

Well and Ditches

by Paris Reidhead

Spiritual progress is made through dependence upon God and being cornered by circumstances, requiring a stripping of confidence in human efforts.

Duration: 50:15

Scripture: 2 Kings 3:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on his 25 years of ministry and the changes he has witnessed in the church. He highlights the development of wide-scale evangelism, which was believed to have died out but has seen a resurgence. The speaker then discusses the importance of surrendering everything to God and digging ditches as a metaphor for preparing for blessings. He concludes by emphasizing the power of God to bring abundance even in seemingly impossible situations.

Transcript

Now we're going to ask you to turn to 2 Kings chapter 3, third chapter of 2 Kings. I'm reading a few words beginning with the first verse. I'd like to ask how many knew from the text this evening that was announced what the theme would be.

There are certain texts that have been used across the centuries. Just about the time you feel you have something unusual, why, this is hardly the case. Now I'm reading 2 Kings chapter 3. And now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel and Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and reigned twelve years.

And he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord, but not like his father and like his mother, for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeremoam, the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin. He departed not therefrom.

And Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs and an hundred thousand rams with the wool. But it came to pass when Ahab was dead that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me. Will thou go up with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up. I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses.

And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way is through the wilderness of Edom. So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom, and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey. And there was no water for the host and for the cattle that followed them.

And the king of Israel said, Alas, that the Lord hath called these three things together, kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him.

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay, for the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

And Elisha said, As the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee nor see thee. But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him.

And he said, Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, ye shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain. Yet that valley shall be filled with water that ye may drink both ye and your cattle and your beasts.

And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord. He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. And ye shall smite every fenced city and every choiced city and shall fell every good tree and stop all wells of water and mar every good piece of land with stones.

And it came to pass in the morning when the meat offering was offered, that behold, there came water by the way of Edom and the country was filled with water. Now may the Lord bless this word to our hearts. It's amazing when you discover how weak man is at his very strongest.

Here we have three kings. Kings that have numbered their horses, numbered their soldiers, numbered their spears, their bowmen. They are prepared to go to this rebellious people Moab, this people that have been under the control of Israel, bringing a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams annually.

Quite a tribute for a small country. They are rebelling, refusing to pay. So three kings unite in order that they can discipline this little shepherd people.

Certainly there was no question about their ability to do it. Three kings, three armies, to subdue one who is called a sheep master. Perhaps we would view him as a desert sheik, someone that has a group of followers but no particular power.

Now isn't it amazing that these kings were quite content to make their own plan. Which way shall we go up, said Jehoram to Jehoshaphat? Oh, we'll go up by Edom. They were quite prepared to do everything

their own way.

Now both of them ought to have known better. Jehoram was the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat the king of Judah. Both had the scripture, the prophets, had the law of Moses.

They had certain of these writings that would have indicated clearly that God was the captain of his own host and should have been sought. But until they had reached wit's end corner and were certain that they were going to perish for lack of water, they didn't ask if there was a prophet anywhere around. They weren't the least interested.

As long as things were going seemingly right, they were quite content to go on as they were. But you see, God would show them that in their strength they were actually utter weakness. Armies, soldiers, spears, bows, arrows, machines of war, and it all comes to nothing because there's no water for the men or their cattle.

It doesn't take a great deal to stop an immense army. Here the Lord is proving that man's strength is but the wisp of wind, and in it one can certainly never confine. Elisha finally is called.

They seek him out. But they weren't ready to do it until they had nowhere else to turn. I wonder if this is not true of men in general.

I wonder if anyone ever comes to Christ until he's brought to the place, he doesn't know where to go. I wonder if we as Christians are not forced by God into that place where we must call upon him. Well, certainly this was the case with the three kings.

But something else that we have to see here. Elisha was not ready to prophesy until he had worshipped. He couldn't just speak.

He couldn't simply turn and raise his hand and lift his voice, for he was afraid that he might speak in and of and from himself. And this then would have compromised the Lord. And so he said, bring me a minstrel.

Bring me someone that can play the psalms. Bring me someone that can make that melody and music which will turn my heart to the Lord. Bring me a minstrel.

