

Isaiah 44: Unbelief, Faithlessness & Revival

by Richard Owen Roberts

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in bringing about revival and transformation, using personal experiences and biblical examples to illustrate the power of faith.

Duration: 1:26:54

Scripture: Joel 2:21

Topics: "Unbelief"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a powerful testimony of a man named Pete who was transformed by God's grace. Pete, a former drunken tramp, desired a wheelchair to visit others in a nursing home and share his story of redemption. Through Pete's testimony, the people in the nursing home witnessed the miraculous work of God in his life. The preacher emphasizes that faith is at the heart of true ministry, and when someone believes in God and exercises their faith, God blesses them and works wonders through them. The sermon also references the 44th chapter of Isaiah, highlighting the craftsmanship of shaping iron and wood and the provision of rain for the land. The preacher encourages the listeners to love and serve the Lord wholeheartedly, promising that God will provide abundantly for their needs. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's faithfulness to His people, His forgiveness of their sins, and the call to rejoice in His works.

Transcript

Isaiah 44. But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus says the Lord who made you and formed you from the womb, who will help you.

Do not fear, O Jacob, my servant, and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants, and they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water.

This one will say, I am the Lord's, and that one will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, Belonging to the Lord, and will name Israel's name with honor. Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts. I am the first and the last, and there is no God besides me who is like me.

Let him proclaim and declare it. Yes, let him recount it to me in order from the time that I established the ancient nation, and let them declare to them the things that are coming and the events that are going to

take place. Do not tremble and do not be afraid.

Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me, or is there any other rock? I know of none. Those who fashion a graven image are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit.

Even their own witnesses fail to see or know so that they will be put to shame. Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit? Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves.

Let them stand up. Let them tremble. Let them together be put to shame.

The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with a strong arm. He also gets hungry, and his strength fails. He drinks no water and becomes weary.

Another shapes wood. He extends a measuring line. He outlines it with red chalk.

He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of a man, so that it may sit in a house. Surely, he cuts cedars for himself and takes a cypress or an oak and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir and the rain makes it grow.

Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself. He also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it.

He makes a graven image and falls down before it. Half of it he burns in the fire. Over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied.

He also warms himself and says, aha, I am warm. I've seen the fire. But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image.

He falls down before it and worships. He also prays to it and says, deliver me, for you are my god. They do not know, nor do they understand, for he has smeared over their eyes so that they cannot see and their hearts so that they cannot comprehend.

No one recalls, nor is there knowledge or understanding to say, I have burned half of it in the fire and also I have baked bread over its coals. I roast meat and eat it. Then I make the rest of it into an abomination.

I fall down before a block of wood. He feeds on ashes. A deceived heart has turned him aside and he cannot deliver himself, nor say, is there not a lie in my right hand? Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant.

I have formed you. You are my servant. O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me.

I have wiped away your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. Shout for joy, O heavens, for the Lord has done it.

Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth. Break forth into a shout of joy, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and in Israel he shows forth his glory. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, I, the Lord, am the maker of all things,

stretching out the heavens by myself and spreading out the earth all alone, causing the omens of boasters to fail, making fools out of the diviners, causing wise men to draw back and turning their knowledge into foolishness, confirming the word of his servant and performing the purpose of his messengers.

It is I who says of Jerusalem, she shall be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah, they shall be built, and I will rise up her ruins again. It is I who says to the depth of the sea, be dried up, and I will make your rivers dry. It is I who says of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and he will perform all my desire, and he declares of Jerusalem, she will be built, and of the temple, your foundation will be laid.

In my mind, in these days we've been together, I've had five biblical concepts at the forefront of my mind. Four of those I have expressed to you in various ways during these days. There's a fifth one of which I have said barely nothing until tonight, but we have talked at some length of the nearness of Christ, and surely that is our good.

We have talked to the free flood of the word as moved by the Holy Spirit and made glorious and beautiful. We did give a considerable amount of time to the subject of the Holy Spirit in his remarkable place in our lives and in the whole world of revivals. I have stressed repentance and thought to spell that out as carefully as possible, but it was said essentially nothing about faith until tonight, and that will be at the back of everything that I say to you tonight, and I want to begin in a way that could hardly be described as a most excellent biblical beginning, but rather an experiential beginning that truly does underline the issue of faith.

