

Making a Real Soldier

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the Army of the Lord, which consists of angels and saints, led by the Word of God, to execute God's judgment and will on earth.

Duration: 1:18:00

Scripture: Exodus 4:2, Isaiah 2:20, Matthew 24:44, 2 Timothy 4:10, Revelation 19:11

Topics: "Discipleship", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of fully committing oneself to serving God. He shares a personal experience of realizing that the people in the church were not ready to be part of God's army. The speaker encourages listeners to make a conscious decision to no longer be of this world and to belong to Jesus. He highlights the difference between being a church member and being a disciple, stating that disciples are focused on growing in their relationship with Christ and serving Him, rather than pursuing worldly success.

Transcript

Lord, as we come unto you tonight, it is with praise and thanksgiving. Lord, you brought us through many dangers, toils and snares, and we appreciate it. We appreciate your many, many kindnesses to us each day, helping us along and giving us wisdom and deliverance.

We appreciate it, Lord. We pray for each family represented here, Lord, that you will hear their prayers and bless them, Lord, and keep them safe. Let your angel be present in their homes, Lord.

Keep them safe and healthy, their loved ones, Lord. And whatever burdens are on the heart tonight, Lord, we pray you'll hear and answer prayer. Praise your name, Lord.

And as we continue, Lord, we need to hear from God. We need to know what you're saying. So, Lord, through your Holy Spirit, we pray, you will just add to each person as he or she has need.

We ask in faith, believing in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to turn to Joel, the second chapter.

Now, I felt to talk some about the army of the Lord. And I know this is not Joel Amos. This is not all that commonly taught.

I understand that. These are old flyers for me. Joel 2. Joel.

Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos. Joel.

You're pretty far back there. And I know it's not commonly taught. I understand that.

But it's something that God impressed on me over 50 years ago in Bible school. In 1948, I'd walk around saying, the drums of El Shaddai, the drums of El Shaddai. Well, El Shaddai is one of the Old Testament terms for God.

It means the mighty one, the powerful God. But the drums of El Shaddai, that's kind of weird. And none of the other Bible school students were saying anything like that.

And I wasn't particularly saying it to people. I was saying it to myself. And at that time, God gave me a feeling for His army.

And Joel 2 is one of the best descriptions. But I want you to know there are many places in the Bible, Old Testament and New, where the army of the Lord is described. It's not just here in this particular place.

But it's in many places. Of course, it climaxes in Revelation 19 with the coming of the Lord. Now, we notice, and we better start there, I guess, hold your big toe in Joel 2. Let's take a look at Revelation 19 to begin with, because we have people here that aren't always here.

They're probably not used to what I teach so much. So I want you to be sure you see it in the Bible. It's in Revelation 19, starting with verse 11.

So you'll be oriented toward the New Testament. What in the world? What do I do? I can't move. Well, that's a sign of age.

I was here to tell you. You can't find your glasses. What's worse is when you're wearing them.

Revelation 19, 11. I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse. This is the coming of Christ, whose rider is called Faithful and True.

With justice He judges and makes war. Now, see, we don't think of the coming of the Lord in this respect, ordinarily. But since His coming is close, this is becoming more real to us and the implications of it.

When the Lord returns, when Christ came the first time, we know we're in Easter season, that He died on the cross. He was a very meek person, and He was crucified, allowed Himself to be crucified, and then rose from the dead on the third day. So we're used to that Jesus.

We understand that Jesus. We don't understand this description of Jesus. We don't think of it.

I mean, it sounds like a Sunday school war or something you read about in the Bible, but it never happens. This is going to be a real war. It's called Armageddon.

His eyes are like blazing fire. We don't think about Jesus that way, do we? Gentle shepherd. He has on His head many crowns.

He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and His name is the Word of God. It's interesting that in the Gospel of John, it says in the beginning was the Word.

And it says the Word was made flesh. And here we find at the end of the age that the Lord is called here, not the Lamb. Not when He's waging war.

He's not called the Lamb. He's not called Christ. He's called the Word.

The Word. Because it is the Word that will prevail. And then it says something that affects us.

It says the armies of heaven were following Him. Well, that's where the rubber hits the road. Notice it's not army.

There are two armies. There's an army of angels that actually strike with spiritual swords in the spirit realm against the wicked angels and the demons. That's one army.

It's an army of judges. And it's led by the archangel Michael. Then there is... That's an army of warriors.

I mean to say warrior angels. And then there is the army of judges. And that is the Christian army.

We don't have swords that we fight with in the spirit realm. That's done with the angels. We pray and we say, Satan be gone.

But you see, we're only speaking words and we're moving our hand. But that isn't doing anything as far as the demon world is concerned. As far as the demon world, there has to be an action by angels and by the Spirit of God to actually move the demons, actually move in the spirit realm.

We make a judgment. We say it's time now for Satan to be dismissed from this person. We make a judgment.

We have the keys of the kingdom being the church. And we decide at this time this person will be released. That's a judgment.

But all we can do is pronounce it, maybe wave our arms to be demonstrative, to show energy or dedication. But that's as far as we go. We're not doing anything.

There's words going out into the air. So there's another army that fights. And that army is in the spirit realm.

It's invisible to us. But it actually executes judgment. Is that clear? Remember what Jesus said? I can call the legions.

I can call the legions of angels to help him. Many times in the Old Testament we see that the angels slew armies. They actually slew armies.

And so we don't do that. We can't take anything in the spirit realm. All we can do is pronounce a judgment.