And as the minstrel came, someone that brought the ancient instrument, the lyre, and began to strum the hymns and tunes and chants that were used undoubtedly even then in worship, in the tabernacle, in the worship of God. His heart was prepared. And as he lifted his heart in worship, the hand of the Lord came upon him and he was prepared to speak that word of God, that living word to their need.

Now I propose to show you, first of all, that our position can be likened to that of the kings, the position of the individual Christian today, the position of the Church today, and particularly our position here in the midst of an immense mission field, New York City. I believe that there are many areas that are parallel and therefore we do well to see it. Notice first that they were utterly dependent upon God.

They'd put themselves in a situation where it was impossible for any ingenuity of man or cleverness of leadership to extricate them. They couldn't get out. They'd gone so far into the desert that if they were to turn around and go back, they'd perish before they reached the edge where water was.

They'd carried a supply, expecting to find it in Edom, and there wasn't any in the wilderness. And therefore they just couldn't go back. They couldn't go ahead.

There was no place to go to the north to find tucker. There was no place to go to the south. They were cornered.

No water for cattle, no water for kings, no water for men. They were utterly helpless. And therefore we would see this first as it would begin with the sinner.

You say it's an easy thing to repent. Anyone can accept Jesus. Well now is it really as easy as all that? This morning we tried to point out to you that Christian life begins with a consent to the fact that what God says about us is true.

But men have been fighting God for centuries. There must be something extremely difficult about saying the words and meaning them. I'm lost.

I'm helpless. I'm a world of sin. My heart's a mountain of iniquity.

There must be something extremely difficult about this because men find it so hard to do it. In fact, may I say it reverently, they'd rather be damned eternally. They'd rather go to hell forever than to stand before God and say I am sinful.

I'm lost. I'm undone. Oh there's something in this that just cuts right across the grain of human nature and human personality.

And apparently there was this same situation here. It was a terrible thing for kings to say we put ourselves in the place where we're helpless, where we're at the end of ourselves. And so to have to say as did the kings, God must help us or we perish, is identically the same situation with a sinner.

God must help or I perish. No wonder we'll try everything else, anything else, go anywhere, do anything to escape from being cornered by the Lord. If you would like to get acquainted with something of what has happened in some lives, reading of that book *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, the biography of John Bunyan, will allow you to see your own heart reflected.

Perhaps your fright from his grace wasn't as persistent as was Bunyan's, but it does represent the kind of thing that we have. God has to somehow engineer circumstances and arrange the situation, strip us and break us and crush all the reeds on which we'd lean before we're really prepared to come to the place where we cry out God be merciful to me a sinner. But you'd think it would stop there, wouldn't you? You'd say well certainly having done that there's no problem about it any longer, but you know God isn't through with us, he still has to keep pushing us into the desert.

And so after we've been forgiven, after we've known the joy of pardon, after we've known the sweetness of having been born into the Father's family, and then we begin to get busy for the Lord, we begin to serve him, we begin to work for him, and it isn't long until we're back in the desert corner again. He has somehow let us get so far from the well, so far we can't go further on, we're exhausted, we can't go back, we're in too far, we're just hopeless. And then we say well now Lord what am I going to do? How many times I even now, but previously in other ministries, had so much contact with missionaries that if, and this is my own case, there in the heart of Africa on the mission field, utterly without well of water, dry, without, where do you get victory over your personality? How are you going to have deliverance from your temperament and trait? How are you going to live the kind of life and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit that the scripture says alone glorifies God? You're in the desert.

You know when you can stay near the well and the artificial supply, it isn't too bad. Oh when God presses you out, when he just forces you out and moves you out, you can't go back, you can't go ahead. How grateful we ought to be for every time that the Lord can corner us.

You, may I put it this way, you'd never make any spiritual progress would or nor would I unless God just forced us to it. Oh we'd love to hear truth. We'd love to be taught.

We'd like the Areopagites, we're delighted with some new thing. Let's just fill our notebooks with outlines, with prophetic structure, with schemes. This delights us to the full.

But you don't make any progress from that. Years ago as a smug young pastor in Minnesota, I had the ministry of dear Maude F. Groom, who later went down as librarian to Northern Baptist Seminary, and she had a course in the Christian life, wonderful course. Why I look back now, I've lost the notes in the passing of the years, but I look back now and remember the things she said, and they're things which later on the Lord revealed to me as, shall I say, startling new truth, but they weren't at all.