As some of you have gathered, both Maggie and myself came from Upper New York State. At one time, I was the minister-at-large of the Congregational Church that was conservative, and in that capacity we lived in New York State, and we started two churches in the Albany Capital District area. Now, I want to share with you some experiences there that are of incredible consequence in describing the impact of faith.

I had been constantly seeking to keep alert as to areas of the Capital District of New York where there was relatively little knowledge of Christ and very little of vibrant Christian churches. We had started a work in Delmar on the south side of Albany, and God was there in a wonderful way, and when that church was up and running and able to call a full-time pastor, then we moved to the north side of Albany and started a church in an area called Clifton Park. Somebody, I've forgotten who, was here this week and mentioned that they knew something of that work in Clifton Park, but I want to share a perfectly magnificent story with you.

I had learned of several families who were hungry for a church in their area, and so we had determined to start with a weeknight Bible class. We met perhaps three or four times, and each time the attendance was greater and the interest stronger, but then a Jewish lady who had a deep love for Christ and was as committed a Christian as I have ever known came to the evening Bible class with an elderly man in bib overalls. I was introduced to him, and his name was simply Old Pete, and when we were ready to start the meeting, I said, Pete, did you bring a Bible? No, I brought no Bible, and now listen to the sanctified speech of this preacher.

I bet he can't read. Oh, what a loving heart. What a wonderful way to reach someone.

Another family had brought a young woman who was just loaded with immense problems, had been into all kinds of sin, and thoroughly messed herself up. As soon as the meeting started, she said, may I ask a

question? Well, yes. Well, we went for two hours doing nothing but answering her questions, and Old Pete was forgotten, by me at least.

To my astonishment, he came back the next class, and he stepped up to me, and he said, would you ever allow a drunkard like me to speak a word in this class? Well, I said, yes. Do you wish to speak at the beginning, at the end, or somewhere in between? And he said, I would like to speak in the beginning. So when the class opened, I said, Pete has requested permission to speak, and he said, you know that young woman you done tried to help last week? Well, you done me more good than you done her.

I went back to my shack, and I got down on the floor, and I said, God, if you can do anything with an old reprobate like me, help yourself. And he said, I'm 79, and I have been sober seven days in a row since last week, for the first time since I was seven years of age. At the Christmas party with my family, one of my uncles got me drinking, and I have been drunk nearly all the time since then.

I have never held a job in all my life. I live on the back of somebody's field in a little shack. They let me build there.

I ain't got no electricity, but I got the little stove, and this week, I have been all week long a brand new man. Well, then the next week, he told me that this Jewish woman often offered him a ride as she saw him plodding along the road. And then on the Monday, we met on Tuesday.

On the Monday, she had invited him to the Bible class, and he didn't make any reply, but she said, well, if you're willing to go, you meet me here, and she named the place. He said when he got back to his shack, he had only one family member who had anything to do with him an elderly sister, and she had brought him a new pair of bib overalls. And when he looked at those overalls, he thought, there must be a God who wants me to go to that Bible class.

And so he got himself fixed up and all ready and went right to the meeting place, but the Jewish lady wasn't there, and he was crushed, and he thought, well, I guess she didn't really mean it. But then he thought, then why did God give me this new bib overall? So he knew where she lived, and he said, now, tomorrow afternoon, I'm going to go to her house. And then he said, no, I can't do that.

I'll never get past the tavern. To get to her house, I've got to go by the tavern. I can't do that.

But then he thought, why did I get this new bib overall? And he said, well, I don't think I can make it, but I'm going to try. I'm going to try to stay on the other side of the road. And then he said, when I came near the tavern, it was as if a giant magnet got a hold of me and pulled me right past that tavern up the hill to this lady's house.

And she said, oh, Pete, I didn't mean you'd have to come here. I was going to pick you up. Well, he said, I thought it was last night and that you'd forgotten me.

Oh, no, she said, just time now. And he came, and he sat through that session, and he was gloriously changed. The next week he came back, and he said to me, I done throwed my pipe away.

Your pipe? Why did you throw your pipe away, Pete? Well, he said, the Lord don't want me to smoke it no more. Then he got this grin on his face, and he said, but I did see where it landed in the woods, and I went and got it. You went and got it? Why? Well, he said, I took it into me sack, and I opened up my little stove, and I throwed it in, and I sat down on the box, and I watched it smoke itself, and it was a lot of fun.

