

Being Made Trees of Life

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth through the Holy Spirit to become effective ministers and sources of life for others.

Duration: 59:14

Scripture: Revelation 5:9

Topics: "Spiritual Growth", "Obedience To God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of fulfilling 1 Peter 2:9, which is the calling of God's elect. The speaker compares this calling to what God said to Israel and highlights that it is our destiny and purpose as believers. The sermon emphasizes the need to go beyond the experience of Pentecost and surrender our will to God, learning the lessons of humility. The speaker also addresses the issue of obedience to God and how it is crucial in the spiritual realm. The sermon concludes by emphasizing the need to show forth God's praises now and especially when Christ returns with his saints.

Transcript

As we come unto you this morning, it is with praise and thanksgiving. You are so good. God is good.

God is good. And Lord, you are good. Hallelujah.

We go through the fire, Lord, but your faithfulness brings us through, and we can look back and rejoice. We pray for each family represented here, Lord, you know the struggles, you know the attacks of the enemy. We pray that there'll be peace and health and safety in each home represented here, Lord.

Where there is problems, we pray you'll solve them and bring your people forth in health and peace, worshiping you, Lord. We pray you'll be with the little children and bless their helpers as we continue. And Lord, you know the needs that are here.

I don't. The Holy Spirit does. And I pray, Lord, you will add Jesus where the need is and that no one will leave this place without something from God.

I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

We'll turn in our Bibles to Ezekiel 47. If you don't have an NIV, it'll be up on the board in a minute. Ezekiel 47.

We're going to read verses 3 through 7. This is an old, tiny passage. We've been a long time getting here. How long have we been on the book of Ezekiel? About two months? Three months? And we've finally come to the great climax.

One of the greatest heights in the Bible is the waters. I was going to read verses 3 through 7. You can read together with us if you like. As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle deep.

He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in a river that no one could cross.

He asked me, son of man, do you see this? Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. That's a great, great type in the Bible.

And what I want to show you this morning is the meaning. Now we covered the water to the ankles, water to the knees last Tuesday night, so I'll go over that briefly. But I thought this morning I'd like to emphasize where this is going, what the end of it is, why we should have to move.

The river stands for what? The Holy Spirit. And it's a deeper level of the Holy Spirit. First the ankles, then to the knees, then to the waist, and finally the fullness, the waters to swim in.

So if we could see for a minute, Brian, those four, like I told you, those four things. Remember the four levels. The first level, we'll just look at this briefly, and then I want to show you where this is going, why this is necessary.

The first level is death to the world and resurrection into the kingdom of God. That of course is speaking when we're first saved. We die to the world on the cross, and then we are resurrected with Jesus into the kingdom of God.

That's waters to the ankles. So we could think of that as basic salvation, as first being saved. And then the second level is pretty well known to us.

Death to sin and resurrection to life, lived in the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit. That's Pentecost. That's when we, water to the ankles, we have the Spirit.

We cannot be a Christian without having some of the Holy Spirit, but when we go on past that, then the Spirit has us, so to speak, to a much greater extent. Now we know about the Holy Spirit in Pentecost pretty well. We know about speaking in tongues.

I think most of us here speak in tongues. I've been speaking in tongues a long time, over half a century. I don't know what I'd do without it.

But the Spirit has two main operations in our life. One is to give us power to witness, to minister. We know that, Acts 1.8. But the other I don't think is as well known as an equally important role of the Holy Spirit, and that is to give us victory over sin.

There's quite a bit of scripture about that, victory over sin. So the Holy Spirit gives us both power to minister, the ability to minister within the body and out from the body, and also power to overcome sin. We

cannot overcome sin on our own strength.

That's the second level. Those two levels are pretty well known to the Christian church. It's the last two levels that are not nearly as well known, but they are at issue now.

I'll explain why that is in a minute. They are at issue now. We've had a whole century of Pentecost.

We've had the whole 20th century. It was a Pentecostal century. Now we're moving forward in the kingdom.

Pentecost is not the last feast, as we see from the feast on. There's three more to go. All the types in the Bible show us that Pentecost is kind of a midway.

I first heard that in Bible school from an Assembly of God presbyter, that there was more after Pentecost. Hallelujah! It's a wonder I didn't get raptured right then. So the third one, and the third one is known to the old timers.

You'll see it coming out in A.B. Simpson and Madame Gayon and Jesse Penn Lewis and other deeper life teachers, but for the church as a whole, it has not been known as a specific action like getting saved and getting filled with the Spirit. We haven't known it as a definite act of God in our life. There's something to look forward to.

But we have to know about it today because this is what the Holy Spirit is pressing. This is where the action is in the Spirit, is in this third level. And it is death to our own will and resurrection to fruitfulness and to the power to exercise our Christ-filled will.

