

# God's People Deceived

by George Verwer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a quiet time with God and meditating on the word day and night to experience victory and power in our lives.*

**Duration:** 58:25

**Topics:** "Deception"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the desire for victory and success in the Christian life, drawing inspiration from the story of Joshua in the book of Joshua. The speaker highlights the importance of prioritizing communion with God over other distractions and urges listeners to recognize their need for Him. The sermon also addresses the state of the church and the need for reformation to effectively evangelize the world. The speaker references a book called 'The Need of the Hour' by Dawson Shotman, which resonated with the speaker's experiences in Poland and the burden to pray for the evangelization of the land.

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## Transcript

A group of people were present who could not understand English. Translation took place, therefore, step by step into six languages by means of interpreters. This interpretation has now been extracted, but it has resulted in there being a few places where unexpected changes of tone occur in the speaker's voice.

Nothing has been added to or taken from the original message. To the book of Joshua, the first chapter. I'm sure all of us desire to live in victory.

We want to see success. We want to see God work, just as Joshua wanted to see success in the plan or the proposal that God had given him. And God gave to Joshua some very clear-cut instructions.

And I believe these are for us as well this evening. Let's begin at verse 7. God had promised this land, and here we read in verse 7, Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee. And turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper with it, soever thou goest.

And then verse 8. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein. For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Now this is a tremendous promise.

And I'm convinced if we take this to heart, we would need even one more day of conference. Too many of us are conference Christians. We've had meeting itis for years.

And we're never able to do anything until we get conference-ized and challenged and spurred and rebuked and everything else. And then finally we launch off at least for a few weeks. Many a young person recommits his life every year from the time he's six or seven until he's tired of raising his hand.

And never to know real victory down in the deserts and the front lines of everyday living. And basically it's because they never learn to feed themselves. They never learn to get their daily needs for themselves from the word of God.

We all have heard many times about the quiet time. Every Christian should have a quiet time. Every Christian should have his devotional time, whatever word you want to use.

How many of us could stand up and say, for the last six months I've known reality and blessings in quiet time every morning of every day? Dawson Trotman, before he died, interviewed many missionaries and discovered even a great high percentage of missionaries were not having a systematic quiet time with God. This is basically what God was saying to Joshua. He was telling Joshua to have his quiet time.

And he was telling Joshua to make sure that he set aside every day for meditating and feeding upon the word of God. He says, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night. Not just in the morning, but in the morning and at night.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we have some tremendous verses along this line. Chapter 11, verse 18, Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hands, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. Ye shall teach them, your children, speaking of them, when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up, and thou shalt write them upon the doorposts of thine house and upon thy gates.

Very clear, isn't it? The absolute importance of the word of God in our lives. Yet wherever I go, I find Christians trying to live a Christian life without time with God. We get up early in the morning, but because we lack discipline, because it's so easy to get going in a conversation with some person, it's so easy to spend extra time taking care of our physical body, before we know it, today's work has begun and we haven't been with God.

And then, of course, we wonder why we're not experiencing the reality and the victory that God wants to give. I want to tell you, out in India, we have a very, very difficult schedule. But I know that I can't afford, no matter how much I have to do, I cannot afford to miss that time in the morning with God.

One mistake I made for many years was trying to get time with God before getting my body awake and alert. This is why starting on Monday morning here, we'll help you get alert with our physical exercise program the moment you get up. Because, you know, it really isn't very pleasing to God when we sort of drift into His presence in the morning half asleep, and some of us have even developed the ability to sleep while we're praying.

Maybe some pray while they're sleeping. I don't know. That's not so bad.

Verse that comes to my mind is, Whatsoever you do, do it heartily as unto the Lord. Nothing wrong with sleep. You sleep, sleep heartily.

And I can tell you, you laugh, but in my years of Christian service, I've discovered one of the greatest things you can develop is the ability to sleep with everything you've got. If you want to stay healthy, you learn to sleep well. But then when you come to pray, pray with that same intensity.

When you come to dig into the Word of God, come with that same intensity. And this will revolutionize your spiritual life. No greater power, breaking down that dichotomy that we've talked about much, than the meditation on the Word of God.

I can say that 90% of the Christians I've met in my life do not have a quiet time, anything near as systematic. Even when I was at Bible college, there was only a small percentage of students that knew anything about a real quiet time with God. It's no wonder that there's so much carnality and so little victory and power in our spiritual lives.