So there are two armies that are involved. And we see when Joshua was at the border of Canaan, there appeared the commander of the angelic army. So Joshua, who's a type of Jesus, was leading the army of judges, bringing with them the Ark of the Covenant with the Ten Commandments.

That's God's judgment. They were bringing that. The army of angels don't bring that.

The judgment is given to man and to man alone. But they couldn't fight the battle against Jericho by themselves. They had to have angelic help.

So the captain of the Lord's army showed up. And between the two, I mean, it's ridiculous the way they fought the battle. I mean, they marched around blowing rams for it, you know, and it went away.

But then the angels pushed the walls over. So you have to, if you're going to do anything in God, you have to do two armies. I mean, we can make all kinds of noises and religious statements, but if it isn't working in the spirit realm, nothing happens.

And that's where the problem is, is in the spirit realm. Andrew? How does today's Psalm 149 work? It says, in 149 verse 6, May the praise of God be in their mouths as double-edged sword in their hands to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the people to bind their teeth with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all these saints.

Yes, that's one of my favorite passages. That's our job as judges to do that. We actually bind them with our Word.

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. We pronounce the judgment of God against them, but it has to be carried out in the spirit realm. It has to be carried out.

We have the sword of the Spirit, which is what? The Word of God. But it's a word until something happens in the spirit realm. And so that happens through the Spirit of God and through the angels.

So that's why we see here armies of heaven. So, now here's where it gets very practical. When we think, and some of us are old codgers like Jim and me, and we think, boy, now I'm getting so tired, I'd like to just lay down and not get up again.

Did you ever feel like that, Jim? Boy, when my time comes, I'm not going to protest too much. Just lay me out there in Kaiser and bid me farewell. You do get that feeling when you get old enough.

But you see, what we're hoping is that we'll go up there and rest. But see, here we find that we're returning with the Lord to fight. And that hasn't been too much in the forefront of Christian thinking.

We've pictured, well, maybe we'll be in a nice mansion and maybe we'll never have to worry about food, never have to worry about bills, no sickness, dread, fear, anything. It'll be a wonderful place to be. We'll have a spiritual body that's not attracted by gravity so we don't have the sense all the time of being crushed down and tired and weary.

That's what we're looking forward to is the paradise of God. And nothing wrong with that. The Lord said to Daniel, go your way and rest and you'll stand in your lot at the end of the days.

Go your way and rest. And you will stand in your lot at the end of the days. But now we find that something else is happening.

This is the army of angels and the army of saints being led by the Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, to enter the earth and to set up God's kingdom. Because the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom. And the original preaching by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles concerned the kingdom of God in the first century.

The kingdom was coming to the earth and God's will would be done here. But when the Lord delayed His coming for 2,000 years, that hope grew very dim because so many millions of believers have died and the kingdom did not come. So, that hope grew very dim and what became more real to us was that we would die and go to paradise.

That became more real to us. But now we're so close to the return of Christ we see the tears of wickedness rising in the earth and we know that when that happens the tears of righteousness will grow up at the same time and we're close to the coming of the Lord. And now the message, the original gospel message of the kingdom of God, the doing of God's will in the earth for which the saints have prayed so many hundreds of years, thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth has been prayed by so many millions of people throughout the 2,000 years of the Christian era.

Now, we're close to it. And so God is opening our eyes to how we adjust to this. How we adjust our thinking to it and what effect it has on our daily life.

It has a direct effect on our daily life. Because in order... Now, I don't think all Christians, this is my opinion, I'll get it to you and tell you my reason why. I don't think all Christians will return with the Lord as per this passage, riding behind Christ.

I don't believe it. For one thing, in any kingdom, the whole kingdom is not an army. Anybody that's been in the military knows that the whole army is not the infantry.

You have a whole backlog of cooks which are important three times a day. Motor transport. Getting people around.

Clerks that fill out millions of... The army is great for writing everything down in quadruplicate. You've got an army just of clerks. And then, of course, there's the medical corps which is absolutely essential.

And many other aspects of an army. You can't have just infantry and have an army. They're the ones that face the enemy.

But you have a lot more assisting functions without which the army cannot function. An army cannot function without the food and the cooks. You can't function without that.

You have to have your food, your supplies. An army doesn't last three days. I mean, it's over.

So, in the kingdom of God, it's the same way. There are those that God will train for war. And it will be in their heart.

And that's why Paul said, I press toward the mark. Everybody has a mark. Everybody has a place planned for them from the beginning of the world where they fit.

And all that you and I have to worry about is our own mark. We don't have to compare ourselves with anybody else. All we have to do is to ask the Lord each day, help me, as Paul said, to press toward the mark that's before me.

The heavenly calling, that is my unique mark. Because we're all different. And we all have different roles in the kingdom.

Does that make sense to you? You see that? It's very restful when you think of it. You don't have to compare yourself with anybody else. All you have to do is go to Jesus.

And if you do what He wants you to do, then you're perfect. That's all He's asking. And He doesn't ask a whole bunch of stuff that's foreign to your thinking, is distasteful, onerous.

It's not like that at all. Those things happen when we're either in religion or something where we're not hearing from Jesus. But to hear from Jesus and to do what He says to us as an individual is the most restful, joyous thing in the world.

It takes some time to get there because we have so many forces that impact on us to get our eyes off the Lord. But God, as David Duplessis said, God has no grandchildren. We always relate to God one-on-one.

Just, lovest thou me more than these. It's always you and Jesus. You can't bring anybody else with you.

Your Creator wants to hear you, see you, know you, and He doesn't want you trying to force somebody else up there. He doesn't want that. And He won't.

