

Keeper of the Spring

by Ralph Sexton

Christians must take responsibility for keeping their spiritual springs clean and forgiving others in order to experience the fullness of God and fulfill their purpose.

Duration: 29:53

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 4:4-14

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of going to the next level with God. He refers to a story in the New Testament where Jesus intentionally goes through Samaria, showing that God has a plan and purpose for every situation. The preacher shares a powerful testimony of a revival meeting where a young girl confesses her need for Jesus and falls to her knees in repentance. He challenges the congregation to not just go through the motions of being Christians, but to truly get right with God and make restitution. The preacher encourages believers to move past entertainment and curiosity, and to seek a genuine and deep relationship with God.

Transcript

Some of you have been here every night, and you're enjoying this, you're just enjoying, you've been out there in the desert so long, and you've been hanging around cactus and briars so long, that you forgot what a good clover field looks like. And God laid a big old clover field out here last few nights, and you done lost your mind, you've been eating clover, drinking water, and you're saying, boy, this is like heaven to me. But God wants you to know, you've got to get under a burden.

If we're going to have a breakthrough, we just can't come down here and eat clover and drink water. Somebody's got to travail and get with God for our family and our friends to see an outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. Isaiah 58, 11 says, And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones.

Bless God, I'm not worried about South Beach or Atkins. God's got me on a fat-boned diet. Hallelujah.

You think I'm not enjoying the good things of God? I'm eating in the land of milk and honey, and my spiritual bones are being made fat by the good grace of God. He'll keep you in the drought, and when you can't figure it out, He'll say, you just hang out with me, and I will satisfy the hunger and thirst of thy soul. And thou shalt be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do what? Fail not.

Now, turn over to the New Testament. Go to John. If you've got your old Schofield study Bible, it's page 1118, John chapter 4. John 4, 4 talks about Jesus leaving Galilee, and he's in verse 4, And he must needs go through Samaria.

God had a plan, and God had a purpose. There's not an accident here tonight. God had a need to walk through Archdale last night.

He didn't have to, but He did. He could have been anywhere, but He said, let me go down. I must needs go by Archdale.

God graced us with His presence. Now, go to verse 10 in that same chapter, And Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee what? Living water. All right, go to verse 14, same chapter, But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall what? Never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into what? Everlasting life.

So what God's teaching us, He's talking about drought. He's talking about, I'll be a well for you. And then when you're in me, that same well will be inside of you.

Now you're going to go to school tomorrow. You're going to go to university. You're going to go over to the office.

You're going to go to your factory. You're going to go with your work crew. And you're going to go about your business as an entrepreneur and a business woman, a businessman.

And you're going to encounter people. And you're going to meet two kind of people tomorrow. You're going to meet people that have never been saved by the grace of God.

You're going to meet them. They're going to be all around you. And they're going to be looking for something real.

And then you're going to meet people that used to walk with God, and they've lost their tears. They've lost their burden, and they've become a corrupt spring. They didn't mean to, but they allowed things.

See, God put a living well in them, but they allowed circumstances. Let me tell you something. You get your feelings hurt enough times, you'll just give up.

You have enough people lie to you, and you'll just give up. You say, I just can't believe anybody. Do you know that we have a high casualty rate among Christians because the way other Christians treat Christians? You've got lost people in this community, and they say, well, she's supposed to be a Christian, he's supposed to be a Christian.

And if that's one, I hope I don't catch it. I know it's quiet down there in that clover patch, but we've got to be honest tonight. If we could ever get Christians past our moods, our attitudes, our envies, our jealousies, our fight and fall.

Do you know, Christians, we're so talented, we can carry grudges longer than lost people. You'll never believe that 1811, they did me wrong. Bless God, I ain't forgot it either.

It's under the blood, but I ain't forgot it. You got people come in church and won't sit on the same side of church as somebody else because they're mad at them. 17 years ago, he backed his car across my flower patch and never made it right.

