

Slightly Healed

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon 'Slightly Healed' calls for individuals to listen to God's voice and take personal responsibility for their spiritual lives amidst a backdrop of historical disobedience.

Duration: 1:00:54

Scripture: Jeremiah 6:6-17, Jeremiah 16:16

Topics: "Healing"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the disappointment of God with His chosen people, using the analogy of a vineyard. Despite God's efforts to cultivate and protect His people, they have produced wild fruit instead of good fruit. God decides to remove His watchmen and break down the walls, allowing the vineyard to be trampled. The preacher emphasizes the importance of setting our minds and wills to listen to what God wants to say, using the example of Jeremiah who was sent by God to deliver a message that the people did not want to hear. The preacher also encourages the audience to study the scriptures, particularly Acts and the New Testament epistles, as textbooks for understanding God's intended ways for His people.

Transcript

Will you turn please to Jeremiah chapter 6. I begin reading in a moment with the sixth verse and we'll continue through the seventeenth verse in order that we might have the scriptural background for our message this evening. Jeremiah chapter 6, verses 6 through 17. For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, for thus hath the Lord of Hosts said, Hew ye down trees and cast them out against Jerusalem.

This is the city to be visited. She is holy oppression in the midst of her. As a fountain casteth out her water, so she casteth out her wickedness.

Violence and spoil is heard in her before me continually as grief and wounds. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee, lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, they shall throughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine.

Turn back thine hand as a grape gatherer into the baskets. To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot hearken. Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach.

They have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord. I am weary with holding in.

I will pour it out upon the children abroad and upon the assembly of young men together. For even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. And their houses shall be turned unto others with their fields and wives together.

For I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord. For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them everyone is given to covetousness. And from the prophet even unto the priest everyone dealeth falsely.

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush. Therefore they shall fall among them that fall.

At the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see and ask for the old paths where is the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Also I set watchmen over you saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Jerusalem is God's chosen city, the place of his abiding, the city of his dwelling, the place of his testimony.

It was there that he instructed the temple to be erected. This sermon in marble and in the tabernacle in the wilderness as he dwelt with his people. But when they came into the land he selected this place that it might be the point of their meeting with him and that there this temple which Solomon built might be the place to which the eyes of all the inhabitants of the land should look.

And in looking there should remember his covenant, remember the law, remember the offerings, the sacrifices, and all the provisions of his grace. Thus in the Old Testament Jerusalem stands for the place of his dwelling. It is synonymous with the place of his meeting with his people.

It is also to be thought of as his testimony to the idolatrous nations around them. And when he speaks of Jerusalem he is not speaking of mud walled houses or of stone paved streets. Nor actually is he speaking of a temple that was erected out of costly material and with great thought and pain.

He is speaking of the witness that he had in his people Israel. This nation that he had caused to be born out of death for Abram was when called as good as dead and Isaac was the seed of God's miraculous life imparted to a woman far past the years of bearing in order that there might come from one as good as dead a nation which would have its background in the promise of God and in the power of God. That they would never be able to say see what we have done, what we have wrought.

And thus it was that it began supernaturally. But it was formed as a nation supernaturally. For Egypt was that place where it was developed.

A heterogeneous company of slaves. Slaves that had been demeaned by meaningless toil. Bruised by cruel taskmasters and turned into brutes by the absence of any significance for life or opportunity to become what God intended man to be.

But God loved this people and by his stretched out arm and his great power he delivered them at the cost of Pharaoh's life and his army. As the pursuing army was destroyed in the sea so God's people were delivered by his stretched out arm. And he said he gave nations, Egypt, Ethiopia, other nations he gave for Israel.

That he might have a people that would know him and understand him, love him, and long to glorify him. And thus Israel was God's chosen bride. Not bride but wife.

He said he was married to her. And the purpose of his having this people was that he might have a witness to those about him. A witness to the nations on every hand.

And so Israel's experience was after the third generation from the triumphant crossing of the Jordan River under Joshua's leadership, they went back to serving Baal and Ashtoreth. It was then from that time a series of ups and downs, disobedience, unbelief, wickedness, idolatry, leading to captivity. And then a judge being raised up, a deliverer being sent of the Lord in answer to the cry of some.

And this was God's way of ransoming this people. But you saw the prophet Isaiah in that striking 43rd chapter that God said he was through with this wicked, this disobedient, unbelieving, fickle nation that would serve the Lord diligently in one year and serve the gods of the land the next. And God said, I've had enough.

I'm finished with you. I'm through with you. It's just not possible to get anything out of you.

