

Awakened to the Truth

by Fred Tomilson

This sermon titled 'Awakened to Truth' emphasizes the importance of a genuine spiritual awakening and the need for a deep personal encounter with God. It highlights the contrast between mere Christian lifestyle and the true essence of the Christian life found in Christ. The message urges believers to seek a fresh awakening to spiritual realities, to break up the fallow ground of their hearts, and to surrender completely to God's transformative power.

Scripture: 2 Kings 6:1, John 14:6, Hosea 10:12, Romans 8:9, Luke 1:38, Romans 1:16, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:20

Topics: "Spiritual Awakening", "Surrender to God"

Description

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Transcript

Well, it's certainly a pleasure to be able to speak to you this morning. It's morning for me, at least, and that is it's Sunday morning, Thanksgiving Day here in Canada. The title which I would like to refer to right at the beginning that I've given to this message is Awakened to Truth.

I don't normally do that, but there it is. My Bible is open to the second book of Kings, chapter 6. Because of a certain time restraint, I'm not going to read the verses, but they are verses 1 through 7, which I hope you'll look at at least later on. Essentially, in what I would choose to call Scene 1, we find a young trainee prophet who, along with his colleagues, are felling trees.

The intent is to build a home for themselves which is larger than their current accommodation. Moving quickly to Scene 2 in this little passage, we're looking at one of the young men standing and holding an axe handle. There's one problem, and it's a huge problem, and that is that the handle has no head, it has no steel cutting edge.

So what he now holds is utterly useless for the purpose intended. And as I read over those verses and I contemplate what I've just been sharing in these moments, in my own mind I sense what I can only think of as an ominous parallel. Today, what claims to be the Christian life, and indeed Christian ministry, is all

too often lacking a pivotal feature, that certain something that identifies it.

Let me state something which I think needs to be ever so clear in all of our minds, and it's this, that the Christian life is not merely a Christian lifestyle. The Christian life is Christ. It was Jesus, the Christ, who said, I am the life.

And we see and hear preachers who are wielding beautifully crafted handles, and we also know that there are sincere, professing believers who are content with the title, shall I say, tree fellows, or more properly, Christians. And so often this company of people in their home situations, and as a matter of fact here in Canada today it's Thanksgiving Day and there'll be many family members coming together. Many of those family members will have the title and they'll call themselves Christian believers.

But one can't help but wonder what the topics of conversation will be as they gather together on this occasion. All too often the conversation of the people who confess to be Christian people is about almost anything but Jesus himself. And I don't know that I would be wrong if I were to suggest that probably scarcely any of them have actually cut down a tree, or again to put it more specifically, who have personally led someone into a living experience and knowledge of the Lord Jesus and his salvation.

Each time I think along that line I think of a prayer meeting that took place in Ontario many, many years ago now, and we were gathered around very early in the morning. And I remember one young man praying, and he said, Lord Jesus, never let me forget the experience of leading a soul to you. And that statement, it stuck with me through decades, because I know that in those moments I thought to myself, his prayer was never let me forget the experience, and I wondered how many who call themselves Christians have ever really actually had the experience at all of leading a soul to Christ.

It reminds me of a statement relating to Israel of old where we read, it was a confession really, there was a whole setting to this, but the line that I'm thinking of is, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth. We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth. It's like a tree feller who's never ever cut a tree down, a Christian who's never known the joy and the privilege of leading another soul into the experience of the redeeming work of Christ.

And as a matter of fact, notwithstanding that, I think in so many occasions those very same people, they sing songs about this powerful axe, which is the gospel of Jesus. We sing about it, we pray, and it's somewhere in our thoughts. Some people even have a little gold version, if you will, hanging around their neck.

But what do we really know about it all? You know, in this same chapter that I'm looking at, there's another story. The king of Syria has sent an army to Dothan to capture Elisha. There's a very interesting reason why that king would want to capture Elisha.

You can read about that for yourself. And back in Dothan, Elisha's servant has had a dream. He wakes, as it were, and looks out the window, and he sees that their home and their setting is surrounded by a huge army.

Let me at least just read a couple of verses here. It reads in verse 15, Now when the attendant or the servant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, that is to Elisha, Elisha responds and says, Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.

And Elisha prayed and said, O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. Wonderful.