He won't put up with it. He'll break that relationship if He has to to get to you as an individual. There comes a time when Jonathan and David are separate because they have different destinies.

And so no matter how close you are to someone, you can always love them, pray for them, be with them, and support them. But when it comes to meeting Jesus, you have to meet Him by yourself because you are as unique as your fingerprints and there's nobody like you. It's just you and Jesus and when you get that straightened out, then you can relate to people properly.

If you don't get that clear, you can never relate to people properly. It always will be abrasive. Once you get you and Jesus straightened out, then you have a firm marriage, then you have friends, and so on.

But first is God. He has the number one claim on us. Isn't that true? See, that's how He made us.

Alright, so our minds are looking at this, so we see it's clearly New Testament that when the Lord comes, He's going to declare war on the earth. Not because He doesn't love people, but because He does. If you think much about the state of the world today, most people are in abject misery.

And a lot of it is due to self-seeking rulers. You see this in Mexico, so graphic, where the poor are eating out of the dump, and the politicians are sending millions to Swiss bank accounts. To Swiss bank accounts.

It always seems to be happening down in Mexico. Every time I look at that, I get sick, because in sight of Mexico City, which is a metropolis, in the city dump, you'll see Mexican people out there trying to squash cans to sell and everything, while their leaders are amassing millions. And this is true in many governments.

I had a laugh at the communists with all their thing about, you know, helping with the poor and all that. But in East Germany, this guy before the Berlin Wall came down, the ruler of East Germany, when they got after him, he restored away all these millions of dollars. I don't know if you remember that or not, when the wall came down.

So, it's that way. It's that way in the Arab countries, where the sheikhs and the rulers have 16 Cadillacs, and the people are living hand to mouth. Well, the Lord is not pleased with that.

He's not pleased that some children have nothing to eat. He's not pleased that fetuses are abhorred. He's not pleased with that.

And all the politics in the world won't change it. Education won't change it. We've tried to give food to Russia for the people.

As soon as it gets there, the crooks steal it and sell it on the black market. Everywhere you turn, it's graft and corruption, graft and corruption. I mean, I don't know how the presidents of this country stand it, because once they get an office, there are so many pressures on them.

Even if they had the best resolve in the world, they couldn't do it because of the financial pressures and others that are exerted on them. So the world is a mess. It's been that way for 2,000 years.

It's a record of war, of famine, of injustice. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. And you can't stop it.

There have been many savants and philosophers, teachers, politicians throughout the 2,000 years who have promised utopia and gave their scheme for utopia. It never has worked. The only way peace will be brought is by the Lord coming and declaring war on the governments of the earth.

There is no other way. They're not going to give up their power or their money. They're not going to do it.

They're going to lie and connive and steal. No matter what you do, they'll outfumble you and they'll end up ahead of you. But when the Lord comes, his eyes are fire.

You can't con him. You can't get around him. And I'm sure people will try to offer him a billion dollars or a trillion dollars.

Oh yes. This is a very real thing. This is not some weird Oz kind of thing.

This is going to happen. And it's going to be real. Christ came once and he's going to come again.

And when he does, he's not going to ask permission. You see, Christ... If you want a picture that will make you nauseous, it's the picture of Christ knocking at the United Nations. Christ knocking at the United Nations trying to get in.

It is so totally farcical. I mean, it is so ridiculous. You get any sense of Jesus Christ... United Nations means nothing.

Like it says in Isaiah, the nations are a drop in the bucket. They're less than nothing. Nothing at all.

And there's no United Nations. There's no building. Manhattan is just laid bare, you know.

But they'll do it. They'll try to bribe him just like they did back there in the book of Acts where the sorcerer said, I'll give you money. Give me the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Oh yeah. Oh sure they will. They'll try to buy him off.

And if he were a human, they say every man has his price. Maybe he could be bought, but you're dealing here with God. And he can't be bought.

He doesn't need anything. We don't have anything he needs except ourselves. There's no king of history that had one billionth of the power that Christ has.

So when he comes, the con game is over. Now, he could have done that two thousand years ago at the first Easter. When Jesus Christ came forth from the tomb, he was invulnerable.

There was no one who could touch him. The Roman soldiers couldn't touch him. All the power of Caesar couldn't possibly touch the resurrected Jesus.

He didn't ascend to the Father so nobody would hurt him. We know that seems silly, but we have to think about it. We have to understand what's going on here.

Now, he could have at that time. He said, I have power to call the legions. Well, a legion was, does anyone remember, it was 144,000 soldiers or 12,000 soldiers, whatever it was.

One angel wiped out the whole Assyrian army. One angel went there and wiped out that army. So you can imagine what a legion of angels could do.

And Christ, they were worried about his being crucified. He said, I can call the legions. I can summon the legions.

And he could have summoned the legions. And after the atonement was over, the blood had been shed for the sins of the world, he could have ruled from Jerusalem and no one could have stopped him. He could have sent out his apostles as kings and no one could have stopped him because they would be accompanied by angels.

Huge warriors that no one could resist. He could have set up his kingdom 2,000 years ago. Think about that.

Think of the agony that would have saved mankind when you read through history the various cons, for example, Kamerlane, Hitler, Stalin. You think of the monsters of history that caused the death of millions, multiplied millions of people, brutalized them, enslaved them. Even today, so many little boys and girls are sold into prostitution in several countries.

Such a thing. None of that would have happened had Christ elected to set up his kingdom when he was raised from the dead. So evidently, God, who does not delight in the destruction of people, who has love, who cares for the children, who cares for the boys and girls, who cares for the adults, who cares for the old people, didn't let that go on because there was no purpose.