To many of us, this is an old message. And we like, of course, to hear new things. But unless we get this old thing, all the new things we hear will always eventually be of no avail.

Of course, we always have an excuse, don't we, why we don't get our quiet time. And by the end of the summer, I'm sure you'll blame your team leader for not giving you enough time in the morning. Maybe he expected you to be ready to work by 9.30. So you say, well, we didn't have enough time in the morning to get with God.

Just oh, and they're always running about just 9.30 in the morning, looming off to do the work. Not enough time for God. Now, with that philosophy, what hope is there for the man in the normal job ever to live the Christian life? There's none at all.

Because he cannot come in at 10 o'clock or an hour late and say to his boss, well, you know, I had a great blessing in my quiet time this morning. It was a little late, but you understand, of course. And one of my great burdens is to testify to the layman, to the man in the world, and many of you will be in that position, that no matter where you work, no matter what you do, you can find time for God.

So it means learning how to use those early hours of the day. And that takes initiative. This is the word that has come to my mind almost every other day out in India.

Initiative. Taking the initiative. That means not worrying about the problem, the difficulty, or whatever might be missing, but on your own steam, accomplishing what needs to be done.

Were you determined tonight, in the beginning of this conference, to have a quiet time? To give God priority in your day? Not literature, not O.M., not a summer campaign, not driving a vehicle, or whatever else you might be doing, but God. Use whatever message you want. I must confess, I'll be very honest, that this past year, the one that has stirred me almost every other morning is not Joshua, nor Matthew, nor Paul, but A.W. Tozer.

Every time I've opened one of his books in the past months, I've received breaking and blessing beyond capacity to hold. Most of us have this mentality, oh, we must get it from the word. And of course, the word of God is a hundred times more important than any man's book or anything else.

But all through history, God has spoke to men through his prophets, through speakers, contemporary men, relating the word of God to the problems of their day. And when I read a chapter of Tozer, the verses that he uses, that he applies to the contemporary situation, revive my soul and cause me to want to press

on for God, and then drive me deeper into the word. I don't care what message you use, but get the message that will drive the word of God deep, deep, deep into your heart.

Everybody I meet has some kind of problem, and we want to see our problems solved. They'll have emotional problems, and they want to see them solved more and more. We see that the majority of sicknesses are caused by emotional and psychological problems.

Again, all this year, I've just had this confirmed every week, that the major source of physical illness is emotional and spiritual and mental problems. And this means that these problems are very deep in our psychological makeup. But you know what can go very deep right into where those problems are? That which can go down into the very depths of the word of God.

John chapter 15 says, Now ye are clean through the word of God which I have spoken unto you. And I'm convinced that as we meditate day and night in the word of God, it will cleanse even some of the deepest problems of our life. I find that people today are plagued with fear, and fears of various kinds.

And sometimes these fears are not even seen on the surface. And you will find this work of door-to-door distribution a terrific battle if your heart is gripped with various kinds of fears of people and of situations that you will be going into. There are more than 50 major diseases that can be brought upon your body through fear.

And his sister, a little misworry. These two things have caused more illness than all the microbes that you can get under a microscope. But again and again, when people have gotten serious about the word of God, I've seen them delivered from fear.

I've had letters even this past week from people who were delivered from fear for simply getting down to business with the word of God. 2 Timothy 1 verse 7, God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. Recently a girl wrote to me.

She heard me preach on that verse. She claimed it as her own. And was delivered from tremendous fears of her own life.

Recently I spoke to a young man in India. He was suffering from a number of sicknesses. He'd gone through all the tests, about a half a dozen tests.

Doctors told him there's nothing wrong. Till he saw that his problem was fear. That when he went out into the streets he had a fear of being beaten.

And the next time when he went into the streets he claimed God's promise and he received terrific victory and blessing. And I think most of us are honest. We've got to admit that there's some fear lurking in our hearts tonight about this whole work.

The very thought of knocking on doors in France. There's some little unrest in some of your hearts especially when you think of your French. But the word of God says I've not given you the spirit of fear.

So when we read that, what do we do? Do we just pass over it? Oh, that's another nice verse. No. God said to Joshua, meditate on it.

Take that verse and all day think upon it. In the morning, noon, at night think on that one verse. One verse in the subconscious is worth a hundred in the conscious.

That's why we read so much in the Bible about meditating and very little about reading. I dare to say that many here are probably Bible readers but you're never going to know real real reaching of the word until you become a meditator on the word of God. So this is the thought I want to leave with you tonight that we make quiet time the number one priority for this country.