And, you know, what should we do? That was the man's cry. And Elisha's response again was simply this, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, open this man's eyes. You know, I believe that the single most pressing need today for those who profess to be Christian believers is for a fresh personal awakening to spiritual realities.

Familiarity breeds contempt, they tell us. And we know that it's true. And sadly, even tragically, that's true in this realm of the things of God.

You know, among the problems, really, that hinder spiritual sight for so many is that for many years, perhaps I'm speaking to people in this very category, but for many years they've been listening to preached messages, but they've listened without that radical response to what they're hearing. In the book we know is called The Song of Solomon, we read this line on one occasion, it's, draw me and we will run after thee. You know, that's what God is looking for.

He's looking for that to be true in your life today. Draw me and we will run after thee. You know, when God speaks, we must act.

So many, I think, of those in this category of sincere believers, they're committed to, what can I call it, the Christian fellowship culture. They're part of it, they're committed to it. Their head is filled with doctrine and the teaching of church practice.

And yet, inwardly, they've simply resigned themselves to a sort of status quo, the sort of thing that, I suppose if you were to put it into words, or try to put it into words, it would sound like, well, we've been there, we've tried that. And that becomes an attitude that so many carry through decades of their lives. And they're not awakened to the spiritual realities.

And in this sort of twilight zone, this dullness of spirit and understanding, they're still attending the church, they're still considering themselves Christians, but something pivotal is missing. And, you know, this is a tragedy beyond description. To never allow yourself, and I'm choosing my words carefully, to never allow yourself to see that there is in fact something, something crucial that is missing.

And I'd like to suggest that that mystical, certain something is nothing less than the glory of His indwelling, the indwelling of His presence, the glory of that inward dwelling being manifested through our persons. Elisha's servant, the prayer has been made, Lord, open his eyes. And you'll notice in verse 17, you find this little phrase, and he saw, and he saw.

You know, going back to the earlier story, Elisha's young tree-felling prophet, he was very aware that he had no iron, and he acknowledged it. He was not pretending to have it all together. He wasn't beating trees with the handle of an axe with no cutting edge.

There was nothing smug about him. You know, if someone had challenged him on that fact, he wouldn't have been defensive. It was just so obvious, it was glaringly obvious that something crucial was missing.

And you know, that really is the first step in receiving from God. It's to acknowledge honestly and openly before Him that you're sensing need. It's as though He, the Holy Spirit, is bringing light and understanding

to one's heart and mind.

And when there's a ready acknowledgement of this, and we're not defending ourselves, or we're not trying to remind ourselves of all that we know about the Bible, or the Christian teaching, or end-time prophecies, or anything. We're just acknowledging there's something that God has for me that I'm not currently experiencing. And I'm saying to you, to come and arrive at that moment, that's the beginning.

It's the first step in actually receiving anything from God. When we come to Him, nothing in my hands I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling.

That's how we come to Him. And you know, for the young trainee prophet that I'm referring to here from this chapter, the question facing him was, well, where is it? Where did it go? What happened? But today, in our situation, I think the question is more pressing. It's more penetrating.

And I'd like to suggest it's, why do you not have it? Why are you not experiencing this precious thing that God has provided? And I'd like to suggest to you, can I just pause for a moment? This section of Scripture is not a type in the way that other passages are types or shadows of something else. It falls into a category that I frequently refer to as illustrations. And so we're not examining every detail of it and trying to imagine.

Even with types, this doesn't work. Every type and every shadow at some point falls short. It's just a shadow of the reality.

When we're dealing with illustrations, we must be careful we're not forcing every element in the passage. And I'm not forcing anything here, I'm sure. But as I read it and I think of it in the light in which I'm presenting it just now, I think the answer to the question, well, why do you not have it? Would be today, well, you never had the iron truly attached to the handle.

I mean, the text of Scripture says it fell off. What kind of an axe was it? What kind of a situation is this? It wasn't caught in a knot in the tree and it wrenched it. It just fell off, fell into the river as a matter of fact.

And in so many cases, this is true. This is a hard thing to say, but I believe it's true. The reason that you don't have it is you never truly wanted the flesh to be completely dealt with.

