finding myself in a position where I was exposed to what I believe is the truth of God. The possibility, the opportunity, the availability of all that God is talking about here.

What he's done for others. He wants to do for each one of us. He wants to bring us out of that safe place, and so on.

It's amazing, you know, we can so easily, those of us who've been around for a while. I did this a good many years ago. Perhaps some of you are still doing it, I don't know.

I'm thinking of the times with my young brother, when he was attempting to convince me that I needed what he was claiming to have experienced. And it's this sort of, what do we call it, fancy footwork that we do. It's sort of fancy theological footwork.

You know, well, we kind of believe this, but, and we find ways to somehow justify our own lack of response to God, and lack of faith to believe him as well. And that's a terrible thing, because as surely as we adopt that posture, we'll get nowhere with God, we'll get no further. Than we are at the present time, probably we'll lose ground if the truth's known.

You know, Paul asked this question, the men he found in Ephesus, have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? And there's a variation on the rendering of those words that we're not interested in just now. But here's the, have you, like, let's take it. Have you received the Holy Spirit of God into your life and found his presence to be transformational, and to change you into a fruitful Christian man, a woman of God, with peace and joy and the love of God? You know, forgive me, I'm digressing for just a moment.

Our friend Dale is still in the hospital in New Westminster, and he's longing to be moved back here to Abbotsford, and there's no beds been available. So that's where Dale's up to. Dale's had five bypasses

done, and so on.

And we all know, those of us who know Dale know Dale, okay? But this was Dale, a different Dale, and you can put it down to anesthetic, you can put it down to all kinds of things, but nevermind. Listen to this. I was there the other day, he's lying there, he's weak, his voice is weak, and he's saying, this is it, he said, Fred, he said, I love everybody, I love everybody, he's saying tears running down his face.

And then the night, he said, I'm going through all the names, your names, he said, I'm going through the names of the people, and so on, and so on. And I prayed with him before I left, and I said, Lord Jesus, please don't let Dale lose what he's gained while he's been here at this point in time. The love of God should grow in our hearts.

Our dog makes such a fuss when we've been out and come back again, and so on. And our dog is not filled with the Holy Spirit of God, but our dog can put a lot of Christian people to shame. There's just such enthusiasm, and love.

My dog, yesterday, I mean, just for an example, he'd write me off completely. Sheila was walking away from our house down the road, I drive in here in my car, I mean, I'm as far away as the end of the drive to here. The dog hears the car, looks around.

It's just a white car, how many white cars are there? And the dog is fascinated, it knows that's our car, whether it's the sound of it or what, I don't know, it doesn't rattle, but Sheila took the leash off the dog, and the dog ran all the way to me, and I got my greeting. And then I said, I won't tell you what I said, because Sheila will shout at me, but I suggested the dog would return to the precious lady he'd just left. And the dog goes running away back there.

This is a dog, I love dogs. But we're talking about the Holy Spirit of God, for the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us. What manner of people ought we to be? Two things, and I'm finished.

Just to highlight and illustrate the way I'm thinking here, it seems to me that ultimately, the initiative is with God always. He's always the author, he's always the originator, but since he has taken the initiative and he's put his truth before us, he gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. This is Jesus speaking.

It seems to me puts a responsibility back onto our shoulders. We're not earning our salvation, and let me put it this way for the purpose of making it simple. It's as though there are two features of our responsibility to the gracious offer of the Spirit of God.

And I'm thinking of them as, first of all, imagining that our lives are like a ship, all right? So the first thing I need to do is adjust the rudder, because the rudder has to do with the direction in which the boat, ship is moving. It's as though there's a rudder in our hearts here that's steering the direction of our lives. And what we need to do first of all is adjust the rudder so that my whole life becomes focused on him, on the Lord Jesus.

That's a big thing. We can imagine that's true, but to the point where it affects the whole direction of my entire life. Listen to David.

David is said to be a man after God's own heart. We've played on the word sometimes and said he was after God's heart. But listen to this.

These are words from three different Psalms. I'll just read them all as though they're all one here. Oh God, you are my God.

Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

The zeal of thy house has eaten me up. You know that applied to Jesus. Jesus takes a number.

Listen to this. In case you want to look at this, it's later on it's Psalm 132. He vowed this.

He said, surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed. I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids until I find out a place for the Lord and habitation for the almighty God of Jacob. Amen.

Isn't that wonderful? He's a man with passion. He lived under the old covenant. Wow, how would David have looked if he'd lived under this covenant with a passion like that for God? He said, I won't come into my house.

I won't go to my bed. I won't go to sleep. I won't close my eyelids until this is done.

Now that's someone who is desperate for God. Adjusting the rudder of your life is becoming desperate for God and steering your life in spite of all the other winds and waves and currents and seductive things that are all part of our lives as living here in our Western society. And we say no, no to those things.

I'm going after God. Why? Right there, we've got a tremendous potential. The other thing I'd like to suggest of our responsibility is to open up the sails.

We're still on the sailing boat. We've adjusted the rudder and now we're opening up that roll of material which is the sail. That roll of material which is my life or your life.

Also tightly woven, carefully guarded. Inside there, there may be sinful thoughts, unforgiveness, worldly carnality. Who knows? God knows.

And we need, because you remember some weeks ago we spoke on that scripture. Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow I will do wonders among you. Sanctify yourselves.

And I'm illustrating that I think when I say open up your life. Open it up. Open it up.

Let it all come out. Sometimes, and there are good men from good revivals, great revivals of yesteryear who bear this out. Sometimes there's need for public confession of sin when you're just so desperate to get everything right.

Get right with a brother, with a sister. Clear your heart. Clear your conscience.

We don't want, we're not interested in everybody's dirty washing as we say in England. That's not the point. But to confess, be so real about your passion for God.

Open it all up and lift the sail of your whole life up. Breathe on me breath of God. Fill me with life in you.

That I may love what thou dost love. Undo.

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