

John the Baptist Willing to Be Excelled - Part 2

by Roy Hession

The sermon explores the story of John the Baptist's doubts and questions about Jesus, and how Jesus' answer emphasizes the importance of looking at the evidence of God's work in our lives.

Duration: 59:31

Scripture: Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah 45:21, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:6, John 14:6, Acts 4:12, Colossians 2:9-10

Topics: "John The Baptist"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the early days of their conferences at Abigail, where a group of people gathered to learn about Jesus. They emphasize that Jesus is the source of good news and blessings, and that a rediscovery of grace and the power of his blood brings peace to the soul. The speaker shares a story about a gold mining company that found abundant gold, highlighting the potential for growth and abundance in their own ministry. They also discuss the doubts and struggles of John the Baptist, who questioned if Jesus was truly the promised one. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the importance of deepening one's faith in Jesus and trusting in his power.

Transcript

May we please turn to Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 11. Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 11. We are having our second study in this beautiful man, John the Baptist.

I really am looking forward for myself to a more complete study than I personally have made and than is possible in these two meetings. He was the greatest of the prophets, greater than Isaiah, greater than Jeremiah. Jesus said so.

In fact, there are none greater among the sons of men, apart from Jesus, than this man, John the Baptist. It's a wonderful story. It's a sad story.

But sadness is never the last word in the things of God. And now we turn to Matthew 11, verse 2. Now when John had heard in the prison, how in the world did he get there? As you go through Matthew, that's the first time you hear that he's gone to prison. It's rather strange how that is the reason, how it's recorded.

In Mark, it just breaks in, when Herod heard of the miracles of Jesus, it's John the Baptist, risen from the dead, whom I beheaded. Therefore mighty work do show forth themselves in him. Beheaded? How did that happen? And then it backtracks a tenure.

So here, we're told he's in prison. Later on, he's been beheaded, before it tells us how he got into prison, or how he came to be beheaded. Well, you know how he got into prison.

This man had the temerity, not only to challenge the scribes and the Pharisees and the publicans and the sinners, who came to hear him with their sins and call them to repentance, but even to challenge a king. And Herod had married his brother Philip's wife. And John the Baptist had the temerity to go into the court and say, it is not lawful for thee to hammer.

And he got a reaction which isn't to be wondered at, seeing sinners are stiff necked. Instead of bowing to the word of God by John the Baptist, he tried to silence that word. And had John the Baptist put in prison.

He was in prison some time before it reached its culmination. And before Herodias had her way, a little plot came off and an executioner was sent to behead John the Baptist. This one, who spoke so nobly of Christ.

Whom Jesus had said such glorious words of commendation about. And here he is, in prison, and later to be beheaded. Now at this particular point he is just in prison.

He doesn't know how it is going to eventually end. He's paid the price for challenging sin in one and authority. He's put in prison.

He little knew it was going to be even worse. And when he was in this period, and a very low place in his history, in his fortune. Now when he had heard in the prison, the works of Christ.

He sent two of his disciples and he said something quite extraordinary. Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? You can hardly believe it's John. He was the one who said, behold the Lamb of God, that beareth the sins of the world.

Great saying. He is the one who was so sure that Jesus was the promised one. That he said of him, he must increase but I must decrease.

And here he is, beginning to doubt the whole thing. Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? I think these are three great sentences of importance that John added. The Lamb of God, that beareth the sin of the world.

Thank you, John. And oh John, how wonderful for you to be so sure you're only the best man at the wedding. But now the bridegroom's come.

He's going to increase and you're going to decrease. But now, what are you saying, John? What are you saying? Are you doubting the whole thing? Art thou he that should come? Or we've still got to look for another. Is there a more important question? For you, for me.

Art thou he that should come? Are you the answer we thought you were? Or have we got to go on still searching? Isn't that important? And Jesus answered and said unto him, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. In another account, Jesus didn't answer immediately. He just went on performing an array of most glorious miracles of grace in people's lives and bodies.

And then he said, see, now go and tell John, The things which you do see, the blind, receive their sight. The lame walk. The lepers are cleansed.

The deaf hear. The dead even are raised up. And the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Those phrases are phrases which are prophesied to Messiah in various places in Isaiah. But quite apart from the prophecies, they were wonderful in their own right. Just go and tell him what you see grace doing by means of my word and my touch.

