

The Ministry of Prayer

by Mary Peckham

This sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, humility, and obedience, as well as the need for purification and cleansing to draw near to God.

Duration: 1:01:01

Scripture: John 1:6, Acts 2:41

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of the word of God in the lives of believers. They encourage listeners to spend time reading, meditating, and praying the word of God. The speaker shares their personal love for the Bible and how it has impacted their life. They also mention the significance of studying and memorizing scripture, comparing it to the sword of the Spirit. The sermon concludes with a reference to the story of Esther and the need for purification before coming into the presence of the King.

Transcript

Thank you for your prayers during this time. It's been a blessing to know that I've been remembered in prayer. You've said such wonderful things about me, I'm going home to my husband to tell him what a wonderful person I am.

I don't think he'll believe a word of it. Paul said I am what I am by the grace of God. You folk in America have a habit of telling people these things, you know, you're such a wonderful person and so on.

We don't do that in Scotland and in England. I don't know whether we should or not, because I think it's a little bit dangerous to be telling people that they are so wonderful when they know themselves that they're not. Terrible thing to say to you, I don't believe you, that's how I feel.

One of the ladies said to me this morning, Oh, the Lord did answer your prayer and make you beautiful. It's a good job I've got a mirror in my purse, otherwise I might believe her. Well, it's been good to be with you.

When I thought, first of all, of this coming to America on my own to this conference, I must admit that I was very apprehensive, not saying the least of it. And this man, Harold Vaughan, and my husband, Colin Peckham, they were in cahoots together, and they were planning the whole thing, and here was I thinking of it. And one day in tears I said to Colin, You and you and this Harold Vaughan have arranged all this for

me.

Do you realize what this is going to mean? I'm going to go on that long journey all on my own, and it's all right, dear, you'll be okay, you'll be fine, and I'll be praying, and I was praying, I was really praying right through for you. That's all right for you, you're not going. Okay, I want to assure you that I'm 101 percent human, 101 percent human.

And some of you have said to me, too, that they would love to be able to pour out the texts of Scripture as I've done in these Here I Say sermons. Oh, by the way, the previous pastor said that, suggested that I should become a pastor. Let me assure you that I have a deep conviction in my heart that ladies should not be pastors.

They can have their job. I don't believe in women ministers, but I believe in the ministry of women. You got that? Well, what was I saying before that? About the Scriptures.

Somebody said to me this morning they'd love to know the Bible. It takes time, it takes time. I was for three years when I couldn't take any meetings because of heart palpitations.

I couldn't go hardly a day without spending hours lying on my back with my heart going at 130, 140, and one day it went at 176. And they used to rush me off one week. I was three times in the hospital rushed off to try and do something for me.

So I couldn't book a meeting because invariably it would start again. So I determined that I would spend that time reading the Bible because I believe that this is the most important thing in my life. God gave me a love for the Word of God when He saved me.

Oh, I used to hug my Bible as a young teenager. I loved the Lord. The Lord, I loved His Word.

After all, it is through His Word that we see Him. In our Bible college, the students will not receive their final diploma if they have not read the Bible through twice during their two years in the college. And during their two years in the college, they have got a third year too for a degree if they want to stay, but they've got to learn over 300 texts of Scripture and recite them off by heart because the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God.

And was it not the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory? That which we have seen and heard, said the apostle, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. The light was manifested and we have seen it and we declare unto you that eternal life. The Word is everything.

I'm no expert of the Word. I spend quite some time each day before I put my feet on the floor because if I do, ladies, you know what happens if you put your foot on the floor. It means that you're at it right through the day and there's no time.

So you've got to take time and redeem the time and get this Word into your heart. There's lots of books and, well, they're okay, but there's no book more important in your life than this one. Live in the Word.

Meditate on the Word. Quote the Word in your prayers. Pray the Word of God and you will draw near to God through His Word.

Now the final word for this conference, Esther chapter 4, the book of Esther. I'd love to be able to read the whole book of Esther to you. You can do that when you go home.

I hope you'll do that. And read it not just once or twice, but over and over and over again until the story of Esther gets right into your system. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai was Esther's cousin.

