

Man's Extremity - God's Opportunity

by Anton Bosch

God waits until we come to the end of our resources so that He can work in our weakness, not in our strength, and bring about His opportunity in our lives.

Duration: 40:13

Scripture: Philippians 3:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses two miracles performed by Jesus: the feeding of the 4,000 and the turning of water into wine. In both instances, Jesus waits for the right time to perform the miracles, allowing man to come to the end of their abilities and plans. He involves the disciples in the process, using what little resources they have to perform the miracles. The preacher emphasizes that God graciously chooses to involve us in His work, even though He doesn't need us, and highlights the importance of trusting in God's timing and provision.

Transcript

So let's begin to read in Philippians chapter 3, and we're going to look at quite a few examples. We'll look at three examples from the Old Testament and five examples from the New Testament. So, Philippians chapter 3, and again we're speaking about the principle or the attitude of blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Remember that, just to sum that principle up. Poverty is not a matter of whether we are poor or not. We all are poor.

The question is whether we understand our poverty or not. That is really the issue. And when we understand our poverty, then we're able to draw from Him.

And then His strength is made perfect in weakness, according to Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. So, in Philippians chapter 3, we'll read the first 11 verses. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord, for me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation. For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit. Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and I have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks that he may have confidence in the flesh, I am more so. Circumcise the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, concerning the law, a Pharisee, concerning zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gained to me, these I have counted lost for Christ.

But indeed I also count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ. And be found in Him not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith. That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Now, let's begin to look at the first example which is Abraham in the Old Testament. And I'm not going to take you to a specific reference because we have to look at many, many at the whole story of Abraham's life. But you remember that one of the promises, Abraham receives essentially two great promises.

One that he would become a great nation and the other that God would give him a city. And the promise of the great nation, of course, was a very difficult one for Abraham to understand because his wife was barren. And so there seemed to be no fulfillment of the promise.

He didn't even have the first son. He didn't even have the beginning of this great nation, let alone a great nation. It wasn't even like he had ten or twelve sons that could now become this great nation.

And so Abraham looks for this promise of God. And this was something which was very important to him. Not only was it important because God had made it a promise to him, but it was important because it was important to people in those days to have many children.

Because that would continue the line and so on. And if it's important today, and it is important to many people today, it was many, many times more important for them to have children. And so Abraham has no son.

He doesn't even have a daughter. And so he gets older and older. And eventually he has passed a hundred years.

Sarah had been barren all along. But now eventually they get to a point where they are absolutely, the scripture says that their bodies were dead. There was absolutely no opportunity to have a child.

Now you remember that along the way Abraham tried to make it happen. Because Sarah suggested to him that maybe if he took Hagar, who was a servant in the house, that if he took her as a concubine and that he raised a child through her, that somehow he could help God to fulfill the promise. And of course from that we learn the lesson about the other worldly saying that we often use, is that God helps those who help themselves.

Now God does not help those who help themselves. That is exactly the principle that we are trying to establish this morning, is that God does not work according to that principle. Because when Abraham tried to help God, when Abraham said, well let me see what I can do about the situation.

Let me try and do something about this. And he works outside of the promises of God, we find that disaster happens. And Ishmael is born and we have the consequence of that today.

And the very wars that we see in the Middle East right now is a direct result of Abraham's disobedience. As God told him that it would be through Sarah that the promise would be and not through Hagar. And so he tries, but nothing happens.

God patiently waits. I think that to unbelievers this is a difficult thing, because unbelievers would look at this and say, well maybe God has a mean streak, because God just sits on the sideline and just watches as we struggle along. And as things just get more and more and more desperate.

But the principle that I trust that we will come away with this morning is to understand that it is not because God has a mean streak, but because we need to understand that we can do nothing in the flesh. Remember one of these principles, or one of the things that Paul says here in Philippians, that he says we are the circumcision who worship God and the Spirit, number one. Number two, who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Have no confidence in the flesh. And because the flesh can only produce an Ishmael, the flesh can never produce the true son, which was Isaac. And so as much as we think we can do something, and we can make something happen, it's never going to be the best.