That's a big challenging statement. But I know and I believe this, that when a man or a woman is truly and divinely enabled to see, to see their own true state in His presence, that is what I'll call an authentic awakening. When God shines His light, we see our need, we face our need, we're not quibbling, we're not trying to defend ourselves, but we're ready to respond to what He's saying.

So the question then really is, well, what now? And, you know, there's an Old Testament verse that I'm going to quote. I'm doing this deliberately. We could go to the New Testament.

There's all the truths and the doctrine of the New Covenant experience spelled out clearly. I mentioned just a few moments ago, though, that sometimes familiarity breeds contempt. Sometimes we're so familiar with words or phrases that we don't allow them or they're not able to penetrate deeply with meaning.

And we're very thankful to God that He gave us the Old Testament and there's lots of other reasons why He gave it to us that I'm not discussing. But sometimes a passage or even a phrase in the Old Testament can come with a certain freshness to us as the Holy Spirit is handling His own word and applying it to our current need and our current situation. And that's certainly true here.

You know the verse by heart, I think, but it's in Hosea and it's in chapter 10. And the 12th verse reads like this. So with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness.

And here's the particular part I'm thinking about. Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord until He comes to reign. And there's the challenge.

It's coming before God with this sense now, this quickened sense of one's own need before God. And there's a desire that's quickened there. And the desire is, I must have this.

I cannot go on living. Charles Wesley said, I cannot rest in sins forgiven. Where is the earnest? The down payment.

Where is the earnest of my heaven? You know, can you see this? It's an exciting thought that God loves me. He's chosen a moment to reveal truth to me, to bring light, to bring sight to me so I begin to understand and see what He's after with me. And inwardly, the response is, Lord, I want this.

More than that, I must have this. I must do it. I cannot just rest.

I can't go on any further wielding this beautifully crafted handle. I must know that cutting edge. I must know that dynamic, that divine feature of this redemptive provision for me.

And the word in the passage here is to seek the Lord, to come before Him until He comes. Not to just pray a little casual prayer, but we're desperate. We need God to deal with us inwardly in a radical way and so on.

That's what you want, right? I trust that's exactly true, that this is your desire. You know, every awakened soul begins to long for the Lord to come and manifest His presence in them and through them. Amen.

But look for a moment, look at what precedes that statement. The word is this, break up your fallow ground. Now, in the context in which I'm thinking of it in this session, then I'm going to suggest, well, this is a statement that relates to the flesh.

Break up your fallow ground. You know, the flesh is that human bias that is driven and powered by indwelling sin. Paul on one occasion, and it needs its context to be explained rather than me just pulling out a phrase like this, but it's in Romans chapter 7 where the apostle says, sin dwells in me, dwelleth in me, as the old King James.

You know, let me just help you, I think, just a little bit to appreciate just the dimension of what we're thinking about here when we're looking to God to deal with something that is so deeply rooted into our human personality, into our inward man. You know, as you know, I live in Canada, just above the United States. And you will have heard the reports and the records of the early settlers who moved from the east, they were going west to a better life.

And those earlier settlers, as they found themselves on the western side of the United States, they had some huge tasks and they'd experienced a good many on the journey. But when they got to the piece of land that was going to be theirs, where they were going to set up home, they first had to log the trees. And as hard as that was, the really tough job remained.

And that was the stumps that had to be removed. And what they would do, they would dig around the tree and dig deeply. And then they would need to cut all of the main roots of the tree.

And then, with their axe, and then with their, I don't know, their ropes and their chains, and perhaps a team of horses or oxen, they would seek to wrench out that root from the ground. And then with their ploughs, very simple ploughs at that time, I'm sure, but they had cutting edges, and the blade would plough through the ground, which is as hard as rock in many cases, I'm sure, before the ground was ready to be planted. I suppose the remaining question is, in the text you just read, it said, you break up your fallow ground.

We're talking about deep roots within our inner man that we inherited as we were born into this world. Sin dwelleth in me. How many of us, I'm sure all of us, have struggled with those roots and these issues and find that the powers are just too strong for us.

We can modify our behaviour up to a point, but that's as far as it goes. So how about this? Break up your own fallow ground. So someone asked, well, how can I break up my fallow ground? Listen carefully to what I'm saying.

And again, this is not a type, this is an illustration, this passage. And listen very carefully. You can't do it.

