

(John) 11 - the Light Refused

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon explores the themes of Jesus as the light of the world, the nature of mercy and judgment, and the call to true discipleship through belief in Him.

Duration: 50:32

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 21:38, John 7:37-39, John 8:12, John 8:31-32, John 8:36, John 12:16

Topics: "John"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses an illustration of a plane losing engine power to explain the Christian life. He emphasizes the importance of relying on the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome challenges and obstacles. The speaker also discusses the promise of Jesus that those who come to Him and believe in Him will have rivers of living water flowing from their hearts, referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with a discussion of the first part of chapter 7 in the Bible, addressing the authenticity of certain verses and the significance of being set free from the law of sin and death through faith in Jesus.

Transcript

Just before we get down to business, you have been praying, some of you, for Davy Watson, who has been critically ill. He's now home, inoperable, and just been sewn up, and medically it's only a matter of time. But some people are really believing God for healing, and a healing, if you've ever heard of it, Church of England people will... Are there any Anglicans in this student body? Any Church of England? Yes, well you'll know what I mean when I say that a healing Eucharist service is being held next Tuesday in St. Michael's, Belfry, York.

I'm going over to that, and several from this district will be, but it's a national thing. Davy Watson, of course, is in London. But we want to give, by faith, the Lord an opportunity to work a miracle in answer to prayer.

It would be a tremendous testimony if Davy recovered. On the other hand, God knows best what he's doing. So would you turn now in your Bible, to John chapter 7, and I'll just read the last portion of it, from verse 40, and I'll read through verse 12 of chapter 8. When they heard these words, some of the people said, this is really the prophet.

Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?

So there was a division among the people over him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

The officers then went back to the chief priests and pharisees, who said to them, why did you not bring him? The officers answered, no man ever spoke like this man. The pharisees answered them, are you led astray, or you also? Have any of the authorities, or the pharisees, believed in him? But this crowd, who do not know the law, are accursed. Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing, and learning what he said, what he does? They replied, are you from Galilee too? Search, and you will see that no prophet is to rise from Galilee.

They went each to his own house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. In the morning he came again to the temple.

All the people came to him, and he sat down and talked to them. The scribes and the pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst, they said to him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such.

What do you say about her? This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.

And once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, being the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus looked up and said to a woman, Where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, No one, Lord.

And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you. Go and do not sin again. Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world.

He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. We'll leave it there at the moment. Just bow our heads to pray and seek God's help as our closing hour of today, and sing quietly together, Thank You, God, for Sending Jesus.

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, that you came. Holy Spirit, won't you teach me more about you? Thank you, Lord, for your presence through this day with us all, and for all that we've been taught and learned from your word, and by your grace have received, and by faith are seeking to make it ours.

Now, in the closing hour, when we're all tired and mentally at a stretch, we ask you, Holy Spirit, to come afresh and give us liberty to think, to speak, to understand your word, make the book live to each one of us, show us ourselves and show us our Savior, and make the book live to each of us. In Jesus' name. Just one word about how we're getting on.

In the analysis of the gospel that you have, Part A, you'll see that this concludes at the end of Chapter 12. At the end of Chapter 12, that it is marked on the analysis as the close of our Lord's public ministry. I'm afraid, though perhaps you may be glad, that I won't be able to get further than that this term, because having lost 12 hours teaching last term, and of course not expecting to be able to make those hours up this term, because others are already booked for lectures, that's as far as we can get.

So the test will be set on that first part only, and the lectures will conclude with Chapter 12 at the end of that chapter. OK? I hope that is comparatively good news. Though I find it just a little bit frustrating.

It's nobody's fault but my own. Now, already, I don't mean cough, I mean just get ready. Now just to conclude Chapter 7, by noting that tremendous verse again, that promise of Jesus, and the explanation of it that John gave in verse 39.

Anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive.

For as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. And so 60 years after this utterance of our Lord, John explains it, in the light of experience, in verse 39. That the Lord Jesus was referring to the gift of the Spirit.

John explains that here. Not until Jesus was glorified could the Spirit be given. I'll repeat that.

Not until Jesus was glorified could the Spirit be given. I mean glorified historically. And not until he is glorified spiritually, in your life and mine, do we possess him.

It's when we come and drink that he begins to flow. Not that? No. It has to be 60 years.

That's about 1890 when John's gospel was written. 60 years after this utterance of Jesus, John explains it in the light of his experience. Verse 39.

