

The Blossoming of the Desert

by George Warnock

The sermon emphasizes the importance of friendship with God, intercession, and unity and love in the body of Christ, and encourages listeners to seek God's guidance and wisdom in times of judgment and struggle.

Duration: 1:18:28

Scripture: Genesis 1:3, Isaiah 35:1-3, Isaiah 35:5-7, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:3, 1 Corinthians 12:26

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker highlights the issue of natural reasoning replacing the voice of the Holy Spirit in the church. He criticizes the practice of appointing individuals to positions of authority based on their worldly influence and financial contributions, rather than their genuine heart for God. The speaker encourages believers to rise up, strengthen one another, and put on the whole armor of God to combat the spiritual battles they will face. He also references biblical passages that speak of God's ability to bring forth water in the desert and restore the broken and suffering. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the need for spiritual discernment and unity among believers in order to experience true fruitfulness in their lives.

Transcript

When the time comes for God to do something different in the earth, something new, He doesn't do it without warning. One of the prophets says, The Lord will do nothing unless He reveals it unto His servants, the prophets. And anytime God is going to do something, He'll find a friend somewhere that He can share the secret with.

And He found a friend in the Old Testament, the name of Abraham. And I think he's the only man, as I recall, that's called God's friend in the Old Testament. Not to say there were not others, but I think he's the only one who is called a friend of God in the Old Testament.

And God says, Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do? And so he came to Abraham. I gave him a little instruction, information as to what he was going to do because of the wickedness of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. And immediately that brought forth intercession in Abraham.

And that should speak to you and I that when God reveals His purposes concerning the judgments that He's going to execute, say in the church or in the earth or in an individual's life or in an assembly, if there does not come forth a crying unto God because of what has been revealed, there's something wrong. And it frightens me when I hear of individuals who have perhaps had a great ministry in God and maybe a

prophetic ministry and they're able to foretell things and maybe to declare God's judgments and God's judgments come to pass and they talk about it, tell you about it, how wonderfully God is working. And I don't see compassion, I don't see concern for what God did.

It might have been something quite disastrous to some person's life. It bothers me because I know that such a one does not have the heart of a priest, does not have the heart of one who is a friend of God. So God is after friends and He wants friendship with people.

And as we come into that closer bond of friendship with the Lord, we walk with Him and He walks with us. He's going to share His heart to His people and tell us things. And it frightens me also when someone perhaps with prophetic insight comes and says, I don't think you're going to make it, you're going to miss out.

Now, maybe they had a word from the Lord, but it sort of scares me. If God was to show you and I that, what would we say? Would we go and say, you're going to miss it, walk away? There should be a crying out unto God. Oh God, no, you can't do that, Lord.

You've made an investment in your people. You shed your blood and gave your life and then you've given your Holy Spirit for such a one. God undertake, crying out unto God should come forth.

And so I just pray that in this hour when strange things are happening and frustrating things are happening and perplexing things are happening, that we will draw an eye to God and come to know what God's heart is in the matter. Not to judge according to what we see or hear. You say, what else have I got to go by? Well, if we're not close enough to God that God can speak to our hearts and cause us to see the hearts of man, what you see in here is not sufficient.

It's not sufficient. But coming closer to Him, coming to that abiding realm in Christ, we too, like our Lord, will not judge by the seeing of the eye or by the hearing of the ear, but with righteous judgment that can only come as we sense the heart of God. It's very important that we draw very close to God in this hour because I know we see strange things happening.

We see confrontation amongst God's people, perplexity, certain amount of division. And there's always that carnal nature that would strike back and quick to show what's wrong, quick to say what's wrong. And we don't always know.

If we're judging by what we hear and see, we're not maybe seeing things right. But they said this, I know, but you can't go by what you see or what you hear no longer. There's hidden things in the heart that only, as we said this morning, that quickening thrust of the Spirit of God, that sharp two-edged sword is the only thing.

Perhaps the enemy would like to project into our minds certain causes and questions. And we'll know, yes, but what about this? And oh, we're quick to grasp some thought that is compatible with that fleshly carnal nature that we still have. Don't forget that.

Fleshly carnal nature that we still have, that all of us still have, is compatible, it's compatible with evil suggestions of the enemy. And he suggests something and, oh yes. Because it's a suggestion that our carnal nature likes and it goes along with it.

And so let us put on that whole armor in these days. Let us realize we just can't be soldiers on Sunday anymore. We've got to learn to put on this whole armor.

So that these fiery darts were alert and we see them coming and we lift up the shield and stop it. And like the brother said, the battle is just starting. You think you've had battles? Well, they had a few skirmishes in the wilderness.

A few skirmishes. Nothing to speak of. The battles were in Canaan.

There's a few skirmishes in the wilderness. To get them acquainted perhaps with the weapons of their warfare and to build that warrior spirit within them. But the real warfare was in Canaan.

And so they weren't far out of Egypt before they had a battle in the wilderness with Amalek. And Amalek, grandson of Esau, the man who was born according to the flesh, not according to the spirit. Amalek was his grandson.

And so he had a kinship with the man who was born according to the flesh. And he came out against Israel and confronted them in battle. And he didn't come to the strong, but he came to the weak.

He knew the strong wouldn't be able to resist. He came to the weak, it says. The feeble.

