

Resources Which Must Be Received

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath emphasizes the critical need for Christians to receive the Holy Spirit as their primary resource for living a victorious life in Christ.

Duration: 53:16

Scripture: John 7:38, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:4, Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 2:4, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:17-18, Ephesians 5:20-21

Topics: "Resources"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the seriousness of the Christian life and the need for young people to understand that following Jesus is not just about having fun and games. He believes that young people should be presented with the gospel as total warfare, rather than a happy and easy life. The speaker also highlights the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian and in the church, as there is no substitute for the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. He encourages the audience to learn the secret of steadiness in their Christian walk, even in ordinary circumstances, and to rely on God's fullness to remain steady in the midst of storms and pressures.

Transcript

Good morning. Amen. By the way, I would like a few more questions for tonight, questions that are relevant to the ministry of the week, and put them in the question box on the first floor in Fitzwater Hall.

I hope you'll come this evening prepared to give a brief word of testimony concerning what God has done for you. We'll have a time of question and answer and a time of testimony to his goodness and his blessing in our hearts in these days. Now let us bow before him in prayer.

Dear Lord, our hearts are hungry for thee today. I hunger and I thirst, Jesus, my manna be, ye living waters burst out of the rock for me. Each one of us urgently, desperately need thyself in all thy saving fullness in our lives.

O Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh.

We've been thinking, of course, this week, as you know, about the communication of our faith. And we've considered this subject under four different headings so far. We thought about the relationship which must be restored, the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ in our lives.

We thought about a responsibility which must be realized. I have set thee to be a light, a reflector of light in the world, an area in which if we move in it, we're beyond competition. Then we thought about the revival which must be recovered, that there should be upon us all the marks of the cross.

It's not another Pentecost we need, it's another Calvary. Revival isn't going through Chicago, beating a big drum, it's getting back to the cross with a big song. Unless God brings us there, we haven't got much to offer.

And the Lord has been wanting to do that with us all in these days, bring us right back to the cross. Then we thought about the requirements which must be recognized, that the terms of this task, if we're to fulfill it, are costlier than we think. This is not a picnic, not fun and games, it's total warfare.

I don't want to tread on thin ice or get into deep water, unnecessarily, though I'll be departing tomorrow, so perhaps it's all right. But I do want to say that I get very concerned about the way in which some young people are presented with the Gospel in these days, as if it's all fun and games. Anything's all right, as long as you end up with devotions.

You can do anything. Flip it up, and have cakes, and have a great time, and fun and games, and thrilling business, and present to young people that the Gospel is a great life, wonderful, thrill, and happy life, and everything's fine, if you only follow Jesus. And it's not presented as total warfare.

And I believe that young people need to be presented with, from the very start, that they're engaging in total warfare. If they come to Christ, life's going to be a battle, it's a thrill and a victory, but it's a fight all the way through. The Christian is not someone, of course, who goes through life with a long faith and a big Bible and looks miserable.

He knows the joy of the Lord is his strength. But he's not, on the other hand, a frothy individual who just superficially touches every situation with a light touch. There's something about him that speaks of the obligation and the solemnity and the seriousness of the task in which he's engaged.

The terms are costlier than we think. Heaven has dawned upon his soul, and he's in the grip of a living God, and his life has been transformed. But then when we've said all that, where are we right now? Well, I want to speak to you from the final message this morning, and the final angle upon our theme, upon the resources which must be received.

The resources which must be received. I have much upon my heart. I don't know just how I'm going to get through what I want to say to you this morning, and I'm trusting that the Lord may put it through clearly, and with authority, and yet with love and grace, and it may mean something to you.

Because when all is said and done, we're shut up to a miracle. And the Lord spoke of it when he said, ye shall receive power. After that the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

There is no substitute in the life of a Christian for the Holy Spirit. There's no substitute in the life of a church for the Holy Spirit. God's method is always miracle.

Not new methods he wants, not new strategy, not new ideas, but new men. Men who are prepared to be small enough for God to use. Men whom God has reduced to a minimum that he might do through them his maximum.

He moves in the realm of miracle. From beginning to end, the Christian life is a miracle. The Christian church is a miracle.

And it's engaged in the operation of miracles, of carrying out miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no substitute for the Christian or for the church, for the Holy Ghost. Now Satan knows that.

The greatest enemy of the devil is not the Christian. That's only incidental. The greatest enemy of Satan on earth is the Holy Spirit.