You know what the result of that was? He was the only permanent squatter in that entire district, and virtually everybody heard about the transformation of his life, and incredible numbers of people came. Now, I want to ask you, what do you think was the cause of the change, and who should get the credit? The Jewish lady or me? Well, nobody but the Lord. It was obviously the Lord's doing.

It wasn't even my faith that had any part at all, but then it was decided we would try to have a summer vacation Bible school, and the Grange Hall was available, and the ladies went to work. We had over 200 children in the summer Bible school, and then a special meeting at the end with all the parents, and when Maggie and I started out for the Grange Hall, the clouds were absolutely black, and it looked as if it was going to pour rain, but the ladies had announced a watermelon feast for everybody that came to the Bible school program. When we reached the Grange Hall, I went into the kitchen where the ladies were cutting up watermelon, and I said to them, you might just as well quit because it's going to pour rain, and there's absolutely no way you're going to have this watermelon feast, and they said to me, it's not going to rain.

Well, I said, it certainly is. No, it is not going to rain, and I said, how do you dare say that? Just step outside and see for yourself, and they said, it's not going to rain because we prayed about it. It will rain later, just as the last cars are leaving, and that's exactly what happened as the taillights of the last car of the guest was leaving the Grange Hall.

Heavens opened up, and the rain poured down. Well, that sort of thing could be multiplied millions of times, but those are two events I was part of, not in any way significant part just there. And saw the exercise of faith.

When that Jewish woman started picking up that squatter who had been drunk all his life and never held a job in his 79 years, she had faith to believe that if she could get him under the sound of the word, he would be transformed, and he was. Now, he was already greatly harmed by the excesses of alcohol, and so after a couple years, he was committed to a nursing home, and when he was entering the nursing home, he said, I have one request. Well, what's that? I want a wheelchair.

Why do you want a wheelchair? He said, I want to visit the other people in the nursing home, and they said, all right, we'll give you a wheelchair. He went to every person in that large nursing home, and he told them his story, and he said, if God could do that for old Pete, think of what he could do for you. And because the people knew it was not an idle testimony, they had seen him.

He was a best-known figure in the region as a drunken tramp, and God used that testimony miraculously. At the heart of all true ministry is faith. God-given faith.

Somebody believes God, and God blesses that faith that he has given them, and they exercise with some wonderful, wonderful results. Now, this evening, our dear brother Anthony read from that spectacular 44th chapter of Isaiah, and it's a knockout kind of a chapter. It would take at least three days to really begin to explore what's there, and I don't think I'm up to three days, even if you were.

So, we're not going to try to deal with that wondrous chapter. I think we all caught on in the reading how absurd it is to take a chunk of wood, and to cut off part of it, and burn it, and heat your food, and warm your body, and then make another God, and then make a God out of the other part, and then bow down and worship. And many of us know how this is beautifully laid out in the book of Romans, and how absolutely grievous it is when somebody is as dumb as an American, and worships and serves the thing that they have made, and not the one that made them.

But that's not the portion we're going to focus on. Will you look with me at the first part of this passage? So, Isaiah 44, if you will, and we are looking at the first five verses. Now, listen.

My servant, and you, dear one, whom I have chosen, for I will pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. I will pour out my spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants, and they will spring up among the grass like poplars by streams of water. The one will say, I am the Lord's, and that one will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, belonging to the Lord, and will name Israel's name with honor.

Now, I want to ask a very real question to you. Do you believe revival will happen? I'm not asking you if you believe in revivals. Do you believe revival will happen? There's something awfully foolish about talking about a subject which is completely unrealistic.

Most of the people that I know who pray for revival are in no way convinced it's going to happen. They hope it does. They think it would be wonderful if revival came, but they have no confidence.

I'm asking you now. Do you believe revival will happen? Well, you say, I don't really think any of us is wise enough to know the will of God. How could we possibly say yes or no? One of the most earnest and sweet-spirited and effective Christians I ever knew was an Irishman with the name James Edwin Orr.

Some of you perhaps have read some of his books or perhaps even heard him speak. For many years running, he had a conference at Oxford, England, at the University, Regents Park College, and I participated in many of those. They were always very small, just an invitation only.

I don't think we ever had more than 30 in attendance, and almost every year somebody from a place where revival was burning gloriously, and we had these first-hand reports. But one year some discontented men came, and they made it clear it's rather disgusting to be part of a revival conference where there's a lot of talk and no prayer. Well, it's not quite that there was no prayer, but you know, sort of the on-the-go kind of praying that we're so used to.