That the promise of our Lord related to the Holy Spirit. Jesus had to be glorified historically before the Spirit could be given. I can't get diverted onto a message on the Holy Spirit, but you all know why that was so, I hope.

He is God's perfect man who has been absolutely obedient to his Father, and has fulfilled the obligation of the law, and has died in our place, and risen from the dead, and received of his Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. You would see that if we related more fully in John 14, 15, and 16, the greatest chapters in the Bible on the ministry of the Holy Spirit. John 14 through 16.

Jesus having been glorified, ascended to heaven, received the right for us all to live, received the Holy Spirit, and at Pentecost he came. This tremendous statement of Jesus set everybody guessing. Verse 40 through 44.

Is he the prophet? Is he the Christ? Or neither? Verse 40 to 44. Nobody could answer that question. And really, nobody knows Jesus until they trust him.

Nobody knows the Lord until they trust him. Some things can only happen from the inside. When you know the Lord, when you trust the Lord, you come to know him.

And verse 42 makes it perfectly clear. It isn't a matter of the geography, or even chronology. Verse 42.

Has not the scripture said that the Christ is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was? Notice that the officers appear again in verse 45. The officers then went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, Why did you not bring him? And the officers answered him, No man ever spoke like this man. The officers come on the scene, but they appear without Jesus, in spite

of being told to go and arrest him.

Verse 46. The words of the Lord Jesus had proved so strong for them. No man ever spoke like this man.

And at this point, interesting enough, Nicodemus appears on the scene again. He's what I would call a night school student. If the authorised is correct.

It says he came by night. Verse 50 to 52. Came to Jesus by night.

But he only got abuse for his loyalty. Surely we ought all to listen to one whom we could call the greatest speaker in the world. No man spoke like him.

But remember, no man was ever silent like Jesus. Isaiah 53 verse 7. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. But like a lamb before a shearer is dumb, so opened he not his mouth.

Nobody spoke like him, with such authority. And nobody was silent like him. That's worth thinking into.

But let's get into this eighth chapter, which we called The Light Refused. The light refused. Chapter 7 verse 53 really belongs to chapter 8. You notice that once again, verse 53, Jesus found it necessary to be alone.

They each went to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Over and over again in his ministry, he was doing that. He found it necessary to be alone.

It's absolutely ruinous to spend our lives in the company of other people all the time. Even though that company is very nice. It's absolutely ruinous, I repeat, to spend our lives in the company of other people all the time.

No matter how good that company may be. Now let me just say a word to you about this first part of the chapter. The first 11 verses of this chapter are not in many versions.

Some put these verses at the end of John's gospel, or at the end of Luke chapter 21. One of the most able of Bible commentators is Westcott, and this is what he says about it. I'll read it to you.

This account of the most characteristic incident in the Lord's life is certainly not a part of John's narrative. The evidence against its genuineness as an original piece of the gospel, both external and internal, is overwhelming. On the other hand, beyond doubt, it is an authentic fragment of an apostolic tradition.

The incident seems to belong to the last visit to Jerusalem. It breaks the narrative. Introduced perhaps here to illustrate verse 15 of chapter 8, where Jesus says, you judge according to the flesh, I judge nobody.

For our purpose in this study of John, that's not important, but it's something we ought to realize and remember. But the account of our Lord's dealing with this woman has some wonderful, wonderful things to say to us. And I can't leave it out.

This, first of all, take a pen, second, a few seconds. Jesus had no use for people who cover up their sin and point out the sins of others. I'll repeat that.

Jesus has no use for other people who cover up their own sin and point out the sin of other people. These Pharisees hadn't come to the synagogue to worship, but they've begun to put Jesus in a snare, in a trap.

Look at verse 5, verse 5, or verse 4. They said to him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her? You see the trap they're trying to get him into, put him in a dilemma. If he recommends mercy, he's opposing the law of Moses.

If his judgment is that she should be stoned, then he's in conflict with the civil law of Rome. For the Roman government alone had the right to take life, or inflict a death penalty. I'll just repeat that, so you may just be clear about the trap they were trying to get Jesus into.

If he recommends mercy, he's in opposition to the law of Moses. If he recommends stoning, his judgment will be in conflict with the civil law of Rome, which alone claimed the right of inflicting a death penalty. So they try to trap him.

They call him teacher, verse 4. This certainly hadn't come to be taught. And what does Jesus do in reply? He stoops and writes on the ground. I wish I knew what he'd written.