His youngin, call my youngin a name, back in 1927. And we're going through the motions of having church and being Christians. And yet we've never one time got all the trash out of our spring.

Now, listen to me for a moment. God's people have got to be willing to go to the next level. We can stay down here for seven or eight weeks because we love God and we love each other and we can sing gospel songs.

We can have a spiritual pep rally and we can enjoy being together. I told someone today on the phone, I said, it blesses me just to drive over to the tent and see that many people wanting a little something decent. That encourages me.

Does that encourage you to see this many people coming out? It encourages me. Amen. But what if we got this many Christians past entertainment, past curiosity? What if we got past coming down here to see if somebody'd shout? And then when they did shout, you nudge you up.

Look at that jack leg. He ain't got nothing to shout about. I saw him at the Walmart last week shoplifted when I was in their barn a few things.

I mean, when I was in there, several passages in this Bible refer to the spirit of righteousness as a spring or a well, a well, or a spring is associated with life. And in particular, the illustrations in your Bible, because the Bible lands, the Holy lands are a barren, dry desert land. And so water is very precious.

Those of you who've been to the Holy land with us, you know that one of the guidebooks I use in the Holy land is the very fact of wells, rivers, and bodies of water, because you can't move them. And if it happened there a thousand years ago at that spring, or at 2000 years ago at that river or that ocean, you can't move that. That's there.

I'm not going to use some tourist site. I'm going to use those sites God carved in the land because those are the Bible illustrations. And God used water and whales to show how Christians are, that we're in a world that denies the Lord.

We're barren and we're a spring and whale bringing life. Now, if you've got a new nature inside of you, you've got a new source of life. You're no longer living and drinking in polluted water.

Look at Isaiah 58, 11, and the Lord shall guide thee like a spring of water whose waters fail not. Now, let me give you an illustration that's from Austria over in the Alps. And I believe it was Peter Marshall, the great chaplain of the United States Senate that brought this story to America.

But many, many, many decades ago, there was a beautiful mountain town there in Europe. And the whole community lived out of this very pristine, sparkling, clear reservoir of water. It was fed by many mountain springs up in those hills.

And the water flowed down into this reservoir. And because of that, there was clean drinking water. There was water to cook with.

There was water to make medicines with. That was mountain pure water. And the industries of that community could use this clear source of water to turn water wheels and generate power for the industry there in that community.

The town council in that little mountain town, that community assembly, one day was reviewing the budget of their community, their public works, if you would. And one of the new young council members held this up to the council and he said, what is this here, this budget expense, keeper of the springs? And one of the older men on the council said, I can't tell you a lot about him. We never see him.

He stays out of sight. He has a love and a burden for our mountains. And his call to life is that he crisscrosses these mountains year in and year out and he cleans out the springs.

If the animal falls into one of our springs and dies, he's always checking the springs and he takes that polluted animal out of the spring. In the fall of the year when the trees are blowing leaves and it can dam up one of the springs and cause the water to get stagnant, he's making his journeys, always checking, always looking. And he'll find those springs and he'll clean them out and make sure the water keeps flowing.

He said one year we had a big wind storm and I heard that all of the mountain springs were almost cut off because so many limbs fell in that winter storm. But I heard that he's so dedicated to his job that he walked in the snow and pulled the limbs off each spring so ice packs wouldn't build up and we'd have running water even in the wintertime. His title's called Keeper of the Springs.

We don't see him very often but he'll come through and take his little paycheck, buy some supplies. He's sort of like a hermit. He said he don't want any attention.

He said we've tried to give him a couple of community awards but he's not interested in that. It seems that his joy is making sure we've got clean water to drink. Said he loves the mountains and he loves the springs.

And that young council member said, well, if we never see him, how do we know he's doing anything? Said for all we know he's sitting up in those mountains. Said we're just giving him a paycheck. Said the budget's tight this year.