In the fifth chapter he said, what more can I do for you than I've done? I've chosen a vine, a costly vine. I've dug a field. I've fenced it in.

I've put watchmen and guards. And when I looked that it would bring forth fruit, it brought forth wild fruit, wild grapes. What am I going to do now, said he? I'm going to take the watchmen away.

I'm going to break the walls down. And I'm going to allow the vine to become trampled in the ground. But he wasn't through at that time.

Other prophets came. These also served the Lord. These also were willing to stand as witnesses for the Lord Jesus.

And we find that Jeremiah, sent of God, he was told by the Lord that the people would not hear him. If he sent them to a people of strangers, they would. But since he'd sent them to his own, they wouldn't hear him.

It's a terrible thing for a man to begin a ministry with the word that came to Jeremiah, saying that as to Isaiah, also for the same thing, he said, there will be a great forsaking in the midst of the land, yet there will be a tithe. And it was something similar that was given to Jeremiah. Now we find him as he is dealing with the generation that's there responsible to face the dangers of their hour and the claims of God upon them.

And we've heard here how that God has spoken of this people, this witness. He addresses his words to Jerusalem, but it isn't walls and streets and floors and chimneys and fireplaces and stables. This isn't what he's talking about.

He's talking about men and women that are there under his name and calling themselves the people of God. And he is saying that instead of finding the evidence of God's grace manifest in their life, he finds that they're like a fountain, but not casting out pure water, but casting out wickedness, violence, spoil, griefs, and wounds. My, what a testimony it is.

What a sad day has fallen upon this land when God's servant has to say such a thing as he has said here. But I think that we find this parallel. We're dealing not now with a nation.

We're not dealing with the nation of America. I see no parallel at all in the scripture between our land and Israel. We're not a theocracy in spite of the fact that we have in God we trust on our coins, and now in our pledge of allegiance we are one nation under God.

We are not a theocracy in any sense at all. We're a nation that has had a rich heritage. The parallel is not to be established between America and Israel, and I don't even think it's to be established between the church and Israel.

But the point of parallel is between you and me and the people of Israel, and to establish there whether or not we are going to accept the responsibility for our day and our generation. We're so apt, you know, to think about what England is going to do. But do you know that England's policy is made up of a few men, just a very few men, that sit together perplexed and confused trying to arrive at what is expedient and profitable and the wisest course to take? England doesn't have a mind.

England doesn't have a conscience. England doesn't have a will. It's men, just ordinary men such as ourselves, that by the accident of circumstances are plunged into or pushed into responsibilities far beyond their ability and their insight.

I've told you I think sometime in the past of going into the office of the director of education in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, a faithful churchman in the cathedral in Khartoum, and I wanted to get into the Ngesena tribe. I said, you have it in your power. You can sign a paper.

No one will criticize you. You as a professing Christian, as a member of the church, ought to view this people with concern and give them an opportunity to hear. He looked at me and said, I want you to know that when I sit behind this desk, I am a servant of his majesty and I am determined that I'm going to continue in this as not letting my personal convictions and my religion influence my government responsibilities.

But he was. He was letting them influence. England doesn't have a mind.

The United States doesn't have a mind. It doesn't have a will. It doesn't have a character.

It's people, you, me. Decisions are being made by men now sitting behind closed doors that are going to affect your future. They're going to affect the future of this world in which we live.

Decisions being made by failable mortals, frail men with all the perplexities and uncertainties, with all the prejudices that we have. Just imagine yourself responsible to make some of the decisions that have to be made every day and probably will be shaking in their consequences next week. Well, they're made by people that have perhaps more information, but sometimes added information brings added uncertainty and added perplexity.

But it's always the attitude of some to say, well, let the government do it. Let the, and so there's an impersonal they that are responsible for decisions. There have been decisions made by our government that are absolutely reprehensible.

But who made them? The government? The United States? No, some man acting from motive best known to him, or perhaps not even known to him, or on advice, good or bad. Point I'm trying to make is this, that we can't charge something so nebulous as the church. We can't charge something so nebulous as the, so faceless as the nation.

It finally comes down to this. God is looking for a man to stand in the gap, fill up the edge. He's looking for a man, he's looking for a woman, he's dealing with you.

Now if we are prepared to recognize that the nation of America is a composite of all of the influences, all of the personalities, the history, the economic pressures, the group pressures, we're not going to be so critical because we're going to see that these are men. If we want to change the direction of the course of the nation, then change the characters of the people that are directing the course of the nation. It's as simple as that.