I'd heard them from Mrs. Groom. She'd taught them, but do you know what it was? I hadn't gotten into a desert place yet. Oh, the things she said were wonderful, were true.

My heart responded. I leaped to them. And I remember she said, now you'll have to go alone and make these things yours.

So I went out into the big auditorium at the First Baptist Church, went way back in the blast section, got down between some pews on the cold concrete floor, and I began to take a hold of God. And I stayed there, and I laid hold of God, and I said, now I'm taking by faith these truths, they're mine, I'm going to claim them, I'm going to live by them. And I was sincere.

But you see, I'd never been in the desert. I'd never been there, and so later time went on, pressure went on, I got out to Africa, and desperation I forgot everything I'd been taught, everything I'd learned, because filling my notebook and filling my memory wasn't enough. It just isn't enough.

And so God loved us enough, he loved me enough, and I trust that you've seen his love in you, that he's crowded us into a corner. I can't go back, it's too far, I can't go ahead, I'm too weak, there's no way to go on either side. Lord, what am I going to do? And then he says, well, now you're in the place where you're dependent upon me.

And this, I believe, is the circumstance in which spiritual progress is made. Because as long as we've got a canteen we can tap, take the cork out, we'll take a good drink and start running. We're going to do it.

But when we can turn our canteens over, and we just get nothing but dust, and we go to the spring, and there's nothing but mud, and we say, well, we're no, not a cloud in the sky, not a brook with a drop in it, not a spring that has anything, and all the vessels we brought empty, we say, where am I going to get it? And then we're in the place to call upon the Lord. Which ends corner. God, man's extremity is God's opportunity.

It's a terrible thing to do, but you know, I think we have to pray. Oh Lord, strip us of all confidence in everything other than thyself, so that finally we'll come to trust thee. It's a terrible way to pray.

About four years ago now, Dr. Tozer had a service in which this theme was emphasized. Maybe you were one of the people that stood that night. He said, how many of you are prepared to stand now and say, oh God, set in motion tonight the circumstances which will press me to yourself.

Do anything you need to do, strip me, break me, anything you need to do to bring me to the place where truth becomes real in my experience. Were you one of those that stand, that stood that night? And then you said, the next month something began to happen, this little part of your world crumbled, and that little structure fell down, and this spring dried up, and that stream was gone, and the dust began to blow where the water had been, and you said, oh why are these things happening to me? Well, you asked the Lord to make them happen. You said, Lord, I want you more than I want everything else.

So every spring, stream, canteen, and well we'd ever depend on, he just touched and withered. Well, this is the experience we have. So it's the experience of the Church.

I'm glad I live in the 20th century. I'm glad I live right now. Glad I'm serving the Lord now, and I'm glad I've had the privilege of serving the Lord in the last 25 years.

I hope I don't look as old as I feel, nor that my senility doesn't show up as clearly as I'm experiencing it day by day, but the fact still remains that in July the 4th, I will have completed 25 years of ministry. Now, I wasn't very old when I started. Of course, I had the experience of never being a young people.

I went from an adolescent into a preacher from beginning the ministry at 18, and so there's 25 years this next 4th of July. Do you know what's happened during these 25 years? We have seen the Church do four things that haven't been done, the previous 50. Four things that haven't taken place have taken place then.

First, we've seen the development of wide-scale evangelism. I was told when I began training in 1935 that there never again would be wide-scale mass evangelism. It had all died with Billy Sunday, but that wasn't true.

We saw the first of this move back in Philadelphia with Mervyn Rosell, then Hyman Appelman went to Philadelphia with a great meeting, and this began it. Then later on, the Youth for Christ rallies, and finally the ministry of Dr. Billy Graham, and we have seen during these past 20 years the rise of evangelism on a scale never equaled in America, in some ways, in some measurements. But those that have been closest to it, and most part of it, and most appreciative of what has been done recognize that this is not adequate to meet the Church's need.

They're the first to say, as grateful for we are, for as we are, for all that's transpired and all that have found the Lord, the answer to our responsibility in the 20th century isn't here. This is good. We're not criticizing it.

We're simply saying it's not enough. So we've seen something else. We've seen the rise of large churches.