And these men requested a night of prayer, and I thought it was a good idea, and I was glad to participate. So we were in this upper room at Regents Park College. There were not many of us, possibly 16, 18, something like that, and it got nicer and nicer, better and better, more vibrant, more powerful, more exciting.

In fact, it got so lovely it was as if the roof was lifted off, and God came down, and I was enjoying it immensely. And then a scripture popped into my head. An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and no sign shall be given it.

And in exasperation, I said, Lord, why did you bother me with that at a time like this? Well, it was quite obvious that's what we were doing. We were asking for a sign, some evidence, and we were feeling as if a sign was there with the way the glory of the prayer meeting was rising up. But that verse just greatly disturbed me, and I couldn't get back into the focus again.

And as I was kind of muttering to myself, why did the Lord do that? Another verse pressed in on me. Thou shalt say to that mountain, be removed, and if you doubt not, it will be cast into the sea. And I thought, what mountain? My word, have you ever been in Oxford, England? It's not plentiful with mountains, you can be sure of that.

So there I'm wondering again, why does the Lord disturb such lovely times with thoughts? And I said, Lord, I just don't know what's going on. What mountain? And I thought, well, are there any mountains in England? Well, yes, there are. Not perhaps much by way of physical mountains in England, but there's a tremendous mountain of unbelief here, yeah, and a tremendous mountain of religious tradition that interferes dramatically with truth, yes, and an incredible mountain of dead works.

So now I've got three mountains in my face, and I'm pressed with this question. Do you believe that these mountains will be moved into the sea? And I thought, it's no distance to the sea anywhere in the United Kingdom. I don't have any problem believing a God who moves mountains like these into the sea.

And so I said, yes, I believe. But then, the pressing question in my mind and heart was, what about Chicago? And I said, Lord, it's a long ways to the sea in Chicago. And then I wondered, do I believe? And after struggling for some time, I realized, yes, I do believe that these very mountains in America will be moved.

I did, and I do. Now, could you build your faith on my experience? You'd be awfully dumb if you did. I can't even sustain my own faith on my own experiences.

I surely can't sustain yours. I'm not asking you to adopt my conviction in the matter. I'm asking you, do you believe? Not that revival is possible, but that it will occur.

I'm not expecting you to give a show of hands. I'm just asking you to begin with me tonight with that urgent question. Do we believe? Most of you know that a great deal of your own personal prayer life has been undone by a lack of faith.

And we've almost learned to pray in such a way that everything has an uncertainty hanging over you. Now, with that thought in mind, let us turn to this passage. I think you can readily see when I narrowed it down to five verses that I would be likely to narrow it down still further.

And so really, we are concerning ourselves with this matter. Will God himself pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground? Will he pour out his spirit on our offspring and his blessing on our descendants? Now, I have tried to freshly alert your concern to the children now alive and to the unborn children still by God's grace to come. And I'm asking you, do you believe that things will continue to get worse and worse? Or do you believe that God will send a precious revival? I'm not going to try to convince you to believe.

I'm only asking, do you? Now, obviously, when we take a passage out of Isaiah, some of our great Christian scholars want to help us to understand that doesn't apply to us. But does it? Is there a promise here that a believer today can lay hold on? Will God pour water on the thirsty? Will he cause floods to occur on dry land? Now, I don't think it takes a brilliant mind to put together the concept of water for the thirsty. Floods on dry ground with the subject of revival.

That's obvious that there is some relationship, but it's not obvious whether we can safely look at a passage like this and have our faith quickened and begin to pray with certainty that God himself will respond precisely. Now, you know as well as I do that the subject of water, of rain, of floods is a very prominent subject in our Bible. Some of you are acquainted with Leviticus 26 verses 3 to 5. If you walk in my statutes and you keep my commandments so as to carry them out, then I will give you rains in their seasons so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the fields will bear their fruit.

Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until the sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. But has Leviticus anything to do with us? Some say no.

Who do you believe? And we've already had some reference this week to the book of Deuteronomy. Listen carefully to these words from chapter 11, starting at verse 10. For the land into which you are entering to possess it is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden.

Have you ever wondered what that meant? How do you water your garden with your foot? Well, obviously they had some kind of a foot pump and the irrigation water was pumped into the field in some primitive fashion. But that's not the heart of this passage. But the land in which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares even to the end of the year.