It's got to be a personal matter. And so we find that God is dealing here with Jerusalem, but then he turns from dealing with this faceless thing, a city of stone and brick, and he comes right back to the fact that there isn't anyone to whom he can speak. To whom shall I speak and give warning? That they may hear.

This is the cry of the prophet. Is there a man, is there a woman in Jerusalem that will listen to him, that will believe what he says, will accept what he says? Thus it comes back to the fact that in our day, in our generation, we must be prepared to accept personal responsibility for the future. God is looking for you.

What are you going to do about the day in which you live and the responsibilities which you face? You can't undo President Kennedy's decisions. You'll have to live with them, just as he's had to live with the decisions of his predecessors. And you can't do anything about a great many things.

But God's not going to hold you responsible for what you can't change. He's going to hold you responsible for whether or not you are listening to hear what he is saying to the church today. He is saying to individuals today, are you prepared tonight to say this? I am determined to hear what God says to me.

I want to hear him. I've opened my mind to hear him. I've surrendered my will to hear him.

I am prepared to let God say to me anything that he wants to say. Are you? Then you are on the ground where God can deal with you. You say, well, will his dealing with me and any wise affect the future of the land, of the state of the church? Will it affect? Of course it will.

Of course it will. Why, you'd be amazed how sensitive people in great government responsibility are to the opinions of individuals, and how important it is to find out what people are thinking. Now, if you are going to recognize the fact that in this scripture that's before us, God is indicting a nation because there isn't anyone in the nation that will listen to God, speak through his servant the prophet, you're going to have to say, well, in this day, and in this hour, I can't listen for anybody else.

I can't give attention for anybody else. I can't hear for anybody else. But I can hear for me.

I can listen to what God has to say. I will open my mind, my heart, my ears to what God is saying today. I'm prepared to let him speak to me.

Now, that's the first issue that has to be settled. If there is to be something more than the slightest healing, there has to be a preparation of mind, a readiness of heart to say, I want to hear everything that God has to say to me and to others. I am putting myself in the place where I will hear what the Lord has to say.

Now, that isn't too difficult, but this is his first indictment against this nation, that they would not listen to him. They would not give him ear. They would not hearken.

The word of the Lord is unto them as a reproach, and they have no delight in it. My, how difficult it is for God to bless a people when the people will not hear. How difficult it is for God to bless a church if the church will not hear.

How difficult it is for God to bless you or me if we're not prepared to listen to the Lord and let him speak to us. So the first thing that is essential if you are to be part of the answer and not a complicating factor in the problem is that you set your mind, you set your will, you fix your attention in this direction. I will give attention to what God wants to say.

This is the least I can do. I am prepared to hear. Now, when you say hear, it doesn't just put your ear out because you know it's too easy to turn the ear and to listen and to nod and say, yes, yes, that's good.

I'll think about that and perhaps I can do something. And of course, you haven't heard a word that's said. It's too easy to do that.

And this isn't what God's asking for. When he asks you to listen, he's asking you to bring every thought into the focus of that which is being presented and to think about that which you hear. Now, this is the point of beginning.

Nothing can be done other than the very slightest healing unless there is to be this close attention to what God has to say. Listen to the Lord. Then we find that God has also stated that there are old ways.

This we find in the 16th verse. I want you to see that early now. Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

But they said, we will not walk therein. I have been a lifelong opponent to the spirit that I call dodo birdism, always looking backward to the good old days, not caring where we're going, but just interested in where we've been. Now, I'm not contradicting myself at all, I don't believe.

If you want to look back, it's good, as long as you look far enough back to see things as they ought to be seen. If you look back to what happened in great-grandfather's day, there's only one thing I'd say about it. Remember, great-grandfather was just as dissatisfied as you are, and he was looking back to the good old days of his great-grandfather.

And so there's no, there's no margin in this. If you look backward to the, say, oh, if we just could have been here in Dr. Simpson's day, remember the people in the latter part of Dr. Simpson's day were looking back to the early part of Dr. Simpson's day, and then the people before him were looking back to other days. I believe that this is just a dead-end street.

It really gets us nowhere if we have something in the past, in the more or less immediate past. But if you want to look back and find the good old ways, then you'll have to go back a long way, and that's back to the Word of God. Our Lord came to his generation and he said, the traditions of the fathers have made the Word of God of none effect.

In my library upstairs and at home, I have accumulated as many sets of commentaries as I can afford, and I would, there are others that I'd like, but refer to them because they're available in libraries and elsewhere. But you know, this is what I discover. It's extremely easy to become in bondage to a commentator.