Before 1935, in 1937, at 25 years under question, there weren't as many big churches as there are now. One of the largest in the United States was the one of which I was a member, First Baptist Church in Minneapolis, with 3,000 members. But 3,000 members nowadays is like a Branch Sunday School, when you consider that there's a church down, two churches in Tennessee that have 15,000 members and more.

And we've seen during this past 25 years churches of 15,000 to 18,000 members, and tremendous program in ministry. And I've had the privilege of being part of it, and praise God for it, and rejoice in the things that are being done, the mission ministry. I know of one church where they had over 60 Branch Sunday Schools.

We had 18 buses, and we had men that were supported from the church, and each bus had an area. There was a bus pastor who went in, visited the homes, brought the children out, got them there, took care of them. We had 18 such buses and bus pastors.

Well, this was a tremendous ministry, and there's no question about it. But do you know what we've discovered in these past 25 years? That the large church is not the answer. It's not the answer, as good as it is.

It's not good enough, and the ones that are closest to it and nearest to it are prepared to say, well, we see this, we thought perhaps that this was the ultimate answer, but we know now it isn't. Then we've seen the rise of another area. We've seen the rise of great mission societies during these past 25 years.

For it's in this period that the China Inland Mission reached 1,500 members, the Sudan Interior Mission reached 1,200 members, and there have been these great ministries of evangelical men armed with all tools, all implements, all means whereby the gospel could be extended. But those that have been closest to the mission enterprise are the first to say that this does not represent the answer to the need, for in even the areas where we've been in the highest concentration, we've not been able to cope with the rise in population or the evangelistic responsibilities. Then we have seen something else.

We've seen the development of the outstanding youth ministry, for I believe that during this period, with the rise of Youth for Christ, Word of Life, and these other ministries, we see the ultimate achievement that can be wrought by intelligent planning, preparation, prayer, and faithful preaching of the Christian message. And we're grateful for the multitudes of children and young people that have come to know the Lord through these ministries. But the ones closest to them, the ones nearest to them, are the first to say, when in candid and open conversation the matter is discussed, this, as good as it is and as needful as it is, does not represent the ultimate need.

It doesn't meet the need on the level that should be met. And so these that have been part of that which from a distance would say, well, this must be it. This must be God's answer.

The ones that are there in the midst of it, appreciative as they are, recognize that it isn't. We're somewhat like the kings in church, in Christian ministry, in missions. We've been pushed into the desert of responsibility to witness to a world that's under the sentence of death.

And somehow or other, with all the plans, preparations, programs, ministries, and all the enterprises that we've been able to develop, they have to admit with all candor and fairness, as good as it is, it doesn't meet the need. Christianity is not a matter of mechanics. It's not a matter of programs.

It's not a matter of institutions. It's not a matter of operations. This is a spiritual ministry, and it can only be sustained by spiritual means.

And so we discover that whereas we've had underlying each of the ministries that I have described, a great sense of spiritual urgency, I'm not going to suggest for a moment they could not have been achieved apart from the blessing of God. This isn't in my mind at all. I am still saying that when we achieve here in

Memphis, Tennessee, a church of 18,000 members, as great a spectacle as it is, and as our hearts say this certainly is a tremendous evidence of work and labor and enterprise and ministry, we recognize that the answer doesn't lie in every church, every city becoming this size.

This isn't the answer. Because the spiritual dynamic there, even from the testimony of the pastor under whose ministry it was built, is such as to say to his people, as large as we are, as endowed as we are, we still are in desperate need of the power of the Holy Ghost and of the moving of the Lord. So I believe in the forefront of these.

These men would be the first to say, we're in the midst of the desert, we're caught in the great need that's there, we're too far to go back, it's too far out, what will we do? We must send for a prophet. Those that are the first to call are the ones that are in the midst of that which we consider the most successful enterprise in our land today. Well, if that's the case with these men whom God is so signally allowed to test for all of us, what all of us would like to achieve, then I think we can say, let us do now at our point of development what they're doing at their point of development and call for prophet and say, Lord, what is your answer, what's your provision for us in the day and the hour in which we live? Now, we must understand that from what we have here, that all that is done is going to be done by God.

We have no might of ourselves, we have no power of our own. Without me, we can do nothing. But driving the other day with Dr. Redpath over the George Washington Bridge, we were discussing this, but we'd had some very revealing questions asked by the pastors back at Hawthorne and the Hawthorne Gospel Church as they'd met on Tuesday morning for fellowship and afterwards a time of questioning.