God never removes our will from us. He changes our will from our own personal ambition to God's will. But our will, we can't just say I'm an empty vessel and flap around.

We have to always keep our will strong, but then we have to permit God to blunt our own will and impregnate it with his own will. Do you see that? Blunt our own will and impregnate it, but we always keep a strong will. You can't get anywhere with God unless you keep your will razor sharp.

But we have to submit to the process of death to our own will and strength. How's that sound to you? Death to our own will and strength. We were saying about it this morning.

But as I say, we haven't seen it as a thing as specific as the Holy Spirit. We haven't seen it that way. But this question of will and of obedience, stern obedience to God is the issue of the hour.

That's where the action is in the spirit realm. That's the growing edge. We'll speak about that later.

He has a way of accomplishing each of these four levels. Finally, the fourth one, the waters to swim in, is after we go through these first three, we may feel that we're pretty hot stuff spiritually. I had a lady say that once to me.

She says, I've been through tabernacles and all this. Isn't that wonderful? Wished I was. No, you don't go skipping through these things like that.

Also, the purpose is not to exalt us. After we get victory over the world and victory over sin and victory over self-will, then God wants to bring us, as it says, back to the bank of the river. He wants us then to humble

ourselves unto the hand of God.

Remember Christ. He said he did not count it a thing to be grasped that he was equal to God. It's not something that we grasp and say, look how spiritual I am.

We have to learn to go with God. And the end of that is to be a chariot of God. Like we said this morning, that God's will be in us, that we'll live, we'll just be God's chariot.

We're not all occupied with our own spiritual growth. So we're occupied with our spiritual growth up to God and then up to getting our will right. And then we have to learn that this is not where it is.

We then are the servant of God. And the purpose that God does this is what I want to speak about right now. I want to show you with the Lord's help what the purpose of this is.

There's a purpose for it. And when you see the purpose for it, it helps a lot. So we look at where we're reading in Ezekiel, back to Ezekiel 47.

I'm particularly interested now in verses 5, 6, and 7 in Ezekiel 37, verses 5, 6, and 7. They follow this. This is verses 3 and 4. When I look at 3, 4, and 5, but 6 and 7 give us the purpose of it. He leads us back to the bank of the river and that means that he brings us back to the place where we're ready to give to others in this life and also in that which is to come.

When we appear with the Lord Jesus, when he comes, we have ministry to accomplish. We have ministry now. We'll have ministry then.

And so we go through these four steps with God and then he brings us back to the river. And on that river is a great number of trees. Now those are the trees of life.

And Christ is the tree of life. But he's like some kinds of trees that they grow up but their roots go underground and then you look a few yards away and up comes another tree and then you look away and up comes another tree. There are trees like that that all come out from one root.

And that's what God is making us. That is our destiny is to be a source of life for people who do not have life. And that's why we have to go through these steps because until we go through these steps with God, God is still occupied with our growth in the spirit and of course we can minister all along the way, but God has a much greater fullness of ministry for us.

All right, now let's look at 1 Corinthians 15 verse 47. 15 verse, I mean 45. 1 Corinthians 15 45.

1 Corinthians 15 45. So it is written, right at the top of the screen there, the first man Adam became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. That's a tree of life.

And we're being made in that image. We are being made trees of life. Now think about the depth that there is in the world and we want to get out the gospel to people.

We want to get out the information. Of course I'm into that with the internet and so on. We're transmitting information about just like we're doing now.

But you know the sin is getting so bad in the world. It just seems that a new horror comes up every week it seems. I don't want to go into them.

They're things that are so bad that they just sully our minds. And the world needs more than information. It needs life.

It needs the communication of life. Jesus said the words that I speak to you they are spirit and they are life. The world is dead in its sin and what it needs is life.

And that's what God is making us as we go through these four levels of the river is life. Jesus said in John 7, 37, 38, out of your inward being shall flow rivers of living water. Hallelujah.

Rivers of water. Not just doctrine, that's important. But the world needs life.

And the more life we have, the more we can give. You buy that? The more life we have, the more we can give. And that's why God takes us through the water.

It's not for our own aggrandizement. It's so we can go back to the bank and be a tree of life and then of course when you go on further in Ezekiel you can see the great revival, the end time where the water goes out into the sea and the multitudes live, etc. and so on.

Alright, 1 Peter 2, 9. Now this is, 1 Peter 2, 9 is the crux of it. This is the purpose for getting saved, for getting filled with the spirit, for having God break down our will and ambition, and for finally humbling ourselves so we can just do God's will and not try to be something great in the creation like Jesus said he made himself of no reputation. We have to go through these four things in order to fulfill 1 Peter 2, 9. This is what we are called to do.

This is practically the same thing that God said to Israel. Almost word for word. It's the calling of God's elect.