She was his uncle's daughter. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes and went out into the midst of the city and cried with a loud and a bitter cry and came even before the king's gate, for none might enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews and fasting and weeping and wailing and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved, and she sent Raymond to clothe Mordecai and to take away his sackcloth from him, but he received it not. Then called Esther for Hethach, one of the king's chamberlains who had been appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai to know what it was and why it was.

So Hethach went forth to Mordecai and to the street of the city which was before the king's gate, and Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews to destroy them. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to show it unto Esther and to declare it unto her and to charge her that she should go in unto the king to make supplication unto him and to make requests before him for her people. And Hethach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Again Esther spake unto Hethach and gave him commandment unto Mordecai, All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces do know that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter that he may live. But I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days, and be told to Mordecai Esther's words. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house more than all the Jews, for if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed.

And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this? Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day. I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house over against the king's house. And the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house over against the gate of the house. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight.

And the king held out to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand. So Esther drew near and touched the top of the scepter. Ending at verse 2 of chapter 5. And God will bless to us his word.

Let us pray. Come Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire. Let us thine influence prove, source of the old prophetic fire, fountain of life and love.

Come Holy Ghost, for moved by thee the prophets wrote and spoke. Unlock the truth, thyself the key, unseal the sacred book for Jesus' sake. Amen.

The story of Esther is a thrilling story, and this is a ladies' conference. And we're going to consider together this story of Esther. And I hope that God will plant something in your heart and in mine as I speak this afternoon.

Is it afternoon? No, it's still morning. My time is upside down anyway. The curtain rises in the first chapter of the book of Esther upon Ahasuerus, the great king.

He has a tremendous kingdom, 127 provinces from India across to Ethiopia, of which he was king. And he has a great gathering of all his lords and chamberlains and delegates and what have you. And he spends six months, according to the first chapter, showing them the glories of his kingdom.

Must have been some kingdom. Elaborating on his riches and on the glory and on the power that he possessed as a king. And he feasts with all these people.

They have a marvelous time of celebration over his greatness. Then for the common people later on, he has another celebration at Shushan the palace. And so it's a great time of rejoicing all together.

And then the Vashti, the queen, she has all her ladies around her and she also has a feast. And in concluding, after all the feasting and the drinking and the joy of the occasion, Ahasuerus thought that it was time to show all these delegates and all these leaders of the provinces, all his chamberlains and what have you, show them the beautiful queen that was his queen, Vashti. And so he sent messengers to her to please come and be paraded before these important people.

And she refused. Well, the king was very angry. And so he consulted his wise men as to what should be done about Vashti.

Having refused to come and put in an appearance, seemed to spoil the whole thing that his wife would put the spoke in the wheel at this stage. And so his wise men said, well, if you give in to her and let her off with it, then this will spread right through the provinces. And all these ladies will rise up and demand their own way.

That will never do. So what you must do is give her the order of the boot. Do you have that expression? So Vashti got the order of the boot and she was out.

And then in the second chapter, we find the king thinking of all this. And then he was advised again that he should send messengers throughout the whole land and find a replacement for Vashti the queen. And this is where we come across Esther.

Well, all these ladies were brought, all these girls, and they were paraded before the king. They were prepared, first of all, to appear before the king. And then we find that this girl Esther is chosen.

She was an unlikely choice. You know, God makes very many unlikely choices. He brings many a profit from obscurity.

We tend in evangelical circles these days to parade people who might have had some place of importance in the world, or maybe they were in Hollywood, or maybe they were at one time pop stars and converted and they're still pop stars. I won't name any names. And they are paraded, look who we've got on the

platform here.

And we all bow and scrape to them because of what they were. You know, God says in His Word that not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God has chosen the things that are not, things that are despised, the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are that. No, what was the pastor speaking about flesh? Should glory in His presence.

Not many mighty, not many noble. And if you read your history aright, you will find all kinds of people. You will find all kinds of unlikely choices.

Well, go back to the Bible and find Peter, whoever would have chosen Peter a fisherman. Only God could choose such a man. Imagine Peter who denied him three times.

Imagine Peter who could blurt out anything that came into his imagination. Imagine Peter who after the resurrection had to be named by name, otherwise he might not have come. Go tell my disciples on Peter that I go before you into Galilee.

Why did he say that? Because Peter had denied him and no doubt if he had heard the message, go tell my disciples, poor Peter wouldn't have come. He would have been too ashamed to come. But the Lord of Glory said, go tell my disciples on Peter that I go before you.