And so God waits until we come to the end of our resources. Until we stop trying to do things for ourselves. And then he's able to begin to act.

And it's interesting in the case of Abraham, is that eventually God brings him to the point where he then introduces the concept of circumcision as a sign of the covenant between him and Abraham. And we know that that continues through to this day. But the other interesting thing about the circumcision, because one says, well, why didn't he use some other kind of sign? I believe that there was significance in the sign that he used with Abraham.

Because in effect, Abraham was now putting symbolically a knife to his own ability. He was saying, I'm cutting off my ability. I'm cutting off anything that I can do and I can produce in a symbol, in a type, of course.

And we find that that same symbol comes to us in the New Testament in baptism, in water baptism. When we symbolically bury the old man. And we say, it's no longer me who's living.

But in fact, Christ is now living in me. And so Abraham comes to the end, and he now actually has to physically put a knife to his ability. And God then raises up Isaac.

And Isaac is born when everything had come to an end, as far as Abraham's ability was concerned and as far as Sarah's ability was concerned. We look at a man like Moses. Moses had every potential to become a great man.

He had all of the qualifications to become the great deliverer and the great mediator between Israel and Egypt. He was born a Jew. And yet he was raised an Egyptian.

And of course, in that sense, he's a picture of the Lord Jesus, who was, is God, and yet he became flesh. And so he is the only one who is uniquely in a position to be able to fully understand us. To fully stand in

our place.

And at the same time, to fully stand in the presence of God. And Moses was such a man. He was raised in all of the Egyptians' skills.

He was trained as a strategist. He was trained as an engineer. He was trained in the arts and in all of the skills of the Egyptians.

To such a degree that Stephen says in Acts chapter 7, that he was a man mighty in word and deed. So he was a powerful man. He was trained as a prince in Egypt, in all of the skills of the Egyptians.

And in fact, even today, men marvel at the skills of the Egyptians. At their engineering skills. At their understanding of the stars.

Their understanding of various aspects of science and of the arts and of various things. And Moses was raised in all of these things. And you remember Moses comes to a point one day in his life as he walks down.

And he sees an Egyptian mistreating a Jew, a Hebrew. And he rises up and he says, I'm going to sort this man out. I'm going to begin to deliver my people.

And he kills that one Egyptian. Now, if he was going to kill one Egyptian after the other, it would have taken him a long time to deliver the people of Israel. But you see, that's the futility of the flesh.

We think that we can deal with things in our ability. We think we can sort things out. We can make things happen.

But we can do nothing. And Moses tries. And the same way as Abraham tried and all he did was he produced an Ishmael.

Moses tries and all he produces is an absolute mess. And he has to flee. And for 40 years he spends in the wilderness looking after sheep.

In fact, really I believe that in those 40 years what God was doing with Moses was that he was bringing Moses to an understanding that he had nothing. That all of the skills and the craft and all of the abilities that he had learnt in Egypt were of no value whatsoever. When you're looking after sheep that are wayward and that have a mind of their own and don't want to do what they're supposed to do and don't stay in the place they're supposed to stay in, when you're exposed to the elements and you have no control over the weather and over the drought and all of these things for 40 years, you eventually come to an understanding that you don't have any ability to control these things.

And one thing we have to say about farmers is that even though many of them are unbelievers, they all acknowledge that they can do nothing unless God makes things happen. Unless God sends the rain, unless God sends the sun, unless God gives the increase, nothing is going to happen. And there are very, very few atheists amongst farmers.

Most of them have to acknowledge that in fact without God we have no chance. And you just need to see when there's a prayer day for rain, when there's a drought, that every farmer goes to that meeting. And so in the city it's easy for us to become atheists, to say, well, you know, we can manage our things.

We manage the economy, we make things happen, we do this, we do that. And somehow God is really out of the picture. But when you're exposed, as Moses was for 40 years, just wandering behind the sheep out there in the wilderness, you come to a point where you understand that in fact I can do nothing except God does it.