If you're a weak person then you want to get a partner. You know, when I'm all alone it's very hard to get my 6.30 exercise. And my wife is so loving she always lets me sleep an extra half hour and then it's too late.

But almost all the time wherever I go I'm with at least one other fellow. We walk completely in the light. He knows what a wretch I am, I know what a wretch he is.

From there we can start building together. And so in the morning we have the opportunity of beating each other to getting the other one up and helping him get the exercises. And through this system over the past two years we've had a complete revolution in this thing of bodily exercises which is so important for physical, mental and every part of our health.

And so we can do the same thing with our quiet time. If we find that we just keep slipping on this we can have someone check on us. And it's a great blessing.

I just believe that victory this summer depends on whether we really determine to become serious about our meeting with God in the end. Of course the word of God without obedience is nothing. We must come hungry and ready for obedience.

You know one of our greatest problems is that we don't know how bad off we are. Many of us are not hungry for God the way we should be because we don't realize how far we are from God's plan for our life. We also don't realize the importance of obedience or of discipline in our lives.

And above all this we live by feelings. Many mornings this summer you're not going to feel like getting up you're not going to feel like doing any exercises that's for sure. You're not going to feel like reading the word of God you're not going to feel like distributing books you're not going to feel like being obedient to a team leader or anybody else.

The greatest enemy without any doubt of a victorious life is feelings. Tozer says this. He says to want a thing or feel that we want it and then to turn from it because we see that it is contrary to the will of God is to win a greater battle on a field larger than Gettysburg or Bunkerville.

And there's a lot in that statement. And I can tell you that decisive point of turning from feelings to obedience is the thing that will make a complete difference in your life. You know this summer we have to be ready to be crucified.

And it's amazing what God will allow to come upon us to bring us to that point where we're truly dependent upon Him. The same morning I wrote that quote in my Bible I wrote this other quotation. Tozer said, To do His supreme work of grace within you He will take from your heart everything you love most.

Everything you trust in will go. Piles of ashes will lie where your most precious treasures used to be. I wonder how many of us are ready for those kind of ashes.

You know those ashes are going to come even more when we go back home. In some cases this campaign can only give the motivation for the action that must take when you get back home in that normal situation. You know it's very hard for me to communicate and every year it gets harder.

Six years ago when I went to preach in a place people took one look at me and expected nothing. So whatever they got they weren't disappointed. Now people come, they've heard some exaggerated story or they've seen some ridiculous picture or something else and they expect great things and no matter what they go away disappointed.

And believe me, in many ways I would rather be back in the desert of Rajasthan. But I want to say this, I trust you understand it. We're interested in you.

We're not interested in a machine. We're not interested in just seeing how many tracks we can give out. We don't even count them anymore in most places.

We're not interested in just being able to say we've had another summer campaign. We've had so many hundreds that come with us. Another airplane has crossed the Atlantic and has gone back.

So many souls have made decisions for Christ. This means nothing. If lives are not changed, if you don't go back different, more like Jesus Christ, ready to live in a lost world, then we will have failed.

We will have failed. I'd rather not have any more campaigns. You know, I just pray that you'll see what the Spirit of God wants to do this summer.

What He wants to do in your life. That this will not be soldiering for a summer. Some kind of a special holiday that you'll be able to tell your grandchildren about many years from now in your \$40,000 home.

You know, about nine years ago, when I began giving the orientation tapes at Moody Bible Institute, some of the things, some of the things I said, people really got upset. I said some radical things about the condition of the Church. I said I believed that the Church was completely hopeless to evangelize the world in our present generation and its present state.

I said I didn't believe that any of the evangelical churches or any of the so-called New Testament churches were living and following real New Testament patterns. And that we needed reformation. I used the word revolution.

And I... Some of you have heard me make comparisons in which I've, I believe, proven that our situation today is worse than the situation that Martin Luther faced. Very few people comprehend this. We American evangelicals especially refuse to believe that we are pushing nothing but a carbon or a false copy of New Testament Christianity.

And I can get it, I seem to be able to communicate to very few people how bad our situation really is. How completely hopeless is the direction of all of our schools. You can imagine, when I said things like this at eighteen years of age, it didn't exactly get an applause from many people.

But now, in the past two years, the works of Tozer have become widely known. Though I lived two years in Chicago, somehow in God's plan, I never heard him or read his books, though I lived in the same city. I don't understand that.