Perhaps you will recall my having related this. After these years, there's hardly anything in the past before you that you haven't heard sometime or other. I don't want to keep continually apologizing, but I did make, tell you that I grew up and trained in a rigid dispensational scheme of theology.

And in the First Baptist Church of Little Falls, Minnesota, one day, inspired by something from Matthew 5 or 6, prepared a message. And it was just leaped out of my heart full bore, and I put it down on paper and was preparing to preach it. Then I thought, well, before I do that, I'd better find out whether or not this is orthodox, shall we say, kosher.

And so I turned to Dr. Gabeline's book, a set that I had there, and picked it up and turned to the appropriate verse. And to my amazement and grief, I found out that I was in the wrong track, that this didn't fit the scheme. And so I put the book, the sermon aside.

Then I began to think on the way out, you know, if I should die and someone went through my effects, they would find out that I wasn't quite orthodox. That's no, I can't leave that there for posterity to question my wisdom. And so I went back and I tore it and to it and threw it in the wastebasket.

But this didn't seem nearly adequate for such a crime as mine. And so I tore up one half in small pieces and left it there, and the other half in small pieces and left it in the wastebasket down the hall on the way out to my car. Now you will have to say that there's no change, no slavery in all the world quite as destructive as the slave chains around the mind.

You can say the Bible's inspired, but if it comes to the point where what's inspired is no longer meaningful to you, then the inspiration is a technique rather than a testimony to truth. And so I found that it was impossible for me any longer to labor in the shackles of a system, whatever the system would be, that would put such fear in my heart. And so I'm not speaking against, I'm not speaking against the thing to which I refer, the men whose books I refer.

I'm speaking against the attitude in my heart that caused me to be intimidated by the slightest frown. Well, now having a multitude of commentators around you on every hand is a little compensation because you find that they fought violently with each other and took great umbrage with one another and carried on living conflict with men long dead. And of course I'd get a great thrill out of that because I find usually one of them says, you know, so-and-so said this, and I write that down.

But he was wrong. I say this, and I write that down. Then someone else said this, and I write that down.

That becomes the three points of the message. You see, they all were looking at the same diamond from a different facet, and they all had some truth, and so we just accept it. So there's certain value in conflict, if you can see the elements of truth over which they were contesting and contending.

But the principle of it is this. How do you read the New Testament? How do you read the book of Acts? How do you read the book of the Church? As a history book or a textbook? How do you read it? Are you prepared to listen to the Lord? Where is he going to speak? Is he going to speak from the clouds? Is he going to speak on the rainbow? Is he going to speak from the marquee over here where the lights flash on? Where is God going to speak? You're going to speak through his word. How are you going to hear him? You're going to have to listen to the word.

And where are you going to find the word? You're going to find it in the record that he's left. And what's your attitude going to be toward it? It's going to be, teach me, Lord, speak for thy servant, heareth. And where? You're going to listen to what he said, what he's told about the new thing.

You're going to find it out. You're going to discover that Acts is a textbook and not a history book. You're going to discover that the New Testament epistles are textbook and not history book.

And you're going to have to come back to the place where you say, this is his pattern, this is the manner in which he wants us to walk, these are the good old ways in which he's intended us to move. This is the path that he's intended us to take. How frequently we are prepared, we're satisfied with far less than the Lord is.

It takes very little to satisfy most of us. And so we are prepared if the finances rise, if the attendance rise, if the enthusiasm and interest rise, we are prepared to equate that with God. I remember one pastor down south saying, I know God is for us.

We had 60 people join the church last Sunday. And this is proof that the Lord is on our side and what we said is right. And I, the man who told me that, I said, would you please go back and tell him that he missed it completely at 61 people.

He missed it by one. The Lord isn't on his side at all. He needed one more.

How did he know that it was 60 and not 61, or 60 and not 65, or 60, 70 and not 60? How did he know? Where do you find the statistical margin, the statistical evidence that what you're doing is right? If numbers are the success, the Jehovah's Witnesses are far more successful than most other things because they filled Yankee Stadium to the place where they were standing room only and seated all around. If you measure success by any of these criteria, then where do you stop? Now, what is the standard by which we judge whether something is right or wrong? Whim, fancy, authority? No. We've got to come back to something absolute, something inflexible, something that doesn't change.

We must come back to the Word of God. And therefore, every adjustment that we make, every accommodation that we make, is just the slightest healing unless it brings us back to the Word of God. Thus, there are good old ways, ways that we're to walk in, and they're established.

But let's come back again to the fact that we said that it's not the church, but it's you. It's a personal matter. You're going to discover then that when the Lord is speaking in the book, he's speaking to you.