And you know, when one looks at Moses and one sees the before and the after picture of Moses, and again this is so important because there is so much emphasis and so much pressure on us today to become the kind of people that we think we should become, that the Church thinks that we should become, that there is this model of these great, powerful, victorious Christians and that we should work towards that. And so we should work to do everything we can to become these great super-Christian people. And yet God does everything in Moses' life to rid him of all of his skill and his ability.

Now remember, in Acts chapter 7, Stephen says concerning Moses, he says that he was a man mighty in word and in deed. So he was a powerful speaker, he could move people by what he was saying. And yet you remember what happens when God confronts him at the burning bush and God says to him, now go and deliver the people, go and speak to Pharaoh.

And he says, God, I can't speak, I can't speak. And yet he was a man mighty in word. So he had even lost in the 40 years of looking after the sheep because he had nobody to speak to.

He wasn't speaking to people. We understand that he was married and he raised two sons during that time. But obviously when you are working with sheep there is not much to say, there is not much communication.

And somehow during that time he had even lost his ability to speak and certainly he had lost his confidence to speak. And so he says, God, I can't speak. You better give me a mouthpiece, someone who can go with me who can speak because I can't speak.

And folk, it was only then that God begins to use Moses. And so it took God 40 years to get all of the skill and ability and self-sufficiency out of Moses to a point where Moses was able to be the kind of man that God wanted him to be. Just a vessel in the hands of God.

Just a man that God was able to use in the way that he did. The last example I want to take you to in the Old Testament is that of Gideon. And I'm sure by now you know which way we're heading with the story of Gideon.

Gideon was raised or called by God to deliver the people of Israel in a time of difficulty with the Midianites. And he rallies the people of Israel and he says we've got to go and fight these Midianites. And he raises an army of 32,000 men.

Which seemed to be quite a number. And yet we remember how it happened that God then says to him, well, there's too many. He says, I can't deliver Israel by these many.

Maybe we should just look at Judges chapter 7. The sixth book in the Old Testament. Judges chapter 7. Sorry, not Joshua. Judges 7. And verse 2. Judges 7 verse 2. And the Lord said to Gideon, the people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands.

Lest Israel claim glory for itself against me, saying, my own hand has saved me. What a statement. The people of Israel, the people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands.

Now, you can see how this philosophy, this thinking of God is directly opposite to our kind of thinking. In our thinking we can never have enough men to go against the enemy. The more we've got the better.

God says the less we've got the better. Now that's quite a statement. He says there are just too many.

Because at the end of the day if you gain a victory you're going to say, we did it. And so he says, those who are afraid must go home. And I think it's 10,000 of them turned back.

And then he brings them to the water and he tests them. And of the 32,000 are left 300 men. And that day God gives them a great, great victory.

And you know, they came away with absolutely no question that God had done the work. They couldn't come away and say, we did anything. Because 300 men against the mighty army of the Midianites, and I've forgotten the numbers, but the huge army of the Midianites, they had absolutely no chance whatsoever.

135,000 Midianites. 300 men on Israel's side, on Gideon's side. And yet God delivers them.

And God teaches them and us a very important lesson. That God is not interested in numbers. He's not interested in power.

He's not interested in skill. He's not interested in ability. He's interested in men whose hearts are right towards God.

And who are humble before Him and will allow Him to work. Channels that are just able to allow His glory and His power and His wisdom and His things to flow through. Rather than trying to do things in their ability, in our ability.

Now if we go to John chapter 2, and we're going to look at some of these examples in the New Testament. And I'm going to look at five of the miracles that Jesus performed. And I think that all of us are crying for a miracle in one way or the other.

We need a miracle in our fellowship. We need a miracle in our private lives, in our private relationship with the Lord Jesus. We need a miracle in many of us in our financial affairs and in other areas of our lives.

And I want for us just to look and see how did these miracles happen. And what are the things that surround these miracles. And I'm not going to go into each one in detail.

But I want to just highlight a very important principle from each one of them. In John chapter 2, we have the first miracle that Jesus performs. And that is the changing of water into wine at Cana of Galilee.