And it's our destiny. It's what we are saved for. And it's why we have to go further than Pentecost.

Pentecost is great, being saved is great, but if we are going to give this world what it needs in the last days, aren't you glad he's kept the good wine until now? Hallelujah. We're going to have something to give. If we will allow God to take us now through the next step, surrender our will to God, say not my will but thine be done, and go on and learn the lessons of humility, we'll be able, because we're facing an age of moral horrors.

People write to me and say what do you think about all this vote stuff? I don't think anything about the vote stuff because these are only ripples. These are not the big issues. And if Satan himself were elected president, Romans 8, 29 would still operate.

All things would still be working for good to those who love God. Politics doesn't change that. So we vote and we pray and we do what we can, but don't worry about it.

Because the Bible doesn't change. All things will continue to work for good to those who love God, no matter who's elected. Hallelujah.

Praise the Lord. All right. Now look at that, because this is why God saved you.

We say, well, we chose Jesus. But the Bible says in John 15, he chose us. You have not chosen me.

I have chosen you. And this is why he chose us. I think it's James 1.18. Don't put it on now, but get that ready.

I think that will be the next one. It's James 1.18. I didn't have it written down here. You are a chosen people.

You are not like the rest of mankind. You can read John 17. You see, I'm not praying for the world.

I'm praying for those that you gave me out of the world. You know, we have to get a stronger grip on that idea that we are saints. We are holy people because God called us out of the world for a purpose.

And once you're called as a saint, you don't have any other calling. That's the only calling you have, is to be a holy one. Regardless of what you work at, you're calling.

You were called out. You have not chosen me. I have chosen you.

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Now, that is our goal. And that is why we have to go through these four levels of the water of the Spirit if we're going to serve in our role.

We can't stop anywhere along the line and say, well, I'm ready to go up and rest on my cot in heaven. I'm ready to go up there, and I'm sure Jim and Mary Lou are, but that is not what God has called us to the great retirement home in the sky. What God has called us to is to show forth his praises now and especially when the Lord returns with his saints.

Hallelujah! I get cranked about it. And why is God stressing that in these days? Audrey and I were in Pentecost in the 40s, and we know that message. We've been to Pentecost, and the things that we're stressing now today have been, are not what we're stressing in those days.

What we're stressing in those days was the baptism, get the Spirit, the Antichrist, the Catholic Church was Babylon, and we were all supposed to fall away. Problem with that, Jim, you may remember that, but that was the doctrine. I mean, the Catholic Church was the Babylon and Antichrist around the corner, and we were all falling away as fast as we could because we were preached to have a great falling away.

The only problem is God had another idea, and so along toward 1949, 1950, God began to prophesy in his church, I'm ready to move again, and he began to move, and as you know about David Duplessy and the charismatic movement and so on, and I'll tell you, God is not finished yet. There's more good stuff coming down. Hallelujah.

That old unpacked, there's more good stuff coming down. We're ready to go on with God, and what God is stressing, and it makes sense. Most of us believe the coming of the Lord is near.

Now, I'm not going to say it's going to happen tomorrow. It may not happen in 50 years from now as far as I know, but if you stop to think about it, the Lord is coming in his kingdom, and he is going to bring us with him to install his kingdom on the earth, and we're going to appear with him, as it says in Colossians 3, 4, then there has to be more done in the church. If he's going to have a church without spot or wrinkle, it ain't there yet.

Is it? I haven't noticed that it is yet. It isn't there yet, so obviously if the coming of the Lord is at hand, and he's going to come as king of kings and lord of lords, and we're going to rule with him, then we've got to have more than we have to the present hour. My goodness, the churches are still having the bitterness and division and every other thing, and this is not what you call a bride without spot or wrinkle.

So there's got to be more. Thank God for what we have, but there's got to be more if we're going to reach the prize and the high calling of God in Christ. And so, as we might expect, that's what the Holy Spirit is talking about.

That's exactly what he's talking about. So if our calling was something else, it would be different, but our calling is to be a priest, and a royal priest at that. That is a governing priest.

That is our calling, and that's why we have to go through these steps in God, is in order to be qualified to be capable of this calling. Now, does that make sense to you? You know, goals are awfully important. If you have the wrong goal, the whole system goes crazy.

Goals are important, and our goal as God's people is to come up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. That's why we have ministries, to bring us to the stature of the fullness of Christ. That's why we have ministry.

Why are we coming to the stature of the fullness of Christ? Tell me. So we can serve as a tree of life, so we can serve as a priesthood. Now, these things aren't in there to mystify or frustrate us.

They're in there because this is the nature of redemption. We're being redeemed from everything that is of Satan, and brought into everything that is of God. Hallelujah.