We want to put up some oil lamps down the street and we've got some things we want to do to improve our city infrastructure. And said maybe this is a budget cut we could make. Does anybody know the Keeper of the Springs? Have you had him? Do you know him? No.

No. I just know we got clean water. That's all I know.

Well, how many of you vote that we save money on the budget and we cut out that check and just let him know when he comes down next time to get his pay that we're going to be fine? That water's run for years. It'll keep running. We're going to save money there.

And so they voted to cut the money for the Keeper of the Springs. Well, for the first few days there were no change. First month or two, wasn't any change.

Then all of a sudden one of the guys down at the factory said, you know what? I don't believe we're getting as much water off the mountain as we used to. My water wheel's not turning like it used to. They got

through the winter.

A couple of times it seemed like the streams almost froze up. Spring came and instead of having a flow of mountain water coming down, they noticed in the reservoir as it warmed up and got warm, they looked down in there and they said, oh my goodness, look, we've never had that. What's that old stringy green stuff growing? Said, looks like there's not enough current.

There's algae filling up the reservoir. And the fish that were in there that they had some fresh fish and the kids would catch, they started floating up and dying. All of a sudden the water wheel began to crank and stop and crank and stop because there was so much algae and trash in the water.

And then about six weeks later, one of the mothers came over to the council and said, I got three of my four children sick. The doctor said it's because they're drinking polluted water. Said the water's not clean.

And while she was there, a dad came in and he said, my wife's sick unto death. Said she's been drinking water and the doctors say that it's dirty water that's making my wife sick. And they had an emergency meeting that night and one of the men said, what do you think the problem is? And the old man said, only thing I can figure out is we don't have that man up there in the mountain keeping our springs cleaned out.

He said, you reckon we could send somebody up there and ask him if he'd forgive us. And if he'd come back and our community and clean out our springs, we need a clean drink of water. We can't have any power without the power that comes off that mountainside.

We can't have health if we don't have a clean spring. Said would you see if somebody can go get him and beg him to come back. We didn't mean to offend him.

We didn't mean to run him off. And they said, yeah, and they split up and they went all in different directions, hiking and walking. And sure enough, one of them came up on his little cabin and said, sir, we're sorry.

Said we didn't know what was going on. Would you go back to work? And he said, let me show you something. And they walked him over and he said, this is your problem.

And there was the springs, one of them feeding down the mountain. It was full of leaves, trash had fallen in. There was a dead squirrel laying up at the top.

And he said, those are not mine. Those are our trust. And I can't bother those unless you ask me to.

That's the city's land. That's your water reservoir. And I wanted to clean them out because I know what's going to happen down there.

It don't happen today. It don't happen a week from today. But if you leave it alone, if you leave it alone, it'll bring a better harvest in.

And I'm telling you tonight, Christians, my burdens for God's people. I don't care if you've been in church 50 years. You say, well, brother Ralph, I went to the altar when I got saved and I don't think I need to go back to any other time.

I'm going to tell you something. We ought to get under the altar and we ought to say, God, I've been saved 50 years. I've been saved 30 years, but it just dawned on me tonight when brother Ralph was up there that

I've allowed trash to fall in my spring.

I've allowed the world to clutter up me. I've lost the sweet Holy Ghost of my life. I've grieved you, God.

I don't have my tears like I used to. I don't have my burden like I used to. We don't have power turning in the church like we used to.

The preacher not preaching with power like he used to. But God, if you would come back one more time and clean the trash out of my spring, oh, that we could have the power back and we could have a burden back and we could have tears back. And all of a sudden we could get our kids off that rap music and off of VH1 and off of MTV and off of dirty jokes and the pornography and Hollywood.

Oh God, would you clean up our house and clean up our television and clean up our music? Get that out of the well. Clean up the spring and give us revival. It's not going to happen until God's people clean up the spring.

