

Dryness

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon emphasizes the need for spiritual renewal through Jesus, addressing the issue of dryness in faith and the importance of relying on God's grace.

Duration: 39:15

Scripture: Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Dryness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a testimony of a young Presbyterian missionary in Brazil who had a hunger for God. The missionary experienced a transformation in his heart and began to draw from the new spring of living water at Calvary. As a result, he brought 19 fellow missionaries and evangelists to a conference, where they too were hungry for God's presence. The speaker emphasizes the importance of continually sharing our testimony and allowing others to experience the deepening river of grace. The sermon concludes with the belief that God is working to bless, revive, and refresh the church through the sharing of living water.

Transcript

I'm on my way back to England from Brazil, an old hunting ground of Dr. Pearson's, and God has blessed us very much there. God is doing great things in that land, and there's a band of men whose hearts God is newly touching, and giving them a fresh vision of revival in the simple gospel way that we shall seek to learn together here in this conference. And so, I believe God is working in this simple way in the hearts of his church, all over the world just now.

There are two wonderful brothers just now in Australia, two Africans who've been for years leaders in revival in East Africa, and even now they've been spending months going up and down Australia. One is a bishop, through no fault of his own, he never wanted to be the bishop, and they didn't usually appoint revival-minded men as bishops, but he said, well, you know what I am? They said, we don't want you to be anything else. And another is a schoolteacher, men on fire, who are giving the same message as we shall be seeking to learn together here.

And all over the world, God is doing this quiet but new, fresh working of his Spirit, I believe, just nothing special, no special emphasis, but taking us back to Calvary, back to learn again those first lessons from which the church is always in danger of departing. So I believe this conference is fitting into a glorious, gentle, precious working of God to bless and revive and refresh the church, that through them the living

water shall flow to others. Last June, there was an international conference along these lines, and Dr. Pearson was there, and Mike Markham was there, and Benley Master, who's coming in a moment, as well as people from 22 different countries.

And there we had a wonderful sense of the Lord Jesus, adequate for the needs of the world, and beginning first with his own church. So these are great days in which to live, and I believe God is purposing to do a fresh work for this great, widespread, evangelical church in America, beginning with humble people like ourselves. So we don't know where this river will end.

I've been on the biggest river in the world, the Amazon, in the last weeks. At the mouth, it's 200 miles across, and the fresh water extends 200 miles into the Atlantic. And yet somewhere, that mighty river was just a little tiny stream.

Now who can tell from the tiny streams that will begin to flow in our hearts, what good God designs should come. So let's be full of expectancy, hungry, and eager to learn. And I would like to say, do come to as many of these meetings as possible.

It's a very short conference, and I would say it'll be worth laying aside every other thing to come, if possible, to the whole series. The memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery have recently been published in England, and there's some wonderful stories of the inner history of the war. And he tells that whenever there was an acute situation, when perhaps the enemy were adopting new tactics, he would call in his other general, over whom he was chief, for special consultation.

And the notice calling them in was marked priority. And no matter how many things those men had to do on their own sector, when they got that order, they had to drop everything to give this priority. They might meet in the woods somewhere, and they'd have that priority conference.

Now, I believe we could, and I believe it's right to call this a priority conference, not because certain people have come to speak. We're just simply pointers to the Lord Jesus Christ. But you know, really, some people have said they're too busy in the Lord's work to come.

We had to say this again and again in Brazil. But you know, a whole ministry can be changed here. But everything used to be so busy with our ministry, which may be, for all we know, on exactly the wrong line.

The harder we try, the shorter we're going to fail. When here, Jesus has come to share with us some secrets that may change everything for us, that may bring a new day. And so, I would suggest then that we mark this conference priority.

And though there are other things to do, just as they had to drop them, I believe the Lord is asking us to drop other things for this short time. We might spend it together, learning of the Lord Jesus, and telling him we're not quite satisfied, we haven't quite got the answer, and I know that he's going to help us. Then, a little word of testimony.