It's not halfway there. It's not half Satan and half God. We're pressing for the mark.

We're pressing for the fullness, as it says in Ephesians 3.19, the fullness of God. We're pressing toward the fullness. We're not there yet.

Why are we there yet? No, we're not there yet. The Holy Spirit is speaking about obedience. Amen.

Preach it, Brother Thompson. I'm preaching it. All right.

That you may declare the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. All right. Another one on that.

Revelation 1.6. I don't know why these things have been kind of hidden to us. We know them. We say we're going to rule with Christ, but I don't think we pay enough attention to it.

What does that mean? Rule with Christ. What in the world are we talking about? Rule with Christ. When and where and how and over whom? Got to pay more attention to it, because time is getting there.

We're going to be ruling with Christ. We've got to be ready. Got to go through these four steps.

Not only salvation and the Holy Spirit, but we've got to go through this death to our will. We've got to become humble. Count it not a thing to be grass to be filled with God.

Amen. Hallelujah. And all that.

All right. Now we're on Revelation 1.6. He has made us to be a kingdom and priest to serve his God and Father. To him be glory and power forever and ever.

Amen. This is what we are being made. It is a kingdom.

We talk about the kingdom of God. We don't even know what it is. We pray about it.

Thy kingdom go, right? Thy kingdom come. God's kingdom is coming to the earth and we will be priests in that kingdom. We will be rulers in that kingdom.

That is our destiny. Somebody say amen. That is our destiny.

That is our goal. That's where we're going. So we don't go through these things with God because they're nice or because we think it would be a good thing to be spiritual.

It's because it qualifies us, trains us so that we can serve God in this kingdom as a priest over the people that God is saving. Hallelujah. When the Lord comes everybody isn't going to be killed.

We read in the Bible. And we're going to appear with him. And we're going to rule with him.

So we say we're going to rule with Jesus. Well we all say that but now it's becoming real to us because the coming of the Lord is near. So we have to start thinking what does it mean to rule with Jesus? Where are we going to rule? Over whom are we going to rule? What in the world are we talking about? Rule with Jesus.

But it's in the Bible. It's in the Bible. Now you may not be carried away with the idea of ruling.

I can't help it. That's what God calls you to. He has made us to be a kingdom and priest to serve his God.

All right now we're on Revelation 5, 9 and 10. Revelation 5, 9 and 10. I'm fixing to preach here in a minute.

Revelation 5, 9 and 10. All right. And this people up in heaven they sang a new song.

You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom. Is that you? You suppose? You have made them to be a kingdom and priest to serve our God and reign.

I'll tell you the truth. When I first started preaching the kingdom of God, people thought I was a Jehovah's Witness. I'm Jehovah's Witness.

Heaven's sake. That's what the Bible teaches. We're going to rule in the earth.

Do you ever think about that? Have you ever seriously thought about that? That's the truth. That's why we're going through the water. That's why we're being made trees of life.

Come in here today. God has dealt with you this last week. I mean God has dealt with you.

If God has dealt with you it's been around one or three lines. He has dealt with you about the love of the world, being too involved in the world. If you're all involved in the votes and everything and you read the whole paper from page one to the last page, Alpha to Omega and all this, you're really getting too involved

in the world.

Get out of it. We're in the world but we're not of the world. Maybe God's been dealing with you and says, come on, be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

You're not of the world. God called you out of the world. By the way, did you dig up James 1.18? I think that's what it is.

You need to see this to get a proper vision of what God is doing. Brian will have that up there in a minute. I'm pretty sure that's the verse.

Somebody beat Brian to it? There we go. That's right. Now if you get this concept, you'll have a much better grasp of salvation and of the kingdom of God.

Notice what it says. He chose to give us birth. Now who do you suppose us is? Us.

The people James wrote to. All right, us. Birth through the word of truth.

Were you born again by the word of truth? No. That we may be a kind of firstfruits of all we created. Now you have to see that to understand the kingdom.

Firstfruits is used a lot in the Bible. A term that's used a lot in the Bible and it refers back to the Old Testament where God asked of the animals or of the grain or whatever, God wanted the firstfruits. God refers to Israel as his firstfruits.

He said to Pharaoh, you do this to my son, I'll do this to your son. Israel is God's firstborn. What that implies, when you have a firstfruits out of your field, let's say the first grain that was reaped was barley.

So you get sheaves of barley and not the whole field, just some sheaves of barley and you bring it to the priest and the priest waves it before the Lord. That's the firstfruits before the Lord, a wave offering. Then you go back and you start with the rest of the field.

See, the firstfruits is not the whole field. Make sense? Capiisce? It's not the whole field, it's the firstfruits from the field. The best beans on the vine.

The best. The firstfruits. That's what the church is.