But Tozer, in far clearer words, with twenty times the intellect and experience, if you read his writings, has said the exact same thing. He says in one of his books that we're making converts to an ethic, I don't know how to pronounce that word, type of Christianity that bears little resemblance to that of the New Testament. He says the average so-called Bible Christian in our times is but a wretched parody on true sainthood.

He goes on to say, yet we put millions of dollars behind movements to perpetuate this degenerate form of religion and attack the man who dares to challenge the wisdom of others. They're very hard words, aren't they? Very hard words. If it wasn't for the very hardness of the dichotomy that we live in, we would get very sick just reading them.

Thousands of Christians trapped by this blindness can even wade through Tozer and come out untouched and unchanged. You can too. You know what scares me, really scares me, the deception of the human heart, the blindness of the masses of people.

You'd think that especially we in America would wake up by now, but we won't. The masses have never woken up. All of history proves that the masses have never been right, and the message of the cross will never be popular in any of our campuses.

And it makes me really search my heart to know what areas am I being deceived in? In what areas have I been blinded by a degenerate religion? And it drives me to my knees. It drives me to the Word of God, hunger after God, that He might be my sufficiency, He might deliver me from this present world and from this deception. And I pray that in these days nothing else will receive a fresh hunger for God.

Quite a few of you have come up to me, and you were at Urbana, a special conference that I spoke in in December, for those of you who don't know about it. And you remember the response that there was there to a rather unusual kind of invitation. Yeah, where are these young people? Not that they have to come on O.M. That's completely irrelevant.

But I can tell you this. Because they go out from that giant gathering, many of them with hearts really hungry, if there was anything there, there was hunger for God. They go back to their colleges, and the Pied Piper plays, and the world calls, and the deception is so great that within a year, the vast majority might as well never have come.

You say, how can you say that? Well, history proves it. So many commitments we have made, so many tears we have shed, so many times we've been to the altar, so many times we've promised God we'd change, so many times we've rededicated our lives, yet we remain. One of the reasons, don't realize how bad it is.

Don't realize how deep we are. Don't realize how much it's going to take to pull us out of this deception and bring us into life. On the day of Luther, many people were interested.

Many were hungry for God. Not only Martin Luther. There were only a few.

Mainly him, who were ready to pay the price. Who really understood how bad the situation was. Who refused to compromise and go back under the deception, but who determined to stand.

And he stood. And I believe it's the same today. The deception is great.

Billy Graham says 95% of all Christians are living in defeat. We seem to be able to hear that statistic, and it rolls off as if that was nothing. 95% Christians living in defeat.

That very thought is enough, should be enough, to drive us right into tears and crying out to God. It's going to take more than a summer. In the past seven summers, you know what we've learned? We've learned a summer you can't do much.

But you know that's so typical of us, especially from the West. We want instant Christianity. And some people are sure that if they can get a month on OM, they're going to come out a different person.

And we've got OMers that have been around for a hundred months and have proven still that OM doesn't make a person different. Only God can do that. And you and you alone will determine whether God works through OM.

I just must read this other quote that I put in my Bible recently. He writes, The American genius for getting things done quickly and easily with little concern for quality or permanence has bred a virus that has infected the whole evangelical church in America. And through our literature, our evangelists, and our missionaries has spread all over the world.

An automatic once-for-all quality is present here that is completely out of mode with the faith of the New Testament. A summer on OM won't do it. A year on OM won't do it.

But God can do it. Take his word. Meditate therein.

Day and night. Allowing it to break down every area of your life that's not pleasing to him. Allowing him to make a pile of ashes out of the things you cling to, love, most of all.

Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we're not willing by nature to face truth. We know by nature we're rebels against truth.

The pride of our heart deceives us. The deceitfulness of our heart overwhelms us. Lord, we look out over thy church.

We are part of that church. We cannot leave it, but we plead with thee. Revive thy church.

Change individuals that we might know a New Testament reality in our generation. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Book of Numbers and chapter 13. For we do so ask the Lord to speak to us through his word as we read it. Father, we do praise you for the power of your word, which is as powerful as when it was written.

We praise you, Father, that we see it at work in our own lives, day by day, and in the lives of others. Lord, we ask that it might be operative in our lives tonight. Father, we ask that, as we've prayed so often before, we might not become used to your word.