In these last days, I found a little shadow across my path, and on my heart, and it was a shadow of this conference. And I found myself getting just a little anxious. The devil was telling me that people were looking to me, which of course isn't true, because it's a team of us going to work together, and he was telling me that I hadn't got anything.

And that, of course, had the effect that it was designed to have, of getting one striving, and trying to get something. I believe that's why the devil accuses you of what you haven't got, to get you to strive in your own strength to get it, or to be it. And he just knows that in that place, we are not seeing Jesus as the one who is the supplier of our need.

And so, I confess to you that that's how it's been with me a little bit, and this morning I found myself getting just that bit tense, and striving. And I praise the Lord for meeting me, showing me that. Because you know, the trouble is with all these things, for a long time you don't see them.

And the devil doesn't, designs that you shouldn't see them. And you know, the devil designs that we shouldn't see these things. It's a victory, when at last we say, Lord, something's wrong, will you please show me? And I'm praising him, he showed me, and he gave me a wonderful verse this morning, that's helped me no end.

Isaiah 51, 12. I'll just pass it on, this isn't the message. But just to start with, Isaiah 51, 12.

I, even I, am he that comforteth to you, who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid. Now you know, when you have that phrase, who art thou, in scripture, it invariably is a rebuke to pride. Who art thou? And I had to see again, that my fear, and my striving, was pride.

I haven't got what it takes. The Lord said, whoever said you had. I'm doing this.

What a wonderful scripture. I am he that comforteth you, who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid. Sheer presumption to be afraid.

It's really a funny, subtle form of pride. I feel the Lord's put a word on my heart, and it may well be that perhaps before we finish, someone else of our brethren here would like to add something. They're free to do so.

Now before we come to the word, I would like us to turn to Ezekiel chapter 47. Ezekiel 47. And now having read that Old Testament scripture, I want to turn you to the scripture in the New Testament, which I believe refers us back to that.

Let that scripture then be in the background of our minds, as we turn to John's Gospel chapter 7. Chapter 7. And here's something which I think is going to make us thirsty, and full of desire, on our first coming together this morning. John 7 37. In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, what scripture? It can only refer to one scripture. I've hunted through my Old Testament to find what scripture the Lord was referring to. Because nowhere do you actually get those literal words.

He's referring to the whole passage, which we've just read. He that believeth on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly, or if you prefer it, out of his inner man, shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.

For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Now I just want to read that verse again, in a slightly different way, which I believe is absolutely warranted. In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, this is the first day actually, but it's message is the same.

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. And he that does so, as the scripture has said, out of his inner man, shall flow rivers of living water. For a long time I regarded those things as two experiences.

That to come to the Lord Jesus and drink was one thing, but it was another experience, probably ushered in by a very great climactic blessing, after which rivers of living water would flow from me. I knew the first, but I didn't know the second, and for long I strove to get to that place, to fulfill whatever conditions were necessary that the rivers might flow from me to others. But I've come to see that I was wrong in thinking that.

The man who comes to him is the one who believes on him, and therefore it's the same man. If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink, and out of the inner man of such and one shall flow rivers of living water. As I come to him and drink, those living waters flow to others.

And if they're not flowing to others, it's just because I'm not drinking enough. I'm not coming enough. In other words, we could call this the outcome of the income.

A blessed outcome is promised for those who are willing for the blessed income. As I come to him and drink, in all my need, and defeat, and thirst, and see grace has got a place for me there, and as I get my burdens lifted and my heart satisfied at the feet of the Lord Jesus, and as I simply testify to that new drink I've had, those living waters will flow to others. Rivers of them, out of a new experience of grace myself, and others will stoop, and drink, and live too.

Let's think for a moment or two about this income. The Lord Jesus says to us this morning, if you're dry, if you feel a bit cold, you've lost the vision a little bit, he says, come to me, and drink. Now most of us feel that when we've got cold, and dry, and we're thirsty, and dissatisfied, that somewhere along the line there's a big stick waiting for us.