It's not the whole ranch. It's not all that God intends to deal with. The church has been called out from the world.

You have not chosen me, I have chosen you. God has called us out from the world. In the book of Acts it says, as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

You have to preach the gospel to every creature, that's what it says in Mark 16. But from that preaching God will bring out the ones he has chosen. Such a thing as the concept of election.

And we are called out to be, like Israel, a firstfruits of God. Now what does that imply? That implies that it's the best in choices out of the field. But the field is the world.

And so our job is to be trained and filled with the spirit, made a tree of life, so that God then can through us bless his creation. Hallelujah! You're not getting saved to go up there and sit on a couch and read the

funnies. Or eat chocolate without getting fat.

You're being prepared to do something. Hallelujah! Out of your inmost being will flow wells of running water. It's not for you, it's for others.

It comes out of us with joy to bring forth water out of the wells of salvation. There's no greater joy on earth than giving of the life of God out from your person to someone who needs it. Hallelujah! And remember we were teaching a couple of weeks ago about every day, every day, every one of us should pray for more of the Holy Spirit.

Ask and you shall receive. People come to us and they have a need. We have no bread.

We're saying, God give us of your Holy Spirit. God give us more of your Holy Spirit. We should be praying that every day.

We ought to be baptized every day. We need more of the Spirit of God. Can you say amen? We need more of the Spirit of God.

He should be created in us as a well. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles, not at the Feast of Pentecost, but at the Feast of Tabernacles in John 37 said, He that believes in me out of his inmost being. Pentecost is the rain, but God wants that Spirit coming out from his throne in us.

Out from his inmost being shall flow rivers, rivers, rivers, rivers of running water. Hallelujah! God is, we look at the world and we curse the world because they're doing this and they're doing that. The world is waiting for us.

What are they going to do? We've got it. If we belong to Jesus Christ, we have it. And God is aware of their pain.

He's aware of the children that are dying of starvation. He's aware of the people that would serve God if they ever heard the word. God sees the world.

God so loved the world. But his church, it takes time. You can't build a saint overnight.

You can't create people with living water in them overnight. We've all seen the different revivalists, or as many of us have in the 50s, and A. Allen was one, and there was a number of others in the healing ministries and so on. But these things had their day, but they left because it wasn't the level that God wanted.

They are signs, signs. These signs shall follow them that believe. But signs point the way.

What are they pointing the way toward? The righteousness of God. Hallelujah! So we have a ways to go. And the Spirit is ready today to take his church on past what we've known, building on what we've known, and then teaching us to be obedient to God.

God's people run around. They don't like what's being preached. They run to another church like a wild colt.

Many of them have never learned to obey God. If you ask them if they're obeying God, they're apt to say it's impossible to obey God, or some other crazy thing. God expects obedience.

Hallelujah! We can't do a thing until we learn to obey God. The kingdom is based on obedience. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done. Not our will. God's will.

And the problem with some of the early ministries is tremendous miracle workers, and God blessed them a great deal, was good. But some of them were going in their own strength, in their own will. And God has a better thing than that for us.

He wants us to have the glory, but he wants us to obey him. Obey him implicitly. Not seek our own glory.

Not see who's got the greatest tent. Not see who's got the greatest attendance or anything else. Thy will be done.

Whatever he says to you, do it! And you live with it? All right. We are a firstfruits. The church is not the whole reaping of God.

The church is a priesthood, a royal priesthood, a ruling priesthood called out from the people of the world to be trained by the Lord, to be brought through the four levels of the Spirit until we come back to the bank and can serve mankind as a tree of life. And that's why you see as you go on, in fact, we can do that. Listen, we finished with 5, 9, and 10.

This is, I didn't prepare you for this, Brian, but back to Ezekiel 47. You see where this is going. Oh, hallelujah.

These are old fires. I get wrapped up. These are old fires.

47. And you notice here, this is a great picture here of the revival that will take place when the Lord comes. Same as Isaiah 60.

Ezekiel 47. We'll be there in a minute. Now notice, he led me back to the bank.

This is verse 7, I believe. 7. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. Now these are saints.

These are trees of life. Not talking about cherry trees or something. He said to me, this water, what water? The Holy Spirit, flows toward the eastern region and goes down.

Whenever you see east in the symbolism of the prophets, it refers to what? Coming of the Lord. The day of the Lord. And goes down into the that is down in the dry place where it enters the sea, the dead sea.

It empties into the sea. The water there becomes fresh. Mankind in the Bible is viewed as a sea.

The wicked are as a sea. And so God wants to put his life into the dead sea of mankind. As it says, the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

That is the dead sea of mankind. God has in mind to save people. He's not going to return and kill everybody on the earth.

He's going to save them. They're going to come to his light in his saints. And we've got to be prepared for that.