We might not become hardened to it. But, Lord, that it might speak in a living and a powerful way to our hearts, day by day. Open our hearts, Father, lead and guide us to what we should meditate on tonight.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Numbers chapter 13, and reading from verse 26.

George will be speaking after me, but I don't know how much of what I have to say there'll be time to say, but we'll just go as the Lord leads. Numbers chapter 13 and verse 26. And they went and came to Moses and to Aaron and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, Chadesh, and brought back word unto them and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

And they told him and said, We came unto the land with it as our sentence doth, and surely it floweth with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled and very great. And moreover, we saw the children of Anak there.

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south, and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites dwell in the mountains, and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and by the coast of Jordan. And Caleb filled the people before Moses and said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it. But the man that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched, unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof. And all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which came as the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

I'd like to apply the different passages of Scripture we'll be reading strictly to our situation. Those of us who'll be going out on teams during the next few days. Because it's a very similar situation to the situation that existed in this passage we read and in some of the other passages, in that we're entering into new territory, we're entering into new sphere of work, of witness.

And I think we can learn some lessons from the experience of the children of Israel here and in other books. We saw that in this passage the children of Israel brought back an evil report of the land. They brought back a report which made God seem very small in their own eyes, and which exalted the circumstances, which exalted the difficulties.

And so we read in Hebrews that they didn't enter into the land because of their unbelief. And if you'd asked those children of Israel excuse me, if you'd asked those children of Israel why they hadn't entered the land they would probably have given you a number of different reasons. Some would have said it was because of the children of Anak.

Some would have said it was because of the Amalekites. Some would have said it was because of the Hittites or the Jebusites or the Amorites. Each one would have had its particular reason why they couldn't enter into the land.

And yet we read God's verdict. He says it wasn't anything to do with that at all. It was because of your unbelief.

You saw something as bigger than me. Although you profess to worship the living God you thought that there was something greater than I am. And this is idolatry.

Although we may think that those Israelites were strange and rather foolish people to react in that way after all the wonders they've seen God do, yet I believe that we in our own generation are very similar, sometimes unconsciously, to them. And over this past year I've just been looking back over it and thinking of the different things that we exalt in our own eyes to take on a bigger perspective than God takes in our

eyes. And there are four things that particularly stand out when I think back.

The first one, as we look forward into the future we need to beware of, is the thing that stumbled the Israelites. They looked at the circumstances, they looked at the evil conditions, they looked at the obstacles in their way. And they got so caught up with their conditions, they got so caught up with the problems that faced them that they forgot about God.

And the whole report was concerned with the situation in the land. The whole report was concerned with the enemies that faced them. And they forgot the promises of God that He would give them that land for inheritance.

And it's so easy for us, as we work on the teams in different lands or those of us who aren't going out to no end, we're working in our own home area, to make excuses. To make excuses for why we don't see God's blessings. And to justify ourselves for the lack of truth.

You find this wherever you go, people will come up to you and they'll give this reason, that reason, why God isn't blessing their work. Because of the hardness of the people's hearts. Because we lack this or because we lack that.

And yet we only find one reason for failure throughout the Bible. It's lack of faith. Lack of faith in the promises of God.

And we need to beware as we go out on teams of blaming other things for a lack of truth, for a lack of results in our work. Another thing that we often exalt in our own eyes and which we often use to excuse our own lack of results, I want to go quickly through these, is the great men of God that we see down through the history of the Church. This might seem an insignificant thing.

It might not seem very important as we admire the men that God has used in the past or the men that God is using in the present. But in actual fact it's very subtle and it's a very dangerous thing. We look back into the Old Testament and we read the life of someone like David.

We see the way that God used him. We look back and we see the life of someone like Elijah and we see the way that God used him. We look back and we see the life of the Apostle Paul.

Or we look back and we see the life of someone like Hudson Taylor. And sometimes it can be discouraging to read their lives. And we wonder just how can I ever achieve that standard? How can I ever achieve that standard of dedication as it seems to us? And we use this as an excuse sometimes for not seeing God being able to do more in our own lives.

If you think of David, we admire him so much for the things that he achieved for God, the way he flew Goliath, the things that he did throughout his life. And yet one of the things which characterizes David as he reads the Psalms is the consciousness of his own sin and his own unworthiness and his own lack of dependence on God. Over and over again through the Psalms you find that he's bemoaning the fact that he's so sinful and he's so wretched and he can do nothing.