There's people sitting right here tonight, you're saved, you'll die, you'll go to heaven. But you've got all of it in your heart against another Christian. You're mad somebody did you wrong.

Well, you don't know that guy over there. He left our church eight years ago and hurt some people in our church. Well, let me just tell you something.

You're not in charge of him. You're not in charge of her. You're in charge of you.

And you've allowed trash to get in your spring and you're clogging up your whole church. You're killing your preacher. You're killing God's men.

They're preaching and praying, begging God to work. And I'm going to tell you something. We're not going to have revival until we get the trash out of the spring.

One of the greatest revivals I was in was right up the road at Kanapolis, North Carolina. And you know, when it broke it back to Bethel, it broke one night. I was preaching along a similar line about being a hindrance to the Holy Spirit.

And there's a preacher that I love very much. If I said his name, a lot of you would know him. And he tore down out of his chair.

I thought he was coming to the altar. He said he was getting out. Went out, started up his car.

His headlights came up under the tabernacle. I thought, my Lord, what in the world? And he took off down the road. And he went and we're, the service is going on.

We're now coming down to the invitation. And he comes driving up and he slid on the gravel and left his headlights on and his door open. And he came running in with his hands up and he's saying, it's under the blood.

It's under the blood. Said it's forgiven. I'm sorry, God.

I've got forgiveness. And I said, what on earth? And he started yelling. He said several years ago, Percy Ray was up here preaching.

And he said, I got critical of Brother Ray. I didn't like the way he was doing it. I didn't like what he was saying.

And I went and talked about Percy to other preachers and tried to get them not to support him, not to stand with him. And said, I ran my mouth. And he said, it dawned on me tonight that I got the spring backed up in my soul.

Dawned on me tonight that God will never use me as a preacher until I get right. And said, I called Myrtle, Mississippi. I went to a pay phone and asked Percy Ray.

He said, God worked it. I got him on the phone. And I said, Brother Ray, will you forgive me? Of course I will, son.

Get up there and get my holy gold. Amen. And old Percy growled at him.

He came running up there. Hey, that night, over 30 some preachers got in the altar. And you know what I saw happening under there? I saw preachers hugging preachers.

And they're saying, I'm sorry. I got mad at you. I'm sorry.

Forgive me. I talked about Stuart Shoney. I got mad because my best deacon went to your church.

It ain't my deacon. That's God's servant. I'm sorry.

Forgive me. And they got to hugging each other. And it broke out.

Went seven more weeks after that night. People started getting saved like you've never seen. Hardcore sinner.

Got so bad, listen to this, got so bad with God the Holy Ghost in the community that people started getting under convictions. Listen to these testimonies now for a minute. People started getting right in taverns and bars.

Now there's some folks here who knows about it. They were there. One of the testimonies that a man gave was that he was sitting on a bar stool over there near the tent.

And said every time he'd pick up his beer can, said there's a little preacher, a little boy down that beer can. He said he'd get it up to his mouth and he'd say, prepare to meet God. You say, I don't believe that.

Bless God you wasn't drinking that bud either. Huh? Said he'd try to pick it up again and say, today's the day of salvation. He'd put it down.

He'd pick it up and try to drink it again and said, prepare to meet God. And he said while he was sitting there, his hands got to trembling. And said all of a sudden the bartender went crazy.

Said he grabbed the cash register off the counter and he threw it against the wall and started cussing me, the bartender. Said that blankety-blank so-and-so preacher with that old tent said he's ruined my business. And started, opened the cooler and started throwing long necks.

I wouldn't know about those, but Bob Drake told me about them. But, but, uh, but started throwing those long necks against the wall and breaking them. Huh? What happened? A holy ghost.

Why did it get like that? Cause the church got so broken. They started praying all night. They started taking their babies home after the tent meeting.

Meeting back at the church, back at the tent at midnight. Praying to daylight. Now listen to this.

They prayed to daylight, go get a shower, eat breakfast and go to work. You say you can't do that. They did it for weeks.