And he attacked them. And somehow they discovered, I guess, Moses was crying unto God on behalf of his people. So he was lifting his hands and Israel prevailed.

Of course, his hands would get heavy and he dropped them. And then he noticed that when he dropped his hands, Amalek prevailed. And so he lifted his hands again and suddenly the battle would change and Israel would prevail.

And so he learned the secret, you see, of that battle. I believe God will give us the secret. Every battle we face, we'll, you know, really seek Him for it.

I believe God will give us the secret. And if you don't judge according to the seeing of the eye or the hearing of the ear, but earnestly seek the Lord, we might come into the Lord's presence with Urim and Thummim in the breastplate. For when that priest stood before the Lord with Urim and Thummim, there was no problem.

God says, this is the way it is. And we're not there yet. But God has that provision for His people.

And no matter what problem arises in the midst of His people, oh, it'll take seeking, it'll take prayer, it'll take fasting, but God will come forth and reveal the true cause. And all the while the enemy is getting us thrusting at one another. And that's his tactics of battle, to get people thrusting one another.

But when you and I come into that place where, oh, love reigns and love predominates and mercy is uppermost in our thinking and our own welfare matters nothing, but our whole concern is for others and for the body of Christ, love will prevail and truth will prevail and victory will prevail. And that tactic which the enemy has used against the people of God will begin to happen in the enemy's ranks, and they'll be thrusting one another. The Bible teaches that.

Well, I brought it out in that last writing. It was all through the Scriptures, that when God's people sought Him and walked in truth and went forth into battle, according to the command and the order of the Lord,

the battle was won right there. And the enemy destroyed themselves.

The enemies destroyed themselves. Right now, you know, somehow, you know, let's fight against this thing and that thing and try to fight these unseen hosts, and we don't even see exactly what they are, where they are, how they're functioning. And we're trying to fight them, and how frustrating, not realizing that we can defeat any enemy of God, any enemy of the church, as we set our priorities for the union of the body of Christ, for the flowing of love, for the flowing of mercy, for the flowing of forgiveness.

If we set our sights for that and pursue that, that will be our victory. And furthermore, there'll be no victory apart from that. That's going to be our victory.

And so coming into Canaan, God has got a people who are going to be a corporate people. He's dealing with them as a nation, as a corporate people. And it doesn't mean that as a corporate people they lost their identity and that the individual didn't matter.

It meant just the opposite. Coming into this corporate relationship, the individual really meant more than he did before, because the corporate nation was made up of the individual. And if that one individual failed, then it might bring disaster to the whole nation.

Walking as individuals, you don't see that, you know. He fails, so what? We carry on. Just another comrade fallen in battle.

But not so as God begins to bind his people together. God says, I'm going to do something with a people, a corporate people. And the most insignificant member is going to be vital for the success of the whole body.

And if one member fails, there's disaster for the whole body. So God taught us that awful solemn lesson back there in the Old Testament, when they command, and walking in union with God, according to the direction of the Spirit of the Lord, when the captain of their salvation came to take charge in place of Joshua. I shouldn't say in place of Joshua really, but Joshua stepping out of his shoes, because he stood in the presence of the captain of the host of the Lord, and acknowledging the lordship of the captain of their salvation.

So that though Joshua was a leader, and God honored what he did, he only honored what he did because he was henceforth walking in the shoes of the captain of his salvation. Because of that great confrontation which he had, as Joshua went out, you know, the general of the army, they're going to take Jericho, surveying the city of Jericho, no doubt pondering in his mind what kind of attack he was going to make. And he saw this strange personage approaching him with a drawn sword in his hand.

And Joshua boldly went up to him because he was strong and powerful, he wasn't afraid to face any Canaanite they had. He says, Are you for us or for our enemies? He says, Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. Put off the shoe from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

And Joshua did so. Tell upon his face, he'd had a confrontation with a captain, and therefore Joshua couldn't go forth in the power of that captain, in the wisdom of that captain, in the might and the authority of that captain. You know how they took the city, so simply, and how could he have received that revelation except he'd had that confrontation with the Lord.

There's a lot of devising, a lot of planning going on as the Christian church has aroused to the evil of the day in which we're living. What are we going to do to combat this evil situation? And they're marching, and they're marching on Ottawa, and they're marching on Washington, and the devil isn't the least bit concerned. But he's concerned when he sees the people who are binding themselves together because of the cross, because of the resurrection, because of the abiding spirit in their lives, are being knit together by the spirit, becoming one with the devil is greatly concerned.

And that's why he's trying to inject doubts and fears and confusion in the hearts of his people, because he can't hurt us. His power has been destroyed. Satan was defeated at the cross.

He can't come against us and hurt us. His power has been taken away. When Christ died on the cross, he there and then disrobed principalities and powers.

He struck them a mortal blow, triumphing over them in his cross. All he can do is inject fears, doubts, perplexities, confusion. He can bring all those things which pertain to his realm, bring it into our very midst.

And so we continue to cry unto the Lord. And let us all take this hour very seriously. Cry unto the Lord, that we might have that confrontation, that the Lord might come into our midst and pinpoint and tell us clearly what we are supposed to do.

And it may come from the weakest member of the body of Christ. It will not necessarily come from leadership. And that's why we must continue to cherish every member of the body of Christ.