That we've been very, very wrong, which of course is true, and that when we're wrong there can be a little more than some sort of a big stick from us, from God. And very often when we come to a conference, in spite of all we may know with our heads, we come just a little tempted. Now what's the challenge I'm going to have? What am I going to be told? What terrific, excruciating challenge am I going to face? It's all because we've got such a wrong conception of the Lord Jesus, and of the grace of God.

Jesus says, come and drink. That's all, that's what's going to happen. You're thirsty, come and have a real good ice-cold drink.

Even if our dryness is the fault, as it always is, of sin. However, whenever I'm dry, whenever I'm dissatisfied, when the grace of God isn't filling my heart, it's because something's gone wrong in my relationship with the Lord Jesus. That's all right, says the Lord, doesn't make any difference, come to me then.

We'll get that relationship right so quickly, and you'll drink, and you will be satisfied. And so here's this wonderful word of the Lord Jesus. When I was thinking about our conference, I wondered whether perhaps the word of the Lord might be, come and dine.

But he said, no it isn't, it's come and drink. Well that's all right, in California sometimes you need drink more than you need food, it gets so hot. And so the word of the Lord Jesus to us as we come to spend this time together is, if any man says, any of us a little dry, not really on top, a bit down, come to me and drink.

For I'm just for such people, that's what I came for, that's what grace is for. The grace of God is like an ocean of water seeking depth that it might fill it. Come.

And so that's, that's his word to us as we gather. Anybody thirsty, anybody not really praising, anybody down, don't say Jesus, I'm here for just such people. This isn't a conference for excellent people, it's a conference for failures.

And deep, if we only knew it, we're all that. And there's a place for such people at the feet of the Lord Jesus. And so there's that lovely word, if any man thirsts, let him come unto me and drink.

Now I've been asking myself, why is it that we do get dry? Some people have been dry for years. You can tell they're dry when they pray, dry. You can tell they're dry when they preach or teach.

It's all dry. They haven't been melted lately. They're busy, but dry.

As I say, we can be in that condition for years, and come to the place where we believe, well that's a Christian life, you really can't expect too much. Oh I know the hymns say this and that, and there's some wonderful promises, but really that's just what, that's just preacher's talk. The real thing is always dry, after the first flush.

And we just get used to living in a dry, thirsty place, until we meet somebody who's got a testament. And you see a heart satisfied, praising, radiant, having found the answer, having found the solution. And that makes us thirsty.

I praise the Lord it was that which helped me, and my wife, back in 47 we were in evangelistic work, and were utterly defeated. My wife groaned under my ministry, and now I don't blame her. It was so dry, really dry.

If there seemed to be power, and people thought there was the first time they came to a meeting, it was only, but it was the power of self-effort, and later they realized it. Hadn't always been so, but it becomes so. And the thing that aroused our thirst was to meet some, who might not be very eminent preachers, but they had a testament.

And their hearts, their cups were full, and running over. And they knew Jesus, as the one who daily satisfied them. And things began to happen, in a fresh way, as we were challenged by the testimony and lives of those, who were coming to Jesus.

They got dry too. Oh yes, that was their testimony, they knew what to do. And they were all the time coming to Jesus and drinking.

And I had to learn again, that simple gospel secret. Well now, why is it that we get dry, with all that that means, of defeat and barrenness. Well now, this passage of John 7, obviously links up in our mind, with John 4. John 4 was, is that famous passage, where we have the story of the Lord Jesus, speaking to the woman at the well.

The difference is, of course, that John 4 only speaks of the income. John 7 goes further, and talks about the outcome of the income. But for the moment, we're thinking about the income.

And here's a woman, who was dry. She was thirsty, both physically, and morally, and spiritually too. And we read, verse 7, Jesus saith unto her, give me to drink.

Verse 9, she says, how is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.

From whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children his cattle? Jesus answered, said unto her, whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well, rather a spring leaping up into everlasting life. Now that woman was thirsty because she was drawing from the wrong well.