And it shall come about if you listen obediently to my commandments, which I'm commanding you today to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul. Then I will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and the late rain that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle and you shall eat and be satisfied.

Does that pertain to us or is it just a lot more of that Old Testament stuff that's out of date and irrelevant? You see what I'm asking you, is it nonsense to believe that revival will come or is the best we can do to hope? Knowing that we need revival, can we just stand by saying, well I sure hope God comes and meets our need? And obviously most people don't believe it's going to happen because those who believe it's going to happen have done something to make preparation. And most people who are praying for revival have made no preparation. Now this may seem perfectly stupid to you, but the first book that I wrote and was published was intended for the church in the midst of revival.

The book Revival was a series of lessons on how to respond when God begins to stir and to work. Some of you perhaps have seen the pamphlet of 24 questions on how to behave in seasons of true revival. But I'm not asking you about me, I'm asking you about you.

Do you believe or do you write these various passages off as not really pertinent to our situation? Listen to these words from 1 Kings chapter 8 verses 35 and following. When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against thee, and they pray toward this place and confess thy name and turn from their sin when thou dost afflict them, then hear thou in heaven and forgive the sin of thy servants and of thy people Israel. Indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk and send rain on thy land which thou has given thy people for an inheritance.

Is that relevant or should we toss that aside as belonging to another time? Or these words from 2 Chronicles chapter 7 verses 13 and 14. If I shut up the heavens so there is no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, and my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked way, then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land. What does he mean when he says heal their land? Do you remember that I urged you to consider Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, both of which have lists of blessings and both of which have lists of curses.

That reference in Chronicles to healing the land has to do with those huge lists of curses that God promised to bring for any people who were disobedient. But I still ask, do you believe revival will come? But then, now we come at last to a really disturbing passage. Indeed a passage we looked at this morning.

Joel chapter 2 verses 21 to 26. I hope I'm not wearing you down with all these readings, and if I am, shame on me for not being able to hold your attention with the word of God, and shame on you for getting so lazy. Well, I hope nobody is here like that, but listen now again to this Joel quotation.

Do not fear, O land. Rejoice and be glad, for the Lord has done great things. Do not fear beast of the field, for the pastures of the wilderness have turned green, for the tree has borne its fruit.

The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full. So rejoice, O sons of Zion, and be glad in the Lord your God, for he has given you the early rains for your vindication, and he's poured down for you the rain, the early and the latter rain as before. And the threshing floors will be full of grain, and the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.

Then will I make up for you the years that the swarming locust is eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust. My great army which I sent among you, and you shall have plenty to eat, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God who has dealt wondrously with you. Then my people will never be put to shame.

Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and there is no other, and my people will never be put to shame. Is that one more passage like the others that we dismiss because they're irrelevant? Well if it is, poor Peter was dumb. For at penny cost, Peter said, this is that.

This is the fulfillment of the prophecy made in Joel. Do you find any significant difference between the Joel quotation and the others? I don't. It seems to me that the Lord is more aware of how dry we are than we are.

He knows a good deal more about the thirsty land than we know. Can you imagine a God so cruel that he taunts his people by pretending to supply their need when he has no intention of doing so? And in these several passages, what was meant by moving the early rain and the latter rain? I've heard some amazing theories about the early rain and the latter rain, but I'm not much interested in garbage. Nonsense I don't find any pleasure in, but I do know when the early rain and the latter rain are moved closer together, and the sun is beating down, in that in between time the crop comes on a whole lot faster than ordinary.

And I believe that that's exactly what is being said here. Now a lot of our friends believe that the world will end with things getting worse and worse, and so that Christ who intends to come and claim a virgin bride without spot and without blemish is bound to be disappointed because things have just gotten worse and worse. But I don't happen to like that notion.

I like to think of my dear Savior gaining the reward of his death, burial, and resurrection, and coming and gathering a glorious bride to himself. I'm not asking you to build your confidence in God for revival on my faith, but I'm asking you if you believe God himself that revival, true revival, not nonsense, not absurdity, but true revival will come. Listen to these words from Isaiah 55 verses 10 and 11.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bare and sprout and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word which goes forth from my mouth. Are you listening? Have you ever heard that quotation? My word. I hear

people say 2 Chronicles 7 14 has nothing to do with today.