And as we were driving, I pointed out that I considered the George Washington Bridge to be the most beautiful, aesthetically satisfying structure that's been erected by a man in the continent. And he remarked that he felt somewhat similar. And then we tied it in with this verse, without me you can do nothing.

And he said, well, we've done that without him. Yes, but the answer was that one of us made, and when he comes, all these things are going to be dissolved, and nothing will be left. It'll all just evaporate, for this shall be dissolved with a fervent heat.

Our Lord says, without me you can do nothing that will abide, nothing that will endure, nothing that will stand the test of the fire, nothing that will be for eternity. And the only quality that will give to work an enduring essence is that it's done according to the plan of God, by the power of God, to the one single sole purpose that God has set and ordained. And consequently, we have to come back to this, that all work that endures, all work that's going to be to his glory, is by him.

Therefore, sinners are saved by his awakening ministry, his bringing them to conviction, quickening faith, bringing them to repentance, and then regenerating them. Everyone is born again. It's a miracle.

Human enterprise, human effort, human ministry, enter into it. But God has to do the miracle. Every Christian that lives victoriously and triumphantly does it by the miraculous power of the risen Christ.

If your life is, if you are experiencing victory over yourself, over temptation, if you're walking triumphantly in the day, the place that God has placed you, you're doing it because you've seen that in yourself there's nothing but weakness, nothing but sin. I think I told you of someone that was counseling with me a while ago, and in speaking of himself, he said, you know, I've discovered that I'm bad, I'm wicked. Why, and he went on, he said, you know, there's nothing good about me, I'm absolutely terrible.

And when he'd finished describing himself, all I could say was, well, fine, I'm glad you found it out. He said, what do you mean, glad I found it out? Well, I said, I've known that about you for a long time. And he looked rather chagrined and rather shocked to think that I'd say such a thing.

He said, yes, it's true, everything you've said is absolutely true. But I said, do you know why you're in the trouble you are? He said, why? I said, because you've been trying to prove something else. You've been searching around in the refuge trying to look through, find something that you could wave in God's eyes and say it's not as bad as you said it was.

Well, if you're living triumphantly and victoriously and gloriously and happily, it's because you've come to the place that this is what you are, and that Jesus Christ is everything you are, and that you can't live the Christian life, but only he can. And when you come to the place where you say, I can't, then he says, well, I can't. And you'll move in and do for you what you never could do for yourself.

So being born of God is all of him, and living the Christian life is all of him, and so the Church in its corporate expression and ministry must be all of Christ, must be the Lord doing it all. He must be the one. And thus we're at the place where the kings were, in the desert of responsibility to witness, to defeat an enemy, or to exercise the defeat that's already been wrought upon him, but we're without water.

And how interesting it is that water in the Scripture is the picture, the type, of the Holy Spirit. Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. If any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink.

And water, therefore, is the picture, is the type of the Holy Ghost. And thus it is that it's the work of the Holy Ghost in bringing sinners to life. It's the work of the Holy Ghost making real the life of Christ in Christians, and it's the work of the Holy Ghost fulfilling God's purpose for the Church.

Well, here it is, without water. Are we without water? Are we without that manifestation of the Spirit of God to the degree that we need? Now you say, well, yes, I know I've been born of God. This is subtle.

This is clear. I know I've passed from death to life. Well, rejoice and be exceeding glad.

Don't ever, ever underestimate what has been done. In your eagerness for what needs to be done, don't minimize what has been done. Then secondly, are you experiencing victory? Well, dear heart, don't let anybody's reticence or anybody's reluctance or anyone's lethargy keep you from what God has for you.

It doesn't make a difference to you under, in any way, what anyone else does. You can know him in his indwelling fullness, and you can know his victory, and you can know his life. And it doesn't make any difference what I do or what anybody does.

You and the Lord can meet on this grounds, and he can satisfy your heart and you. You say, well, the Church--oh, now wait a minute. You meet him.

You meet him. He'll meet your need regardless of anybody else. If you'll come to him, this we must recognize.