And isn't it amazing that it was on the day of Pentecost, Peter stood forth with the eleven and he preached and three thousand souls came to Christ. Oh God makes, He makes unlikely choices. He makes strange choices.

And so often you find in the scripture, you find the prophets and there's no word of their pedigree. To us the pedigree is so important, but not to God. Remember John the Baptist, there was a man sent from God whose name was John.

Could you find anything more ordinary than that? And could you find anything more strange than the figure that emerged from the wilderness? Clothed as he was with camel's hair and a diet of locusts and wild honey. And it was John who pointed to Jesus by the river Jordan and said, behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. The latchet of whose shoes I'm not worthy to unloose, to stoop down and unloose.

All we can go down through is, what about D.L. Moody who came to Scotland? He couldn't speak the Queen's English. But in Edinburgh alone 3,000 souls came to Christ through the ministry of D.L. Moody. We don't know anything about his pedigree.

What about Billy Bray down there in Cornwall? He was so full of the joy of the Lord that one day coming home with a basket over his arm and a little dress that had been given to him for one of his little children. He danced the dress out of the basket with the joy of the Lord as he made his way home. He lost the dress and he probably got a scolding from his wife at the end of the journey.

Not many might. And whoever in this day would have chosen a Jewish girl to become the Queen for this great, powerful, rich king, Ahasuerus, of course she did not. She did not betray her identity.

She was told by Mordecai, her cousin, that she mustn't tell that she was a Jewess because that would not have been acceptable. So we have God's unlikely choice of this young lady. But she had to be prepared

for the presence of the king.

And how was she prepared? For six months she was prepared, first of all, first of all with sweet spices and all sorts of things. We don't know anything about that. But she was prepared for twelve months according to the manner of the woman, and that is in chapter 2 and verse 12.

According to the manner of the woman, for so were the days of her purification accomplished to wit, six months with oil of myrrh and six months with sweet odor. This is how she was prepared for the presence of the king. Six whole months she went through this purification process before putting in an appearance in the presence of the king.

We live in a day of push-button experiences. You push the button and everything will happen. I pushed the button of my dishwasher the other day and nothing happened.

It just rolled. So I put a big face on it with a mouth like that, out of order. Purification doesn't happen overnight.

We don't just press the button spiritually to prepare ourselves for the presence of the king. All so often there is a painful period of purification. We're talking about intercession.

We're talking about coming into the presence of the king. You remember that story from the Hebrides revival when the elders met together and they were praying and then this elder John Smith, who was a blacksmith, he read Psalm 24 to the men and he said to them, Brethren, we'll read this Psalm. And what did the Psalm say? Who shall ascend into the hill of God? Who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully, he shall receive the blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

And John turned to his friends, the other elders, and he said, My dear brethren, it is absolute humbug for us to be here today seeking God unless our hands are clean and our hearts are pure. So let us confess our situation and our condition before Almighty God because we are here to ascend into the hill of God. And God is a holy God and he requires clean hands.

Are our hands clean? In all our dealings with others, are our hands clean? Remember a story that Duncan Campbell used to tell of being at a meeting down, I think, in England and a choir sang that song, Calvary Covers It All, My Past With Its Sin and Shame, beautiful song by John Moore. And they sang it. And then Duncan Campbell got up to preach and he said this, My dear people, he said, Calvary will never cover what you have to uncover.

One of the men came to him afterwards. He said to him, he said, What am I to do? Must I go back to my wife and tell her that I'm a thief? Must I tell my children that God's a thief? Because he said, I have furnished my house from my firm and I haven't paid for it. And now the years have gone past and the firm no longer exists.

What must I do? Duncan Campbell said to him, you want to get right with God, you will go home and do exactly what you've said. You can take the value of your furniture and pay it wherever the Lord leads you to pay it, because the firm didn't exist anymore, and it did. And the joy and release came to him.

Calvary will never cover what you have to uncover. There is a cleansing process, clean hands and a pure heart. What do we read in the Beatitudes? Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Something to think about. And so we find Esther, this young girl going through this process of purification according to the laws of the land. And then there were all the sweet spices and things that we don't understand in this process.