And then just add something, will you? Perhaps this is the most important thing. And blessed is he. Make a point of this, won't you? Just add, and the Master said, Blessed is he who is not offended in me.

Is not who put off by me, because I haven't fulfilled exactly your picture of me. And because, John, you've been left to rot in prison, don't let that fact stumble you. There are some people, they are the most blessed people and nothing puts them off.

There are some people, anything will put them off. They come to our conferences, don't like this, don't like this, don't like that. There are other people, no problem to anything.

Blessed are the people that will suck honey out of any old rock. And there are some, they are better at it than me. Sometimes I don't always get as much for meeting as they do.

Oh, but they got something. I said, brother, you've learnt to suck honey out of any old rock, if it's about Jesus. And so, John the Baptist, who'd spoken so nobly of Christ, who was the promised one to prepare the way for him, who'd had this mighty ministry, and who's so insistent, I'm not the Christ, don't you get it? I know it's a great, we're having great meetings, but I'm nobody.

I'm simply the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the promised one after me, who's preferred before me. He's the one who's going to do things. He's the one who's going to baptise with the Spirit.

He's the one. And the Lord had said, you know, you won't know who he is, but when you see the dove alighting on him, then you'll know that's the one who baptises with the Spirit. And by the way, I don't think we necessarily need to think of being baptised in the Spirit as an extra blessing, different from our conversion.

I know this is merely terminology. If we can get our terminology right, it's OK. If you don't, it isn't all that important.

But you know, as a suggestion aside, Jesus said, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit. And John the Baptist has said, I'm baptised with water, he's going to baptise you with the Spirit. And I think Jesus was talking about that.

Not enough to be born of water. Not enough to be baptised with water. Except you're baptised with the Spirit, you won't enter into the Kingdom of God.

And I think being born of the Spirit, and being baptised in the Spirit, it's my own personal conviction, whether you think otherwise, you're perfectly at liberty to do so, and I shan't think any of the less of it. Because I'm only expressing as I personally see it. And this is the one who does this great gorgeous thing, in the sons of men.

He immerses them in the Spirit. If I may just digress even one other step. There's a difference being baptised in the Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit.

Here's a sponge, and there's a basin of water, and you plunge that sponge, which you hold tightly into your hand, and it's baptised in the water. But not only is it in the water, but in some measure, the water is in the sponge, in spite of the fact you're holding it. But if, having plunged it into the water, you take your hand off it, then it's filled with the water, before the water was in it.

Now it's filled by the water which is in it. And so, if we want to get our terminology really scriptural, this is more and more generally received by various branches of the Church of God, that the baptism of the Spirit, as far as terminology is concerned, is being the same as being born of the Spirit. Ah, certainly we can be filled with the Spirit, in whom we've been baptised by all means.

And let's not be satisfied with anything less. That should be the normal experience. And it's not once for all.

It's not once for all. As occasion demands, you need very specially to be filled with the Spirit. In any way, on Monday morning you need to be filled with the Spirit, just as much as on Sunday, when you are taking that service.

And in spite of the fact that John the Baptist had seen Jesus to be the one, he's here asking this tremendous question. Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? I said to Pam, don't you see there's music in these wonderful old English words? Or do we look for another? Well, that's what we'd say today, but I like it. Or look we for another.

It's poetic as well as expressive. So tell us this wonderful language of hers. I love languages.

There are a lot of words I don't know, because alas, whereas I did do Latin, I never did Greek. And we were discussing about certain words, synthesis. There was another word, something similar.

I said, you know, that's a trouble, that's a Greek word. The great thing, our language is however basically Anglo-Saxon. And Spurgeon decided as far as he was able, he'd only use as far as he could the Anglo-Saxon words, the words of the man in the street.

And I suppose the King James Version is one that uses, as I'm sure the other ones do too. Amen. Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? If you ask me why he should now entertain those doubts, I would say quite quickly two things.

Although he pointed to Jesus Christ as the coming one, he had a mental picture of what that one was going to be and to do. And the event didn't match up. They were under the thralldom of the Romans.

I don't know, did he expect a national deliverance? Did he expect the Messiah to do greater things than he was doing? Did he expect him to be acclaimed by the people? But he wasn't. All he did was to go about doing acts of mercy and grace. Specialising in the poor and the sick and the needy.