It's the only place in the whole Gospels that we have a record that he wrote anything. I wish I knew what he wrote. I think, I think that to people like these Pharisees, he goes on writing until he seems to have written down every sin they've ever committed.

And one look from him, and they all shrink away. Verse 8. Once more he bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the oldest.

That's interesting. I suppose the oldest was the most guilty. They went away one by one, beginning with the oldest.

And Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. We've got the gist of that. The action of our Lord suggests unwillingness to answer their question.

And it's only because they were insistent that they got their answer. Verse 7. Please note, won't you? Let me go slow. Freedom from outward guilt does not mean freedom from inward sin.

Freedom from outward guilt does not mean freedom from inward sin. They, the Pharisees, caught the force of that, that him without sin among you be the first to cast a stone. Yes, those Pharisees caught the force of that.

And notice this also, that outward guilt doesn't cut somebody off from hope. Outward guilt doesn't cut someone off from hope. She caught the force of that.

In verses 10 and 11. I'll just repeat that, if I may. Freedom from outward guilt doesn't mean, or carry with it, freedom from inward sin.

Those Pharisees caught that. But outward guilt doesn't cut somebody off from hope. She caught the force of that.

Only Jesus, only Jesus, can separate--I want you to get this down, to think it through as I go very slowly, and stop me if need be--only Jesus can separate between the act which he condemns and the sinner whom he forgives. I'll repeat. Only Jesus can separate between the act which he condemns and the sinner

whom he forgives.

Jesus does not excuse sin, nor does he condemn the sinner. When it all got out, Jesus looked up and said to a woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, no one. Notice the next word, Lord.

No one, Lord. And Jesus said, neither do I condemn you. Go, and do not sin again.

What a moment. Now comes, immediately, one of Christ's greatest claims. Be sure you know what the claims of Jesus were, in these opening chapters.

Here's one of them, in verse 12. I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

One of Jesus' great claims. He's made some before this in the gospel. Got a note of them.

In verse 12 to 20, Jesus bears witness. And in verses 21 through 30, he issues a warning. He bears a witness in verses 12 through 20.

And in verse 21 through 30, he issues a warning. Now, if your Bible's open, let's look at that a moment, because this is a part we haven't read. Let me read it to you.

Verse 13. The Pharisees then said to him, you are bearing witness to yourself. Your testimony is not true.

Here is Jesus bearing a witness. His testimony was unsupported. Jesus declared it was supported.

Supported by his Father. Jesus answered, even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true. For I know whence I have come and whither I am going.

But you do not know whence I have come or whither I am going. You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one.

Yet even I do judge. My judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but he who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two men is true.

I bear witness to myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness to me. They said to him, therefore, where is your Father? Jesus answered, you know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.

These words he spoke in the treasury as he talked in the temple. But no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. Notice that little phrase at the close of verse 20.

His hour had not yet come. Look for it through this gospel, over and over again. His hour had not yet come.

And then, in John 17, as Jesus prayed to his Father in Gethsemane, Father, the hour is come. God working, as I said this morning, to attend to. You notice Jesus declaring his witness was supported by his Father, verse 18.

And these people could only think of an earthly Father, verse 19. With tremendous authority, he claims he was the revelation of his Father. What a testimony the Lord Jesus bore.

And from that witness, he passes on to give a warning, verses 21 through 30. Just let's read together these verses. Verses 21 through 30.

Again he said to them, I go away, and you will seek me and die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come. Then said the Jews, will he kill himself, since he says where I am going, you cannot come? He said to them, you are from below, I am from above.

You're of this world, I'm not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for you will die in your sins, unless you believe that I am he. And they said to him, who are you? Jesus said to them, even what I have told you from the beginning, I have much to say about you, and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world that what I have heard from him.

They did not understand that he spoke to them of the Father. So Jesus said to them, when you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he. I do nothing on my own authority, but speak thus, as the Father taught me.

And he who sent me is with me, he has not left me alone, you will die in your sin. Verse 21 through 24, underline that threefold repetition, you will die in your sin. Three times over in those verses.

Verse 21 through 24. And now we do notice also, four times repeated, the phrase, the claim, I am. I give you the verses, and maybe you the words, but note them if you don't.

Verse 23, I am from above. Verse 24, you die in your sins, and you should believe that I am he. Verse 28, when you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he.