And you'll notice that they had wine to start with. And they were having their feast. Somehow they hadn't provided properly and they hadn't worked out their logistics correctly.

And they come to a point where the wine has run out. Yet Jesus does nothing. He's there.

He knows that the wine has run out. He knows that they are now embarrassed. But he just leaves it.

And he waits. And then they come to Mary. And Mary comes to Jesus.

And Jesus says, well, woman, what have I got to do with you? My hour has not come. This is not the right time. So Jesus waits.

Now, that's a very difficult verse when Jesus says that my hour is not yet. Let me just... Verse 4. Jesus said to her, woman, what does your concern have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. So Jesus is saying, it's not the right time.

So it seems that Jesus waits a little bit more. Because if Jesus says, this is not the right time, then I don't know how long he waited, but there was a right time. And this is the issue, is that we want the miracles when we want them.

Mary wanted a miracle there. She said, we need something. You must do something now.

And you must do it now. You must do it quickly. And he says, this is not the time.

My hour is not yet. This is not the time. And so he waits.

Until it is God's time. Until there was no more wine. Until there was no more plan.

Because I'm sure that they would have borrowed wherever they could have. And if there was a bottle store, they would have sent down to the bottle store. And they would have done whatever they could.

And when they ran absolutely out of all ideas, Jesus steps in. And so the first thing that happens in this miracle is that Jesus waits for man's extremity. Until man had come to the end of his abilities and his plans.

But then I want you to notice that Jesus doesn't just perform the miracle. He doesn't just speak and suddenly wine appears. But he tells them to take those six water pots and to fill them with water.

And then he tells them to draw of that water and to take it to the president of the feast. And suddenly it becomes wine. And I think one of the two problems that we struggle with in terms of looking for miracles in our lives.

Looking for miracles in our environment. Is that first of all, we want it when we want it. We want it to happen when it suits us.

And secondly, we're looking for God. Well, maybe there are three things. Because the second thing is that we try and make it happen ourselves then.

As we saw in the Old Testament. And then finally when we come to a point where we've come to the end of our abilities. We sit back and we now say, well God I can do nothing.

Now you better do something. Now that's only half right. It's only half right because you see that Jesus expected them to do something.

And what they had to do was be obedient to what he asked them to do. Which was a very stupid thing. He didn't ask them to go down to the vineyard.

He didn't ask them to go down to the winery. But he says to them, fill these water pots with water. How ridiculous an instruction can that be? And yet when they're obedient in the little thing that he asks them to do.

And then to scoop from that and to give it to the president. Suddenly a miracle happens. So the third thing we learn is that we need to then be obedient.

And whatever he tells us to do. And Mary you can see very clearly is very wise and understands what the issue is. Because in verse 5 his mother says to the servants, whatever he says to you, do it.

Whatever he says to you, do it. And so however foolish that may be. However inappropriate it may seem to be.

Let's just do it. If he tells us to do it, if he tells you to do it, do it. Because as we're obedient to him, in that situation, he is able to change that and perform the miracle.

In Mark chapter 6, and I'm not going to read the passage. But in Mark chapter 6 we have the miracle of Jesus walking on the water. Now there is another story of the Lord Jesus sending his disciples over the sea.

Which has similar and they seem to be two separate occasions. But what happens is that Jesus goes up into the mountain to pray. He sends the disciples over the sea with a boat.

And the scripture says that he saw them struggling. Maybe we should just turn then in Mark chapter 6. Mark chapter 6 and verse 45. And I was quite amazed when I reconsidered this miracle.

He sends them away in verse 46. And he sent them away and departed to the mountain to pray. Verse 47.

When the evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea, and he was alone in the land. Verse 48. Then he saw them straining and rowing, for the wind was against them.

And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea and would have passed them by. And so first of all Jesus knew the storm was going to happen. I have no doubt that he knew that that was going to happen.

Because he had clearly planned this whole process in order to teach them some important lessons. And so he allows them to go. He knows the storm is coming.

He then sees them fighting the storm. He sees them in the middle of the sea. Now obviously he wasn't seeing them physically.