Having nothing very much for the well or the important. Specialising where there was need. Perhaps he didn't fully understand that this one of whom he spoke was unlike Moses who gave laws and commandments and put on a tremendous show at Mount Sinai.

The law came by Moses but grace came by Jesus Christ. And it could be it didn't fit with his picture. And there was another reason.

If he is the one that should come, why am I left to rot in prison? And there was a very personal reason for his doubts. There very often are. You may have some straightforward doubts about things doctrinally but very often there's a personal thing that's getting you down.

That you can't take. In God's dealings with you, hasn't done what you thought he would. Hasn't healed you as you thought he was going to do.

Hasn't begun to use you as you thought he was. Hasn't turned the church upside down. Left you with a very hard problem.

And that's why the Lord having given his main answer said, and blessed is he who is not stumbled in me. Does not find in me and my dealings that which stumbles him. And I believe this is a great word for us.

We found him of whom Moses and the Lord speak. We have found him as we understand who was to come. And more than that, we found him in a deeper way than we first found him.

That always ought to be going on, a deeper and a deeper way. But we have. We came to him though converted, weary and worn and sad.

Defeated, living in the wilderness rather than in Canaan. We have seen many beautiful things. And we have thought this is it.

I found him. But you had a mental picture of what Jesus was going to be, especially when we talked about revival. People came out of revival as you know they did, to share what they found.

I don't know why, I asked Dr. Joe, I said, why hasn't the Lord worked in England? Outwardly. In the same way as he's worked in East Africa. I mean, the beloved in East Africa are a force to be reckoned with.

Every government knows there's a people you may call the quiet in the land, but a mighty potent, who influence history as nothing else does. Why is it known in that land? Full of sinners, yes. But it's all known, there's forgiveness with God that he might be feared.

So many have discovered that forgiveness and have testified to it, that it's a sort of common knowledge. And when God works, that's what happens. They don't decide, they get born again.

They expect it, they get saved. And I asked Dr. Joe, why has that not happened on that scale in England? He said, I don't know, do you know why? I said, no I don't. But we expect it.

That God would visit us in a wider way if we on our part were prepared to be the first to be revived. Yes, we got beyond the stage, I trust, when we were asking for God to revive his church and begin in the other people. We got further to say, Lord, begin in me.

If there's anybody needy in this church, it's me. Begin this work of renewal with revival in me. And he did.

And you were blessed, as so many of us have been. But maybe you had a mental picture that that was only the beginning. It was going to go to others, and in a wonderful way.

History abounds, the history of the church, of movements of revival here and there. And in our day, we know various movements of revival. And certainly, that which most of us had contact with has been that in East Africa.

One of the longest lasting revival movements of modern times. The Welsh revival lasted for two years. It's still spoken of and rejoiced over.

And we ask that God will do it again. But the one of which I speak has lasted for 50 years. This is the Jubilee.

I know it only began in two halves. But that's what you'd expect. It's got to begin somewhere.

The biggest river begins as a stream. And we've all had the picture that though the stream's begun, it's soon going to become a mighty river. And perhaps it hasn't happened.

And you've begun to entertain doubts. Art thou he that should come, or be thou still? Go on looking for another. Have we got a still? Go on praying for the moon.

Have we got a still? Trying this and trying that. Oh, we've found our rest. But it hasn't eventuated in that larger thing that we hoped for.

And it's possible for us to begin doubts. I want to take an illustration as a story about a dear brother whose name I couldn't possibly mention. He's one of my dearest friends.

He's not here present. And I'm sure he would stand by me and say, Yes, Roy, you tell him. Years ago, after the early days when some of us first made a rediscovery of the grace of God and the power of the blood, and there was a beginning of a little team of brothers, ministers and others from various groups.

And we knew we were in on something together. And we had sought to humble ourselves before God, to see where in the blood needs to cleanse. And we had found life and life more abundant in Jesus.

And we were having a very small team conference in Swanwick. We weren't much more than a handful. They were able to accommodate other people and they accommodated us.

And I don't know how long after we'd first been helped, this incident took place, a few years. And there was one of our brothers who really took a tremendous lead with things. It was he who first called some of us together into his vicarage after that early team had returned to Africa.