Who knows? That member there that feels they are nothing, have nothing, and will never amount to anything, might be the one who has become so low that God says, I'll use this one. Remember one time this great evangelist tried to cast out a devil, and the devil just laughed and laughed. He said, there's only one person here that can deal with me.

And I don't know the details of the story, but as it turned out, it was this one certain little woman that not recognized as having anything great, but in the power of the Spirit, she went over and cast out this demon. And we've come to that day and hour when the feeble members are going to be necessary. And because of that, God is demonstrating that we can no longer afford to exalt leadership to the, what's the word, diminishing in our eyes the least member in the body of Christ.

We can't do that. And this frightens me a little sometimes. I suppose not too much because we just have a little handful of people.

But it must be frightening to men who have a great ministry and who are well thought of and well received by multitudes of people. It ought to be a frightening thought to them. And they better begin searching their hearts and ministering the truth of God in clarity because there's been too much over-exaltation of ministry in times past.

And God has had to come in, step in, and perhaps remove a man from this scene entirely because he was over-exalted. Some believe that might be what happened with William Branham. I've often contemplated that because I know he went to some friends of mine, personal friends of mine, one of whom was out promoting William Branham to the point where they were over-exalting him, even declaring him to be the Lord back in the flesh.

And some of these boys went down and had an interview with him. He says, you men could ruin my ministry by saying things like that, that you're Christ back in the flesh. You could ruin my ministry.

I don't know if they did. But God saw fit to take him and it seemed almost to be an untimely taking. And so rather than promoting one's ministry, one should be very watchful to try to take the lowly position, less unaware somehow.

The people give you that undue adoration and you're perhaps not aware of it, but it's there. God give us insight to know it. And I don't say, Lord, take me if that happens.

I say, Lord, let the word out of my mouth be so pure, let it become so pure, so cleansed, so from your own heart that people will not exalt me, but that they will see the Lord. And so that's my prayer. Let the Lord be seen.

Let Christ be exalted. And if he isn't, Lord, shut my mouth that I will not be able to minister if people are not being brought into a closer relationship with the Lord, for us to love him more, to worship him more, to praise him more, to exalt him more. If my ministry doesn't do that, I don't say, God, remove me.

I say, God, shut my mouth in. Cause me to search my heart and bring me to that place where I might walk in such harmony with you that when I speak, men will know it's not George, it's the Lord. If I minister, that men will know it's the Lord.

That people will say, isn't the Lord great in the midst of his people? And I've told you this story before of these two great ministers in London. One, I think, was Charles S. Spurgeon, who was considered by many to be the prince of preachers of modern times. And how men just thrilled to hear him.

And another man, I forget his name, he also had a very powerful word, a very powerful message. And so these two men wanted to hear both these great preachers as they visited London. And so they went to hear the one man.

I think his name was Parker. And they came away saying, oh, what a tremendous speaker. What a tremendous preacher.

And then they went and they heard Spurgeon and they went away saying, oh, what a marvelous Christ. You see, that's the difference. We can portray Christ.

We can speak Him. We can live Him. We can show Him forth.

That's the only thing that's going to deliver the humanity that's groaning and bondage in corruption, if men might see Him. We would see Jesus. We would see Jesus as the heart's cry of many.

And it's the unconscious heart's cry of multitudes throughout the earth who are thinking they want to see Muhammad perhaps. Or maybe they want to see the Pope. Maybe they think, oh, that's the thrill of their life to see the Pope.

But deep down within, there's a hunger that's not satisfied when they go to Mecca and crawl on their hands and knees or worship at the Shrine of Mecca. Or when they go to the Vatican and get a glimpse of St. Peter's and see the Pope in all his glory, there's still something lacking. And they know it, but they don't know what it is.

But one day God is going to raise up a people who are going to go, and they're not going to be like the Pope, lifted up and exalted on the shoulders of the people. But they're going to be like Peter, humble and like Paul, humble. When the people bowed down to worship, He says, don't do it! And they tore their garments.

And they said, we're just men like the rest of you, worship God. I'd like to see our Pope say something like that. And then I'd be more inclined to believe that he knew the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

And I can't see that exaltation being accepted by man and claiming to be the Vicar of Christ on earth and the successor of the first Apostle. I can't see it! God grant that God might raise up a people who will go forth in the image and likeness of Christ, who will show Christ, who will reveal Christ, who will show forth His love and His mercy and His truth and His greatness and His power and His beauty. And then the world is going to see and know that Jesus is Lord of all creation.

They don't see it now. They don't believe it now. And the world's trying to tell them by printing tracts, by getting on radio, by getting on TV.

And there's almost a competition to see who can become the greatest radio evangelist, the greatest TV evangelist. And it's not making one dent into the kingdom of Satan. But let that people come rise up in the earth, known as the body of Christ.

And they shall go forth and reveal the Christ that nations have heard about and whose name is blasphemed everywhere because they don't see Him. They don't see Him in manifestation in the midst of the people who profess to be His followers. So God, bring about that confrontation in Your people.

And in seeing You, we might be changed. We won't be changed until we see You. We won't be changed until we see Him.

But we can see Him who is invisible. I'm talking about having some kind of a vision that some people have. Seeing Him who is invisible.

Seeing Him who is even now in the Spirit dwelling in His body. But to see Him as He really is. To see that He is lowly.