And these other passages I have, oh no, they're not relevant and yet they've got the gall to quote this passage as if somehow it's a promise. My word will not go forth in vain, but it shall return to me and not empty. It will accomplish what I desire and it will succeed in the matter for which I send it.

Now again, I'm not asking you to believe because I do, but are you happy praying for something you have no conviction is going to occur, something that's needed, something that's desirable? And listen, how do you suppose our honestly believing God's word would impact God himself? Do you think he would take any pleasure if you came to him in a prayer of faith? Now listen, when that Jewish lady picking up that drunken squatter determined to bring him to the Bible class, she let me know later she brought him because she knew God was going to save him. And when they were cutting up their watermelons and telling me it wasn't going to rain, they told me that because they knew absolutely it wasn't going to rain until the watermelon feast was over. They were right, I was wrong.

And what a wonderful thing to be wrong. Isn't it absolutely delightful when we are wrong and God's people are right? So again, the question, don't want to be a pest, but my word, you know this is likely the last time I'm ever here. And so it would be at least decent to listen and to pay attention and to wonder and then to decide, will God keep his word? Now we know that there is at the present time in America a terrible drought and that the prophet Amos spoke to this doubt.

Listen to these words from Amos 8 11. Behold, days are coming, declares the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. We don't have to wait for that.

Everywhere I've gone in recent years and a high percentage of people who come by both my office and my home tell me they're thirsty. They're not getting what their soul needs. They are withering, not flourishing.

So the famine for the word of God is not something to be dreaded that may come, but something that is already upon us. Jeremiah described the problem in his day, Jeremiah 2 13. He said, my people have committed two evils.

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. I think of those tens of thousands of people that attend these large churches and what they're getting is the drippings of a cistern that is broken and can hold no water. What about you? Have you had any problem with spiritual thirst that has not been met? Do you any people who are themselves groaning in their spirits? But this is not merely an Old Testament concern.

The apostle Peter described the same exact situation in chapter 2 verse 17. He said, these are springs without water, mist driven by a storm for whom the black darkness has been reserved. And even the half brother of Christ in his tiny little epistle of Jude used five similitudes of nature to describe what multitudes of people are experiencing today.

He said, these are uncharted reefs. He said, these are dry clouds. He said, these are fruitless trees.

He said, these are wild raging waves of the sea. He said, these are wandering stars for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever. And he was describing the leadership of a church in those five similitudes of nature.

The famine, the drought have come. Would you please take care of this problem? How about you? Couldn't you solve this? Is there anybody here who can do anything about this famine of the word of God? Yes. Every single person in the room can believe God when he says, I will send water to those who are thirsty.

I will send floods on dry ground. Now look, when this passage talks about the thirsty, I will pour water on him who is thirsty. Who is it talking about? Now throughout scripture, time after time, the thirsty are mentioned.

Psalms 63, 1. Psalm 107, 9. Isaiah 55, 1. Matthew 5, 6. And what did Jesus say about the problem of thirst? Did he not in that fourth beatitude say, blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled. And was that not preceded by three immense issues that guarantee that a person will be thirsty? Isn't that what it means when it says, blessed are the poor in spirit? Isn't that what's referred to when it says, blessed are they that mourn? Is that not the issue when it says, blessed are the meek? Did you ever ask the question, in how many realms is it possible for a human being to relate? Put your mind in gear and think of that question. In how many realms is it possible, excuse me, in how many realms is it possible for a human being to relate? Now Christ has three things that lead up to hungering and thirsting for righteousness and being filled.

How many things are there that lead to such desperation of hunger and thirst? How many realms can we relate in? Well, three. We can relate upwardly to God. We can relate inwardly to ourselves.

We can relate outwardly to others. Has it ever occurred to you, if you're not one of the thirsty ones, there's a reason. After you just come from a Thanksgiving banquet, do you say to yourself, I can't wait until I get another meal.

No, your appetite has been satiated when you're just drunk a half a gallon of something. You're not dying of thirst. But when you get right with God and become poor in spirit, when all your self-righteousness is drained out of you, and you acknowledge that God and God alone is right, that leaves a big vacancy.

And when you stand in front of your mirror and you weep over your wretched sinfulness, that drains another portion of you. And then when, and this is where for most people it stops, when you admit to your world that you are as rotten as you've admitted to God and yourself, then you've got nothing left. You're empty.

You can't help yourself but hunger and thirst. You see, the problem with most professed Christians, they admit their problem to God. They even admit their problem to themselves.