Because he is resident in the Christian life, your life and mine become the focal point of battle. Battle which never ends until our dying day, when we reach glory. I used to pray when I was younger, Lord don't let me ever get involved in a situation in which the devil is not interested.

I've stopped praying like that now because it's been answered for me more abundantly than I expected. But if you are really in business for God, Satan is in business with your life. And every movement of advance and every movement of the Spirit of God in you is accompanied by a counter-attack from the enemy.

When you are in the Christian church, you're in a moving concern which is facing battle all the time. Therefore it is typical of Satan that he has the whole of us, many of us and most of us, confused about our adoption of the Holy Spirit. There are some strange manifestations of the Holy Spirit abroad today.

Panic theology, I call it. But Christian people, when they're facing a situation, have found themselves with inadequate resources. They haven't got what it takes to get to a country on the mission field which has been for centuries in the grip of Satan.

And they either withdraw for another higher education or they press in for an experience of the Holy Spirit which has no foundation in Scripture. One of the greatest and most divisive things that the church has known for a long time is what is known as the charismatic movement, where people have entered into an experience of speaking in tongues. Well, I haven't spoken in tongues.

It takes all the grace of God to make me speak right with the one tongue I have got. But if this was really the answer to the church's need today, then it would be the major theme in every one of Paul's letters. I don't dispute the fact that there may be such a thing as the gift of tongues.

I think it would be very hard for us to prove as evangelicals that this gift was withdrawn after Pentecost. But I would press upon you the fact that it is the last in order of the gifts. It is a minor and not a major gift.

It is only referred to in one letter of the Bible, the Epistle to the Corinthians, only in two chapters, and then always with a view to dampening it down. I repeat, that if this was really the answer to the church's need, the thing that we need most of all, then it would be the major theme in the New Testament. But I find it is only a very minor theme.

I spoke to a missionary in Africa recently, a missionary leader, who professed to have received this gift. And I spoke to him for hours with my open Bible, and we talked about it together and prayed about it, and he finished the conversation this way. Well, he said, I don't care what the Bible says.

I've got an experience, and you can't argue me out of it. Now, when a man talks like that, it's highly dangerous. You can't have all the gifts of the Spirit, but you can have all the graces of the Spirit.

And the major theme of the New Testament in relation to God the Holy Spirit is not gifts, but grace, character. Galatians 5.22 gives us the fruit of the Spirit in a Christian life. And this is the major theme.

Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me. Of course, in our fear of becoming extreme or fanatical, we've exchanged the false fire of fanaticism for the no fire of orthodoxy. We find ourselves absolutely helpless to meet the challenge of these days.

John Wesley used to know that which our hearts hunger for. When his brother Charles Wesley wrote, Jesus thine all victorious love shed in my soul abroad, then shall my heart no longer rove rooted and fixed in God. Oh, that in me the sacred fire might now begin to glow.

Burn up the dross of base desire and make the mountains flow. Oh, thou who at Pentecost didst fall, do thou my sins consume. Come, Holy Ghost, on thee I call.

Spirit of burning, come. That kind of thing we don't pray about because we're afraid of it, but that's what we need. I was in Ethiopia just recently at a mission station, S.I.M. station, and stayed there for about a week.

And I stayed with a couple who came from this country who were the missionary builders for the S.I.M., and they just celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. And the husband had bought his wife the most extraordinary and unusual twenty-fifth wedding anniversary I've ever heard of. You know what it was? He bought her a present.

You know what it was? A bathroom. I don't think, I hope there wasn't a sting in the tail of that, but of that gift. But he bought her a bathroom.

And when I went to the house and saw it, my word, you never, it was lovely. There was all the green tiling and beautiful bath, beautiful equipment, lovely chromium-plated taps, and I thought, well, bless their hearts, they deserve it. And I was very thankful for this because I had been for ten days in a very remote area, and this bathroom would meet my need, which was urgent at the time.

And so I looked at it with a great joy, not only for his wife's sake, but for mine. And so I repaired to my room and prepared for my bath, and went in with great excitement and great anticipation. And I got ready for it, and I turned on the tap, and nothing happened.

No water. So I had to dress again and went to see him, and I said, say, what's the idea here? You've got all this lovely bathroom, but I can't get any water. Oh, he said, I forgot to tell you that the local council haven't turned it on yet.

It'll be six months before we have any water. So my, I thought, that's done it. My need is not met, at least in that way.