She was drawing from Jacob's well, and she knew it was a very deep well. It needed a very long rope, and after perhaps some time she toiled away on the handle of pulling the water up. It was only to find that she hadn't got to the bottom of the well, so she would try again.

She knew the toil of it, and she couldn't understand what Jesus was speaking. And on many occasions we'd try again, and she really thought she'd got to the bottom of the well, and she was sure there was some water in the pail. But on the way up it hit against the side, and by the time it got to the top it was empty.

And there were many, many occasions I like to imagine when she'd worked so hard on that well, and so often got so little, sometimes nothing at all. And I believe that she wasn't only from drawing from Jacob's well physically, but also from Jacob's well morally and spiritually. I certainly know that I do that so often.

By Jacob's well, I mean the well which is me. The well which is my own self. And I sometimes expect such good things from it.

I've got to bring my love to the Lord. He says, give me to drink my love, my service, my devotion, my prayer life. And so I try to give him to drink.

But from what well? It's the wrong well. The well of myself. What Paul calls the flesh.

Someone has said, if you want to know what the flesh is in scripture, drop off the last H and spell it backwards, and you've got S-E-L-S. And that's the natural thing to do. I'm going to try my best.

I've got to come up to the mark. I've got to be a soldier. I've got to be a man of prayer.

And I try to draw water out of that well to give to the Lord Jesus. It doesn't satisfy me, let alone him. For again and again, after my best attempt, when at last I get the bucket up, there's nothing in it.

And the harder I try, the more surely will I be dissatisfied. And so will he, if I'm drawing from that well. Someone has said it is easier to get holiness, oil out of a stone, than holiness out of ourselves.

It just isn't there. Paul says, in me, that's in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. But we still feel that perhaps there should, would we, if I got very blessed or wonderfully helped, there would be something in me which I could bring to him.

And we've only got to get to that place again, and we're poor, dry people, thirsty. Water pot. This woman actually left the water pot.

I wonder what water pot, what little spiritual gimmick we've got. It's the thirst. It's the thirst.

It's become, perhaps, the grace of God. I've found people using that term almost inevitably. Sometimes, in some meeting, we had a wonderful message of grace to say, who tried so hard, and who felt the only way out was to try harder, and they got more and more defeated.

And then we've heard this wonderful grace, and I've heard someone say, oh, you know, this has been like waters in the desert for me. That's it. And you know, this water that he gives, yes, the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit comes to reveal something else.

He comes to reveal Jesus. He comes to reveal grace. And grace is like a spring.

It doesn't require merit on your part. It doesn't require excruciating conditions to be fulfilled. We haven't got to come with right feelings.

We haven't got to come with special standards attained. The moment we do that, grace is no more grace. And the moment we try to do that, we're drawing from the wrong well.

But wonderful to see that there is this amazing, matchless grace, as a spring available to me. Grace is flowing like a river. Millions there have been supplied.

Still it flows as fresh as ever from the Saviour's wounded side. And there is the spring. It's there.

But we've been drawing from the wrong. But there's another reason why we sometimes get so dry. Not only that we've been striving, before I passed from then, I believe that striving, or whatever you like to call it, works, law, I don't know, don't mind what the phrase is.

I believe it's second only to sin as the enemy of spirituality. Second only to sin. And I know amongst my brethren, both in England and in Africa, and doubtless here, I've heard them repenting of striving, of work.

In Africa they repent, in Egypt and Uganda, of matika. That's what they mean. But as I say, there is some other reason, too, why we are thirsty.

And that is that maybe we understand where our life has to come from. Maybe we don't expect it to come from ourselves, from that spring that Jesus has put within us. But something's fallen into that spring and blocked the mouth of it.

This was the case with that woman. She says, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. And Jesus says, go and call your husband.

She says, I haven't got a husband. No, he says, you haven't. And the one you're living with isn't your husband either.

And a whole world of hidden sin was revealed. And ere she could know that spring within her heart, grace meeting her need, she had to call her husband. She had to call sin, sin.