He is meek. He is kind. He is merciful.

He is long-suffering. He is patient. Because you can't see Him without partaking of those same qualities.

And so we see the shortcomings in one another. We see the shortcomings in ministry. We see lack of patience.

Lack of long-suffering. Lack of mercy. Lack of kindness.

And we're quick to notice it and to strike back. But God help us to know that as we all draw near unto Him and uphold one another, not only individually but corporately, the time will come when this people shall be the expression of Jesus Christ. In the meantime, I don't think God is going to let those who profess to be building up the body of Christ and who profess to have that vision of the body functioning as one.

He's not going to let us get away individually. But we're going to suffer when that individual suffers. And so boldly they took Jericho because they walked in harmony with God.

And so they said, we'll take Ai next. The whole land lay before them. Ai's next, they said.

And we don't need to send the whole army up there because it's just a small town. So they sent up a small army. And they fled before the men of Ai.

And they were smitten. And I think 30 people were killed in the battle. And the soldiers ran back to Joshua and said, we're defeated.

We couldn't stand against them. 30 of our comrades are dead. And Joshua fell on his face before God.

Now, 30 men fighting a battle. 30 men dying in battle. You know, well, the sword devours one as much as another, David said.

Warriors sort of take that for granted. The casualties, oh yeah, there wasn't many. A hundred casualties in this battle.

Not that they don't respect those who are fallen. But after all, in a battle, you expect some casualties. But Joshua said, God, 30 of our people are killed.

What's wrong here? Did he send out another 10,000 soldiers as reinforcements? That's the way they do it today. Well, just get some more reinforcements out there. You know, I don't think God would be one little bit disturbed if every missionary board in the land said, stop this whole thing.

Bring all our missionaries home. Right now. Let's see God.

I don't think God would be disturbed. And I think that if they really sought God in earnest, God would be able to talk to them, be able to send forth people in the power of His Spirit. That one man could go and evangelize a whole nation.

Happened before. One man could step on the shores of a continent and declare Christ the light of fire that would consume the whole nation. God can do that.

But no, if there's casualties, well, that's too bad. We need more. We'll just raise a bigger army.

And so that seems to be the thought and people get excited about it. Get a bigger army going here. And we're going to invade the nations, you know.

Oh, that God might show His people that it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, sayeth the Lord. And that the battle is the Lord's. And that when the battle is the Lord's, all we have to do is stand still and see the salvation of God.

Hear what He says. Hear His voice. Walk in obedience.

And then watch God going forth unto war. So when the children of Israel went forth to battle, the Ark of the Covenant went forth before them because that symbolized God's presence. And Moses would cry out, Arise, O God, and let Your enemies be scattered.

And their enemies would be scattered because of the presence of God. Coming home from the battle, Moses would cry out, Come back, O Lord, into Your resting place. And the Ark of God would come back and rest there while the people of God continued in their camping according to the will of God until the pillar of cloud moved again.

Oh, for a day when God's people will have that kind of a corporate relationship. When God looks upon us as one. We look upon our fellow members as very vital.

And it's going to take a deeper working of God in our midst, I know. In the meantime, we want to continue to encourage God's people to continue to cherish this hope and this vision, not to let it slip. Like we said this morning, not to become weary because of the journey or bitter because of the experiences, but to allow every bitter experience to purge out the bitterness from our lives as God intended it should.

To allow every stumbling block, as someone said a few minutes ago, to become a stepping stone. And to recognize that if there is a cross and if there is suffering entailed and if there is a trial, to accept it from the Lord, embrace it as from the Lord, and pray for holy endurance to bear up under it according to the will of God, seeking Him that in His own good time and way and pleasure, He shall see fit to remove that impediment and cause His people to rejoice in His faithfulness in doing so. But there is something hidden there that caused the men of Israel to fall in battle before the men of Ai.

Something hidden. Joshua knew it. If your people are defeated, there is something wrong.

Let's just recognize that. If the people of God are defeated in battle, there is something wrong, and God is trying to put His finger upon it. I shouldn't put it that way.

God knows all about it. He is trying to get you and I to recognize it and to seek Him until God pinpoints the problem. And therefore to seek Him in fear, not a tormenting fear, reverencing the Captain of our salvation, not saying, Lord, is it I with a thought of... I always like to encourage those who are always condemning themselves because they need to be lifted up.

Often times you find those people, they are humble, sincere, so humble and so sincere that they are always condemning themselves and blaming themselves. Reg gave me a good thought today. I am encouraging Reg to speak up and God gives him a little word.

Well, you know, I don't know how to say it, but say it. God does give him a word. You are vital to the body of Christ.

The Lord said to him, there is no condemnation. You feel condemnation? God says, I didn't put it there. Where are you getting it from? There is one that condemns, not Christ.

It must be Satan. And those things will encourage us, you see. Christ doesn't condemn those who are truly seeking Him, truly desiring to do His will.

You step out of the pathway, you feel the condemnation, not because Christ is there with a club, but because you are back in the territory of the enemy where condemnation rests. So you feel it. God continues to love you, continues to yearn over you, continues to desire to bring you back to the path of righteousness.

You just feel the condemnation that belongs to that realm of disobedience and sin and darkness. You step into the realm of darkness and you feel it. There is no condemnation from Christ.