We didn't know one another, but we'd all just knew and heard that Cernzo had been giving a new testimony that shocked his church but blessed many people. And another, and this dear brother, had the initiative to call us together and entertain us in his home. About 14 of us, I don't know how we all got in, but we did.

And so we began. And we were so thankful for the initiative that he took under the Spirit of God. In those early days we may have had a public meeting, the Caxton Hall, I remember.

And it was the mere beginnings of the stream. And it was flowing. But on this occasion, this brother who'd been such an inspiration to us was very down in heart.

And it was because it had not worked out in his parish as he'd expected. There was a bunch there. They met regularly.

They rejoiced in the Lord and they shared their testimony, but only a bunch. And it was studiously avoided by many in the parish. And he said, you know, this isn't working out.

He said, I had hoped that if we responded to Jesus, didn't worry about the big thing, just ourselves, and went deeper and deeper with Him, where we were told we were to be deeper broken, to say, yes Lord, a deed for faith in the power of the blood, and so on. We went on like that, the time would come when the top would blow off. And the Spirit would be outpoured all around us.

And he says, it hasn't happened. And he was beginning to entertain grave doubts. Art thou he that hath come? Is this the new sight of Jesus? That which we've needed and the world needs, we've begun, but it hasn't worked out as I thought.

Or have we got to go on looking for another? Have we got to go on praying for the moon? Have we got to go on as if revival had not begun? We're still on the search. Well, this really was quite a thing. And I think, mercifully, we refused to move.

We were sad to see our brother, and the Lord recovered him in due course. Bless his heart. That's the John the Baptist experience.

Because we've got this thing. Now what did Jesus tell to John the Baptist? Go and tell him the things that you see, the extraordinary happenings of grace. And they are all grace.

There's not one whole man amongst the bunch of mentioned. Not one good man. It was grace.

The blind received their sight. I know it was on the physical level, but it was all pictorial of the spiritual. The lame? Look at them walking.

The lepers? They're free. Clean. The deaf? Can you believe it? They're hearing him.

Hear him be deaf. He dumbed your lucent tongues in ploy. The impossible is happening.

I know it's not a big scale. I know it's not affecting the political situation of Israel with regard to the Romans, but just look at it. And he enumerated the dead, leaving them raised to life.

They and the poor had the gospel preached to them. Well that's lovely. The people hadn't got any expectancy of getting any good news.

They're getting it. Now you go and tell him that. And that's my answer.

Whether I am the one to come, or whether you've got to look for another. I remember in those early days, we began our conferences at Abergele. It was just a bunch of us who'd had a new sight of Jesus, and we invited other people to come and sit with us.

We didn't really, in those days, say we're going to preach to you. You're going to learn with us. And I trust that's basically how it is with us to this day.

We want to learn with others the deeper lessons of grace. Now I've been for years in evangelistic work, going up and down England under the National Young Life Campaign. After being in a bank, God led me to that.

I went up and down, and there was Aaron Redpath. He too was as green as I was. We had no theological training.

And with our Bibles, we didn't think we needed it. And to this day I think I've been duly spared. Though I must say, I would have liked to have had a real grounding in Greek and in Hebrew.

That would have helped me. I could have even done without my young's analytical concordance. If I'd had it.

So I don't decry study. No, far from it. Anyway.

And I'd been doing evangelistic work, and God had been gracious and blessed, and people had been saved, and I'd heard many testimonies. But at the end of each week, invariably there was a testimony meeting. I tell you, in those days, I heard testimonies the like of which I'd never heard before.

I'd never heard of people repenting of criticism of their vicars, and bringing that to the cross. I'd never heard of reconciliations such as I was hearing of then. I'd never heard of the deep, the hidden things exposed and cleansed away with consequent liberty.

I tell you, the blind were receiving their sight, the lame were walking, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf were hearing, and there were conversions among them too. The dead were brought to life even without us trying. And I said, if I don't know in any other way that this is that which God has got for us and even for England, I wouldn't know it now.

It wasn't very important. It was only on a small scale. You see, what you need are only tokens for good.

There's been a great word with me lately in PAM. David said, give me a token for good. And you know, all sorts of good things happen to us since I lose something.

For goodness sake, we can't do without it. Then we find out, hallelujah, a token for good. A token, not big in itself, but of a bigger thing.

God intends great good for us. And so I saw these things. If it can happen a few, that's enough.