You're going to read the book on the level of, this is God's Word to me. He's telling me the kind of a person I ought to be in relation to the sovereignty of Christ, that I ought to be in utter submission, live in total commitment to this risen, glorified Lord. And anything that's in contrast to that, anything that violates his authority, is to be dealt with as the sin that God counts it.

And if you simply say, well, I want to be accepted by my group, I want to be approved by them, this is healing the hurt slightly. The great crime against God was that we turned to our own way. And to heal this implies a total abandonment to his will, genuine repentance, completely given, heartily offered, and perpetually observed.

And so, if left there to be something genuine and real, it has to go back on God's standard, not ours. It has to be pleasing to him, not to me. It's so easy to please us, but it's important that we make sure that we're not pleasing one another, that we're pleasing the Lord.

There are good old ways to walk in, and these ways that have been established for us, in which we have been told to stand, these are the ways wherein we're going to be judged. You'll never find that God is pleased to bless until we come back all the way to what he wants. It's imperative, therefore, that you find out, just as we've been seeking to bring you, whether you accept the fact that the outline we've given is the only one or the proper one, this is up to you.

But the fact still is that there's such a thing as the normal Christian life. There are standards, phases of relationship, there are aspects of development, and there are steps in progress in the Christian life. And it remains, therefore, for us to recognize that things have to be real in our lives if they're to please the Lord.

It's so easy, you know, to put things in a package and then say, now, if you'll accept this package, you come down, or you sign, or you do this, or you do that, and equate a moral action with a physical expression. This is wrong. It can't be that way.

For instance, as we've taken you week by week and still have a handful of them here in the pulpit, if we consider what the Lord has given, awakening cannot precede conviction, and repentance has to follow conviction, and faith can only come on the grounds of repentance, whether you know it or not and can make the delineations. There's still the matter of being genuine. There has to be phases of progress.

Out of this that's been real comes this that can be real. But if you move on this level superficially, the next step is going to be superficial, and from that point on, it's going to be superficial. So the important thing for you to understand then from what we're saying tonight is that every phase in your spiritual development must be real.

It must satisfy the Lord. It must please him. There are good old ways that he's established.

You're to ask for these, and you're to walk in them, for in such you shall find rest for your souls. But there can be no rest unless your life is lived on the level of reality, genuine reality, each step. For the place that you allow something to pass, and it's superficial, it's light, it's shallow, that place is the place where your Christian life becomes artificial, and your growth stops, your spiritual development is impeded, and from that time on, you're going through the motions in anything that would seem to be in advance of it.

This we will call healing slightly. Oh, how easy it is for one to have a slight awakening. How easy it is for one to have some conviction.

How easy it is for one to have a little repentance. How easy it is for one to have just enough faith to get out from under the cutting edge of conviction. How easy it is for one to see that just a little bit of identification with Christ and have a partial victory.

My dear friend, there is to be seen something in my heart and yours that's a characteristic of the race of which we're apart, and that is we want to get by. We tried it when we were children. Your mother said, wipe the dishes, so you went like this.

They were dripping wet, weeping on every side, but you tried to get by. And so being of Adam's family, your mother had to deal with you. She knew all about you.

She was the same way as you were. And so she had to say, now wipe them all over again. And this time she examined them, and a few were put out.

You see, you were trying to get by. And in school, you were trying to get by. And so it has developed all through the earliest days of your life that you were living in a society where the pressure was to try and get by.

And when we come to the things of the Lord, we carry the same attitudes we've developed into this. This is one reason why I answered a young student out at Queens College this past week. He said, what kind of people make the best Christians? And then he said, the beatniks or the drunks from the Bowery.

He said, which one, when they're converted, do they become so enthusiastic for Christ? Or the people that have been way down and out when they're converted, do they become so enthusiastic for Christ? Or the people that have been way out in the extreme, in thought and so on, in revolt against? I said, personally, I think neither make particularly good Christians, because they have a great many personality problems and traits that are going to carry on over afterward. He said, do you want to know who I think makes the best Christian? I said, who? I said, the one that's undergone five years of strict apprenticeship in any trade. That's learned laws, that there are laws in metal and laws in wood and laws in wood, laws in paint.

They're learned laws and learned to cooperate with the laws. I have no influence, but if I did, my dear friend, I would see to it that no one got into college until he'd completed an apprenticeship in some basic trade. I think the Jewish people of our Lord's day were absolutely right when they said, a man's trade is his estate.