You read the life of Elijah and you find the same thing. We think of him as a great man of God, a great man of prayer. And yet the book of James says that he was a man of like passions as we are.

And it uses that to emphasize the very thing which I'm trying to say tonight. He was a man of like passions as we are and yet he prayed. He prayed fervently and God answered.

It didn't depend on him, it didn't depend on his ability, on his training, on his dedication. He was conscious of his need of God and he prayed fervently. We think of the apostle Paul, a great man of God.

Sometimes we tend to idolize him and set him up as someone who is just someone apart, very special. And he was special in many ways. And yet we should beware of just putting him on one side as being an unattainable kind of life to live as we read into his own intimate life.

And we read when he pours out his heart about his own failures and his own weaknesses. And the thing that he exulted in the most was the fact of his own weakness. As for time, he struggled against this fact that he was weak until he realized that this was the very thing that God had wanted to show him so he could lift him up and use him.

When I am weak, then I am strong. These great saints bounce through the pages of the Bible. Each one of them was a weak man.

Each one of them was a frail man. Each one of them was dependent upon God. We think of the life of someone like Hudson Taylor in a more up-to-date year.

And you may have heard already the answer that he gave when someone said that he must find it very difficult not to be proud because God had used him in such a wonderful way. And he said, on the contrary, he said, he thought that God must have been looking around for someone weak enough and frail enough to take up and use. And this is the kind of person that God is looking for in our generation.

Someone who is conscious of his own failings. Someone who is conscious of his own weakness so that God can take him up and use him without fear of him becoming proud, without fear of him becoming swollen-headed, without fear of him eventually falling through pride. And I don't think that any of us should be discouraged as we go out into this coming year because we don't think that we have abilities and talents and some kind of what we call dedication.

The main thing that we should have as we go out into this year is a sense of dependence upon the living God that he is going to do the work through it. And as we go out in that attitude, we are going to see God at work in our lives. Another thing I was going to mention that I was just going to go over briefly is this attitude of so often wanting God to bless us.

Wanting God to give us all blessings, blessings all the time. And we get caught up with these things and we forget that the thing that God is wanting to really teach us is to get to know Christ irrespective of whether he blesses us, as we call it, or not. You remember how Jacob was so caught up as he wrestled that night with being blessed.

I will not let you go except thou bless me. And yet he didn't realize that he had already been blessed because God had touched him and had crippled him. And that was the blessing that he needed.

And this is the blessing that many of us need tonight. It's for God to touch us and cripple us in our own strength so that we rely on him throughout the rest of this year, throughout the rest of the years that lie ahead. Finally, the fourth thing I'd just like to mention briefly, the thing that's often we exalt in the place of God is activity, works of the Lord, doing things all the time.

I was down in Spain in the middle of August and was with a team down there, working down there. I think at least one of you was on that team. And I was talking to the team leader and he said that the one thing that God had taught them as a team, the thing that he seemed to have brought them there, teach them was that he was more interested in them than he was in all that they could do for him.

And this is the thing that he taught them during that time down there, that he was more interested, God was more interested in them as an individual than he was in all their futile efforts to serve him. It didn't mean that they didn't go out in evangelism, but it did mean that they went out realizing that they had a much greater priority to know God. Again, this reminds me of Jacob.

So often we push God to one side and get caught up in activities. So often we're afraid to be alone with God. And it's when we're alone with God that he can move in and speak to our hearts.

It's when we're alone with God that he can reveal his will to us. And sometimes what we need to do is to get alone, not to come to a meeting, not to come along and hear a message, but to get alone and speak his faith. I wonder how many of us go along to a meeting or to a film in order to just blank out our minds so that God can't speak to us.

I think there's great danger of this. In the evangelical church today, just blanking out our minds through meetings, through films, through books, so that God can't get through to us, because our minds are crowded with other people's words and thoughts and ideas. I can think of one young person who is complaining that they didn't have enough time to meet with God, that it was difficult to get time to meet with God alone day by day.

And that very day, when that young person said that, in the evening, they were in watching an evangelistic film. Seems rather strange, doesn't it? A Christian going to watch an evangelistic film, not taking a contact along, just going and watching, when they don't have enough time to meet with God. And sometimes we replace our communion with the Lord, with some kind of thing that will fill our minds, so that we're just running away from God, running away from God, refusing to acknowledge that what we need is to get alone with Him, so that He can deal with the basic difficulty, which wasn't the lack of time, it was the lack of desire for Him.