There's a purpose. And the purpose is that it's God's determination that Christ would not come to earth by himself to be a king by himself. It was God's determination, as we read in Hebrews, the second chapter, to have a company of sons who would share the inheritance with Christ.

That doesn't mean that they're as great as Jesus. They didn't come from eternity as he did. They didn't create all things as he did.

Nonetheless, they're born from the same Father. And therefore, he calls them brothers. And there will be an army of these brothers as we see here.

The armies of heaven have followed him. And they will be with him as he rides through the earth. The armies of angels doing the actual slaying, but the army of judges directing it, binding and loosening, determining who's permitted in the kingdom, who isn't permitted in the kingdom, because they have the keys of the kingdom, the power to bind and loose.

And then these invincible warriors that fought alongside Joshua, helping when they invaded Canaan. And the earth, the wicked, will be destroyed from the earth. There will be an end of sin on this earth.

God's will shall be done in the earth as it is in heaven. That prayer was not given in vain. God's will shall be done in the earth as it is done in heaven.

His kingdom shall come. His will shall be done. And when we see the world, in general America in particular, becoming increasingly wicked, we realize what it will take to remove sin from the earth.

But the Bible says in Daniel that God shall make an end of sin. And He's giving us faith now to believe for that. There's a movement in the spirit world.

It's not the same as it was when I was first saved. There's a movement. We have faith now to believe that God is going to do this, can do it, will do it, and the day will come when there's no sin on the face of the earth.

But you see, people being what they are, it will have to be done by war, and then it will have to be maintained by the rule of the rod of iron, as the Scripture says. That's the rule of Christ. It's not... What shall I say? It may not be like we picture.

The Scripture says that Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron, and they'll be broken like you would break a flower pot with a crowbar. They'll be smashed to pieces. That same promise is made also to the victorious saints.

And so the army, Christ will come. From the Scriptures I'd say not sooner than 20 years. I hope I'm wrong, but I don't see how the things that have to be fulfilled yet can be fulfilled in less than 20 years.

Maybe they can. I'm not going to set any dates. But He will come.

And He will declare war on sin. And He will make an end of it. And the reason that the gospel call goes forth... See, there's two things in the New Testament.

Two issues. Two messages. One is the fundamental message of salvation.

He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. And what that means is spared in the day when Christ returns with His army. That's what that means.

He who believes and is baptized will be spared when Christ returns with His army. That's one issue of salvation. The second issue is talked about much more in the New Testament than just basic salvation from wrath.

And that is the program that we go through as Christian people. The pains, the trials, the strengthening of our faith, the creating of Christ in us, which is not for the purpose of delivering us from wrath. It's for the purpose of preparing us to rule with Jesus.

See, there's two different issues altogether. If the issue were only to be spared from wrath, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved. That's all you have to do.

Forget about it. Just rest and wait. Don't do anything too bad.

But because what's going on and the reason for all the ministries is to build us to maturity as measured by the fullness of the stature of Christ, which is not talking about basic salvation at all, but it's talking about the preparation of saints who can return with the Lord and install the kingdom of God on the earth. And that is why God is dealing with us today as He is. And depending on your calling, each one of us needs to make sure that he is praying each day and that he is reading his Bible each day because the currents are running so swift and the challenges are so severe as Antichrist rises in the world and Christ rises in His church that flesh is only dust.

It's dust. There's no middle ground. To not press into God with all your might in this century is to default to defeat and punishment.

You will be... If God's hand is on you to be in His army and you are careless, your talent will be taken from you and given to someone who is more industrious. You will lose your crown. I'm just telling you what the Bible says.

God is looking for diligence. This is the parable of the talent. You wicked and lazy slave.

God is looking for diligence. Jim knows about diligence. He's a businessman.

He's been in business I guess all his life. And he'll tell you if you want to lose your company, be careless. Just be careless.

Be careless in these days like the people carelessly buying stock on margin and all this and they're millionaires one day and they're paupers the next. That's careless. They're not diligent.

They're not looking at what they're doing. They're just looking as far as the end of their nose. Whoopee! I can invest in this and I've got a million dollars overnight.

They're not diligent. Yes. Having done all to stand.

Not having done all to attack. Now, the Lord under the hand of God the Father is waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool. God the Father in His wisdom and Christ always moves in the wisdom of His Father and He has to be patient.

He would like His enemies destroyed right now. But the Father has a plan and you and I are part of that plan. And Christ can't move against His enemies until God has offered to you and to me a chance to be a co-heir with Christ.

You're going to have that chance. Now, the currents are running fast today. Fast.

Faster than they've ever run because we're approaching the maturing of wickedness and the maturing of righteousness. And it's going to be you don't have to worry about going out and looking for something to overcome. The hurdles will come to you.

If you want to have some fun sometime when you're driving home just picture that you're not going anywhere. That you're standing still and the earth is turning under your car because it's all relative and it kind of gives you a funny feeling. Well, that's the way the Christian life is.

God isn't asking you to sashay out somewhere and try to do big things for God. He isn't asking you. We use that expression today.

That's aggressive faith that's really presumption. You'll never find it in the Bible. God is not looking for people to do big things for God.

God is looking for people who will tend to their own program just each day. Say, Lord, help me through today. Lead me not into temptation.

Deliver me from the evil one. Sufficient unto the day is the problems thereof. You will have problems every day.