Luther one time, he used to have these battles with the devil. One day he confronted the devil. Satan, you come against me and condemn me? You bring my sins before me and you say, look at this thing and look at this and look at this.

You try and get me under condemnation? I forget the wording of it. But he says, now you're giving comfort to me when you condemn me like that. He says, you're comforting me.

Do you know that? You tell me I'm a sinner? Christ died for sinners. And that way he was able to cause the enemy to flee from him. Oh, you're a sinner.

Where does that come from? Christ died for sinners. Who is he that condemns? Christ died, rose again, was at the right hand of God. Who also maketh intercession for us.

In other words, Paul is saying, who is there that condemns when Christ died for you and rose again? He took your place in the cross. Why should he condemn you? He took your place in the cross. But not only that, he rose from the dead and then he sat down at God's right hand to be your lawyer.

Goodness, if you've got a lawyer defending you, a lawyer that's defending your cause, you can afford to shut your mouth. In fact, they'll tell you, you don't say anything unless I ask you. I'll handle this for you.

And that's what Jesus is. He's our lawyer before the courts of justice. The one who died for us and gave his life for us, he's now my lawyer before the throne of God.

No wonder Paul said, coming into Romans 8, there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. It says who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. But that really belongs down further.

And I looked at every version I could find and sure enough, it's left out. It doesn't belong in verse 1. It's down further. There's no condemnation to those in Christ.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak to the flesh. God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and forced him to condemn sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

We need to have that revelation of the cross of Christ. We need to emphasize it every once in a while. And God give us that sensitivity in the body that when one member who has a particular teaching or phase of ministry emphasizes a certain doctrine of God's Word, God will raise up another who has an emphasis that might seem to be contrary.

But no, it's just necessary for the full picture of truth. Otherwise, we won't have the full picture of truth. And if we don't have the full picture if it's distorted, we won't have a true vision of Christ.

So it's very important what we're talking about. It's not just that we're being liberal and we're hoping that everyone will feel free to say something. No, no.

We want every member to recognize that they're a vital member in the body of Christ and so nurture them in the ways of the Lord and teach them and help them and encourage them when they're down. Take away all condemnation which we see creeping in upon them that their spirits will be liberated and they'll be able to walk in the light. And if they walk in the light, rest assured, they're going to have some of that light to radiate on others.

We won't be able to walk in the light and fail to radiate that light to others about us if God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we're going to partake of that light. If we partake of it, others are going to see it.

We're going to radiate that light to those about us. Something was wrong. Joshua knew it.

He called a halt to the war. They were in a war to take Canaan. He says, stop the battle right now.

Stop it right now so that the church of Jesus Christ would have the sense to stop the battle. They're not doing anything. Building temples and churches and programming.

They're not shaking the kingdom of darkness. They're not making inroads to the kingdom of darkness so that we have sense to stop the war. Fall on our face before God.

They stayed there a long time, all day. He prayed through like they used to say in early Pentecost. Trust that the Lord will restore that ability that God's people once had.

That when they came up against a situation and God put the burden of it upon their heart, they prayed through until they had the victory. That became a very common expression in early Pentecost. I still remember those martyrs they used to have on the walls.

You don't see them anymore. It was outdated. Nobody would know what it meant.

But you'd go into a home and pray through. And Joshua prayed through. And God says, Stand up on your feet.

Israel has sinned. That's why you're defeated. I know we've tried to come into that place of travail and prevailing before God and crying out unto God until we heard from heaven.

We've tried and failed so often and we've got to recognize that we can't do that by any carnal strategy. But we do have to earnestly desire and seek after that communion with God where we can be confronted with a situation in the midst of God's people and get on our knees and pray and get the answer. Maybe not as an individual so much, but as a corporate group.

Individually, there'll be those who have those strong cries and prayers and intercessions who'll be able to break through the ranks of the enemy and reach the throne of God. We've got to come to that. Israel has sinned.

Well, you know the story. They went about the task of discovering where the problem was with Urim and Thummim. That's something we don't know exactly how it worked.

But that faculty they had in their midst. And as they sought God with Urim and Thummim, God says, Here's the problem. Here's the answer.

And God sent that down the line and found that one man had sinned. And because one man had sinned, God says, Israel has sinned. And because one man had sinned, God imputed that one man's sin to the whole nation and the whole nation was defeated in battle.

So when God says, Israel has sinned, well, maybe it was that other person. God's joined you together in some way. You're part of that body.

In some way, you and I are responsible. Say, I don't like that. Well, if you're going to be a part of this body of Christ which you profess you want to be a part of, better face up to it.

Members of a body, no longer can any individual live unto himself or die unto himself. But if he lives, he lives unto the Lord. If he dies, he dies unto the Lord.

He cannot be unto himself. Would you like to go back to that place where you're more free? Do we feel that we're hemmed in in this wilderness we talked about? Are we hemmed in? That's the way we feel, isn't it? But God led us that way. There was a shorter road.

But God says, no, I'll lead them this way and hem them in. So that when I hem them in, the enemy will seek to take an advantage of them and then I'll be glorified that he might take glory over the defeat of your enemies. Let's consider that and remember that.