Because only on a good day can you see that far. And this was in the middle of the night and there was a huge storm. So he wasn't physically seeing them but he was seeing them spiritually.

God had revealed it to him. And so he knows that they are struggling. And yet it says that he comes to them in the fourth watch.

Now the fourth watch is between 3 and 6 in the morning. First watch is 6 to 9. Second watch 9 to 12. Second watch 12 to 3. And the fourth watch from 3 to 6 in the morning.

Now what time did they depart? I must assume it was before 6 o'clock. It was before sundown. Because they wouldn't go across at night I don't think.

And so they would have left in the late afternoon. So they have been on the water now for 12 hours. Can you imagine being on the water for 12 hours? That is after a whole day of teaching and being under the

sound of the word.

And they are tired. Now they are rowing and the wind is against them. And eventually it is the fourth watch.

In other words the day is about to break. And only then does Jesus come to them. Only when they come to the end of their resources.

Only when they come to the point where they say we cannot save ourselves any longer. It is only then that Jesus comes. And notice he comes walking on the water.

We know the story about Peter. And it says that he says to them, Be of good cheer, do not be afraid. Verse 51 And when he went up into the boat to them, the wind ceased, and they were greatly amazed at themselves beyond measure, and they marveled.

And so again sometimes we say well doesn't he know that I am struggling? Doesn't he know about my problems? Yes he knows. And I found that such an encouragement. He saw them straining and rowing.

He saw them struggling. And it wasn't like he was detached. It wasn't like he said oh well you brought it upon yourselves now suffer for a bit.

No he was teaching them important and very valuable lessons. And so he allows them to struggle. And eventually again when they come to the end of their abilities, then he steps in.

And he is able to minister to them. In Matthew chapter 13 we read about Jesus feeding the multitude. And again I found this interesting as I looked at this miracle again.

Matthew chapter 13. Sorry I've got the wrong reference. I think it's possibly Mark 13.

Anyway Jesus feeds the multitude and their 4,000 men. And what happens is that the people had been following him for 3 days. For 3 days he had been teaching them.

So they had long ago run out of food. He knew at the beginning of the 3 days that they were going to run into a problem. It wasn't like he didn't understand that this was going to happen.

So he knew all of this was going to happen. And for 3 days he just waits on the right time. And eventually the disciples come to him and they say well what are we going to do? And again they draw on their resources.

They say well we haven't got money and we can't do this. Have you got the reference Derek? Mark 8. How did I get to Matthew 13? And so he says to them how many loaves do you have? And they said they had 7. They also had some fish. Now it's not in fact Mark's account.

There's another account. It says that they had a couple of fish. This is not the same story as the one with the little boy with the 5 loaves and the 2 fish.

Because here we have 7 loaves and a few fish. But anyway he comes to the point where after 3 days there's now a crisis. And it's amazing how many of the miracles of the Lord Jesus wait for a crisis to happen.

Wait for men to come to the end of their ability. And then he intervenes. And notice that he doesn't just speak and bring food into being.

Which he could have done. Or just speak and just somehow people's hunger was satisfied and they didn't need food. He could have done that as well.

He could have done that a lot easier. But notice that he chooses to say what have you got? Now he waited until they came to the end and then he says now have you got something? And they say well all we've got is... And obviously what they had to offer was absolutely ridiculous because it had no ability to meet the need. There was no way that these 7 loaves and a few fish were going to feed the multitude.

And yet they're obedient and they say this is what we have got. You know I believe that that's the point that we need to come to. You remember Moses the same thing.

Moses says I had ability to speak in Egypt. I had this and I had that but I have nothing now. I have no ability to speak.

And then what does God say to him? What is in your hand? And he says Lord I've got a stick. That's all I've got. And yet he even takes that stick and remember that God says now cast it down.

And as he throws down the stick it turns into a snake and God says to him grab it by its tail. He takes it by its tail and it becomes a stick again. But before it was Moses' rod and then it changes because after that point it is no longer Moses' rod but it is the rod of God.

And it was with that rod that he was able to open the Red Sea. He was able to bring water from the rock. He was able to perform great miracles.