You see, what a wonderful bathroom, but no water. Every bit of equipment, but no water. Everything except the water, the one thing that really matters.

Now I believe today that that's our trouble. In the Church we've got everything except the water of life. The water that I shall give you shall be in you a fountain springing up into everlasting life.

The Lord Jesus just wants to do that to each one of us today. The fountain of life, the source of life, the strength of life, the victory in all our hearts. And we have everything except the land.

Oh, we've got the doctrine right, we've got the orthodoxy right, we can talk about the Holy Spirit, we know the theory, but oh, how urgently we need the life. And Lord, the promise is, ye shall receive power. After that, the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me.

Well now, let me just look with you in the Word what this really means, what's it all about. Turn with me, will you, to the epistle, to the Ephesians, for a moment, and the fifth chapter, and there we read Paul speaking to the Ephesian church, in verse 17, Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be being filled with the Spirit.

That's present continuous tense, be being filled with the Spirit. Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart for the Lord. Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. What a happy verse that is, isn't it? Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord. So obviously, the Christian life is expected to be a life that's joyful and a rejoicing life.

And Paul says, if you want this kind of life, the secret of it is you must know what it means to be continually being filled up with the Holy Spirit, and then you'll learn to give thanks always to God for all things. No, that's tough. Fancy being able--can you give thanks to God for everything? Very difficult.

Thanks to God for all things? I remember Dr. Paul Rees was at the English Keswick Convention a few years ago, and he told a story about a man who was in Birmingham, Alabama. And that's a good effort. And he was sitting in a Greyhound bus at the bus station, temperature over a hundred, humidity very high, heat terrific.

And he was waiting in the bus. Christian man suddenly into that bus there entered a very large lady who sat beside him and oozed over his section of the seat. And in a moment or two, five children came and joined her and sat on her lap.

And this little fellow was squeezed right over into one corner. And oh, he got so frustrated. The heat was terrific.

I'll leave the rest to your imagination. And the man was thoroughly frustrated. And suddenly he remembered that in his quiet time that morning, he had this very verse, giving thanks always for all things unto God.

And he said, Oh Lord, what on earth can I be thankful for in this? And then suddenly he said, I know. Thank the Lord this woman is not my wife. No, that's not me.

That's Paul Rees. Blame him for that. But seriously, seriously, oh you know, when a life is really filled up with all the Spirit of God, you begin to know that there are no mistakes in the love of God.

He never makes a mistake. There's nothing that happens to a man filled with the Spirit by accident. It's all permitted by our Heavenly Father.

All things work together for good to them that love him. Nothing happens by accident, though it's very tough to take, yet we can praise him for it. Ah, but then the answer, the secret of it all, is that we must know what it means to be filled, be being filled with the Spirit.

That's a command. You see, it's possible to be indwelt by the Spirit, but not to be filled with the Spirit. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit.

You can't be born again except you have the Holy Spirit. There are many verses of Scripture which make that perfectly clear. For instance, Romans 8, 9, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

It was the Holy Spirit who convinced you of sin because you believe not on Jesus. Your conscience tells you it's wrong to tell a lie, but it's only the Holy Spirit who convinces you that it's sin not to believe on Christ. John 16, 8. He convinced us of sin because we believe not on Jesus.

It was he who led us to accept Christ. The Spirit that quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing, John 6, 63. And at that moment we were sealed with the Spirit, Ephesians 1, 13.

And indwelt by the Spirit, your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and you were baptized by the Spirit into the family of God, 1 Corinthians 12, 13. All these things took place at the moment of your conversion. It is impossible to be a Christian without having the Holy Spirit, and therefore without potentially entering into the realm of miracle.

But listen, it's possible to be a believer and not have the Holy Spirit. May I repeat that? It's possible to be a believer and not have the Holy Spirit. My friend Major Ian Thomas, whom many of you know, preached at Moody Church one Sunday night and really rocked the congregation.

His text was, Unsaved Believers. That's quite a subject. People who have everything in their heads and nothing in their hearts.

People who can be correct in doctrine and sign every possible correct fundamentalist doctrine, and yet it's all in their head and not in their heart. Oh yes, I can believe my Bible from cover to cover and yet have no indwelling Christ. It's all up there instead of down here.