But then before their people in the church, they pretend that they're all right. So they never get anywhere. Now this passage is talking about water for those who are thirsty, floods upon the dry ground.

A wonderful passage in that narrative about Christ and the woman at the well. Another passage in John 6 about thirst. Another one in John 7, and a perfectly glorious one in Revelation 22.

And the spirit and the bride say, come. And let the one who hears say, come. And let the one who is thirsty come.

And let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost. Now friends, multitudes of people are so thirsty, they're gasping. But others, no.

I'm going to ask you a second question, the big question I'm pushing on you. Do you believe revival will come? But here is another question of great importance. Are you personally so hungry and thirsty for God that nothing other than God himself will satisfy? The thing that marks the difference between Christians of this century and Christians of former centuries is that we somehow have lost our thirst, our appetites.

Let's take a few minutes to consider that. May I ask you to honestly weigh, are there any thirst quenchers in your personal life? You say thirst quenchers? Yes, thirst quenchers. Let me give you a series.

When you're full, as I already said, after a Thanksgiving meal, you're not hungry. And normally you're not thirsty. So when you're full of yourself, you're not hungry and thirsty for Christ.

That's a thirst quencher. But now listen, did it ever occur to you that a person who tolerates pride is always in the shade of their own pride? Just think about that. Let me say it again for the Lunkheads like myself who are here.

A person of pride always stands in the shade of their own pride. Are you more apt to be thirsty when you're hot and sweaty or when you're cool and comfortable? If you tolerate pride, that creates such a shade that you do not have anywhere near the desire that a person whose pride has been broken and destroyed. Or think of this, when a person exercises physically, they become thirsty much faster when they're just lolling around doing nothing.

It may be your personal lack of thirst is connected with your lack of spiritual exercise. Or it's possible that you don't have any thirst for Christ because you have contented yourself with drinking from mediocre sources like broken cisterns. But listen friends, did it ever occur to you what the impact of life in a cold church is? Look, think, have you considered the impact of being in a cold church? Your appetite and your thirst are immensely drained by the cold atmosphere in which you live.

And warped thinking can destroy thirst. And a lot of people in America are so intoxicated on prosperity that they don't have any real thirst for God. Or were you ever truly sick? When you're really sick, both your appetite and your thirst greatly lessen.

I'm just asking you to use the good head God gave you. And if you have no conquering driving thirst, understand that the probability is you have satiated what should have been thirst for Christ with something a whole lot less than the Savior himself. Even a life of absurd busyness can rob a person of thirst for God.

But I want to ask you now for a moment to consider what this passage says about the benefit of God's people thirsting. Go back to the text. I will pour water on those who are thirsty.

Some translations say on the thirsty land. I will pour streams on the dry ground. Look, we've been talking all week about revival.

And revival, I gave you a long list one day. Sixteen of the words that have been used to describe revival. And one of those words was rain.

Rain from heaven. There is an immediate link between revival and thirst. Now we know a lot of people who are so far removed from God, they will never pray for themselves.

They don't even know they've got anything wrong with them. But is it not the burden of every true believer to pray for those who won't pray for themselves? And does it occur to you that if you cry out to God for an

abundance of rain from heaven, you'll be meeting the needs of people that don't even know they have any needs at all. So God promises to pour out water on the thirsty and to pour out water on the dry land upon those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

Upon those who are so badly backslidden they don't even know they have a problem. But honestly, I'm very tired tonight. I'm not feeling well.

But I can't quit yet. If I drop trying, okay. But there's something on my heart of great importance.

Is not the beginning point admission. Now most old people have something physically wrong with them. I have rheumatoid arthritis.

I take bunches of pills every day. If I don't take my pills, I can't walk. And the result of the disease and the pills dry.

Have a look at this old man. Do I look nice? I got brown spots all over me. Part of the disease, you see, dries up my saliva.

I don't have any. When this started to happen to me, I thought, I'm going to quit. How can I preach without saliva? And then I thought, no.

When it's time to quit, I'll let the Lord tell me, not just make it harder. So I press on. But I know right now, I'm very thirsty.

And I look like it if you get up close. But I'm asking you, are you so thirsty? And are you so burdened for those around you who have gone dry? That you are determined to beseech heaven, to make God uncomfortable by getting in his face like Moses did. Have you ever truly admitted the problem of dryness? Some of you through the week have looked at me and said, he must be eating chocolate.