This is a personal matter between you and the Lord. But what of the Church? What of the Church? Yes, I firmly believe that it is the purpose of God to pour out of his Spirit upon the Church. And it is as you mentor into all that he's intended you to be, and with Paul testify, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, Christ liveth in me. And that you are walking in the fullness of his Spirit, that the Church is going to be able to be what the Lord wants it to be. And so we recognize that it's a personal responsibility, but it's a personal responsibility that reflects out to the body and to the group in corporate fellowship.

And consequently, it's extremely important. If you were to say, for instance, tonight, well, I know I've been forgiven and I consent to sit in the desert without nothing for myself to drink or to share with others, you are robbing. Oh, you're robbing.

And so you've got to find a place of your need and realize that if our need isn't met, you're robbing sinners of the testimony they deserve from your life, you're robbing fellow Christians of the testimony they deserve and the encouragement God ought to bring to them through you, and you're robbing the Church of what the blessing you should be to it, and you're robbing the Lord Jesus of the spoils of his suffering and the reward of his suffering, if you're content with less than everything the Lord Jesus died. So with the kings, let us say we must have water and then call for the prophet, call for the scripture, call for the record, find out what it is. Now, what is our duty as it's told us by the prophet? The first thing we find is this, that when he came and the hand of the Lord was upon him, that he had something to say to these three kings that were there of him.

The first thing he said was this, make this valley full of ditches. Now, I can't imagine anything that was more ridiculous than this. They're in the desert, in a valley, and it's arid, it's dry, and he says prepare the ground as though a flood were coming.

And I haven't been there and haven't seen it, but we're told by the geographers that this particular valley, where they were, was raised so that the water flowed down from it, not up, did not down upon it. It was at a high level so that the water would flow off of it. Well, now here they are, and they're told that they're to dig ditches.

Can you see them? Of all the ridiculous things. There isn't a spring up there, there's not a lake up there, there's no wells up there, dig ditches. How are we going to do that? You know the pattern, don't you? The Nile River overflows.

Before it overflows, and the people anticipate it because for thousands of years they've kept a record of the flood of the Nile, they know just what's going to happen. They're down there on the delta, below Cairo, digging their ditches, preparing for the flood water that they're going to lead out into their fields. It'll carry the rich silt from the Sudan and from Ethiopia, and this water is going to come in and fertilize and nourish and prepare for a bumper crop.

And so the man that's wise has the ditches prepared that when the water comes he'll be ready. Out west where Mrs. Reed had grew up in Colorado, they had land that was irrigated. And regardless of the time of day or night, they were notified when the water would be through.

And when the water was coming through, it was coming through, and if you didn't open up and take it into your field, well that was too bad. It went on, it wasn't there. So this is the pattern.

Irrigation ditches, here they are. And so the prophet says to the kings, do something ridiculous, do something foolish, do something that has no relevance to the job at hand. And so with their remaining strength, he says dig ditches.

Can you see them? Taking their spears, their little shovel sticks, and they're digging ditches. Seems absurd, doesn't it? What are they doing? They are making preparation for to receive something that's desperately needed. Ditches made for water, and so they had irrigation ditches.

This is what the Spirit of God says to us. If you find your need is for the fullness of the Spirit for victory in your life, if the church finds its need is for the power of God, says dig ditches. Dig ditches.

You know what you have to do when you dig a ditch? Well, here's a stone. You can't just bring your ditch up to the stone and leave it. You've somehow got to pry that stone out.

You've got to dig around it. You've got to break it off. You've got to lead your ditch around it because that stone is going to stop the flow.

And digging ditches doesn't only mean to take up the loose soil that's easy to turn, but it means to take up the deep embedded rocks. It means confession. It means brokenness.

It means heart searching. It means dealing ruthlessly with anything that could impede the flow. It means making right anything in the past, digging up that which the Spirit of God points out, removing that which would hinder.

And so if you're desirous of God meeting you in the fullness of his Spirit and blessing and power, there have to be ditches dug. And ditches mean the dirt has to be taken out. A way has to be made.

Rocks have to be removed. Roots have to be cut. Anything that's going to stop the flow.

A lot of people want to sit by and say, well, revival is the sovereign work of the Spirit of God. Let him revive me if he can. Let him bless if he can.

And just sit back and say, well, it's all up to God. No, the prophet says, dig ditches. Dig ditches.

And so if there's to be the meeting of your need, there's got to be preparation. Now you have to do this in faith. They had to believe that the prophet spoke for God.