We're not going to be, the Lord isn't going to come, wave a magic wand, all of a sudden we're a great king and priest. This is not the way God works. Most of us in here are experienced Christians.

Now tell me something. Is it or is it not true that before God brings you into a place, he prepares you? Have you ever noticed that? When God brings you into a place, he prepares you. I know God prepared us for pastoring.

I spent most of my life in education. When we hit that church over there 25 years ago, and I've been here ever since, believe me, everything I ever learned in the public school, I needed it. And so God prepares us.

He's a God of preparation. He prepares us. And so our idea that when the Lord comes, we're suddenly going to be made great kings is not realistic.

It's not only not scriptural, it's not realistic. It's not the way God works. He doesn't yank you out of one thing and make you something you've never been.

So that means if we're going to be prepared to come with the Lord, be revealed together with him, and bring the water of life to dead mankind, then there has to be preparation in our life so that we will be able to do this. Does that make sense to you? So expect God, before the Lord returns, to work with his church in a new and greater way than he's ever worked. He's about ready to shell down the corner.

How many feel they're being stretched today in ways they never thought would be true? One or two people? Let me repeat that question. How many have found that the Lord is stretching them in ways they have never anticipated? Yeah, that's a little more truthful there. That's what he's doing.

Don't expect God to look at you and say, oh, you were saved a hundred years ago, and now 90 years ago you got the baptism, so you're swell. He isn't saying that to me. Today is a challenge.

Yesterday was a challenge. The day before was a challenge. I'm being stretched.

Stretched. How about you? Be prepared for that. The Lord is not going to come for an unprepared people.

He is not going to do that. It's not the way he operates. We're going to be so ready, so prepared.

We're going to be so prepared that the Lord's coming will be just another step in our Christian life. It will not be some new, strange thing that hits us. Pow! The guns go off at the Marine Corps base.

Pow! And all of a sudden we're something we never were. That's not the way God works. You're just going to go along gaining and gaining and gaining and gaining and all of a sudden the Lord will be there.

We're going to have a church without spot or wrinkle. That's what the Bible says. Impossible to man, but we're not counting on man to do it.

I don't know about you, but if the Lord was to walk right down that aisle right now, are you ready to rule? Or you've got some tidying up to do? You've got some people you haven't quite forgiven? Some bones of contention that still have a little bit of marrow in them? Are you ready to look into the faces like the sun and say, thank you Jesus, I'm ready. You're a well done good and faithful servant. Let's go and get the job done.

Well, it's going to be that real someday. It's going to be that real someday. It says in 1 Thessalonians 5, that day will not overtake you as a thief.

Speaking of the children of light, 1 Thessalonians 5, a day will not come upon you as a thief. It will come upon the world as a thief. But God's people will know.

They will be ready, saying, come Lord Jesus. There they go. I'm not quite there yet.

You may be. You can preach next Sunday if you are. All right.

The water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures, verse 9, will live. How many see that? Are you picturing tadpoles and crustacea? Octopi? People.

Yeah, but they're just one race. I don't believe it. People are so different.

You learn that as a pastor. It's all kinds of living creatures. You find that to be true? All kinds.

You have, in your experience, all kinds of living creatures. Now, God's talking about people. That's what he's interested in, is people.

Not water, not the Mississippi. He's talking about people and the river of life will live wherever the river flows. Where's that river coming from? Out of your inward being will flow rivers of living water.

Then he says there will be a large numbers of fish. Now, what does that remind us of? Is God interested in trout and carp? What does Jesus say to his apostles? Fishers of men. Fishers of men.

He's talking about people. Symbolic language. A wonderful type.

Because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh, so where the river flows, everything will live. What a hope for the future. The pain of the creation is not marking the end.

It's marking the birth. It's the pangs of birth. Hallelujah.

What God has been preparing from the Garden of Eden, one seamless robe of Christ, moving forward from covenant to covenant until finally the summit is in sight. And God has said, I've given you salvation and you understand that. I've given you the baptism and you understand that.

I want you to go further in the water because I'm going to pour out from you to a dead mankind the Spirit of God and they're going to live and they will be your inheritance. They'll be your inheritance. Jesus said, I'll divide the spoiled with the strong.

We are co-heirs with Christ. What is his inheritance? Ask of me, the Father said to Jesus in Psalm 2, and I'll give you the nations. I'll give you the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.

And we are co-heirs with Jesus. God showed me that. I tell you, I was preaching on one thing or another many years ago and God showed me the desirability of people as an inheritance.

Oh, hallelujah. It's better to inherit one person than anything you can name. The inheritance of Christ is people and they're going to come.

Well, Isaiah 60. I'm almost through. I didn't have this with me, Brian.

I'm sorry. Isaiah 60. One of my favorite passages.