And then there were six further months with sweet odors. Wonder what that was in my simplicity. I think that that may be as she went into the presence of the king, purified and cleansed and fitted and clothed and fit for the presence of the king, that the odors, the odors filled the atmosphere around her.

The sweet odors. We all love sweet odors. Let me say this, that the woman who is right with God carries with her an atmosphere.

Duncan Campbell used to say, the greatest thing about us all is our unconscious influence. The influence that we have when we are not trying to influence anybody. The influence that we are unconscious of.

When Moses came down from the mount, what do we read? He had been in communion with God. And we read, he whisked not that the skin of his face shone, and he had to veil his face because the people were afraid. Oh, to carry about with us in our home that fragrance of the presence of God, that wonderful fragrance of a holy life, of a clean life, not something synthetic on the surface, but something that is deep and sincere and honest and truthful.

But one has said, we are what we are when we are on our knees before God and nothing else, because there we must be honest. And so Esther is ushered into the presence of the king, and we read that she found favor with the king, Ahasuerus. So there she is, a young Jewess, an unexpected choice, how unlikely, unlikely choice.

She came as a child of the captivity. She was brought up by her cousin, Mordecai, who loved her very much, where her parents killed during that captivity. We are not told how they died, but we are told that they did die.

And so there she was, what an unlikely choice she was. Now, if you are genuinely saved, you can look back and you can also say that you are an unlikely choice, and you can say, oh God, why me? Why me? I can say that. When I think of myself in my rebellion away in the city of Glasgow, far removed from the revival, I had no thought of God and the things of God.

But I'm so glad that there is a verse in the scripture that says, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. I wasn't seeking him. I'm fond of them that sought me not, the scripture says.

There she was, this unlikely choice, and she finds favor with the king, and she is now the queen. She is now in intimate relationship with the king. She is now in this position in these 127 provinces.

She is in a position of great honor. What is it all about? What is the purpose of it all from the Godward side? Well, we see it unfolding as we read through the book of Esther, the purpose of God in this unlikely choice that was made. She wasn't chosen to sit back comfortably and enjoy the luxury of Shushan, the palace, and her ladies-in-waiting and all the other things that surrounded her.

She was there in the purposes of God. I want to assure you ladies today that if you are saved by sovereign grace, you are not saved just to sit and warm the key on a Sunday morning and evening, and that's all there is to it. You have a tremendous responsibility because you're not your own.

God saves us. He saves us to become missionaries. You don't need to go to a foreign field to be a missionary.

You are a missionary. Like it or not, you are a missionary. Now the story unfolds.

And what happens? Well, you'll find that tragedy struck. The king appoints Haman as his prime minister, if you like. We don't have a prime minister, but John Major is our prime minister.

But he's the chief man in the land. They're always talking about him and so on and so forth, while you center on Clinton for better or for worse. I didn't say what.

But there was Haman. He was exalted. But there was a problem.

The Jews only bowed their knee to one God, and they would not bow their knee to any man. And Mordecai refused to bow his knee, and he got into trouble. And Haman couldn't stand it.

He could not stick this Mordecai, who refused to bow his knee to him. He had one God and only one God. And only this God, to this God, would he bow his knee, because thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve.

He was a godly man, Mordecai. Well, to cut a long story short, Haman worked on the situation and got the ear of the king. And his proclamation was sent out through the land with the king's seal, with his ring upon it, that the whole of the Jewish nation should be blotted out.

The Jews should be killed. And it was the law of the Medes and the Persians that cannot be altered. And so, Mordecai heard about this.

Oh, he had done a good turn to the king before then, because two of his chamberlains wanted to kill him, and Mordecai sent word through Esther about it, and the life of the king was saved. That was just by the way, but that comes into the story as an important part later on. But here we find Mordecai now breaking his heart.

He, in chapter 4, verse 1, Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth with ashes and went out into the midst of the city. And can you picture it? Have you got a good imagination? He went out into the midst of the city and he cried with a loud and a bitter cry. And there was great mourning, verse 3, among the Jews and fasting and weeping and wailing and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

The sword was stretched out over the Jews. Do you realize what that means? What would have happened to us, what would have happened to the gospel if the Jewish nation had been at this time blotted out? We owe everything to the Jews. We owe the gospel to the Jews.