They had to believe that their labor wasn't in vain. They had to believe that the leaning on the stick and the prying up of the rock and the hammering with their short spear at the roots that were there and their tugging at the shrubbery, this was all for a purpose. Had to be.

And I know this, he says, ye shall search for me and find me when ye shall seek for me with all your heart. God never gives us a hunger to mock us and gives us instructions to taunt us. You've got to do it in faith.

You've got to believe that this is of more importance to God than it ever could be to you. And then, of course, the other thing, you've got to prepare largely. If you're prepared and satisfied just to have a little plot like an herb garden, that's what you'll get.

But when you're desperate enough to say, Lord, I want you in your fullness, I want you to have all the rest of my life, I want everything that can possibly come for me to the glory of Christ to be realized, then you're going to prepare thoroughly and you're going to prepare largely. I wonder if it's possible for us to take an axiom tonight, by whatever means God chooses, by life or death, by success or failure. And there's another, and I reluctantly put it in, by sickness or health, by being known or unknown.

I want Jesus Christ to get out of my life the greatest possible glory. Do you love him enough and trust him enough that you're willing to turn the little plot of your life over to him and say, Lord, grow any crop you want into it, do anything you want with it, but just get the greatest glory out of it? Are you willing to turn your life over to him and like a sponge say, oh Lord, you squeeze it. But just, I don't care how you do it, but just squeeze out of it the greatest glory.

Well, now if he's going to squeeze anything out, he has to put something in because there's nothing there but nurse and drought. I think you can. The devil says to anyone that listens to him, don't trust God with your life.

Don't surrender to him. Don't yield to him. Oh, you can trust him to take you to heaven because he's got a big hotel there and he wants to fill it.

But don't trust him with your life. Don't do that. He's going to take all the pleasure and happiness and joy and blessing out.

He'd just leave you dry husk. Well, now you know the only way to deal with that is to fly right into the face of the devil and say, all right, if God wants my life to be dry husks and can get glory out of dry husks, let it be. I'm prepared for that.

Yeah, I want him to get all the glory that he can out of my life. That's all I ask, that God will put his wisdom and his sovereignty and his power to the task of taking my little blood ransom life and getting for Jesus Christ all the glory he can possibly get. And let him choose how it's done.

I'll sign the check, Lord, you fill it in. Are you prepared to do that? This is digging ditches, preparing largely. But you know something else about this? They had to do it then.

We have to prepare it once. We're all putting it off. It's so easy to say, well, next week, next year, next Christian life convention, next missionary conference, we're going to do it later.

But frats later will never do. They were desperate. They had to do it now.

Now is the accepted time. And then the third thing we see, they prepared diligently. They did it with desire.

They did it with expectation. They did it with determination. They knew that they were not going to be able to go on unless they had water.

They did it faithfully. They did it vehemently. They did it desperately.

And so you're going to have to faithfully and vehemently and desperately deal with all that was in the way. You're going to have to dig those ditches and whatever is involved in giving to him your time, giving to him your reputation, giving to him your name, giving to him your body, giving to him anything, everything, all this just comes down in inventory. All right, Lord, this and this and this.

This is digging ditches, the whole matter given over to him until the ground is open. All the plugs are out. All the keys are on the ring.

Everything's there. Well, then what this is so blessed, I'd like to have the 20th verse when the meat offering was offered, that by the word of water flow, much water came and it just flooded down into their ditches. Now there wasn't any wind.

There weren't any clouds, wasn't any thunder. And you say, well, where'd the water take people? But he doesn't. Just about the time I got a nice little formula that was all set, then the Lord began to show me that he didn't need my formula at all.

Wasn't his need, he didn't need it at all. I'm so glad, you know, I get a lot of consolation out of Peter in many different ways. I'm sure you do too.

We're very much like each other. But Peter was so smug, so sure he knew just how God was working. And so finally the Lord gave him a vision.

An angel came, all the rest to prepare Peter to go to the house of Cornelius. And Peter has a formula. He knows just what the Lord's going to do.

So he starts to speak and the water comes from Eden. And the first thing you know, the spirit of God has fallen upon the household of Cornelius and they're flooded. And poor Peter stands back with his little sprinkling plant and no place to pour.