And I do believe that the time is going to come when there will be far, far more emphasis on it than there now is, especially since the hospitals are telling us that the primary means of recovery from the mentally ill is to give them the therapy of some creative craft or trade. And so we see sick people going in and learning how to run a loom or work in a power shop with some tools and getting well, just well enough to go back to the ulcer circuit and break down again in a little while. But we're glad that they've learned that there is certain therapy in doing constructive things with their hands.

So personally, I think the one that has mastered a trade, mastered the laws of earth, of metal, of glass, of wool, or fiber, that this person is best prepared. He's learned that you can't cheat. You can't cheat on a piece of metal.

You can't cheat on a piece of wood. You can't cheat on wool. It's there or it isn't there.

And oh, if we could just discover that we can't cheat on God. It has to be real. It has to be genuine.

It has to have gone all the way through. You can gild this, but gilding it doesn't make it gold. And you can gild the life, but it has to be real.

If God would give me my choice of ministries in the world in which I serve, it would be to ask him to make me an apostle of reality in the things of the Spirit. That it be real from the very first, a real awakening, real conviction, real repentance, and reality each step of the way up. It's so easy to have formula.

It's too easy to set up a little pattern, a little hoop you jump through in your end. No, we can't do that, my dear. We've got to recognize that if there is to be a conformity to the image of Christ, there has to be a healing of the illness, not slightly, but deep, deep surgery that goes to the root of the malignancy and strikes at its core and brings it on up in health.

You know full well that this is the purpose of God in grace to deal with you. And so, if you're to ever know all that God has, there's got to be a real ruthless honesty with yourself. If you'd like to write down two words, two phrases in the back of your Bible, and hold them as preciously as I hold them.

I wrote them down in my mind. I haven't had them anywhere in the page, but perhaps you can remember them. They're simple enough.

I sat in the office of Robertson McWilkin, the honored son of an even more honored father, the founder of Ben Lippin Conference in Columbia Bible College, talking with this dear young man, missionary now in Japan, and he said to me, you know, after my years in my home with my father and in the school and the conference and then to college and seminary, there are two expressions that have come to mean more to me than anything else in all the world. I said, what are they? He said this, intellectual honesty and spiritual integrity. I don't believe you can improve on those.

Intellectual honesty and spiritual integrity. This is what God is saying to his people through his prophet. They've healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people, say slightly, saying, peace, peace, when there's no peace.

We find people today glibly talking about faith in Christ that leaves them unmolested in their sin, unchallenged in their iniquity, content in their ungodliness and disobedience, we say, peace, peace. Well, I know the Lord. Our Lord has stated expressly and clearly, whosoever is born of God does not keep on practicing sin for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot because he is born of God.

And this has manifested the children of God and the children of the devil. And so as we come back to the word, then this is what we're discovering, that God wants these words to become real. Intellectual honesty, listen to what he has to say, face the claims that he makes, the correction that he makes, the indictment that he makes, the provisions that he makes, opening our mind to all that he presents and all that he offers to him, and then spiritual integrity that insists upon reality in every area of the life.

Now, you know that there's great consequences of pretense and hypocrisy. Let me put it this way. The moment that you, the day that you read the Bible, just because you read it yesterday and you don't want to break your record, you've started to Catholicize your experience.

You've started to form your own superficial level of pretense. And then when you come to the place that you find that you're praying just because you don't want to get a reputation in your own mind of not praying every day, and you're just praying to keep up your record, something superficial has happened, something deadening has happened, something destructive has happened. When you are saying or doing or acting anything other than out of the flow of life, something is happening to you that's inuring and callousing and deforming and withering that cuts the very life flow.

There has to be integrity. There has to be spiritual integrity. You know that it's true.

You know that in the past, I think of one man, just dealing with me, with him the other day, telling me about it out in Indiana. He told of a man that came to an altar where he was. He went to see him, prayed with him.

He says, this is what's all right. It's all over. A little while later, this same man came to the pastor and he started to tell the pastor about his problem.

And then he said, well, the Lord's given me relief. Now he'd been to the altar with this pastor, said it was all over. He went to the office of the pastor and he says, it's all settled now.

I have peace. But you know, three or four years later, and this man's life had become immobilized. He'd become almost atrophied.

He met at another altar in another church, a rally. And this time he said to the speaker, he said, sit right, stay right there by me on this altar. I must tell you.

You know, in the past, he hadn't wanted to mention his sin. He hadn't wanted to tell what he'd done. He hadn't wanted to put into words what had happened.

And he hadn't gotten peace. He just had enough to get up and go again. But the thing kept eating on him, kept eating on him.

And finally, this day at that altar with the pastor nearby praying, he said, Pastor, come here. The pastor came over and the speaker were there. And then the man went back to the thing of four or five years before.