I don't need a huge lot of people. Just give me one. Like that.

That's a token. It's valid. It's true.

It's eternal. We've found him, of whom Moses and the prophets. We've found that answer, which if widely received and applied, would indeed mean, couldn't but mean, the revival of the whole church with the blessing of God, of course.

A message in itself isn't adequate, but the message should be such as designed to bring new life to the decaying saints of God. There are people who are praying for revival, but their message, in the wildest stretch of imagination, isn't calculated to produce that for which they're praying. And the Holy Spirit must have a hard time to use some ministers to the revival.

But even when your message is on that line, only the Spirit of God. But at least we should know I've found the answer. And I'm going to give no other.

I remind you, that when the Lord was born, and the angels gave that great word, great tidings of great joy, and this shall be a sign unto you. If you follow the star, you'll find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. This is it.

This is the answer. And there's always a sign of a new vegetation of God. Not a big thing, but something small.

God humbling himself, confining himself to the form of a little babe, and around him, others who are coming down off their pedestals too, to bow before him. It may not be in a big scale. It's got to begin.

And it always begins small. The extent to which it enlarges, that's up to God, not my business. But because it doesn't seem big, you are inclined, I am, to entertain doubts.

Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? Yes, it's Jesus who is the answer. He talked about the bread of life, and they said, oh, give us this bread. He said, I am the bread.

He talked about the water of life, oh, give us the water. I am the water. He isn't the one who sends revival, he is the revival.

He isn't the one who gives the blessing, he is himself the blessing. A rediscovery of grace, a rediscovery of Jesus, a rediscovery of the power of his blood, which is the continually available answer to sin and failure. That's where the soul finds peace.

And our vision is, in God's time, that which is begun will extend. But we do have our moments. I have, who hasn't? There's a story told of the gold mining days in South Africa, and the early days, when a company would bring all its apparatus and dig a shaft, and go down the shaft and explore the seams, and find gold.

They set up a whole apparatus and they begin to bring gold to the surface. And there were apparently some occasions when a company would get so much gold that it could be more abundant than they'd found it to be. And someone would come along, of course the trouble is with you fellows, you're in the wrong place.

You sink your shaft over there in that area, you'll find it's a very different story. And I haven't got the facts of all this, but this is a little illustration in any case. So they picked up all their gear and they started all over again to do another shaft somewhere else.

If perchance they'd find more gold there. And sure enough, they did find gold. Perhaps a little bit more, but still they weren't really satisfied.

And somehow the prospector said, Ah, it's somewhere else you must go. And there were a number of places where a particular company had sunk their shaft. None of which had been entirely satisfactory.

And later they discovered they needn't have gone any further than the first shaft, only deeper. And out of that deepest still they find seam after seam with all the gold. Now I sunk my shaft at Calvary years ago.

I found forgiveness, I found life. And then I wasn't sure that that was all that I ought to have. And I used to read in those early days all sorts of books about the second blessing.

We've always had teaching about the second blessing. It's the hunger of the saints of God, it's as you'd expect. And I remember occasions when I was reading some book on the second blessing.

It varied with the writers to what the second blessing was. But I remember saying, Lord, I'm not going to get into bed tonight until I've got that second blessing. I got on my knees, but nothing happened.

So I had to go to sleep without it. And so I've sunk shafts. I've got quite a history of them.

I've tried. And then I discovered I needn't have gone off on any tangent at all. I've simply got to stay in that place where I began.

At that place where the just for the unjust died on the tree. But sink my shaft deeper there. Deeper conviction of sin.

Deeper repentance. Deeper brokenness of the deeper faith in all that the blood of Jesus made available to me. And to think and say as John did is quite unnecessary.

Now, of course, today we're in a special situation. And I don't think John had it quite to contend with. You see, he might have said, this is the one.

And things were happening. But what if at this time when he was feeling well it doesn't quite match my expectations. Another teacher arose who was doing more spectacular things than Jesus.

Now that would be a hard one for him. But that's how it is today. This is a day of tangents.

A day of trends and new things. Each one a little more spectacular than another. And really it poses a problem.

Am I to contend myself with that which is not as spectacular, not as wonderful as other things? And we may be tempted to say with John Art thou he that shall come? Or have I got to look for another? Have I got to look for another answer? And what is the one? It's Jesus. And it is a day. It's quite extraordinary.