And verse 58, verse 58. Jesus said to them, truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am. That's one of the keys to the understanding of John's Gospel.

The claim of Jesus. Over and over again, I am he. Already we've had one claim like that, before, earlier in this Gospel.

And that claim was, I am the bread of life. You hear it just coming through, right? I am the bread of life. And the other one we've just had is, I am the light of the world.

Yes, look for it, as we go through. Tremendous claim. And underline, also, in this portion, Christ's reference to his Father.

Over and over again. Verse 18, I bear witness to myself and the Father. Verse 19, you know neither me nor my Father.

To you, me, you would have known my Father also. 27, they didn't understand that he spoke to them of the Father. Verse 28, speak thus as the Father taught me.

He was full of his Father. Slowly, get it down. Right? His absolute oneness with his Father is made clear by the habit of his life.

The habit of his life. Verse 29, he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to him.

The habit of his life. I always do what is pleasing to him. And therefore, is known by the quality of his ministry.

I repeat that. Christ's reference to his Father. His absolute oneness with his Father, made evident by the habit of his life.

And by the quality of his ministry. It wasn't merely a negative sort of obedience. It was ministry that was positively active.

And there's no greater thing in life than to be well-pleasing to him. Let's just notice this, will you, in verse 30. That didn't end the interview between Jesus and these Jews.

If it had then, how different would have been the rest of the story. Verse 31 and 32, notice this. Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, if you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples.

And you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Jesus only promises freedom to those who follow him through an imperfect faith. I'll just repeat that.

Jesus only promises freedom to those who follow him out of an imperfect faith. There's no real truth, sorry, there's no real freedom outside the truth. And no real freedom apart from Jesus.

I'll repeat it. Jesus only promises freedom to those who honestly follow him through an imperfect faith. Verses 31 and 32.

There's no real freedom outside the truth. And no real freedom apart from Jesus. See, get this.

In an atmosphere of awful hostility, many believed on him because of the harmony between what he claimed to be and what he actually was. Give it to you again. Ready? In an atmosphere of awful hostility, many believed on Jesus because of the harmony, H-A-R-M-O-N-Y, between what he claimed to be and what he actually was.

There is no escape from the impressiveness of reality. No escape from the impressiveness of reality. There was harmony between what Jesus claimed to be and what he was.

No escaping the impressiveness of reality. It's strange how the Jews responded to that. Let me, you know this.

They answered him, we are descendants of Abraham and have never been in bondage to anyone. How is it that you say you'll be made free? Hold it a moment. They must have forgotten about Roman occupation.

Forgotten about captivity in Babylon. Forgotten about being dragged out of Egypt. We've never been in bondage to anyone.

And then Jesus makes a tremendous declaration. Verse 34. Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

The slave does not continue in the house forever. The son continues forever. So if the son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

I know you are descendants of Abraham, yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. I speak of what I have seen with my father and you do what you have heard from your father. What's Jesus

saying? This.

Only Jesus can set me free. I'm never really free until I'm not free to be free of God. Oh, you better get that again.

I'm never really free until I'm not free to be free of God. Next Christian living. The Lord snaps one love of chains and then puts on another.

Romans 8.2. Romans 8.2. The law of the spirit of life in Christ has set me free from the law of sin and death. Once more? Right. I'll give you a bit more this time.

Just a little. Sin always enslaves and so we're slaves bound by greed or indulgence or selfishness or pride or lust and much else. No one can master sin.

Only Jesus can set us free. Verse 36. If a son makes you free, you'll be free indeed.

Tremendous statement. Has he snapped your chain? And mine? I'm never really free until I'm not free to be free of God. Like that? I'm never really free until I'm not free to be free of God.

He snaps one love of chains to put on another. Romans 8.2. Sets us free from one law, the law of sin. And masters us by the law of life.

Romans 8.2. To illustrate that, you can ease off. I believe I told you in winter school. I don't know what I did.

Stop me if I did. But I shall never forget a memorable flight I took one day, one night, from Johannesburg to London. Overnight flight.

On British Airways, of course, if you'll excuse the commercial. And whenever I don't like flying, I'm not really afraid, but I'm very prayerful. And I'm always thankful to get it.

What fun is there in air travel, honestly? Pardon me, but really. I mean, you're shut up in a steel tube and fed and watered like battery hen, and eventually you get, there's no pleasure in it. I used to love the ships, Queen Elizabeth and Queen Mary and so on.