Is there anyone in here that did not have any problems this last week? No challenges? Nothing to overcome? No hurdles to jump? No test of your faith? Probably not because God doesn't waste time. There's no time to be wasted. The reason for this continual stretching and testing and challenging of your faith is so that you will be ready to be a co-heir with Christ.

You can't just repent and be baptized and that makes you a co-heir of Christ. That spares you from destruction. It would be just like you were on a boat and someone fell overboard.

And you threw them a life preserver. Well, you saved them, didn't you? But you might have saved them to become a bank robber. See, just saving them doesn't say anything.

And just saving somebody from wrath doesn't say anything. It's what happens after that. And so you and I are living stones in that kingdom.

We are living stones. And for each one of us a place was prepared before the foundation of the world where we fit. And if we don't mind our P's and Q's and we let stuff go by carelessly, our talent will be taken from us and given to another.

That's why it says don't let anyone take your crown. Because what is taken is your crown, your ability to rule with Christ. And people can take that from you.

And we see that in Matthew 25 where the fellow buried his talent, what was given to him. He just buried it. And there was another fellow that was given five and he got another five.

He ended up with ten. So what does the Lord do? He takes the talent from the guy that buried it and gave it to the guy that had ten. Now he had eleven and the other fellow had nothing.

And the Lord said you are a wicked, lazy servant. In other words, you were not diligent with what I gave you. Now in our culture, in our culture with its marvelous attractions and the way the electronic industry and the research and the software and the hardware and the rest of it is going, it's an endless fascination.

I mean, they don't even, you can go down now and buy a keyboard for your personal computer that makes our keyboards look absolutely sick. They're \$60. They don't have just the keys like we have and then alt and control and enter and then the number pad.

They don't have that. They've got on the keyboard along with the letters. You know, I need that.

But I didn't, I, I, you know, I mean, there is no end to this. But what happens is that it distracts you from the intense seeking of the Lord. Now, I'll tell you this.

You have and I'm sure and I have also. I've read, I love to read about the great mountain because in a way, the Christian life is like that. It's like climbing a mountain.

And you know, when you approach a great mountain, they set up base camps. Well, there's all kinds of people in the base camps and they come and they go and they bring food and they bring oxygen and they set up tents and they do everything and then they go up some and they set up another camp a little higher. Well, it's a little more strenuous so you don't have quite the comforts and the things.

But there's still a lot of coming and going as they move material and other things up and down. Then you get one that's still higher than that and there's fewer people there and it isn't quite as comfortable and everything is starting to get a little breezy and cold and everything. But these base camps keep going up until finally there's two or three people who are preparing for the assault on the summit.

And those people, you better read about, I was reading about Hillary in 1920 and so on and other ones. But those people, there's no bringing up stuff there and anything. They, they, they, everything is behind them now.

Imagine what Paul said, you know, I'm pressing on, I'm forgetting the things that are behind me. Life is behind them. Everything is behind them.

They can't breathe all that great. And their legs, of course, they can hardly move. They're in constant danger of an avalanche and stepping into some kind of a gully or a chasm.

And these, these people at that point, from that highest camp to the summit, they're like people set apart. The other people are not nearly prepared for that that are down at the base camps. These are the ones for whom the whole, all this planning and everything is for this two or three people to go and of course the whole group here is in the glory.

But when you read this and you realize some get so close to the top and they have to turn back. It's just, either they can't breathe or they get frostbite and they're losing their toes or a storm comes up and they can't make it and their heart broken because they spent so many thousands of dollars to get to that point and they know their name will go down in history and they're just almost there. Well, let me tell you something.

For 2,000 years the Lord has been setting up base camps. He's been setting up base camps. And we're either the generation or the generation after us that is destined to go to the summit.

And that summit is a full, a full absorption of all the promises of God and will include what Jesus said greater works than these shall you do in John 14 verse 12 I believe. Greater works than these shall you do. That doesn't mean barely, barely greater.

That means colossally, colossally. He meant what he said. He will say to this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea.

Well, we believe that with one half of our brain but with the other half of our brain we figure well, that is impractical and it must be symbolic and mean something somewhere at some place at some time. But what we don't realize is that God said this. And God doesn't say things he doesn't mean.

So when he said, You will say unto this mountain, Be thou cast into the sea and it shall avail you. That's exactly what he meant. Now, that's never been done in church history so far as I know.

But when God says something in the Bible, it's not impractical. It's not a wild dream that someone would have a pipe dream, too much opium or something. It's not that kind of thing.

It is the breath of God. But you see, we haven't been to a height where we can grasp that. And the apostles laid the groundwork for us and gave us the vision and pulse at his old age.

He says, I'm laying everything down. I'm pressing on. I haven't made it yet but I'm going on.

But what he was talking about the summit, he was talking about the full apprehension of the person of Christ. The power of his resurrection. The fellowship of his suffering.

The full grasp upon the possibilities of God. Now, that's what God is challenging us to today. That's what he's challenging us.

And of course, it sounds like, well, I don't, you know, I don't have the faintest hope of ever doing such a thing. You don't. You couldn't.

The only thing that you can do is, as I said, find out from Jesus what he wants you to do. And if he wants you to wait on tables in his kingdom, you'll be the happiest you can possibly be because you're doing what God calls you to do. You don't try to imitate anybody else.

You just find out what God wants for you. So you don't have to say, oh man, I'll be lucky to make the lowest of the base camps, let alone the summit. That's alright.

There's no problem. God hasn't called you to stress yourself. None of us can do anything except that God puts the desire within us.