The Lord's gotten there ahead of him. His little formula was just so utterly inadequate because God took over. Now God is sovereign.

The place where he will work is when we've prepared, then he'll meet. He'll deal with it. The waters came from my way of Eden.

Well, we know that it came sovereignly. God did this just the way he wanted to do and God's going to meet your need just that way. And we know that the waters came sufficiently.

There was enough, enough for all, enough for the whole countryside, enough for the soldiers, enough for the cattle, enough for the kings. And I believe that God is waiting on this parapet of glory, waiting, waiting for a church, waiting for hearts upon whom he can pour. I believe God wants to pour out of his spirit.

I think that one of the great cry of my heart for the five and a half, now nearly six years I've been with you, is that somehow in this heart of a city near Times Square where sin abounds, there might be a people that would love God and love his word and follow his truth, meet his conditions, dig ditches, so that God could show again that that he can pour water upon him that is thirsty and pour floods upon the dry ground. Because, dear heart, with New York before us, it's multiplied millions. Who's sufficient for these things? Unless God pours water upon us, what are we? What are we among so many? Must be.

But just think what could happen if we here in the heart of the city could so meet God and brokenness, so dig ditches, so ministered faith and expectancy, and God could meet us. You know, if God could work in New York City, the whole world would hear about it in just a little while because everybody's here. Representatives are here.

It's like Jerusalem. Well, then we find something else. The blessing of God's presence, the water came suddenly, suddenly.

Ah yes. You say, well, I'm going to go through, Lord. I'm going to dig ditches.

I'm going to meet you. I'm going to lay hold. I'm going to pray.

Nothing's going to stop me. Nothing's going to deter me. I'm determined.

I'm not going to rest until you've done in me all you want to do and done in the church all you want to do. And then the water came suddenly. But wait, it didn't stop there.

Wasn't where it stopped. He didn't say just that they would have water. This is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord.

Oh my, you know, that was some minstrel, wasn't it? Wasn't that something? To have this man come to the place where he not only saw exactly what to do and how to do it, but then he spoke and said, God's going to bring water and this is but a light thing to bring water. He won't use wind. He won't use thunderclouds.

He won't do it any way he's ever done it before. It's but a light thing to give you water. He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand.

He's going to give the victory to his name, to his cause. And this, I believe, is the reason why you should want him to pour water upon you and fill the church. So that the Lord Jesus could have the victory that he's already accomplished rendered to him and the glory that would come from seeing that victory rot out.

This is why we should pray, not just that you'll be satisfied, not just that the soldiers drink, the cattle drink, the kings drink. No, but that the name of Jehovah be glorified in the defeat of the enemy that had flaunted him and held to their idols. And so it is that the purpose of your heart ought not to be just to have your own need met, but to have him glorified.

And how he longs to bless you so that he can be glorified. How he longs to meet us together so that he can get the glory that's his do. Let's remember, he didn't say dig wells, he said dig ditches.

Wells mean we'll get it by our effort and ditches mean it's got to come from him. Do you see? Make this valley full of ditches. It all depends upon you.

No one else can dig your ditch. No one else can make your preparation. And then this God can bring us together to the place where we're hearing and heeding the word of instruction.

Suddenly, sovereignly, sufficiently, the waters rise and he's glorified. Make this valley full of ditches. Shall we pray? We close this service tonight, our Father, thanking thee that thou art spoken again to this of the Old Testament.

For New Testament need and New Testament promise of blessing. We believe that thou art the same and the principles here are unchangeable and eternal. We believe it's thy desire now, in this day, in this decade, yea, in this year, to pour out of thy spirit upon that hungry heart and life and church that's willing to meet thee on thy terms.

We would be that people, Father. And so we would go tonight hearing the prophets say make this valley full of ditches and prepare our own heart and see that all the stones and roots and shrubs and everything that would hinder the flow of thy spirit upon us, that in faith and expectancy and deep desire and anticipation, we will prepare for all that we're trusting thee to do for us. We ask thee, Lord, that thou will bless the hungry, those whose hands have been raised, those who have special need.

Might there be a time of victory tonight as we lay hold upon the promises thou hast given us. Now may thy grace and mercy and peace be and abide with us now and until Jesus comes again. In his worthy name.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24876.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/paris-reidhead/well-and-ditches/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net