And even many dear friends of mine who have experienced a new work of the Spirit would bear witness of it. They're getting quite appalled at the new things come up next time. And then the new things.

This is a problem for all groups. Going off at tangents. Adding, I would dare to say, something in our emphasis to Jesus himself.

And what happens is this. The thing added to Jesus ultimately becomes more important than Jesus himself. It always happens.

Take in the case of Rome. They have Jesus in the central place, so they say. But they do have Mary.

And it is nice to have Mary too. Because you can get to his heart better through Mary than going direct. After all, she is his mother.

But you know, it may not be so evident as it has been in the past. Mary ultimately becomes more important than Jesus. I remember being in Portugal.

A Roman Catholic procession. And there were two statues carried through. All the crowds were there, very sweet singing.

One of Jesus and one of Mary. I noticed all eyes were turned to Mary. And it was a beautiful statue.

She looked so sweet. And as they sang this sweet song to Mary there were tears in the eyes of the crowd. And she suddenly eclipsed.

Now I'm not saying it's not a great problem to us now. Perhaps it's not so prominent as it used to be amongst our Catholic friends. But I just quote that incident as an illustration.

The thing added to Jesus. You see, they said it's not enough to have Jesus. You must be circumcised.

And ultimately circumcision became more important than Jesus in that early church. And created more hoo-ha than anything. And if it's not enough, if it is enough Jesus, thy blood and righteousness my beauty, if that's not enough, then I must have something else.

Ultimately that something else eclipses it. And what I want to say, let's take the warning. Don't say I'm being partisan.

I think there are all sorts of beautiful, valid experiences of the Holy Spirit. But if you get hold of that and make too much of it, you're adding it to Jesus. And in the end you become the apostle of that edition.

And it isn't enough to have Jesus, his blood and righteousness. I must have this and that gift or this and that experience. It needn't become like that.

I'm not saying it always is, but sometimes it is. And all I say, my dear friends, you be warned to learn to keep, to hold the head. Have it possibly said of you, as Paul said to the apostles of the Colossians, not holding the head.

The epistle of the Colossians is written to a people who are going off at tangents. Chapter 2 of the epistle to the Colossians has four tangents that they were going off on. Not after Christ, but after the rudiments of the world.

Not holding the head. The four things may not be applicable to us today. I don't think they are.

The first might be for some. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit. I don't know why our theological colleges have to get their students to study philosophy.

I know those who are going the other way. At the London Bible College, he lost his faith. And he's away from God, given up all thought of the ministry.

The only thing is he has given up all thought of the ministry. I'm so glad he has. The trouble is they don't.

I wish they would. And we have these men in the ministry. Well that may not be a very personal danger.

It varies. But the fact that our tangents and ultimately those tangents, they become prominent. They become almost in the centre.

And so there's no need for us to say look we for another. All around us are the evidence of grace. And I want to tell you I really only need to have one evidence.

Actually we have many. I've written a number of books. And I've wondered what's the effect of it.

I only need to have one bit of a comeback. That's enough. For some of them I had a tremendous lot.

Others, wow. I don't need any more. If through the message of grace one man gets transformed I ask for more or less all the confirmation.

And there we were a bunch of people to have a go. Just that much. The triumphs of his grace.

There was no other word to explain what was happening. The triumphs of grace. Not the triumphs of men doing their duties.

The triumphs of grace who couldn't do their duties. They were beyond it. And the deaf were hearing.

The blind were seeing. And it's happened all down the years. So let's see what the truth of what Paul said in Colossians.

In him dwelleth all the fullness. It pleased the Father that in Jesus all the fullness dwelt. In other words God put all fullness where flops and failures and sinners can get it in Jesus.

For Jesus is God brought down to earth. Available on street level. No depths to plumb.

No heights to climb. As I am where I am if I admit where I am. There all fullness is available for me.

And I believe there is in your awareness of that fact. Because who wouldn't be inclined to want something more than they've received. And who isn't in danger of putting that new thing into such a place it almost competes with Jesus.

We don't intend it to. But it may. Now I want to share with you something very positive.

I've been taken up. I've been reading through Isaiah lately. And I find a phrase.

I find a phrase there that touches me. Seven times it occurs. None beside me.