We owe the scripture to the Jews. And now the sword was stretched forth and Mordecai, this godly man, puts off his clothes, wraps himself in this sackcloth, denying himself, sackcloth and ashes and sits there in the king's gate and he cries with a loud and a bitter cry to heaven that God would intervene for his people. And then the messengers came in to Esther and told her about her cousin who was in this sad state.

And she sent some raiment, some clothes to him that he might clothe himself. And then he sent back a message to her why it was that this was so and that the Jews were crying and he related to her the whole sad tale of the condemnation and the judgment that was to come upon the nation, upon his people, upon her people. And he said, Esther, you're the one.

You must intercede with the king in this situation. And she said, but you know, there is one law to put anyone to death who enters into the presence of the king without invitation. I can't do that.

And modically I said to her, well now, Esther, if you don't do it, God will find somebody else who will do it and you will perish. And so she calls her maidens around her to fast and to pray and to seek God. And she sends out word that the Jews should all fast and pray and seek God.

There is no more important exercise in the church or in your individual life than prayer. Do you remember what Jesus said? My father's house shall be called, not a concert hall, a house of prayer. And he was jealous over his father's house and it being a house of prayer.

And they made it a house of merchandise. What is your church like? Is it a house of prayer? That's what it ought to be. That's the most important exercise of the church.

And so they got to pray. They got to fasting. First of all, they recognized the situation in their land.

They recognized that there was no way in which the law of the maids and the Persians should As you look out upon your land, can you see any answer other than that God should intervene? There is no answer. The condition, the moral cesspool of iniquity in the land. The destruction of the homes in the land.

The destruction of the children born into this country. Oh, I have a daughter who is teaching primary school and sometimes I break my heart over the stories that she brings home from these children. Psychologically disturbed.

No desire to learn anything. No compulsion from the home to do well. No sense of home, no security of parenthood.

No responsibility of parenthood. Three generations that have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and don't want to hear it. Living on a welfare state and incurring more and more and more expenses on the government trying to support children born out of wedlock and parents who don't know what it is to work.

Oh, the tragedy of it. The tragedy of these little children. As she looks at their behavior in the classroom and sees the signs.

This little one is being abused in the home. This one is being abused by her father. This one is being abused by her mother's boyfriend.

And so it goes on the endless, endless list. Children destroyed. How many parents think of their children when they fight with each other? Do they think of the reverberations down through the years of that child's life? As it recalls, our streets are full of young people who have run away from home.

They sleep in cardboard boxes. I suppose they're the same here. And more expenses incurred on the local authorities to provide them some place that they might sleep in.

The country has lost its soul because it has lost its God. And isn't it the same with America? But oh, for the Mordecais who are not ashamed to cry. Oh, for the Mordecais who are not ashamed to cry aloud.

For the Mordecais who are willing to be in sackcloth and who are willing for all to see that they are disturbed and distressed. Remember, when Daniel went into the presence of the king, he was the king's cupbearer. He was sad.

He was sad because a way back there, the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates thereof. Were burned with fire. How many of us are concerned for our land? How many of us are concerned for the state of the church? How many of us are concerned for the spiritual Zion? I remember missioning in one place in the island of Tyree.

We lived in a little cottage with a leafy roof. And we were preaching in a church that had shutters up because the windows were broken. And there were drafts galore, as we say in Scotland, coming in under the door.

Some nights there was nobody there who would come to the meetings. Other nights you would have a handful. One night we had the local postman who was unsaved and an old missionary who was as deaf as a stone.

When I asked him to pray, he thought I asked him to sing and he sang. And we hardly knew what to do. The situation was desperate.

But one morning, as we were on our knees, as we were on knees every morning seeking God, two of us girls, very young girls at that, we had no fuel for the fire. We had very little money, none at all. We lived on the eggs that people gave us.

We had seven dozen at one time in the house. We had them for breakfast. We had them for lunch.

And we had them for our evening meal. But this particular morning we were on our knees praying, wrapped in blankets because we had no fuel to put on our fire. And it was wintertime and it was snow.

You can imagine how cold it was. And as we prayed, suddenly it came to us, we are not here to exalt ourselves or to exalt the mission that we represent or to prove God that he can supply our needs in this situation. We are here for one purpose, to see the Lord Jesus Christ uplifted and honored in this community.