And that's so often the reason why we're dry, why we're thirsty. Things have gone wrong. Maybe something's been there for a long time.

Or maybe just the last day or two. Maybe a worry. We haven't seen it since.

Maybe an anxiety. Maybe something isn't straight. Which you weren't quite truthful.

I only quote the things that I know I've had to see as blocking up the mouth of this spring. And we're left thirsty, left struggling. God will show us, if we're willing to be shown, what it is that's come between us.

Sometimes the thing's not, it's something that's come between us and somebody else. And it's so easy to imagine that the thing that comes between us and somebody else doesn't matter very much. But we can still be good Christians.

But we can't. For everything that comes between me and another comes between me and the Lord. And it may be that which is blocking the way.

And the Lord has to take us and show us, perhaps many things. He had to show me many things and when they come I have to see them again. And I get thirsty.

Well the Lord Jesus said, Are you thirsty? Are you a bit dry? He says, come to me and drink. Because He says that thing that's fallen in is no difficult to me if it's acknowledged. It's all I want.

My blood is enough to cleanse, to give complete cleansing. So He said, come to me. It's the word of grace.

There's a fountain to spring up within us. And the wonderful thing, the rest, of coming to Him and drink. It's a life-transforming experience.

Every time you issue with a testimony. It isn't one of those things that sort of happened so smoothly and there's not much, you know, just happened. But all this coming to Jesus and drinking.

We get so easily thirsty. So easily things come. So easily we can go back to striving in your anxiety.

So easily we miss the sight of this amazing grace that's meant to do everything for us. So easily we think we're not good enough. I believe that's the basic anxiety with every Christian.

I'm not good enough. And you're dry. Not because you're not good enough.

Because we don't see grace that is the answer. That I've only got to acknowledge that that's my condition to find. That's the fountain.

Grace being what it is, can't require anything more. And here's this wonderful Lord Jesus this morning. If any man thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

Well I've been thirsty and I'm coming. Praise the Lord. I'm coming repenting.

That's the only way. For the one to whom we come has eyes as of a flame of fire. When we were in Jamaica, Dr. Church and myself, because we went to Jamaica before we went to Brazil, we felt we wanted to add a verse to more about Jesus.

It just hadn't got enough challenge in it. Because the Jesus we knew came to know more about, always had to, always was showing more about ourselves. I wish I could remember the words.

I think I've got them. That we made up an extra verse. More about Jesus on his throne.

Searching my ways and making them known. Showing the deep and hidden part. Making my shame and fear depart.

Come to me. Let me show you the deep and hidden part. And then I'll make your shame and your fear depart.

But there is something about the income. Now what about the outcome? Well now as I've said, for myself I used to think that the outcome, this rivers of living water flowing from me to others, was some further experience. After which I used to strive.

Of course there was a selfish motive lurking in the shadows, as invariably there is with us preachers. Because you see if that happened then I would be really used and I should be something. And of course I longed for that.

And who can tell how pure his motives are? Well they're not pure. And that's the reason why of course these things aren't fulfilled to us. But I've come to see that it isn't that at all.

That the man who is coming, just as often as we need it, and drinking of this divine light, open to countless, is the man from whose inner man there does flow rivers of living water. If not, it's because he's not drinking deep enough. He hasn't got testimony enough.

But all I can say is that when we're there, our testimony, that new up-to-date is so infectious, so compelling, that people say well I want the same. And they drink the same water we're drinking out of. And that's it.

Now the interesting thing is that the passage to which the Lord Jesus refers is Eq. 47. Obviously it's the passage to which he referred and yet it doesn't give you quite the same picture.

Because here in John 7, it's from the inner man of a believer that the waters flow. But in Eq. 47, it's from the altar that they flow.

And the man, he just gets into a river that's already flowing at different points. But actually there's no contradiction as I see it between. This river of grace, this river of revival if you like, flows from Calvary the altar.