You've got to, you know, blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, but they shall be filled. God has to fill us. We can't fill ourselves.

They shall be filled. And the same is true of having a fighting desire to serve God, or faith, or hope, or persistence, or whatever it is. It all comes from God.

And when you feel within yourself, boy, I'd like to have more righteousness, ask God for it. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. I'd like to have more faith, ask God for it.

I'd like to have more zeal, ask God for it. See, you can't give yourself zeal, but you can choose to ask. And if you don't ask, you'll be regarded as a lazy, careless servant.

He gave the guy the talent, the guy just didn't use it. So God, He didn't say, well, you know, I gave you one talent. He didn't blame the guy.

He just wanted him to use what he had. He only asked him to use what he had. Why don't you take what I gave you and put it out to the bankers? He doesn't ask you.

He said to Moses, what is that in your hand? What is that in Aaron's hand? What is that in your hand? And so, God wants the challenge laid down today. Because there will be people to whom God will speak and it will register and it will confirm what the Spirit is saying to them. And it will help them to address themselves in a way that would not have been possible otherwise.

They will say, that's right. And they will lay aside that which is behind. Our memories often are a tremendous problem to us.

Not always. Sometimes they are fortifying. But we can limit our faith by our memories.

Oh, I tried to do that and it failed. And I tried this and it didn't work. And I tried that and it didn't work.

You know. We forget all the things that didn't work. And just get our eyes on Jesus and keep them there.

And never mind if they come out with a three-dimensional keyboard. If we don't need it, we don't need it. And then it's time to play with toys.

We need to focus on Jesus Christ because Satan is taking over our country an inch at a time. I can see it over the last 50 years what has happened. Our country is in a moral decline.

I don't know if it will rise up again, but it's certainly on the skids as I'm talking to you. And we're going to get sucked into that because the currents are so strong. They're so strong.

The economic opportunities are so great. The educational opportunities are so great. There's so much we can do.

In other countries, Satan fights against the Christians by persecution. In this country, he fights against them by giving them the opportunity to make money. It's exactly how he fights against the Christians.

And let me tell you something. There is no such thing as enough money. There's no such thing as enough money.

Do you remember the scriptural principle? He that gathers little has no lack. He that gathers much has nothing over. All you do is earn the money to give to the righteous, according to the Psalms.

If you were to earn a million dollars, you would immediately start working on your second million. That's human nature. It's a trap.

And that's why the scripture says if you have clothing enough to eat and everything, be content. But that is exactly how Satan fights against the Christians in America. It's with the opportunity to make money.

And once that starts, you can't stop. Let's say you've gone your whole life and never got to enjoy what you do have until you die. And then somebody comes after you and wastes it.

So it is one of the greatest snares of mankind. It was in Jesus' day. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.

It's been a snare from ancient times. And speaking of the day here in Revelation 19, the Bible says in Isaiah 2, they will throw their money down for the moles and the bats. Now hear me.

God, you can lose... Now hear me. In the name of Jesus, you can lose a great part of your inheritance, if not the whole thing, by getting sidetracked with the things of this world. And you have no day to waste.

Not one. We learn this from Brian Wagner. We were planning and hoping that he would have a long career in the ministry.

But it was God's will that he would be cut off in his twenties. And we learn from that. Hopefully.

You cannot count on the fact that this church will be here Sunday. You cannot count on that. What you're going to do, you have to do now.

You cannot say, when this happens, and I finish this, or do that, then I'll serve the Lord. I'm going to tell you something. It will never happen.

Because the minute you get that thing finished, something else will come up. Hear me. Something else will come up.

And it will diddle you around like that until you are in a nursing home. Hear me. I know a brother right now that was in the old church, and he was going along so great, and he was just about to sell his business.

And when I get my business, well, that had to be 15, 16 years ago. And I saw him several months ago. You know what he was doing? Just about to sell his business.

Just about to sell his business. See, he sold one, then he bought another. He was just about to sell his business.

And about 15 years had elapsed. Let me tell you, it doesn't work that way. If you're going to serve God, you have to take a hold of yourself.

You have to wrench yourself out of what you are doing. Life is short. It is short.

And the years go by, and you don't realize it. And you're here, and I'm here for one purpose. And that is to grow into the image of Jesus Christ because that's the only way that God has that.

I saw, not a vision, and the Lord, I could see, he was looking over his army, one of his army. And I realized, we're not ready yet. The people are not ready yet.

And when you go, ten times as severe. There's an article on the Reader's Digest about three months ago. It's unbelievable.

I mean, they were beating on these guys with sticks until their urine was running red with blood. And they're training for the SEALs. They had doctors there all the time because guys were passing out.

There was people with pneumonia, and the doctors were saying, you've got to quit the program. They said, I don't want to quit the program. I don't want to quit the program.

They were yanking them out with pneumonia. That's in the United States in the training for the SEALs. Well, see, the average G.I. is down there with his lawyer trying to sue his drill sergeant because he looked at him cross.

But when you go for the elite, let me tell you, it's a seller's market. You just shut your mouth and do what they tell you. They have these guys down in water hobbling.

If their mothers ever saw them, they'd faint. Well, the Lord is developing an elite corps who will govern with Him and inherit the nations. These nations with a rod of iron aren't going to be your average person that went to church for 50 years and then finally grew old and died and did a little prayer, a little Bible reading maybe, helped in something like that.

That's not an elite corps to ride on horses behind Jesus Christ and conquer the people in the world. The Lord is looking today for people who will go to the summit. And the currents are running fast and Satan has all kinds of with money and more money and more opportunities for money.