None beside me. I give you just one reference to it. Isaiah 44 verse 6. Again and again it occurs.

And you will recognize it does when I show it to you. Isaiah 44. 45 rather.

Half way through verse 21. There is no God else beside me. A just God and a Saviour.

None. And that comes some seven times. And you come into the New Testament there is none other than Him.

And dear me, let me tell you the Holy Spirit's work is to emphasize it. That's what He's come to do. To tell you.

There's none beside Him. He's not come to get our eyes fixed. There are all sorts of things in Christian life.

Why shouldn't there be? But what are we centered on? None beside Thee. If there is, I'm finished. I'm done for.

You don't need anyone else but Him. In Him dwells all the fullness. It's available to you as you are and where you are.

None beside me. And this is what John had to hear. It's a big thing.

And I believe perhaps it's a big thing for us. Get it settled. None beside Him.

Oh, I know there are all sorts of things. I've had all sorts of experiences. Of course you have when living creatures.

But they're not the answer. They're not the answer. None beside me.

One last thought. And it's this. I don't think it was merely the fact that Jesus' work hadn't quite worked out as He thought it should.

And therefore caused Him doubts. But there was a personal reason for His doubt. Why have I been left in prison? Why hasn't He delivered me? I began so well.

I had the crown. I was willing to step down in favour of this one greater than me. And yet He's left me in prison.

And that was why Jesus said and John Blessed is he who's going to find no occasion of stumbling in need of what I allow. I wonder how John took that last bit. Forgive me, Lord.

I've been quarrelling with you. I haven't liked the way it's worked out for me personally. But if this be your way for me, I'm willing.

And so very often doubts are not quite what we express on the surface. Inside there's a doubt. There's a reason.

Perhaps a particular sin that all the repenting in the world hasn't saved you from. Or there's some other thing. A hard thing you're having to put up with.

Living in a home where an elderly relative demands so much attention and it's so difficult. And here you're talking about Jesus being enough and all these wonderful things. I wonder.

And maybe it's a personal element and something personal that we've got to face up to. The Lord says can't you take this? Because I want to tell you if you can't take this one, there's plenty more coming. This is life.

This is the Christian life. And the Christian is sometimes called upon to suffer injustice. But happy the man who doesn't stumble.

Happy the man who doesn't find any reason for being put on. Oh there are those in jail today behind the iron curtain. Oh it's hard.

But happy the man who is not. Who knows he's got the answer no matter how it may work out or not. He knows for him none other than.

None other than. He's found the answer. And if you're not finding him adequate don't start looking for something else.

It may be something in your own heart. I'm not always filled with the Spirit. I know I'm not.

There's many a time I sat in a meeting and I said Lord I'm going to speak in a moment. I want to tell you something clear and plain. I am not filled with the Holy Spirit at this moment.

And the Lord says so glad you told me so. Because confessed emptiness is always the way to fullness. You don't get being filled with the Spirit by asking but to confess you're empty.

That's grace. You're a candidate. You're about the best candidate being filled with the Spirit when you say you're empty.

As a dear friend of mine said the fullness of the Spirit is not God's reward for our faithfulness but his gift to our weakness. The power of God as we sang last night is for trembling ones. Well own up and you're a candidate.

Grace is flowing like a river. Millions have been supplied. And it may be there are all sorts of things on a personal level.

And when we get to Jesus with this thing honest about it, we'll see it's anticipated by Jesus. The blood has never lost its power. And we're through rejoicing again.

And I like to think that dear John got through. And when the knock came on the door of the executioner he was waiting. He was ready.

One of the many martyrs. Oh I've been reading the history of the Reformation in England lately. I tell you it's stained with blood.

For treason you were beheaded but for heresy if the church judged heresy you were burnt alive. And Cranmer who three times recanted of his stand for the Gospel and then recanted of his recantation. When he went to the stake he said this hand that sinned so much let it be the first to be burnt.

And so it was with John. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me you'll be amongst the martyrs that rejoice you'll be amongst those that triumph for they overcame him the devil by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of the Testimony and as in the case of John they love not their lives unto the death. So I just bring this word, take this verse.

I haven't done justice to it, I know. But think it over, let it go aren't thou he that should come? Well we've got to go on looking for another way, another one. Then Jesus in whom all fullness dwells and whose blood has never lost its power.

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