When you feel how frustrated you are and how unable you are to exercise your freedom and you long for those days when you had more freedom, recognize that God hemmed His people in in order that He might be glorified over their enemies. So that every stumbling block in the purpose of God does become a stepping stone. And everything that the enemy devised for our destruction is turned upon his own head and becomes his destruction.

And so when they dealt with Achor and slew him and buried him in the valley of Achor, they went forth to battle and God gave them the victory. God gave them the victory. They went out against the men of Ai and the men of Ai came out against them and they ran away from them.

And the men of Ai says, they're running like they did before. We've got them on the run again. Don't be discouraged if you've suffered a defeat as you rise up in the confidence of the Lord.

That very defeat which you once suffered will become in the purpose of God a divine strategy for the destruction of the enemy the second time. So God had already planned that they would run from their enemies. God had put that in the heart of Joshua.

You're coming against the enemy the second time. God doesn't do anything the second time the same way as He did the first time, something we've often pointed out. So He says when they come out against you, run from them.

And they'll say they're defeated like they were the first time and they'll all come out of the city chasing you. And when they're all out of the city, Joshua says, I've got a group of men over there behind the city. And they'll come in and burn the city up.

And then when the enemy looks back and sees their city on fire, you turn against them. And that's what they did. And so great was the defeat of Eli.

And the strategy that God used and put in the heart of Joshua was something that seemed very ridiculous. That they would give the enemy the concept that they were being defeated all the while they had utmost confidence that God was giving them the victory. When you hear rumors, you know, that oh, these people once gathered and worshiped the Lord and they're no longer gathering.

This company of people, they're no longer, you know, they're defeated now. Don't take it too serious. What I should say is don't figure that's the end.

Because if these people in the time of their defeat earnestly seek the Lord and fall on their face and cry out unto God, as I'm sure many of them are doing, perhaps more so than you and I are who are still gathering

and enjoying the fellowship of one another, as they in their defeat seek the Lord earnestly and cry out unto God, who knows if they will not come back with the keys of victory. And those who feel that they're having it made for them and are moving along in God will have to learn defeat also in order that they might be humbled. It's too early to say I'm going on with the Lord and I think you people are going to miss it.

You people are losing out. I'm going on. It's too early to say that.

And in fact, if you do say it, early or late, it sort of indicates the lack of a priestly heart who, if they recognize that there is a drawing back, there is a withdrawing, there is a lack of vision, a lack of obedience, there's a crying out unto God on their behalf saying, Oh Lord, You cannot do this. So this one whom You have chosen, for whom You shed Your blood and died on the cross, into whose heart You put Your Spirit, upon whose life You showed many tokens of Your favor and grace, O God, have mercy. And the reason God is putting grace and mercy and truth into the hearts of His people is that they might be able to stand up on behalf of such who are fallen in the day of battle or wounded in the day of battle or weakened or brought to some kind of desolation.

That's the reason you, who now feel strong, are raised up into that position of strength that in your strength you might support the weak. When you and I are weak, as it comes upon all of us, in due season, one way or another, there comes times when all of God's people come into special areas of testing and trial where they're just not able hardly to pray on their own behalf. You still have that confidence.

You're joined unto a body. And there's a people there upon whose hearts God will lay the burden, your burden, and see you through. When you come through into a life of victory, then you in turn will have compassion on them as they are suffering some special kind of test or trial and be able to bring them forth.

That there be no schism in the body, but that the members might have the same care one for another. I believe it's a time for the lifting up of God's people. The lifting up of the hands that hang down.

The strengthening of the feeble knees. That which is lame be not turned out of the way, but let it rather be heard. I believe it's a time when those with priestly hearts will no longer cast about in their hearts and minds thoughts about the failure of another, but if they discern it, will take that upon their hearts as if it was their own brother, their own sister, their own child, their own daughter.

And you young people who have young families, may God lay upon you the burden of the teenagers, the older ones, because your little family, cozy and secure and protected, will one day be up there in the teenager bracket and will be facing not just the tests and the trials that our teenagers are facing today, but far greater struggles. And therefore, if you are not faithful in prevailing before God on behalf of your brother's family who is now growing to years and whose ties to home and fellowship are perhaps being shaken or loosened or tested, and you feel the danger of them slipping away, consider that they're your brothers and sisters, they're your children. That when the time comes when your children are at that age, you will have these other teenagers who have come to know the Lord because of your prayers now, ministering on their behalf and bringing them into the truth.

For rest assured, you will be tested and tried the same as everybody else relative to the children that are growing up in this day and age. There's no question about it. But you can also face that fact with the knowledge that God is creating such a community in the body of Christ, a community of light hearts and minds, of people who are being filled with God's mercy and truth, that you will know of a surety that you have the whole body of Christ standing behind you and with you and upholding you before the throne of

grace when you yourself feel utterly helpless to do anything about it.

So may God bless this word to your hearts. Bring forth out of this wilderness life in which we are involved through no fault of ours, but for the glory of God He brings us through the wilderness in order that He might do us good at our latter end. So in type we speak of Egypt there, the wilderness here, Canaan over there, and because we're people of time and space and familiar with geography, we think of going from here to here and there.

True, but in the spiritual realm it's a little different. For that nature within us, that wild nature like we mentioned before, that's our wilderness through which we are going. That's the barren and the dry land.