And his name is in the gutter as far as these people are concerned. There is no desire for him. And we prayed and prayed and prayed on until there came the moment, now I've got a Presbyterian background, there came the moment when my fellow worker did something that I never heard her doing before and that I certainly never did before and that I never heard anyone else doing before.

And it wasn't the Toronto blessing either. She began to laugh. And as she laughed, a laugh of victory, she said, thank God, she said, praise God, the devil's on the run.

We have the victory. We went along to the meeting on the Wednesday night and the church was full. And they brought heaters with them, paraffin heaters.

And after the meeting was over, a young man walked down the aisle, that was in the middle of the seventh week of preaching, six times a week. And he came down the aisle and he said, I'm not going home tonight until I get saved. And suddenly the fires of revival, began to spread throughout the island.

And people came, converged on the meeting house. After about nine weeks, we moved from there to the next place for six weeks and then the next place for, was it nine or 10 weeks? And then to the next place and the grand finale in the middle of the island, in the largest church on the island, it was filled. It hadn't been filled for years.

And it was all that one moment of breaking through into the presence of God. And that's not easy. Can't turn it on like that.

And so they fasted and they prayed. And the first answer to prayer was when, oh, Esther said, okay, I'll go. I'll go into the presence of the king.

And she said, if I perish, I perish. In other words, she's saying, I'm staking my life on this. I'm going to go into the presence of the king.

What determination. If ladies leave this conference saying individually in their hearts, oh God, whatever it costs, whatever it means, I stake my life on it. I'm giving myself to pray for this nation, for this people, for my church.

And I'm going to pray on. You know how to learn? You know how to pray? I'll tell you how you learn to pray. By praying.

You just keep at it. When nothing else matters, not the salvation of your loved ones, not the salvation of your children, not the salvation of your husbands. Nothing else matters, but that in these lives, the Lord Jesus Christ is uplifted.

When God brought us there, and God broke through, we were, as it were, out of the way. The glory of God was all that mattered. Oh, what a thrill to see God doing in a moment what we've been trying to do for many years.

So she entered into, the first answer to prayer was this. Siesta in a royal robe, standing in the presence of the king, waiting apprehensively to know whether there would be the smile of approval or whether there would be the condemnation and she would suffer death. My friend, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to whom we come, has broken the way into the presence of God for us.

The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And what the priest had but once a year, we have at any time, in any place, under any circumstance, we can come with boldness to the throne of grace that we might obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.

But this young girl, she stood in the presence of the king and what happened? The first answer to prayer, she found favor in his sight. And then he reached out the symbol of power to her, the golden scepter. And that wasn't all.

See Esther as she comes gingerly into the presence of the king and she touches the golden scepter. She touches the source of power. Oh, for men and women who will do that.

You've heard of the two old ladies in the island of Lewis, two sisters in their humble little cottage, night after night, into the small hours they prayed and wrestled with God over a generation, my generation, who had no interest in the things of God. We would pass by her door to go off to the only cinema in the island to storm away or to some other enjoyment, amusement. We were not interested in God, but these two ladies were interested in God and they longed and yearned for the glory of God to be revealed in that generation.

Until eventually God revealed his secrets to them and they knew exactly who to send for. They had never seen him. They had never met him before.

I don't know how they heard about it. And they sent a message to Duncan Campbell to say he must come to minister in their congregation. Duncan Campbell wrote back and he said, I can't.

My program is full. And so they sent another message to him and say, that's what you say, Duncan Campbell. Your program is full, but that is not what God has said to us.

And so all his program fell through amazingly. And he came and he stepped off the boat. Now listen, when he stepped off the boat, he was met by two elders.

There was this evangelist. What was the first question they asked him? Mr. Campbell, are you walking with God? Are you walking with God? And then they took him and they said, your tea is ready, but the people are at the church waiting. And he used to say, I never had that tea.

Because the meeting went on and on. Well, that's another story. But here she touched the source of power.

Oh, for women who will enter into the presence of God, purified with the aroma of a holy life, sanctified and meet for the master's use, and ready to every good work, a vessel unto honor. The next answer to prayer was that Ahasuerus had a sleepless night. He couldn't sleep.

And so he asked in chapter six, he asked that the chronicles be read to him. Well, when I can't sleep, I don't think it's a chronicles, a book of chronicles that I would like read to me. You know what's in it? But these were the chronicles.