What were they doing? The Holy Ghost was giving them rest and Holy Ghost, Geritol and vitamins. Huh? God was sustaining them. Some nights the mama would pray and the daddy would sleep.

Some nights the daddy would go down there and say I'll stay with the kids, mama you pray. And it went like that. And God got in lost people.

There was a man there one night, brother David Harrison was leading the singing for us. And, uh, I parked over here on the outside of the tent and drove up. Brother David was already working with the choir.

And I pulled up out there in the parking lot. And when I pulled up, a guy pulled up beside me. Okay.

And I reached around and got my top coat and I got my Bible. And that guy got out of his car and I said, Hey brother, how are you tonight? And he said, Oh, glory to God. And I turned around like, where did he go? And went around his car and he was down on the running board, using it for an altar.

And he's saying, God be merciful unto me a sinner. Lord, I'm sorry. I've been playing and partaking.

I know I'm not right. We had seven people get saved in the parking lot that night before the service ever started. There was a woman, Richard Horne, Pastor Richard Horne, Landis was directing traffic.

He was out at the roadway. And he came and told me, he said, there was a big Lincoln continental, came up the interstate, got off there at the Kannapolis, Landis exit. And said, when they got off, said they pulled up in the yard and said, this big Lincoln said that woman hit the window and said, uh, sir, can you tell me what's going on here? And he said, what do you mean? Said we were down at Lake Wiley in our lake house and said the kids and I just had supper and said, I thought God was going to kill me.

Said the Holy Spirit of God said, get in the car and drive up the road. And said, when I got up there, the Lord said, get off and said, is this a skating rink or is this a yard sale or what's going on? And he said, ma'am, we're having an old fashioned revival meeting. And she said, well, I wonder why I felt such a burden.

And all of a sudden in the back seat, a 17 year old daughter said, mama, I can tell you why I'm lost and I need Jesus. And she threw open the door, started running towards the tent, got about 10 feet from it, fell down in them shavings and started begging God to save her. You say, I've never seen that.

I don't believe it. Bless God. You wasn't there.

You had you to kill the whole meeting. Doubting Thomas, huh? Hey, we've lost our burden. We've lost our tears and we're not going to get the power back.

We can go to another level with God, but God's people have got to get right. You've got to make restitution. You've got to say, God, I'm sorry.

You've got to get it over with. Listen, we're standing in the way of lost people. It was Tuesday night.

There was a lost man and his wife stood right here, stood right there where Pastor Hobbs is sitting. And that man stood there, wiped tears and that woman wiped tears. And I said, how many Christians here know you've got things in your life that shouldn't be here? And it looked like 150, maybe 200 Christians raised their hands.

I mean, all over this tent. And I said, won't you come and Christians, you lead the way. And there might have been seven or eight people came.

And those Christians didn't come. And neither did those two lost people that stood right there in Christ. And let me tell you something, you will meet them again.

You hear what I said? You'll see them again. I just hope it's down here at this altar and not at the Great White Throne Judgment when they're screaming, when God said, depart, I never knew you. And angels are dragging them off to the eternal hell.

And they're walking by you screaming, why didn't you clean your spring out? Why didn't you get the trash out? Why would you be tender that night? Come and talk to me. Not one person went to him. Not one person prayed for him.

Not one person wept in this altar. Lord, we beg you tonight, don't leave us alone. In wrath, remember mercy.

God, would you clean out our springs tonight? Get the trash out of our lives. God, forgive us for being critical, finding fault, holding grudges. God, forgive us for not praying.

Forgive us for not reading our Bible. Forgive us for not being faithful to your house. God, forgive us for robbing you of the tithe and the offering.

Forgive us, God, for not praying, for not witnessing. God, forgive us for not having a burden. Oh, God, stir your people tonight.

God, get a hold of the Christians. Clean out our spring tonight. Clean out our spring.

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