That's the answer. You cannot do it. It is utterly impossible.

Only God can do this work. And that's important. Only God can do it.

First of all, I think he has to deliver us. Those of us who would have called ourselves Christians for a long time, we've been on the road for a long time, and there'll be many who will, whether they're put into these words or not, I doubt they will, but it's that attitude that's kind of, well, I've been there, and I've tried that, and it's not worked. And God must deliver you from that, my dear friend.

This is not then in your life. It is not one of those earlier days when you thought you were going to try and do this yourself. This is today.

This is today. And today, for you, as you listen to what I'm saying, is God's ordained time. It is time for you to seek the Lord.

It is his time, time that he's ordained for you. And what he demands of you is not to try and wrestle with sin or wrestle with your flesh, but it's to be, and listen carefully, because these are pivotal statements in my understanding of the biblical truth. You must come to a point where you are willing, willing to the depths, to the core of who you are, willing for him to do the work in you, now believing that there is a cutting edge, there is an iron that belongs on the shaft, there is a power that belongs to your life, to your inner man, and it's the spirit of the living God.

And it's not by my, it's not by your power, but the scripture says, but it's by my spirit, sayeth the Lord. That's how these mountains are moved. That's how these stumps are pulled out.

That's how your whole inward life is transformed. That's how you become a new creature in Christ. This is what the gospel's all about.

Only he can do it. You can't cut the taproot from Adam. You can't do that.

You can't rip out the stump. You can't remove the hardness from your heart. And I love that wonderful hymn.

And this line, he, he, he God, he by the power of the Holy Spirit who is operating as the product of the Calvary triumph. He breaks the power of cancelled sin. He sets the prisoner free.

His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood avails for me. Isn't that wonderful? This is the gospel of God as Paul referred to in Romans 1. Amen.

And I believe that everything, and I mean absolutely everything about your life and your circumstances has been, you might think this is an audacious statement to make, but I believe absolutely everything about your past has been to prepare you for this moment to listen to this word, which is the most important message that can be heard in this world. God has been preparing you for this moment for himself, for you to hear the word of your salvation. Glory to God.

His plan is to reap in you his harvest, the harvest that he has planned for you. Your disappointments, your frustrations in these matters were then, but this is now. Believe it, my dear friend, and abandon all your unbelief and can I encourage you to get alone with God and cast yourself into the sea of his love and to his opened arms and to the fullness of this great salvation which he has purchased at a price we cannot estimate.

Let your only prayer in that moment be what Mary prayed those years ago Be it unto me according to your word. I've referred to that many times over the years. She did not have a clue what the angel had been describing to her.

How could she? How could she? And she says, I don't have a man. How can these things be? But then she arrives at that moment, that moment that each and every one of us must come to afresh where we just say, Lord, I don't know how you're going to do this. But be it unto me according to your word.

And that must become, for each and every one of us, the governing principle of the way that we live out our lives for the duration of this journey. Just surrendered, yielded to him. Be it unto me according to your word.

What we're saying really is, Lord, I'm giving myself to you. I'm taking my hands off myself. All my plans and aspirations and all my good ideas and everything that's been my human reasoning in one way or another over these years.

But right now, Lord, I'm bowed in your presence and I give my life to you, Lord. You know, if you do that, and you maintain that as a governing principle for all your living, then all you need to do is just watch and watch as his purposes begin to become actualized in you and begin to unfold. Perhaps then you'll sing those words of another great hymn that we love to sing.

And can I yet delay My little all to give To tear my soul from earth away For Jesus to receive Nay, but I yield, I yield I can hold out no more I sink by dying love Compelled and own thee Conqueror Will you do that, my friend? If you've heard him speaking to you in your heart just now, rest assured in this, he means business. He loves you. He's been pursuing you.

He's brought you to this point and your need has been for that. His truth becomes awakened in your inner man and your inward eyes are opened and your heart responds because what in the world is the alternative that comes remotely close to what he is offering to each and every one of us? And we say, Lord, just do it in me. I give myself to you.

I must leave for this time. For more messages, if you're interested, please go to the YouTube channel Turn to the Scriptures with Fred Tomlinson and click on the subscribe button when you do that, will you? And let's continue to travel further together. May God bless you, my dear friends.

Amen.

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