That's the undisciplined area in which God is dealing with us in this time of our pilgrimage journey through the wilderness. Seeking to discipline us in those areas, we'd like some kind of a ministry that would come along and hocus-pocus and suddenly you're out there in the realm of triumph and victory. It doesn't quite come that way.

There's a flesh thing within us, but it's not something you cast out. You don't go to people, and I know some try it, but cast out of you the spirit of pride. You don't do that.

God says if you're proud, humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. I don't want to do that. That's too devastating, but I'll go up and I'll get him to lay hands on me and cast that thing out.

So go there and fold your hands and let the spirit of pride bind this evil spirit of pride and cast it out. If you've got pride, confess it. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

Humility is the antidote to pride. And so there's many areas there that we want a quick answer, we want a shortcut. We want the quick route to Canaan and trying to get the quick route to Canaan.

We shortcut God's purposes and we never really arrive. Because Canaan, like we said, is that area of fruitfulness when out of your being there proceedeth love, joy, peace, neatness, gentleness, long-suffering, kindness, and so forth. Out of your being these things proceed.

They proceed out of your being because they grow from within you. It's a growth. It's a garden that the Lord plants.

Once there is a wilderness, let anything happen. And they teach it. No wonder there's so much lack of discipline in the earth, in the church and in the schools.

They're teaching things like that. Self-expression. They were born that way.

Let's nurture that nature that's there. Not recognizing that the nature that is there comes from a sinful nature we inherited from Adam from which Christ would redeem us. And so it's taught, you see, self-expression.

Just let that which is natural proceed. Let it come forth. Oh no.

God says that's the way it is in the wilderness when I'm planting a garden. I'm going to root out the weeds, cast out the stones. I'm going to nurture my people.

I'm going to prune them. I'm going to cut away from that stalk, everything that's not of me. But you say it's natural.

I know, but the man who grows apples or pears, he goes out and he cuts off a lot of the things that naturally grow there because they're a hindrance to fruit. And if it's in a wilderness, let it grow. But if it's in an orchard, no.

Because the husbandman wants fruit. And because God wants fruit, He's invading your wilderness life. And we feel the knife, you know, and the jibes and the uprooting and the transplanting.

It's distressing. Nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those that are exercised at the bottom. And so, we're saved by hope.

And let this hope be your salvation today. God's doing it. He's doing what He said.

He hasn't deviated from His plan. He hasn't let it decide because you and I have failed. He goes on to carry out His purpose.

What He's doing now is part of that purpose. You seem to be defeated? Have the assurance that God's got an army there on the other side of the city, the other side of the enemy. You're running from the enemy? No, we're just pretending.

The city's going to be burned down. The people of God are going to turn against the enemy and see Him defeated. And so, the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blasphemous arose.

What's going to rejoice and blossom as the rose? The desert. I feel so dry. Well, then, this is your promise tonight.

The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Let me read a few more verses before we close. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it. The excellency of Carmel and Sherry. They shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.

Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees. It's God's Word to you people today. You've known enough desolation.

I know we've taught a lot on the necessity of coming down to the place where we recognize we're nothing. And that's still true, still necessary. But you know, the only reason God would bring us down to that realization is that He might be glorified.

Once we've come to that realization, don't push anyone down any further. Pete Vogt writes me, I've hit bottom. I came to rock bottom.

Then he says I dug a hole and went even further. And that's the way it is with some people. You know, you don't teach those people you've got to be humble.

You've got to come down. You've got to start lifting them up. Lifting them up.

Strengthen the weak hands. Confirm the feeble knees. And say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong, fear not.

Fearful hearts. God says be strong. Saw strength coming out in Gene tonight.

Fearful heart. He says be strong. No, He didn't say that.

Try to be strong. I've gone through this so many times, but I can't help it. We read the Scriptures and we say I'm trying to do that.

God didn't say to try to be strong. He says be strong. You say I'm trying.

You can't do that. Well, what do I do then? The Bible says be strong. Tune your ear to what God says.

And if you hear God saying it, you're going to be strong because what God says, He brings forth that which He says. You see? So we read something in the Scriptures and someone says oh, I'm trying to do that. God didn't tell you to try to do it.

He says do it. You say I can't. Well, if God said it and you hear it, it'll happen.

God says let there be light, but there was nothing but darkness. Did darkness say? I'm dark. You can't do anything with me.

God wasn't reforming the darkness to make it light. He wasn't trying to encourage the darkness to start to shine. He says light shine forth out of the mist of darkness.

Light come into being. Genesis says let there be light. Was there light? Do you believe it? I do.

I don't have all the scientific arguments about it. I don't care. In the mist of darkness, God said let there be light and there was light because God said it.

God the Creator said it. If God the Creator says anything to you and you hear God the Creator speaking, that which He says happens. Instead of that, we listen and I'm trying to do it.

My little children said John, love one another. I'm trying more. You're not hearing from God.

If you're hearing God say that, I might say it and you might say I'm trying to do it. If you hear God saying it, you're going to start loving one another. Love one another.

Because creative power comes with the Word that God sends forth. And so with everything in the New Covenant. I don't despair of anything that God says in the New Covenant coming to pass.

I know it's going to come to pass. And that's why how I long and how I long for God's people to so wait before the Lord that when they stand or sit to minister, they will have heard from God and be able to speak what God is saying. Because if they speak what God is saying, what God is saying will come to pass in the hearts of His people.