With that he led and judged Israel and brought them out of Egypt and brought them to the promised land. Now what is in your hand? There's a difference between saying I can do something and coming to a point of saying I've got nothing. All I've got is a stick.

But what I've got I'm prepared to give you Lord. And so again they come to a point where they say well we haven't got anything. But we've got seven loaves and what we've got Lord you can have it.

And the Lord Jesus takes that and then notice again he says to them feed the people. And so the disciples feed the people, feed the multitude. Again God performs the miracle but it involves us very graciously so that we can become part of his great work.

He doesn't just do his work because he doesn't really need us. He can work without us. But in his goodness and his grace and his mercy he chooses to involve us in the process.

And that's the wonderful thing about God. In John chapter 21 you remember after the resurrection Jesus finds the disciples again on the sea. And he's at the seashore there and he says to them have you caught anything? And they've said well we've toiled all night and we've caught absolutely nothing.

And again he says to them cast your net at the right side. It seemed to be the second time he'd performed the same miracle. And again as they're obedient to him they catch a great draught of fish.

Again they had worked all night. They had tried what they could do. And Peter had many plans about fishing.

You need to go with fishermen and you find they've got many plans. You try this and you try that and you try that and you've got all the plans. And Peter had run out of the plans and all the others had run out of

the plans.

And they'd run out of energy and they'd run out of everything. And they'd come to the end of their ability and Jesus says cast on the other side. They cast on the other side.

Which obviously is a ridiculous thing because there's no difference between this side of the boat and that side. Because the net will sink to about the same place anyway. And yet they cast on that side of the boat and obviously they catch this great draught of fish.

And again they had to come to the end of their ability. They had to come to a point where they said we can do nothing. And yet when they're obedient to the Lord Jesus.

And you know it would have been so easy for Peter to say Lord that's ridiculous. You know we've tried this spot before. And we've tried from this side and that side and we've tried this and we've tried that and it hasn't worked.

And yet Peter is simply obedient and he just does it. And I'm sure when I read that again that he was reminded of the previous time. When Jesus performed the same miracle.

And so this time he doesn't argue. He says well let's just do it. And as he does it there's a great draught of fish.

The last one I'm going to take you to is John chapter 11. In John chapter 11 we read the story about Lazarus. And you remember what happens.

Mary and Martha send for Jesus and they say Jesus you better come and help us because Lazarus is sick. And you remember Jesus says well we'll wait a bit. We'll wait another two days.

And so Jesus waits another two days until Lazarus is dead. And only once Lazarus is dead and even once he was dead here he comes to the town. And even then he doesn't go straight to the graveyard.

He first speaks to the woman and he goes into the house and they have a further conversation. And it seems that Jesus just couldn't be bothered about the whole situation. But he was working his plan.

He was teaching them a particular lesson. And he was teaching us a particular lesson. And so he takes his time but eventually he gets to the graveyard.

And it would seem to have been forever to them that eventually he arrives. We read this so clinically because we read it in a passage and it seems to be just something so distant. But can you imagine losing a loved one? Someone has now actually been sick.

You know there is this man Jesus. He can perform a miracle. He can heal this person.

And yet he doesn't come and he delays and he does whatever he does. Now this person is dead and he comes and he's talking, talking, talking. And yet nothing seems to happen.

And in their grief Jesus eventually comes to the point where he comes to the graveyard. And he speaks. And Lazarus comes forth.

And folk again, I really believe when one says well why did he have to wait until he stinks? Couldn't he just raise him earlier? Couldn't he just do it a day before? But I believe that again the principle was that

Lazarus had to be properly dead. Now how can you be properly dead? Well obviously he was dead the moment he breathed his last. But there could still be the possibility that people could say well maybe he was just in a coma and Jesus just woke him up.

Or he just woke up. No, for the miracle to be a valid miracle and for the miracle to have its impact upon those that were there and upon us, there had to be no question that this man was absolutely dead. Why did Jesus have to be in the grave for three days? For the same reason.