And so often we bring in these other things to blot out our picture of God, to exalt them in the face of God. We remember that eventually the children of Israel did enter the Promised Land, and I'd like to read one or two verses from Joshua. If we're really believing that we're going out into this coming year, and we know that we're going to put God first, we know that we're going to exalt Him, we know that we're going to recognize Him as all-powerful, let's read what happened as a result, when they eventually did begin to enter the Promised Land.

Joshua 2, verse 24. It's a bit of a different picture, a bit of a different report, it was brought back by the spies the second time. Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land, for even all the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us.

Before, they thought they were grasshoppers in the sight of the inhabitants of the country. Now, they say the inhabitants of the country do faint because of us. They were the same inhabitants, well, they were their children, but their attitude has changed.

The children of Israel's attitude has changed, and they realize that God is with them. And he says, Joshua said in the next chapter, verse 5, Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. Some of us are leaving tomorrow.

Some of us are leaving on Tuesday, to move out on our team. I pray that not one of us will go out in any unbelief, in any second bet, knowing that there's still some area that's not committed to the Lord in our lives, something we're still clinging on to. I pray that not one of us will go out tomorrow, into this coming year, completely giving ourselves to God, for him to do whatever he wants in our lives.

But I'd like us to turn on in the book of Joshua, because although they went in with such high-sounding words, and although they achieved great things, there was another part to the story. In Joshua chapter 11, verse 16, Joshua 11, 16 says, Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same, and it lists the different places, the different peoples that they conquered. Verse 21, From all the mountains of Israel, Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel, only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained. Perhaps we'll go out tomorrow, on Tuesday, or whenever it may be. We thank God I've given everything to you.

I'm going in, I'm going to possess the land this coming year. I'm going in, and I'm going to give myself totally to worshipping you, to getting to know you, to serving you, to witnessing to others. And we're going with this determination.

And yet we must be aware that there are little areas that still remain. Little areas that are still unconquered in our own minds. Little areas that we refuse to give up to God, and we think they're unimportant.

Perhaps we haven't got a victory over some, perhaps we just can't get on with someone already, who we know is going to be working on the same team. We just haven't fellowship with them, we just don't really know them. And we know it's going to cause a problem this coming year, and we're just trying to ignore it, we're just trying to turn our eyes from it, and pretend that nothing's going to be difficult.

Perhaps there's some area of our lives that's unsundered in terms of something we're clinging on to, in the way of possessions that we know God is asking us to give to Him. Perhaps we're clinging on to some relationship back at home. Some girl or fellow that we're interested in, and we know it's not of God, and we're clinging on to it.

Perhaps it could be so many things, and we just think that they're not important. We think that we can get by. And yet as we read on, we find that this isn't the case.

Turn with me to Judges chapter 16. It says that only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained unpossessed land. Judges chapter 16, it says, Then went Samson to Gaza, and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.

And we know the sad story of Samson, and his defeat, and his imprisonment, and the way that God's name was dishonored because of what he did. Samson went down to Gaza, that little place that seemed so important, Joshua didn't bother to conquer it when they went into the land. It didn't seem to matter very much.

It was a place that eventually was a place of defeat. It was a place where eventually God's name was dishonored, many years later. Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 17.

1 Samuel 17, verse 23. And as he talked with them, behold, they came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath. Gaza, Gath.

They came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines. What was the result? The men of Israel said, Have you seen this man, verse 25, have you seen this man that has come up, surely to defy Israel? He came up. A place of defiance.

A place where someone came out and shook their fist in the face of God and said, I defy you to conquer me. A place of defiance where God's name was discredited until along came David, foolish David, believing in the promises of God. And then finally, in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah chapter 13, verse 23. In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod. Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

Three places that Joshua didn't bother to conquer. Three places that he thought were so unimportant that it wasn't worth bothering with them. Three places that he thought wouldn't really cause any problems during the coming years, and he just ignored them and turned his sights on them, and he just turned his back on them.

Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. And they were the three areas in the promised land that were constantly a thorn in the side of the children of Israel. Over and over again, these were the areas that tempted and that tried the children of Israel and were a cause of God's name being degraded and God's name being defied.

Let's not, as we go out on extreme, take these things lightly. That little bit of lack of fellowship with someone. That little thing that we know we just don't agree with a brother about.

That little misunderstanding we had with someone and we still haven't put it right and we're just hoping that he'll forget about it. That relationship that we know isn't of the Lord. Let's be sure that before we move out we put these things right.