And where there is desolation and God says let the wilderness and the solitary place be glad and rejoice, and you'll hear it from the voice of God, you're going to suddenly know that God has arisen in your life to give beauty for ashes and the oil of joy for mourning and the garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness. And He says the desert shall blossom as the rose. If you're a desert, prick up your ears.

God's talking about me. God says it's going to blossom as a rose. I'm not discouraged one little bit when I see the discouragement and the distress amongst God's people.

I don't get discouraged. I don't get troubled. I just say, Lord, You've made an investment in Your people.

They find themselves hemmed in in the wilderness. Give them courage and faith and confidence to know that You led them this way. You led them this way because You desire to be glorified over Your enemies.

And I anticipate the day when there's going to be great rejoicing in the wildernesses of God and it begins to blossom as the rose. God rises up on behalf of His people to change this wilderness in your life, in the assemblies, in the churches, this wilderness which is there because of the ruling of the carnal nature. Because men have said, you know, this is the way I see it.

Let's do it this way. When natural reasoning has replaced the voice of the Spirit, when the mind of man has taken preeminence over the mind of Christ, which is all over in the church, it has to be. If men are put in positions of office because of their influence in world affairs, because they're good businessmen, whether or not they've got a real heart for God, whether or not they're broken before God and crying to God day and night for His people doesn't seem to matter as long as they're prominent businessmen in the church and paying a lot of money.

They find themselves in a place of authority in the church. How can we expect to see fruitfulness from God's people? There's a lot of people in desert places. God is raising up a voice.

He's sending forth a voice unto such. Be encouraged. Have hope.

Rise up. Strengthen the weak hands. Confirm the feeble knees.

Say to them that are of a fearful heart, be strong. I'm looking for that day. I believe it's coming.

You and I are in such a relationship with the heart of God that we'll speak as if God Himself was speaking it. God says be strong. His people are going to be strong.

When God says let illumination flow over God's people, illumination will flow over God's people. When God says let there be light, there'll be light. When God says let there be peace, the confusion will flee away and there'll be peace because God is speaking it.

If God isn't speaking it, I can give you a teaching all about it. It used to bother me when I had early indications in my life that I was going to be a teacher because all I knew of teaching was, oh, you know, taking a scripture and unraveling it and telling you all about it. Until I realized that any ministry, teacher included, is walking in union with the heart of God and declaring words from the heart of God.

I've got a ministry of life for God's people, a ministry of creative life. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Oh, I know there's going to be some great healings physically, but it's nothing compared to the spiritual healing that God wants to bring to His people.

And the physical ailments of God's people is but a thermometer, as it were, or an instrument that indicates to you and I the spiritual condition of the body of Christ. When I say that, I don't mean that that person who is suffering has got sin in his life. I'm saying that that person who is suffering is suffering because there's a lack in the body of Christ.

And those 30 men who died out there in the fields of Ai didn't die because of any sin of theirs. They died because a man who survived the battle or he must have been out in the battle because he says, when I saw this beautiful golden wedge and this beautiful mantle of Shinar, this Babylonish garment, I coveted them and I took them and I hid them in my tent. And he survived the battle of Jericho.

And his comrades who were not responsible for his sin died in the battle of Ai. You say, it doesn't seem fair. God was dealing with one people.

And so as God deals with one people today, we're going to see some strange things happening. Let's be very hesitant to say that's because he sinned, like they said to Job. That's because where the cause might be in that self-righteous person who is pointing the finger, if indeed we're one body.

Now this situation with Bob's family. This little lad, I believe, was sick again today. And I think there's a recognition that it's connected somehow with the peace of the fellowship.

I think many are recognizing that. What shall we say? We pray for him, but we've got to seek the Lord. But if God has truly got a people, if God sees her truly coming into that place of fellowship and harmony with him, this sickness is not on the older ones, but on this little innocent member of the body.

Let's seek God for understanding. It could be a fault of any member in the body of Christ. For when one member suffers, all the members suffer with him.

I just throw that out because I think God is trying to show us something. Let's uphold the family for a little bit and ask for understanding as to what God would show us in these things. Eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Then shall a lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing, for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert. You want these flowing waters in Canaan? Our Canaan is going to be right here in the midst of this wilderness through which we are passing. In the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water, and in the habitation of dragons where each lay there shall be grass with reeds, and rushes and a highway shall be there in a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness.

The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for these, the wafering men, though fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there. The wilderness has cruel beasts that pounce upon the unsuspecting.

But as God begins to cultivate the wilderness areas of our lives, the lions will not be there. The evil beasts will not be there to devour. God's people will have been settled in the garden of the Lord in their Canaan heritage.

But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow, and morning shall flee away. But the redeemed shall walk there, upon their heads.

Thou hast desired a broken and a contrite heart. Thou hast desired a people who are broken, humbled before Thee. Thou hast truth in the inward parts.

Thou hast desired a broken and a contrite heart. Thou hast desired a people who are broken, humbled before Thee. Thou hast desired a broken and a contrite heart.

Thou hast desired a people who are broken, humbled before Thee. Thou hast desired a broken and a contrite heart. Thou hast desired a people who are humbled before Thee.

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