But if you're a Christian, if you've been born again, if Christ has really come into your heart and you've yielded your life to him, you have the Holy Spirit. But it's possible to be a Christian and not to be filled with the Spirit. So you have verses such as these, Walk in the Spirit, Galatians 5.16, Quench not the Spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5.19, Breathe not the Spirit, Be filled with the Spirit, Ephesians 5.18. You see, may I put it this way? You may have the Holy Spirit, but he may not have you.

Salvation is like getting a book with two volumes. You go to the bookstore and you ask for Dr. Lloyd-Jones' book on the Sermon on the Mount, a book which ought to be in every preacher's library, which ought to be in every student's library too. Dr. Lloyd-Jones on the Sermon on the Mount, a tremendous book.

And you go there and get the book, and you take one volume and come away with it, and you leave the other volume behind. And suddenly, when you're coming back out of the bookstore, you realize you've forgotten it, and you go back and you ask for it, and the person in the bookstore gladly gives it to you. You've paid for it, it's all yours, and you go back with two volumes.

Well, salvation is like that. You have one volume, The Death of Christ for forgiveness of your sins. You have another volume, The Life of Christ, the risen life of our Lord, indwelling you by his Spirit for victory day by day over sin, so that you haven't to struggle and fight for it.

But you take both volumes. You take by faith Jesus to forgive you. You take by faith the Holy Spirit to deliver you.

And you have two volumes of full salvation. Is this a second blessing? Do I believe in a second blessing? Yes, I do, because I believe in a third, and a fourth, and a fifth. And any day without a blessing would be a miserable day.

Oh yes, there are millions of blessings in the Christian life, but the fullness of the Spirit is an experience beyond the new birth. There is no such thing as a continuous fullness of the Spirit. It's a continuous appropriation of a continuous supply from Jesus Christ himself.

When I trust him, he fills me. The moment I begin to believe, at that moment I begin to receive. And as long as I keep on believing, praise the Lord, I keep on receiving.

So as I believe, I receive. As I go on day by day believing in him, I receive more of him. It's a crisis, a crisis into which I hope hundreds of you have entered this week, when your lives have been totally abandoned to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The trouble is that so many of us go through that again and again. We come forward to every altar call, every invitation. We give our lives always to Jesus, and our sincerity is beyond dispute.

With all our hearts we mean business and we surrender to the Lord, but we only take that one step. We don't take the other, of appropriating faith. There's a great friend of mine who's familiar to many of you, and he has two children, two girls.

One of them is much older than the other. The other is a postscript. And one Monday morning he was sitting in his study, thinking about his sermon the previous day, and sometimes preachers have Monday morning feelings, and feeling it had been all so hopeless.

His ministry had been ineffective. And downstairs, he suddenly heard his wife say to the two children, run upstairs and tell daddy breakfast ready. So they did so, and the big one, having longer legs, got up first and dashed into the room, and sat down on her daddy's knee, and put her arms around his neck, and said daddy breakfast ready.

And a minute or two later, a postscript came along, and stood at the door, coughing and panting, and looked inside, and surveyed the situation. And then suddenly big sister said something rather catty to little sister. You don't need to come any further, she said.

I've got all the rest of daddy. And daddy saw that little sister with her lip beginning to quiver, and a tear going down her face. So he said, now darling, come on, right here.

And he put a spare knee, and held out a spare arm, and little postscript came running in, and jumped on the knee, and he put his arm right round her. And she looked across at big sister, who was only 18 inches away, and said to her, in not a very Christian spirit, she said to her, you may have all the rest of daddy, but daddy's got all the rest of me. Now that's what it means to be filled with the Spirit.

The moment when you have all there is of Jesus, and you have all there is of him, at the moment you're born again. You don't receive him on the installment plan, you have a full salvation within you, resident in you, at the moment of your new birth. But the question is, has he all there is of you? And the moment he

has all there is of you, that's the crisis of identification with Christ, when the Spirit fills what you have emptied.

For God can only fill what you are empty. Now let's just pause a minute in the midst of our message this morning, and ask ourselves quietly in God's presence, have I entered into that crisis? Have I really, really been willing for God this week to empty me of everything that is contrary to his will, or am I still fighting a battle about something? He wants to fill you so that he might use you. He wants to fill you so that you might understand what the will of the Lord is.

He wants to fill you so that in everything you can give thanks. He wants to fill you so that you will have grace adequate for every situation. He wants to fill you so that your life may more and more increase in the likeness of Christ.