There had to be no question because there are those modern critics who say oh no no but he just was in a faint or he was just in a coma. But he was dead for three days. And he had been embalmed and everything had been done and so there was no question that Jesus was dead and buried.

And then he was raised on the third day. God didn't just raise him from the dead when he breathed out the last and they took him down from the cross and raised him then. But he allowed him to be buried so that there was no question as to the validity of the miracle that he was raised from the dead.

And so Lazarus is absolutely absolutely dead. And Jesus again involves those around him. He asks them to remove the stone.

Again there's an objection and they say but Lord what do you want to do this for now? Why are we going to take the stone away? The man is thinking and it's going to make it even worse if we take the stone away. And yet they are obedient eventually and they move the stone. And Jesus speaks and Lazarus comes forth.

And again Jesus involves the disciples and those around and he says you now unwrap him. And so Jesus raises him from the dead but he doesn't extract him from the grave clothes. But he leaves that to the disciples to do.

Now we can see as we looked at each of these five miracles in the New Testament and the three in the Old Testament that first of all we can't make things happen when it suits us. It's got to happen in God's time. And God's time is never our time.

God's time is always later than our time. Always later than our time. We always want things to happen yesterday.

We want things to happen now. And we say but Lord we're losing time here. I'm getting older and things don't seem to be coming together.

And Lord it has to happen today. That a thousand years are as one day. One day is a thousand years with the Lord.

And so another day, another week, another month, another year is absolutely nothing with God. At the end of the day he is going to accomplish his great and his glorious purposes. And so let me wait upon the appropriate time.

And in the process let me come to the end of my ability. Let me come to really understand that there is nothing I can do to fix my situation. There is nothing that we can do to bring God's blessing into this fellowship.

There is nothing we can do to bring God's blessing into our own lives. Except that we come to a point where I become absolutely nothing. Where I die.

Where I understand my poverty in spirit. And when we come to the end of our resources. In fact the reality is some of us just take longer than others to die.

Some of us just take so much longer. We have so many human resources like Moses. We have so many skills.

We have so many personal abilities that it took Moses 40 years to come to the end. And some of us just take longer to come to that point than others. But eventually Moses comes to that point and God says, Okay, now it's ready.

Now the time has come that I can use you. And then God doesn't just put us aside. That's his wonderful grace.

And just carry on without us. Then he begins to involve us. And what we then need to do is we need to hear his voice.

And as Mary said to those around, whatever he tells you to do, do it. Whether it's a stupid thing like moving a gravestone from a grave of a man that is dead. Or filling water pots with water when you need wine.

Whatever it is he tells us to do, let's just do it in obedience. And it's only then that God's power and God's glory becomes available and is unleashed. Let's pray.

Father we thank you that your ways are not our ways. And Lord that even our greatest wisdom and our greatest abilities and intellect is but foolishness before you. And so Lord we pray that you would help us to understand that there is nothing we can do to fix our situations.

Lord whether those are physical or emotional or spiritual or financial or whatever. Lord that there is nothing that we can do about our own situations. But Lord that we need to come to a point where we understand that we have no confidence in the flesh.

That we like Paul may come to say, Lord maybe we have things that we can boast of. Maybe we can claim that we are this or that or the other thing. But Lord that we have no confidence in the flesh.

But that we have faith in you. That you are great. That you are powerful.

That you are able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask and what we even think. And so Lord help us to come to the end of our ability and to begin to draw upon your ability. Lord that we may understand like Paul that when we are weak, then are we strong.

Because then we are able to draw from you. And so Lord give us grace and give us patience to wait for your time. Give us grace Lord that we don't despair in times when the storm is around us.

In times when we have run out of wine. In times when we seem to have no answers and no solutions. When everything around us seems to be dying.

But Lord give us grace to wait for your time. And Lord give us grace to be obedient. To just do those things that you ask us to do.

No more. Lord there seems to be so much pressure on us from all sorts of quarters. To do things and to go here and to go there and to achieve this and achieve the other thing.

But Lord help us just to be obedient. And just do the simple things that you ask us to do. Because it is then that your power and your glory can be made manifest.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

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