These were the things that happened in Israel. That these were the things that were recorded. And it was recorded that his life was saved, and that it was saved by Mordecai.

And they said, now what? Oh, I love this part of the story. I think it's wonderful. He said to them, well, what has been done for this man? Nothing has been done.

He said, well, who's in the court? Well, old Haman was there in the court, the prime minister. He had made a gallows, or he had had it made, a gallows on which Mordecai was going to be hanged. And there he was with his heart full of hatred for Mordecai.

And he wanted this man to die, to be hanged by the neck on these gallows, so that he wouldn't have this problem of Mordecai not bending down and paying homage to him. Well, Haman's in the court. Call him in.

And the king said to him, what must be done to the man whom the king honors? Ah, wow, what an opportunity. So Haman laid it on thick and fast. Let him ride on the king's horse, wear the king's apparel, the king's crown on his head, and let it be heralded before him as he's led through the streets.

So let it be done to the man whom the king honors. And the king says to him, go and do that to Mordecai. Poor, poor Haman.

And Haman went home that night with his tail between his legs, and he told Sarath, his wife, his whole sad story. He said, well, if that's the case, something dreadful is going to happen to you. Then there was the first party, with Esther calling the king and calling Haman.

And then they had this party, and she didn't tell the king the problem then. And then there was to be another party. And of course, Haman was very proud to be invited to the party, but there was old Mordecai again, crying.

There was Mordecai, he wouldn't bow his knee to him. And then the queen tells the story. And you know the sad plight of Haman, that he was hanging on the gallows that he had made for Mordecai.

And then Mordecai's exaltation, he becomes the prime minister of the land. It's a wonderful story, how God, in his mercy, saved a nation by the obedience of one beautiful girl. Of one unlikely choice.

You know, there is no limit to what God can do with a man or a woman who yields entirely to him for his purposes. The way of acts is open. It's open wide for you.

It's open wide for me. Oh, may God make us Mordecais and Esther, who together, in the purposes of God, not for our glory, we are nothing, we are nobodies. We are unlikely choices for the purposes of God.

If we get in the way, God help us. God have mercy on us. But God give to us that ministry that Jesus spoke of behind the scenes, not the ministry of the Pharisees who paraded their ministry, who paraded their religion in the streets.

But he says, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and pray to thy father who is in secret, and thy father who seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. That's something that we don't talk about. That's something that is between our souls and God.

That is the private ministry that can mean so much for the extension of, and the promises, all the promises that we have. Ask and it shall be given thee. Seek and ye shall find.

I will pour water. Let me tell you another story from the revival about John Smith, the blacksmith. With this, I close.

They had a cottage prayer meeting one night. It was about midnight hour in a district which has yet had not been touched by the revival. And this man, John Smith, was there, and various elders, and Duncan Campbell was there.

And John was asked to pray. And John got up and he broke and he said, Oh God, I don't know about my fellow elders, and I don't know about the rest of the people in this prayer meeting tonight. I don't even know where Duncan Campbell stands before me, but if I know my own heart, I know this.

That I'm thirsty. And thou hast said, I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, and if you don't love, how can I believe you again? The house shook. The dishes rattled on the shelf.

They went out to the door. They thought it's an earthquake, but no other house shook. And then they became conscious of the fact that that dark night there were pinpoints of light all around, people coming with torches.

And they're coming, some of them carrying chairs, and they're making for the little prayer house where they held the weekly Bible study and prayer meeting in the middle of the village. And they converged upon the place, and revival broke out. I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground, and the floods came.

A wonderful revival was ushered in. And I remember being in that little hall that was the prayer meeting place, and a bus parked outside by the open windows. The bus full, the hall full, and the singing of the praises of God.

I think of one psalm that they would be singing, Thou shalt arise and be mercy yet. Thou to Mount Zion shalt extend, the time to favor her is set. Yea, the set time has come to an end.

You know how it is in the book of Psalms. The time to favor her is set, for thy servants take pleasure in her stones. Yea, they favor the very dust thereof.

Oh, it became a rallying place for the people of God, hungry and thirsty and jealous for the glory of God in the midst of his people. Provide thy work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years make known in wrath, remember mercy.

Provide that thy people might rejoice in thee. God continue to speak to you as you make your way home.

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