Look at all that dark around his mouth. No. No, I'm a sick old man.

And I have no saliva. And there's no cure. So I accept it.

But now there is a cure for spiritual thirst. And I'm asking you, have you admitted to our Lord how thirsty you are? And how many people you know who are living in a parched wilderness and do not know the Lord? Now, in some cases, we're thirsty because we've got something in our lives that God dislikes. And we know we need to repent.

But for others, they don't even know that anything is out of the way. But I brought here a sheet that I wrote out this afternoon. I can hardly read it.

My hands shake so I can hardly write. And my eyes are so lousy, I can hardly read. But I want to talk to you about prayer.

I want to ask you, are you lifting up draught time prayer? Do you ever hear that expression? Draught time prayer. Here we are living in a dry and a thirsty land. And the only hope of America is people like us who know how dry it is.

And know that when God sends his precious water to quench our thirst, he'll also send floods on dry ground. Draught time prayer. Or if you like, crisis prayer.

Is your prayer life urged on by a sense of crisis? Do you see how precarious our situation is? Do you understand how readily it could be all over? Or number three, do you lift up to the Father in heaven? Must have prayer. Lord, this is what I'd like. Or I think it would be wonderful if.

But must have prayer. I must have the rain from heaven. I must have the outpouring for the sake of all that I know.

Or phrase it this way, have you ever lifted up no other hope prayer? And there is no other hope. But are you in the grip of no other hope prayer? And does the Lord know that you simply cannot go on without the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Or phrase it this way, do you pray? Do you pray millions are dying prayer? Most of us are so self-centered. We're not even concerned about the millions who are dying.

But I'm asking you, dear folk, after you've been kind to this stumbling old man all week, I'm asking you, well, thank you. I appreciate that. I wouldn't have stopped.

I would have dropped dead of thirst before I did. But here, that sweet fellow was sent along by somebody with some water. I hope I don't make you jealous.

So millions are dying prayer. Or how about our unborn children prayer? When my son, I only have one wonderfully devout and sweet-spirited boy, hardly that anymore. But he went to school, to college in Southern California.

And he called one day. He said, Dad, I've met the girl I'm going to marry. And we've set the date for our wedding.

And Dad, do you think it would be possible for you and Mom to come out? I'd like you to preside at the wedding. Oh, I said, Bob, I'd love to. Where's it going to be held? Oh, he said, at the University Chapel.

All the arrangements are made. But I'm hoping you will preside. Well, I was thrilled, of course, and so delighted at the opportunity.

And we went out there. And on the morning of the wedding, my son and I, with a couple of his fellows, were standing outside the door for the signal that we were supposed to march in. And this fellow was standing there shivering.

And I said to him, Bob, are you called? Well, Dad, I don't know that it could be called called. But I have been overwhelmed with the thought. What if Caroline and I are blessed with children? Would it be right to bring children into a wicked world like this? I slipped off my coat, put it around his shoulders, and said, Bob, that's a very legitimate question.

What about our unborn children's prayer? Why not give yourself to prayer that God will send water to the thirsty and pour out floods on the dry ground? Well, it was wonderful. You can imagine, you dear dads, to know that my son was one with me in unborn children praying. And what about the glory of God praying? Isn't that the biggest issue at stake? Whose name is suffering most? Whose reputation is being blackened by a church that is so full of sin and weakness that shambles along as if there is no God and pretends a religion they don't have belief in? For the sake of the glory of the name, ought we not to engage in faith-filled, passionate prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for flooding the land with divine grace, for meeting the immensity of the need given to us? And you say, I'd like to pray that way.

But the truth is, I don't have that kind of faith. Well, now look, let's be honest with ourselves. Where does faith come from? Am I up here tonight distributing it? If all the faith you've got is what I hand out, it's not worth anything.

But is not the source both of our repentance and our faith God himself? Does he not gift us with both repentance and faith? And if you've been saying to yourself, I respect Mr. Roberts, I know he's serious, and I know he means what he says, and he says he has faith, and I'm glad, but I don't. What would be wrong with saying, Father, I've got eyes, they work. I see the dying millions.

I watch the young couples marry. I know that in a short time, a child may be born to them. I see the churches diminishing and die.

I see the hypocrisy all around. Lord, here I am. How about a gift of faith that will enable me to pray for revival as a believer?

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