I was talking in the paper about Spokane, Washington and something like 10,000 millionaires up there. He said, well, I wish I was a millionaire. Don't wish that on yourself.

It will distract you. He said, well, I'm only getting 6% of my money. Maybe I can get 7%.

And that time is wasted because Satan will diddle you along like that. Diddle you along. And then this thing, and then that thing, and then that thing.

You cannot say... And the Lord says, you go out in the ministry now. He went. One year from retirement.

When the Lord tells you to move, He doesn't mean when you get your retirement, when everything is set, you've got all your ducks in a row. He means move. When we came down here, it was the middle of a school year.

Middle of a school year. I was teaching school at the time. I'd never broken contract before, but I went to the principal and I was very... I lost I don't know how many thousands of dollars out of the California State Teachers Retirement Fund by quitting before I had a few more years and I would have had matching funds.

I never got the matching funds. But it was the middle of the year. We had two children in school.

And the Lord said, now, well, I went to the superintendent of schools and I said, I think the Lord is telling us I don't want to break contract here, but I think the Lord is telling me. A man came in there, well qualified to take over after me. He was delighted.

The superintendent didn't care. School went on and we came down here and a few days before that, the fourth square had closed that church over there because of membership that got down to one person. And there were pastors angling for that church.

It was the middle of the school year. And if we hadn't have moved right then when God said, with all the... I mean, what sense does it make? Couldn't the Lord wait till the spring till school was over? Couldn't He wait five more years till I got my matching funds? What has been accomplished in those five years? We wouldn't have had the church for one thing. The timing was then.

That was when they closed the church in December. And we came here in January. That was when they closed the church.

We came here at just the perfect time. But have we been living an average Christian life? We say, that isn't God because God certainly after all these years wants me to get my California State Teachers retirement and all those thousands of dollars and then I can serve God with all those thousands of dollars. But was anything accomplished in those five years? I think things were accomplished.

During that time I think that Stan came on the scene from the Sorollo School of Ministry. Important things were done in those years. No.

You don't... If you're going to be a Navy SEAL you don't live like an average person. And if you're going to be in the army of Jesus Christ you don't live like an average person with your job or anything else. I'm not saying you don't work.

I've been working since I was 15. Started working on a railroad in New Haven. Before that I guess.

Delivering newspapers. I've always worked all my life. I'm not talking about not working.

I'm 74. I'm not retired yet. Tired maybe but not retired.

Because there's something that has to be done. And I have no intention of sitting around my face hanging out somewhere. There's things to be done in this world that God is doing.

And it's far more important than being superintendent of schools or anything else. And there's no saying well I'll do this and then I'll serve God. It'll never happen.

You have to say now. I've made up my mind. I'm sorry.

Starting now. And boy if you don't think Jordan will come to flood. Boy will it come to flood.

You'll have more excuses not to do it than you've ever heard of. All your relatives will come from Mississippi or something to stay with you. Something will happen.

Something to attack your determination and say well after they go back to Mississippi then I'll do it. Oh no you won't. Because then they'll come from the other direction.

There'll always be something like that. I'm too old. I'm too young.

You know what the liturgical year is? Easter. And then summer vacation. And then Thanksgiving.

And then Christmas. And then Easter. That's the Christian liturgical year.

I can't do anything now until Easter's over. We get spring now. We've got graduation.

After that I'm going to serve God. Well nobody serves God in the summer. We'll rest in the summer.

Well then the kids have got to go back to school and we've got to get their clothes. Well by the time we do that it's time for Thanksgiving. Well no.

Well after Thanksgiving I'm going to serve God. But as soon as Thanksgiving's over we've got to get ready with the Christmas presents but as soon as Christmas is over I'm going to serve God. And then of course there's the Easter oratorio to get ready for.

And that's the Christian liturgical year. That's exactly how Satan works. There is no tomorrow.

There's no tomorrow. You may be and you've only got I didn't mean to say all this. I was going to talk about Joel tonight.

So it must be for somebody. Maybe it's for me. Audrey and I talked about going for the summit coming down.

You just have to strip down for the race and you involve yourself in the world only as much as you have to. A true Christian will give up promotion on his job if it means that it's going to interfere with his discipleship. You know there's a tremendous difference between a disciple and a church member? Did you know that? There's an awesome difference.

You can be a church member for 50 years and not grow an inch. A disciple will grow more in one year than you will in your 50 years in church. Because his goal is not making a living.

It's not living the normal American life. It's not doing those things. It's serving Christ.

It's all the difference in the world. Everything that happens to him it's interpreted in terms of Jesus Christ. Whereas a nominal Christian goes to church and everything and he learns a trade and he goes off and he does this and he gets married and he settles down and he has a nice home and he continues to attend church and like that.

He never grows! There's a catalyst that is missing there. There's a catalyst that is missing. It doesn't begin to operate until you make up your mind that you're a disciple and that you're going to lay down your life take up your cross and follow Jesus.

And that's like a catalyst that operates in your life. It changes you from a church member into a disciple. It has to be done.

There has to be a time when you grab the situation and make up your mind I'm not of this world anymore. I belong to Jesus and I'm going to serve Him. And if He leads me like He led me into education I was in there many years.

All I want to do is preach and serve the Lord. He leads me into education I go all the way through seven years of college and the Lord is with me. Oh, that's what He wanted.

That's all that doesn't matter. Audrey and I wanted to go as missionaries. The Lord led me into education and wonderful years.

But I needed that preparation for pastoring. I needed everything I learned in the public schools for pastoring. So, it's how God leads you as an individual.