Everything depends upon this transaction. Have you yielded to it? Have you asked? And maybe it needs that you should go to your room on your own, and you should get out a little bit of paper, and write down on it what the Bible says the Holy Spirit is. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth.

He's the spirit, the spirit of love, the spirit of grace, the spirit of faith, and so on. Am I acting a lie? Am I committing in my life something contrary to that? Am I lacking in love and critical and unkind? I need to go away alone with God and examine my life about these things, and write what's wrong, and tell the Lord I'm willing to be emptied. I know a place in Northern Ireland, it's called Ballymena.

And some years ago there a Protestant lady was having a series of cottage meetings in her house every Wednesday night. And next door there lived a Roman Catholic, one of the few in that city. And she invited her to come in, and this lady said, I'm sorry I can't, not allowed to.

But the next morning she asked her, did you have a good meeting? Oh, she said, great meeting. How many did you have? 27, and my little cottage was full. Will you come next week? No, can't, not allowed to.

Next week went by, and the next meeting, and then she asked her friend, how many did you have last night? Oh, she said 51, my house was full. And she thought, well that's funny. Will you come next week? No, can't, not allowed to.

So the next week's meeting was held, and when it was over the same conversation occurred. How many did you have last night? 62, and my house was full. Well, that was too much for an Irish Roman Catholic, so she said to her friend, listen, you told me your house was full when 27, and the next week you'd have 51, and then you're 62.

How do you do it? The thing's impossible. Oh no, she said, didn't you hear us? What do you mean, didn't I hear you? Well, she said, we just emptied all the furniture out of the barn, and made room for more people. Say, God isn't going to fill you with the Holy Spirit unless he knows that you mean business.

You prepare to empty out of your life the books that take the place of the Bible? Spend more time reading the novel with the shade of the doubtful in it, if you prefer that to the Word of God. God has to empty you of that. Has to empty you of your lack of control of the television knob.

He wants a life to show to him that they mean absolute business. Then he filled. The first condition of fullness is emptiness, and that means complete, absolute disillusioned in myself.

I'm ready for God to enter my life to fill it. And you notice here in this chapter in Ephesians that the fullness of the Spirit is not for missionaries, not for preachers only. Oh no, it's for everything.

It's for husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee. The Christian life, as it's rightly understood, touches every social relationship and has immense implications. And the greatest factor in evangelism is the Christian family and the Christian home, and the outreach from that home.

And all of us need to be filled with the Spirit. There's a right and wrong way of doing everything, every kind of Christian work. And above all, you need the fullness of the Spirit to make you like the Lord Jesus.

This is not, this is not some emotional experience for a few people. It's absolute necessity to meet the demands of the day in which you live. It's a necessity for your life, right now.

Be being filled with the Spirit. I think perhaps the greatest necessity of all is that by being filled with the Spirit you learn to be able to stand against every storm. Some time ago my wife and myself and family were traveling over from Southampton to New York.

We were going by boat. It was more popular than by air those days. And we were traveling in--if you don't mind me saying so, and excuse me mentioning it--what is the world's largest liner, the Queen Elizabeth.

And we were two days out at sea when we noticed that the captain of the Queen was looking through his glasses at a cloud of smoke coming along behind. And it was getting larger, this cloud of smoke. And word went round the passengers of the Queen Elizabeth that for the first time in her history the world's largest liner was being overtaken at sea by the world's fastest liner, the United States.

Yes, you usually enjoy that bit of the story better. And about four hours later the United States passed us. Unnecessarily near, I thought, but as she went by, as she went by, we were told afterwards that the commander of the United States sent a message to the commander of the Queen, which said, you look very beautiful, but you're very slow.

The reply wasn't published. About eight weeks later, when I was returning to Britain, I was sitting in the chief engineer's cabin on the Queen Elizabeth, and he was a Christian man. And he said, you know, just two weeks ago, coming out from New York, the same thing happened on our return voyage as happened on your outward trip.

And he said, the United States overtook us. And he sent us a telegram, which read, sorry to pass you, but he said the old man, referring to the commander, was ready for him. And he said, sent a reply, which read, that's perfectly okay, but it does not meet for the royal lady to travel in fast company.

I thought that was quite a good answer. He said to me, look, would you like to come and see the engines of this boat? Oh, I said, I'd love to. Took me downstairs to the boiler room.

There were four steam compressed boilers. One of them wasn't operating. It hadn't been used since the days of the war.