He told what had happened. He told his sin. He told his failure.

He told his shame. And you know, it wasn't until he was willing to go clear down to the bottom of it and get it out that it stopped tormenting him and stopped bothering him. He had to get it out.

He had to get it clear. He had to get it free. And from that time on, there was marked development and progress and growth.

Oh, how important it is that we should not accept a placebo. We shouldn't expect, accept an aspirin when God wants to do spiritual surgery. Now, you're the only one that can demand this.

You've got to set this as the goal of your Christian life. I'm not going to accept the superficial kneeling. I'm demanding reality and go right to the root of the matter and build on a solid foundation of what's real.

Distinguish between what your intellect perceives and your heart has experienced and each step of your Christian life and your Christian development. Don't say, peace, peace, when there is no peace. And don't let anyone else say it.

Insist on reality. Insist on genuineness. Insist on what you have being real.

I close with this. When I came back from Africa in 1949, I was desperate because of my own sense of failure, spiritual failure as a missionary. And I think you may have heard this, but I went to the pastor in Palm Beach, Florida, and he said, well, why don't you go to seminary? So I went up to a seminary,

matriculated, bought the book, Versailles, my fees, got all ready to settle in.

Our second child was expected in April. My wife was cared for with a family in Florida, and I was going to take some time in seminary, work toward a degree. Well, I sat there one night and looked at the book.

Some of them I'd read and been bored stiff by when I read them, and now I was supposed to study them for a semester. It seemed nonsense. I couldn't come to that.

And I knew that this was just an escape from the issue. This wasn't what, I didn't say I didn't need seminary, but I didn't need it for why I was taking it. That wasn't the reason.

So the next day I went and said, it's hopeless. I have no heart for this. I want as much money back as you can give me.

And then he gave it to me. I said, now would you let me stay in your room for a little while? If I was honorable enough to stay here as a student, would you allow me to stay here? I want about four or five weeks of rest. I've got to think and pray.

And they kindly agreed. So I just stayed there in the seminary, dormitory. I'd pray all day and sometimes sleep all day.

It made no difference. Nobody cared. I didn't interfere with anybody.

But the whole purpose of that was spiritual inventory. I tried to heal it slightly. I'd read this book by that speaker out in Africa, and I said, now Lord, I'll take it by faith.

But I didn't take anything by faith. All I had was faith enough to get up and go along enough until God caught me and cornered me again. I didn't have reality.

And so I said, this isn't doing it. There's nothing happening in this. So I started hunting for something real to build on.

And you know, I found that my heart was just filled with truths that I'd gathered here and brought from there and put there. And I began to sort through and blow them away the same way that the children are raking the yard these days and getting the last year's leaves so that life can spring up beneath them. And I started hunting for something that was alive.

And I went back through 1949 to 1945 when I'd gone to the mission field, 1943 when I'd started college, 1940 when I graduated from the Bible Institute, 1935-37 when I'd begun pastoring, 1935 when I started my training. And I didn't find anything real. You mean to say you didn't remember what you'd been taught? I had far too good a memory not to.

But I remembered what I was taught and saw them as what they were, words, good words, true words, but words, orthodox words, biblical words, but words. Can't live on words. You know what I discovered? The last real thing that ever happened to me was the first real thing that ever happened to me in relation to God.

It was back in 1932 at an old camp meeting in South St. Paul, Minnesota at Red Rock, when Paul Reese gave the invitation and a boy came up and knelt in the straw, broken and bankrupt and lost as the devil. And a man came and opened the word and pointed him to Jesus Christ and saw the wounds of the Son of

God cleansing from a mountain of guilt. That night, casting myself out over the abyss of hell, I landed firm in the arms of his infinite love.

And God, for Jesus' sake, forgave my sin and gave me the witness of the Spirit that I'd been born again. And I could no more deny the reality of that than I could deny my own existence as a person. And so I found out that after how many years? Seventeen years.

I had to begin all over again as a baby. I remembered what happened. I'd gone the next day to Julia Hibbert, bless her memory, a dear, dear woman.

My, how she helped me. I used to go to Red Rock just to be near her. She was so fragrant.

But you know, fragrant people sometimes can do foolish things. She did. I said, Miss Hibbert, last night God saved me.

She said, well, that's fine, Sonny. Now you need to be sanctified. I didn't think it was nearly that lit a light.

But she said, come on with me. So we went into the altar and she said some words I don't remember. And I got down beside her and I prayed and I did everything she told me to do.