There's a weekend at least before us to do it. It doesn't take long. Just to repent and to ask God to cleanse us and to fill us with himself in preparation for this coming year.

Gaza, Gaza and Ashdod. These are one of these areas in our lives tonight that aren't given over to God. A place of defiance.

A place where God's name may be defied during this coming year. A place of defeat. A Gaza.

Some emotion that hasn't been given over to God that the devil will come in and use to pull us down. Some Ashdod, some place of defilement. These are the things, the little things.

Not always the big things, but the little things that are going to mean either defeat or victory during this coming year. The book that I read during this past summer one of the great blessings of this past summer as I was away in July was just a small book by Dawson Trotman called The Need of the Hour. And it just seemed to fit in with the situation that we were working in at that time.

In the land of Poland at the time and brother had this book with him in the house. And we were going from place to place and felicitating with different groups of young people and speaking to them and presenting the burden to pray for the evangelization of that land as some are beginning to do and some have been doing before. Different people would come up with reasons why it couldn't be done.

Perhaps it was the Amalekites. Perhaps it was the Hittites. Perhaps it was the sons of Anak.

It was the lack of literature. It was the lack of funds. It was the lack of transport.

It was the lack of this. It was the lack of that. Every kind of reason why the job couldn't be done.

And Dawson Trotman brought out in this little booklet some of you have heard this story before if you were at the August conference but it was such a blessing to me as we were going around and it seemed to apply so vividly. And Dawson Trotman said how he was meeting with a group of German young men shortly after the war and he was presenting this burden that was on his heart for the evangelization of Germany. And not only for the evangelization of Germany but the Germans would move out to reach the world for Christ.

And he spent several days with them each night meeting with them for several hours each night and presenting this to them. And he said if you have any questions come across your mind just fire them at me. Any objections.

And as he spoke different ones got up and said well we can't do it because we don't have the funds. We're a defeated nation at that time. We don't have the funds.

You Americans are so wealthy. And Dawson Trotman said when the Lord Jesus Christ sent out his disciples he sent them out without any funds. And they got up and said we don't have any transport.

We just have bicycles. And Dawson Trotman said the early disciples didn't even have bicycles. And some other young man got up and said we don't have the literature.

We don't have the word of God in great supply. We don't have Christian books and facts. He said when the disciples were sent out they didn't even have the New Testament.

And finally one young man got up and he was very bitter and he said he said you don't understand our situation here. This particularly applied to the country we were in at that time in July. He said you don't understand the situation here.

He said our souls aren't our own. We're an occupied country. There are foreign soldiers roaming the streets.

And Dawson Trotman said when the Lord Jesus Christ sent the disciples out the situation was the same. Roman soldiers were in power. They were a defeated nation.

They were an occupied nation. And he said how just that time showed to him hammered home to his heart how the Lord Jesus Christ sent out his disciples how the Lord Jesus Christ began to build his church at the very time when the situation was the most difficult. When everything seemed to be against the spread of the gospel.

Not only things we've mentioned but the authorities the Jews the Romans the Greeks everyone was against the spread of the gospel. And he said he just told him that the Lord Jesus Christ was or God just arranged it that it should be at that time so that we should be without excuse. So that we could never come and say well we couldn't get the job done because we didn't have this or we didn't have that or this difficulty was there or that difficulty was there.

And we're just without excuse because it's not the reason. And he said what was the need of the hour the need of the hour for men and women who would take God at his word and believe his promises. It wasn't always external things it wasn't big campaigns it wasn't gospel film shows it wasn't rallies it wasn't literature it wasn't vehicles it wasn't anything except men who would take God at his word and believe his promises.

As we go out into this year let's determine that we're going to be men and women like that. Let's determine that we're not going to make excuses we're not going to limit God by situations by circumstances by unbelief but we're going to take him at his word and say no matter what the situation whether it's a hard area externally perhaps in the Muslim world or whether it's a headquarters situation where it seems that so many people from so many nationalities and so many churches it's just impossible for them to work together in unity whatever the situation let's realize that that isn't the reason for defeat the reason for defeat is if we allow that to become bigger than God if we allow that situation to take on a more important take on more importance than God and allow to allow that to become an idol in our hearts. Let's pray this prayer as we go out into this coming year that Joshua told them let's just in our hearts make this determination as Joshua said to the children of Israel sanctify yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you sanctify yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you and he will.

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