This is where we're going, people. This is where we're going. This is why God has brought you past basic salvation into Pentecost.

Why God wants to bring you past Pentecost into a place where your will is crucified and yet you're living and yet it's not you but Christ. And when he brings you there, then he wants you to bring you to a place of humility so you don't count this being filled with Christ something to be grasped. So we've still got this to go.

How long God will take with his church? I do not know. But I do know this. He's not going to come until he's got a prepared people.

They say, when's the Lord going to come? Do you know yet? Yeah, I know when he's going to come. When he's got a prepared people. He's not going to come for an unprepared church.

Yank them up into his presence when they're still full of backbiting, gossiping, slander, and everything else you can mention. No, no. That is not going to happen, thank God, or I'm for the woods.

All right, Isaiah 60. Arise, shine for your light has come. Who do you suppose that is? Us.

And the glory of the Lord rises upon you. And that's what it says in Colossians 3, 4. When Christ, who is our life, appears, then we'll appear with him. See, darkness covers the earth.

When is it going to happen? At the darkest hour of earth's history. Boy, if it gets much darker morally than it is now, it's going to be a fright. I need more God.

How about you? I need more God. I need more of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to fret myself about the things that Democrats are doing.

I don't want to be fretting myself about there. These people need life. How many know the Democrats need life? Well, we all know that.

How many know the Republicans need life? How many know the Green Party needs life? Our calling is not to curse the darkness. It's to pray for the Holy Spirit so we'll have bread. That's what Jesus said.

Knock, ask, seek. And that's what we're doing. And if darkness is over the people, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you.

Oh, what a day when the Lord comes. Let's talk about the coming of the Lord. And nations will come to your light.

Think of it. You say, what nations? The same nations. The nations that will be destroyed at the coming of the Lord are the servants of Antichrist.

They will be destroyed. There will be many nations on earth that will not be destroyed when the Lord comes. Thank God.

If they were, we'd have no inheritance. Who will the Lord rule over when he comes and sits on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem? There'll be nobody left to rule over. His church isn't going to be destroyed.

No heir is with him. Kings, priests. It's the truth.

It's what the Bible says. I believe the Bible. That's the book for me.

How about you? The B-I-B-L-E. That's the book for me. Every word, every chapter, every verse.

But the Lord, nations will come to your light. This is your inheritance. This is the inheritance of Jesus Christ.

And I submit to you, they won't see him. And they won't see the Father. You know who they're going to see? Who do you think they're going to see? You.

But see, in you will be Christ. And in Christ will be the Father. See, that's where we're being made.

Living epistles. What we're being made is the fullness of God in the earth. Emmanuel.

So, God can come down into his priesthood and then the nations can come to the priesthood and learn about God. Isn't that wonderful? And they don't want to see us half-baked. One of the tribes was half-baked or half-turned or something.

Ephraim was half-baked. Well, we don't want to be half-baked. Some of us are in the fire right now.

Some of the members of the church are in the fire right now. You're getting baked. You were baked on one side.

Now you're getting baked on the other side. Remember the scroll that says in Revelation it was written on the outside and on the inside? God's got to bake you on both sides. Bake you on the inside that only God can see and on the outside that people can see.

It's very important what people see. Amen? And kings to the brightness of your dawn, lift up your eyes and look about you. All assemble and come to you.

See, they're going to come to the Lord. They're going to come to the Lord in you. In you.

Your sons come from afar and your daughters are carried on the arm. Think about it. Your sons, your daughters that you're going to inherit.

That's your inheritance, priesthood. That's your inheritance. You say, well, that doesn't turn me on.

Wait till God touches you. Wait till God touches you. God touched me, as I told you, ad nauseam when I was in Iceland.

I would have laid down on the streets in Iceland if God were to save those people, because God put that in my heart. And when you talk about laying on the street in Iceland, believe me, you are not talking about a steam heated pavement. You're talking about cobblestones with frost on them.

That doesn't matter. When God puts that love in you for people, you will understand then what it means. Up to then you may want a backyard full of diamonds.

That's fine. I'll trade you my diamonds for your people. It's people, it's people that are the inheritance.

Then you will look and be radiant. Your heart will throb and swell with joy. The wealth on the seas, that is mankind, will be brought to you.

The riches of the nations will come. Well, we've been saved. We've been as far as Pentecost.

I can remember in 1948 when Donald G. and Harold Horton, as I remember, Horton began to teach the gifts of the Spirit. I was in the Assembly of God Bible School. I'll tell you, we were aflame.

We never heard of such things. We never taught about the gifts of the Spirit. And here Harold Horton and Donald G. and some others begin to write about the gifts of the Spirit.

We never heard of these. It was wonderful. And we always gave messages in tongues and interpretation, but never a prophecy.