And then she saw Dr. Reese and she said, Sonny, I have something to tell you. And I said what she'd told me. And what had been real now was covered with a veneer of superficiality.

And from the day after I was born again, I began to accumulate words until God finally got me cornered and had me see that the Christian life isn't words, that it's the presence of the living Lord. My heart had been, my hurt had been healed slightly and there was peace, but there wasn't any peace because it hadn't been real. Oh, dear heart, tonight, don't let anyone say peace, peace, when there's no peace.

Be honest with your own heart, because God can only meet you there. And if God can give us a wave of honest-hearted men and women that are absolutely determined to have reality, there's still hope that he can do something even in days as far as advanced toward destruction as these days are. Do you know where it's going to spring out? It's going to spring out from within your heart and yours and yours and yours when you cry out, my soul demands reality.

I can't take words. I've got to have him, not just the words about him, but him. Oh, don't be content to be slightly healed.

Demand reality, whether it's in the repentance, whether it's a matter of regeneration and justification, the witness of the spirit victory, brokenness and confession of sin, the fullness of the Holy Ghost. Every step and phase of the Christian life has to be real, has to be real, has to be real. Is your life real? If people knew what you are deep within you, would they like you as much as they do now? God knows.

He loves you. He's your friend, but he demands reality. Don't be content to be slightly healed.

Don't say peace, peace to yourself when there's no peace. There are good old ways to walk in. He says, stand, stand ye in the ways and see, ask for the old paths, the good way and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls.

There's rest here. There's no other place. How real is your experience? How real is your life? Where did reality begin and where did it leave off? Are you determined to have reality in every step and phase and

aspect of your life? Can you say, my soul demands reality? Don't be content to be slightly healed.

Insist on reality. Shall we pray? I wonder if the Spirit of God has spoken to some heart tonight and someone will say, God has found me out. I've had so many words, so many words.

My soul demands reality. Well, I'm going to ask if this is you, you'd raise your hand for prayer. After the service is over and the benediction is said, I'll be happy to meet with any who wish to stay.

We can meet here in the fellowship in Wilson Chapel. But all I'm asking now is for you to start by saying, my soul is beginning to demand reality and I see areas of my life where I've had words, healed slightly, peace, but there hasn't been any peace. I'm going to stand in the good old ways and ask for the good old ways for those that God has said there'd be rest to my soul.

Right now I'm restless. Would you raise your hand? Everyone. Yes, I see it.

God bless you. Are there others? Thank you. You may take it down.

Yes, I see it. Still others anywhere? Yes, I see it. God bless you.

Any more? Anyone? God's found me out. Found me out. It's just not real.

I want reality. I'm not going to embarrass you. I want you to be honest with yourself.

If you feel this, just say, yes, God has. Put your hand up. Take it down.

Put you on a step toward reality. I can't make it real, but I can help you to recognize and seal what God has shown you tonight or else other time. So just a moment.

Pray for me. Yes, my soul demands reality. Anyone? Our Father, thou hast seen the hands that have been raised, the hearts behind these, the indication, genuine, sincere, and open-hearted.

We trust, demanding reality. Oh, Spirit of God, thou knowest what thou art saying to us as individuals, what thou art saying to the church, what thou art looking for. Thou art looking for people that are determined to be healed throughout.

No malignancy allowed to remain. No infection tolerated. It's got to be real.

We pray, Father, for these whose hands have been raised. We pray for others to whom thou hast spoken, but who haven't made this expression. To all of us that have heard thee speak in some area, for none of us but what have heard thee speak somewhere.

God of our Lord Jesus, move upon our minds and wills tonight and demand to help us to insist for ourselves and for the glory of Christ that in everything we not be slightly healed, but that the matter be dealt with. Breathe upon this breath of God. Oh, that thou canst get a people that will meet thee, stand in the old ways, in the old paths.

Allow thee to be God. Allow thee to do again as thou hast done. Thou canst break forth on the right hand and on the left and start a movement for eternity.

Come upon us to that end. For Jesus' sake, don't leave tonight with unfinished business. When I say that, begin at least.

I can't promise you that just because you stay for prayer, all your need will be met. But I believe if you respond to the prompting of the Holy Ghost and seek help, it will put you on the way to clearing up all that's superficial and getting a foundation of reality on which your Christian life can be built. So don't leave tonight without the help that you feel prompted of him to bring and ask for.

Let's stand for the benediction. You that have raised your hands, I invite you to remain for a time of prayer. You may stay right where you are and we'll come to you after others have left.

Amen. Now, Father, seal thy word to our hearts, grant that our prayers may be answered.

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