If they used it, they would use fifteen hundred tons of oil a day. And Cunard, he said, believe in economy these days. And he was operating on three boilers, had been for years at nine hundred tons of oil a day.

But he said, there's something else I want you to see. He took me right down to the very skin of the ship, way, way below surface. And we walked out into a narrow gangway.

On either side of us, there were two enormous propeller shafts. Huge shafts, four hundred and fifty feet long, one hundred and fifty yards of solid steel. And they were going round at what seemed to me a tremendous pace.

And we went right to the skin of the boat, right to the back of it. And we saw the place where those four shafts went out into the ocean. And I heard the thrash of four giant propellers driving that floating atel across the Atlantic.

Eighty-two thousand tons of it. It was tremendous. And I went back to his cabin, and just for the sake of conversation, I said to him, my, that was wonderful.

I wouldn't have missed it for anything. But I said, you know, those propellers must be going at a tremendous speed. And he laughed at me.

He said, you're no engineer, are you? I said, no. What do you mean? He said, if you were, you would know that I could get those propellers going so fast that they would make a hole in the water, and the ship would slow down and ultimately stop. He said, I have forty-eight engineers on board the ship, and they're constantly calculating the ratio between revolutions per minute in the engine room and steadiness at the point of drive.

I've never forgotten that. Because something has been built into my heart that tells me that God wants from me not speed, but steadiness. Not a flash of enthusiasm, but steadiness in the storm.

And he said to me, you know, we've been going across this pond for about twenty-five years, and he said we'll do it for many more. We've been through it when we've been threatened with torpedoes, and we've been bombed in wartime. And he said we've been through it in hurricanes and gales, in rough seas and tempests, in fog, sometimes in smooth weather, in clear sky.

And he said we've been doing it for twenty-five years, and we've never been late. Mind you, he said we're behind schedule sometimes, but he said we catch it up, because we've discovered the secret of steadiness at the point of drive. And I need God's fullness in my heart to keep steady in the storm.

Oh, not an emotional experience. Not something that makes me go around shouting hallelujah. Not something that's merely emotional, but something that when everything's hitting, and the storm is on, and the pressures are on, when normally I would press the panic button, and try and get out of it, I can stand by the grace of God.

Now that's what God wants for you. He wants to send out to this school a thousand students who have learned the secret of steadiness. Because if you haven't learned it in six months on the mission field, you'll be a casualty.

Well, I just want to talk for the remainder of my time about how this may happen in my life. I hope I've shown you the need. You ever read from Oswald Chambers, an author who needs to be taken in small doses frequently? He says this, some people think that Christians are expected to do exceptional things in unusual circumstances, whereas the truth is that a Christian is expected to be an exceptional person in ordinary circumstances.

No halo to that, right down to earth. Nothing, nothing just thrilling about it. But someone whose reactions and whose behavior in ordinary circumstances is exceptional and marks him out as a man in whose life

God has worked a miracle.

There's an authentic stamp of reality about him, something about him that can't be explained on the basis of education, on the basis of understanding. He's a miracle. Because when the heat is on, and the pressure's on, and the tragedy has happened, and the things have happened in his life that have simply taken the rug from under him and everything absolutely has collapsed all around him, he's standing.

One of the greatest authors of our day is C.S. Lewis. You remember his book, *Screwtape Letters*? That allegory of the description of satanic warfare upon the Saints? One paragraph reads like this, Don't be deluded, Wormwood, writes Screwtape to his nephew, who is responsible for carrying out the tactics of hell against the church on earth. Don't be deluded, Wormwood.

Our cause--listen to every word of this--our cause is never in greater danger when a human being, no longer desiring to do the enemy's will--that is, the will of God--no longer desiring to do the enemy's will, looks around him upon a universe from which every sign of the enemy's existence has disappeared, and asks, Oh God, why have I been forsaken? And yet, keeps on obeying, steadfast in the storm. And before long in your life, my dear friend, God will give you an experience of darkness when all sign of truth has gone from your ministry. He'll put you through an experience, often, in which there's no longer any sense of God's presence, no sense of fruit from service, and you're left absolutely in the dark.

What do you do then, unless you know God's Spirit telling you, moment by moment, you collapse? Because, you see, God's purpose for all of us in life is enlargement through pressure, and what do I mean by that? Put three men in a burning, fiery furnace--that's pressure. They meet in the furnace, one like unto the Son of God--that's enlargement. And God's purpose is enlargement, until our character is conformed to the likeness of Christ, to make us like him.