Revival began and has never ceased from the day that Jesus said it finished. And forces came there out from his side, blood and water. Revival is nothing more than redemption.

I've been very much taken up with every word in the Bible that starts with re. Renewing, redemption, recovery, restoration, resurrection. That's all it is.

The world went dead when Adam sinned and God said I'm going to bring it back to life. And that's revival. It's as simple as that.

And the fact is don't pray for revival. Get into the river of revival that's always been flowing. And that's what you have in Eq.

47. There was the river whether he got into it or not. Grace was flowing.

He simply had got into a river that was always there. But having got into the river, the water passed by him to anybody else further down in the river. And it's only in that sense that the waters flow from the inner man of the believer.

Actually they flow from Jesus. They flow from Calvary, where the only hindrance to the divine life coming to men was finished. And there's that river flowing.

And as I get into it myself, then it passes by me to others. And how? By my testimony. I believe we've made it too difficult for ourselves.

Blessing flows, new life comes to others. Others drink, as I testify. As I testify.

I don't know that revival comes or even spread by prayer. I believe there's terrific striving drawing from the old world when it comes to praying for revival. I'm sure Dan and Nancy will tell us the revival came to this station, that station, not because of all nights of prayer, but because of a few hearts who drank and were satisfied, went to the next poor dead station and gave their testimony.

And the Holy Ghost began to convict them. Oh, there was prayer. The whole thing was swimming in prayer.

But that wasn't the thing the Holy Spirit used. It was testimony. Testimony.

I'm thinking now of a young Presbyterian missionary in Brazil who flew in in the mission aircraft and nearly lost his life because they found afterwards the aircraft was damaged, though not until afterwards they managed to get there all right. They came into a conference and this young missionary, hungry-hearted brother, and the Lord began to work in his heart. I haven't time now to tell the whole story, but my, what a testimony.

My, what a testimony. He went back to his station, to his fellow missionaries. He said, the things that are happening all around me now.

He did rivers of living water. But the only thing, all he'd done was he bowed his head at Calvary, to admit so much that had gone wrong. He ceased to trawl from the old well, from which he'd got nothing, and he found the new spring.

And the testimony. And the next conference he brought 19 of his fellow missionaries and Brazilian evangelists in. And they came all hungry.

They were almost, well they'd found pretty well all they needed from his testimony already. And that's the simple way, as I'm drinking, with all that that will mean, and getting satisfied, and getting made free, and as I'm willing to share that testimony with the people I meet, continually, not only the once for all, but just as I go and walk with Jesus, others get this, get hungry and thirsty too. One last thought, and it's this.

I was challenged and challenged at the picture of that man getting into the river at different points, and finding the river deeper at each point. Everything depends, of course, at the point at which you get into the river, as to how much others get, how deep it is. But remember this is the river of grace.

So this isn't something you've got to be very good to get in deeper. You've really got to see yourself to be just so much worse to get in deeper. Otherwise grace is no more grace.

He that has been forgiven much, loves much. But who is he that's been forgiven much? Why, he who's been convicted of much. It isn't the man who's sinned much that's forgiven much.

We've all sinned enough to send us all to hell. It's those that are convicted much. And as I'm more deeply convicted, as I see my emptiness and world the more completely, I get into the river at an ever deeper point.

For where sin abounds, where I see sin to be more abundant, their grace is more abundant. And I see the end of the picture, it's all great. You're spinning in grace.

You've got your foot off the bottom. Well, I want to get there more and more. What a testimony! Just a testimony that other people need.

Mine is as simple as that, you see. And the river is all the deeper. It comes from my testimony, because I'm tasted grace, all the more deeper too.

Well, there's the picture, and may it give us good hope. If it's this way round, there's a chance for folks like us. I said to a preacher the other day, I said, Brother, give sinners a chance.

And some of them, we don't give sinners a chance. We don't give failing saints a chance. And the people are left sad.

But I believe God wants to give us a chance, give us a hope. And here's this wonderful possibility opening to us, as we sit together and learn of him.

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