But it seems so few believers listen to Jesus. So few listen to Jesus. They're good people.

They're the salt of the earth. They attend the church. They help with the mortgage.

They'll help you. They'll give you the shirt off their back. The best people in the world.

But they don't listen to Jesus. They don't know what He's saying. I got all this stuff going.

What can you do? The currents are too swift today for that. I just got time. Does anyone have a question about what I said at all? Question? Yes, Jim.

Pastor Thompson, maybe I missed this, but when you... Because God has chosen that Christ will not rule alone but with a company of brothers. And the brothers were not ready at that time. Because, you see, Christ had these 12 men around Him.

And He could have sent them out, broken the earth into 12 parts and sent them to govern. But, Jim, He was with them. But He wasn't in them.

And the kingdom is within you. He could have trained them and talked to them, but they were still individuals. Christ isn't going to rule with a number of discrete individuals.

He's going to rule with His body. It's called... The term that Paul used is His body. It's people in whom Christ has been formed.

And then in that new creation that has been formed in them, the Father and the Son come to dwell in that. There's two steps there. One is the creation of Christ in your personality.

And the other one is the coming of the actual Lord and the Father to dwell in that. That, Jim, is the kingdom. And when the Lord comes, He's coming with a church, every member of which has had Christ come to maturity in it.

Because if the Lord were to... Let's say St. Peter here, St. John here, St. James there, St. Philip here, and everything. Sooner or later, they being human, and only human, they're going to reflect the shortcomings of rulers everywhere. Maybe Philip got sent to rule over Asia and he really wanted to rule over South America.

Right away you've got problems. Somebody, maybe the Lord assigned him to just rule a little backwoods community somewhere. Someone else is over the whole United States.

Well, the little guy figures, you know, he gets jealous because we do. Right? So he couldn't send out the twelve like that to rule. Because the perfect one was not in them.

Now, when Jesus Christ is as He is created in us, the jealousy, the desire for preeminence, personal ambition, avarice, hatred, anger, are destroyed. And in its place, Christ is formed. Then the Lord Himself comes and dwells in that formation that has been formed from His body and blood.

Now, there's all these hundreds of thousands of rulers, Jim, but there's really only one. See, there's only one. And His name is Jesus Christ.

He's in this person. He's in that person. He's in that person.

That's the kingdom. The kingdom is Christ in us, the hope of glory. And the purpose of the two thousand years of the church age has been to create Christ in people so that when He returns, this great company, which is really, if you want to put it down to the basics, it is all God because Christ does nothing except that it's God in Him.

And when Christ is formed in us, then it's God in Christ in us, so all over the world is being ruled by God. And that's the purpose for the two thousand years. And that's why you and I are brought through the experiences that we are, is to break down the love of the world and the various passions that we get into, whether it is a love of money or a romantic passion or a desire to rule other people or whatever it is, that's all broken down and in its place comes the pure nature of Jesus Christ.

Now God's got Himself a ruler. That's why He didn't set it up two thousand years ago, because He was with them, but not in them. And according to the scripture, all the ministries, even the evangelists, pastors, apostles, prophets, teachers, are all given until we come to the oneness of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man.

And that word there means, it's talking about individual men. The scripture suggests a group, but the actual syntax demands that it's talking about each member of the body comes to maturity as measured by the fullness. The model, the goal, is Christ Himself, the fullness of the stature of Christ.

Now, when we are willing to set aside our own life so that Christ may be formed in us, then we enter into the kingdom. Then we enter into what God made us for. And God wins, Christ wins, we win, and all the people that we influence win because they get to feed on God through us.

But when we choose instead, then we only have two choices in life. We only have two. One is to live for God and the other is to live for ourselves.

And when we choose to live for ourselves, then God loses, Christ loses, we lose, and all the people that we contact lose because all they got from us is whatever good there is in our personality. And almost everybody, there's something good, something, you know, friendliness, kindness, intelligence, or support of some kind. But when we have God in us, then people are able to drink of the waters of eternal life.

So we all have this choice. And we only have one life. You can be religious, you can attend church, be faithful, pay your tithes, and never turn over your life to God.

You're a good religious person, but you're not becoming the house of the living God. Most all religions have something good to say for them. But Christianity in essence is not a religion.

It's not really a religion. It's a one-on-one relationship with your Creator who brought forth, brought you forth from the womb as one type of humanity. And now He says, let that type of humanity go because I'm going to graft onto it a divine humanity so that you'll really be a son of God.

You'll be born a woman and born of God. Twice born. And until you're twice born, you cannot see the kingdom and you cannot enter the kingdom.

We refer to being born again as accepting Christ. That's not what it means. Being born again means that you have laid down your Adamic life and now God has been formed in you and now you are truly son of man and son of God just as Jesus is.

Amen? Any questions about that? All right. Shall we stand? Father in heaven, how we love you. Father, you have sent forth the Spirit of your Son into us crying Abba, Abba.

You are our Father. You have begotten us with the Word of Truth. Hallelujah.

We no longer are, but we have. And the flesh cries for the world and our new nature cries. Oh, but you must increase.

And Lord, I pray this day, this night, we'll have seen a decrease of the old man and an increase of Christ. Yes, Lord. Oh, God, how we long to dwell in your courts and to hear you say, well done, good and faithful servant.

Now God has another stone in His temple. Oh, hallelujah. May it be true of us, Lord.

Don't let us miss it, Lord. Don't let us miss it for anything. In Jesus' name.

I'm pressing on.

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