They were great. But oh, a plane. However, that's all over with me now.

But this was one of my last trips, and it was from Johannesburg. And the plane was packed. And I got in.

I was about the last to get on board and found a seat, only empty one. And next I noticed to me, noticed a label saying steward, one with crew. So I sat down and he came and joined me.

I thought it'd be chatty to him. It's unusual for an Englishman. And I said, do you like flying these Boeing jets? He said, not very much.

I said, why? Oh, he said, so they're so often going wrong. Oh, really? He said, this one has been taken out of action twice in the last few weeks through engine failure. Really? And I saw the pilot's head at the back of the cockpit.

And I said, oh, God bless him tonight. And we took off with the usual precautions and went to the end of the runway. And there we paused for a moment.

And then there was a mighty roar, and off we went. And I know that a Boeing jet, 747, fully loaded with passengers and guests, takes 46 seconds to get off the ground. Maybe a second or two more or less with wind speed.

And so when that plane started, I did something. I have a stopwatch. And I did what I do in every flight and start and watch it go round.

It went round, the plane went faster, and at 35 seconds that plane slowed down. The engines seemed to quit pulling. And I held my breath.

Presently, in a second or two, they were roaring harder than ever. 46, 48, 50, 52, 56, 60. Lord, how long is this runway? And 62, 62 seconds and whoop.

Just at the moment when the lights marking the end of the runway came underneath, I said, thank you, Lord. All is well. And it went on, I suppose, for about half an hour.

In other words, from the cockpit. But I noticed the fasten your safety belt sign was still illuminated. And so was there no smoke in that sign.

That was unusual. It didn't concern me, actually. But I mean, there it was, still on.

And I just noticed my heart beating a little faster. And presently, after about 30 minutes, the captain came on the intercom. He was terribly English, had a terrific Oxford accent.

And he said, good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm sorry that I've had no time to talk with you, but I have been very busy. I have some sad news for you.

I've lost an engine. How do you react when a man would say that to you? I react in a stupid way. I sort of said in my mind, all right, old boy, don't worry about that.

I'd gladly jump out and get it for you. But of course, that would be no use at all. What the man was saying unmistakably was, I've lost the power of an engine.

And he said, my problem is that with three engines and a full load of gas and passengers, our next stop is Nairobi. And I don't think we'll make it. So with your permission, how unnecessary to say that, with your permission, we will turn around and go back.

And you'll be put on another plane. And so we turned around and went back. And I got on another plane.

That illustration absolutely fiddles me through and through. Because that's what the Christian life is all about. Oh, you get it.

There's that plane, that 747 going along that runway, harder and harder. And at 35 seconds, an engine cuts. And three other engines are put on emergency power and go faster than ever.

But at 46 seconds, it's a long way short of the required speed of takeoff at 150 knots. It goes on and on. And at 162 knots, it makes the required speed.

And the pilot pulls the stick, that's very amateur language, but it's the equivalent of sticks the nose of that plane up in the air. And something grabs it. For all that time, it has been grabbed by a law which is irrevocable, the law of gravity.

Now it's reached the required speed. Ticks, puts his nose up in the air. And another arm grabs it and lifts it and puts it under the control of the law of aerodynamics.

And that's adequate. To lift it up above the law of gravity and to set it on course. The sheer thrust of three Boeing jet engines enable it to get up to its height and keep it.

And there was a time in my life and in yours when we were condemned by the law of death, held down, but we, may I just say, we lifted our hearts to the Lord. And in answer to that, he grabbed us and put us under the dominion of a new law which overcomes the law of sin and death and sets us free. Free in obedience to the Lord Jesus.

Have you got it? If you have really got it, that should make you stand up and shout, hallelujah, I'm free. Free in Christ, but bondage in Christ. Bound by another law, altogether, a law from heaven, which gives me perfect liberty to do the will of God.

Amen? Amen. Good night. The Lord bless you.

Just a prayer together. Lord, how can we ever praise you, thank you enough for what you've done to set us free. Teach each one of us to claim their freedom right now.

To claim freedom from the pollution and the power and the penalty of sin. That we may know the truth, and the truth shall set us free. And if the Son shall set us free, we shall be free indeed.

And we praise you for our risen, triumphant Lord, and for the victory which he gives us in himself. God bless us through this weekend and make our lives mighty blessing to others. Wherever we are, may Jesus be reflected through each one of us.

Lord, answer prayer, for your name's sake. Amen.

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