If there was a prophecy, we talked about it for a month. 1949, there was prophecy all over the place. God was moving, moving.

The waters were stirred. Well, what we didn't know and what we haven't known to this day, in fact, what God did was he brought us up to the prophecy and the gifts and then he worked out horizontally through the historic denominations. So tongues and gifts of the Spirit are known in the Episcopal Church, the Catholic Church, the Baptist Church, you name it.

It's all over the place. But we didn't understand the purpose of the gifts. Ephesians 4 tells us the purpose of the gifts is to bring each one of us to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

That's in Ephesians 4.13. We did not understand that that's what the gifts were for. We thought they were to whatever. In the beginning, I thought I used to interpret messages in tongues.

Oh, boy, was I stuck on myself. And always at the wrong time. No sense of timing.

I would wait. One time the Bible school, we're down at Six and Fir, when it used to be the First Assembly in San Diego. We're down at Six and Fir and they had a distinguished speaker there and the Bible school students were all up in the choir.

And I was sitting there and I began to feel a stirring. Oh, Lord, this is wonderful. Pretty soon I'm going to give a message in tongues or do something.

I had to get an increase, an increase. And I sat on an increase. And finally the main speaker of the evening went down to the podium and he lifted his hand up.

He was about to make a great declaration. And I exploded. Well, I felt real good about it.

It didn't bring anybody to the stature of the fullness unless it was the preacher. It probably brought him a long way. Well, now God wants us to understand that these are not self-feeding into us.

This is to bring us up. And then God shows us why are we coming to that stature? Because there's people that are not of the first roots, but God loves them. They're the nations and they're going to come.

And the Lord's going to come and receive them when he's got his church ready to be alongside with him. And receive them. Does that make sense to you? So there we go.

We've been saved. We've got the baptism. Now God is dealing with us about what? Self-will.

Self-will. Say, Lord, not my will, but yours be done. The fires we go through, when we go through there and we feel like we've really arrived, then God says, now humble yourself.

Make yourself of no reputation. Just be my chariot. Just let me ride.

Shall we stand? Oh, hallelujah. Blessed be the name of Jesus. Oh, just look up to him, saints.

Oh, hallelujah. Father, in the name of Jesus. Lord, we praise you.

Hallelujah. Such a great plan that you're moving in your majesty. And Satan cannot do a thing about it, Lord, because it is the power of God working.

Oh, hallelujah, Lord. Your kingdom, we pray, Lord, it will come. And your will will be done in the earth.

Finally, Lord, help us. Help us to go forward in the water. To go forward in the water, Lord.

We're not there yet. We realize that. But we want to be.

We want to see this thing through to the fullness, Lord. Oh, hallelujah. We love you, Jesus.

Maybe there's someone here that God has been dealing with you about something this week. Don't go out that door with it unresolved. Come to the altar right now and get that worked out with God.

Don't try to gum it through. Don't try to gum it through. You come and tell the Lord about it.

Say, Lord, I'm on my way, but this has been troubling me. If you're here and there's something that God has been dealing with, a little bit of stretching, will you come and work it out with God? Hallelujah. His virtue, His presence.

Audrey? The Lord would have you know this morning that He is touched by the feelings of your infirmities. He is touched and cares and hears as you call to Him. He would reference back to in Egypt when they were in slavery and He heard their groanings.

And He moved in a way that was not understandable to them. And I think sometimes we're crying out to God, give us straw so we can make the bricks and meet our quota. And the Lord is saying, that's not my purpose.

I'm calling you out. I'm separating you. Hallelujah.

He wants to plant faith in your heart to come out. He wants to plant faith in your heart to go through the circumstance of your life. And He prophesied to you this morning that He will be with you and He will cause you to walk through these ugly circumstances, these trials, these things that you have no control over and only God Himself can bring you through.

But He can and He will, just as He brought them out of Egypt and made them so dissatisfied that they groaned and cried to Him. So let your groaning and the feelings of your infirmities cause you to call upon the name of the Lord your God and trust in Him. He will not do it for you, but He will do it in you and He will provide for you.

He will give you water to drink. He will give you a pillar of fire. He will give you a cloud and a succoring.

He will be with you and He will walk you through these times of distress and you will know your God in a way you could not have known had you stayed trying to make brick. Hallelujah to the Lord your God. He is a faithful God and if you will call upon Him and walk with Him through these waters, you will be of benefit and He will be of benefit to you.

Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. That's for you.

Come on. Let's just take a minute. We don't have to be here a long time, but let's take a minute and get it worked out with the Lord.

Praise your name. Praise your name. Come on.

Don't go out through that door. God is stretching you. God is dealing with you.

Make sure that you're in a place of compliance with His will. Hallelujah. Maybe we could have some of the altar workers come.

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