And he puts us through any pressure in order to fulfill that end. When the heat is on, the pressure is there. And I find myself in burning, fiery furnace with three others, two others--that's a bit close fellowship.

And I panic and withdraw, but if I stand in it and meet one like unto the Son of God. I believe there are hundreds of you going through new pressures here at school, pressures in your life, pressures that are almost too much to carry. You feel it's about snapping point.

Listen, he will not suffer you to be tested beyond that you're able to bear, but he will with the temptation provide a way of escape so that you can run away. No, so that you are able to bear it. He knows when to take the pressure off.

If you just follow me, here in imagination you see an engineer, and he's testing a machine under pressure, a new machine, a valuable machine. And he's applying all sorts of tests, and it has upon it a safety gauge. And he finds the pressure going up and up, and suddenly it goes beyond the safety point, and immediately he releases a safety valve, and allows the pressure to escape.

You see, the safety valve, the release, is not for the man, but for the machine, in case it's been damaged. And when the pressure is on, it's not that he will allow you to get out of it, but he knows the moment when to take the heat off. If he's trained a Christian to stand in any test, he knows when to remove the pressure.

But a Christian can only stand if he's filled with all the fullness of God. Let me then ask you again, how's this going to happen? Well, I'm quoting now from Hudson Taylor, a great founder of the OMF, I prayed, I fasted, I agonized, I strove, I made resolutions, I read my Bible more diligently, I sought more and more for

retirement and meditation, all without effect. The blessing didn't come that way.

I sought his fullness for long and earnestly, I cried to God for it. At last I found it was because there was no room in my heart for him. That was spoken by a man who'd been a missionary in China for years and would return to the home base and reckoned he was a complete failure, and found that after years on the mission field, there's no room for God.

I look back upon my ministry, I'm so glad I'm in a position now when I'm never candidating for a pastorate, and everything is in retrospect. And I look back upon times when my ministry has been absolutely a complete failure. I've tried method after method, idea after idea.

I've seen prayer meetings which have been as dead as a doornail. I've turned the chairs round, put them the other way round, asked people to get into groups, and a thing's a thing, there's nothing, nothing happened, it's been dead. Method after method, I've tried together to see the power of God work, but there's one method has never failed.

And I'm sure ashamed that I haven't tried it more. It's when I've been absolutely on my face before God, shot up to a miracle, and then God has worked. God brought you there, flat on your face before him, where you've made room for him to work a miracle.

And then I noticed the second condition of fullness in my life, is faith to accept what God has promised. You remember the wonderful language of John chapter 7 and verse 7, 37? If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his inner man shall flow, not a trickle, not a drop, not a river, but rivers of living water.

He that believeth on me, what's it mean to believe this? If any man thirst, let him come, let him drink. For any who thirsteth for God, well, that's desire. If any man thirst, let him come, that's surrender.

Let him drink, that's faith that lays hold of what God has promised. He that believeth, out of his inner man shall flow, rivers of living water. That's God's promise to your thirsty heart today, how he can fill you with his Spirit.

And let me say this, that's just the beginning. Because, you see, a maintained fullness depends upon a maintained obedience. Faith is the way in, obedience is the way to maintain.

Every step of faith and obedience enlarges my capacity for Christ. Every step of disobedience shrivels it up. And I can lose the fullness of the Spirit.

I can end my life in Romans 7, in all the carnality of spiritual failure. I can enter into life and victory and power and joy and know the thrill of it in my own experience. And then, because I've yielded to a tremendous counter-attack from hell, I can end my day on the shelf, unusable, out of God's service, because Satan has tripped me up.

And, friend, it's not how you begin life that matters, it's how you end it. Have you asked the Lord to fill you? Have you believed that he does do what you ask him? If your earthly parents give you good gifts, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask? Let us pray. Just a moment's quiet prayer.

Jesus, fill now with thy Spirit hearts that full surrender know, that the streams of living water from our inner man may flow. Oh dear Lord, today, just now, may we know the joy of thy incoming life in all the fullness, in all the sufficiency, so that all through the future we know that it is no longer our effort, our struggle, but his power, his fullness in us, adequate for every need. Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

Come now, dear Lord, and fill our empty, needy, poor, sinful hearts, and may we stand in all the joy of an indwelling Christ to serve thee in his power, the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God, the fullness of the Spirit, the hours, now and until he come, and then forevermore. Amen.

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