

Christian and Self-Effort

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing that our efforts to climb the ladder of self-improvement and good works are insufficient to reach God, and that Jesus and his finished work are the only means to true victory and heaven.

Duration: 1:19:52

Scripture: Exodus 34:6, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 14:30, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Hebrews 10:19-22

Topics: "Self-Effort"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of turning our focus and thoughts upon Jesus. By doing so, the things of this world will lose their significance in the light of His glory and grace. The message of grace is compared to a source of water that brings forth new life, just as a tree sprouts from its roots. The speaker also mentions the power of the blood of Jesus and the message of renewal and transformation it brings. The sermon concludes with the idea that through the honesty, love, and unity of believers, we can see Jesus in one another.

Transcript

Now this evening, I want to turn you to John's Gospel, chapter 1, verse 45. Philip findeth Nathanael, John 1, 45, Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? I wonder if you understand why he said that.

He understood his Old Testament, and according to the Old Testament, Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem. Nothing was said of Nazareth. So when Philip says, We found him of whom the law and the prophets spoke, Jesus of Nazareth, he answers, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? And Philip, very wise, he didn't argue with him, but simply said, Come and see.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith unto him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, When thou wast under the fig tree, I sought it. Nathanael answered and said unto him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.

That was a quick one, wasn't it? No one being convicted, converted, persuaded of Jesus so quickly as this man. So full of doubt when he came. And all Jesus had to say of him, Before that Philip called thee, When

thou wast under the fig tree, I sought it.

And for reasons that we may see before the end of the evening, it was enough for him. And he fell on his knees, Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. Notice carefully what Jesus said to him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, And the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. Thou shalt see heaven opened, And the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.

Do you understand? Can you guess what Jesus meant by those last words? Surely we remember that dream that Jacob had when he saw a ladder set up on earth, the top of which reached to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And I believe Jesus was pointing Nathaniel and the others back to that old story and claiming that he and his cross were the spiritual counterpart of that ladder that Jacob saw in his dream. I think it would be good if we just turn to Genesis 28 and saw that old incident to which Jesus referred in the New Testament.

Genesis 28, and Jacob went out, verse 10, went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place and carried there all night, because the sun was set. And he took up the stones of that place and put them for his pillow and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed and behold, a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, thy father and the God of Isaac, the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it unto thy seed.

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth. And thou shalt spread abroad to the west, to the east, to the north and to the south. And in thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blest.

And behold I am with thee and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest and will bring thee again into this land. For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not.

And he was afraid and said, How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven. And many centuries after, Jesus said to the Nathanael, You will see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. And so Jesus claimed that he himself and his cross were the spiritual counterpart of that ladder that Jacob saw in his dream which linked earth to heaven.

Some time ago, my wife and I were in Switzerland for some meetings and in the home where we were staying, on our last morning there, the daughter of the home had to leave for work before we were up. And so she left a little note attached to the door of our bedroom. A little note of thanks for our coming and a little note of good wishes to us as we went on our way.

And this young woman was taught of the Lord and she included in her letter these words, If your pillow be like a stone, there is a ladder going up from it to heaven and the angels ascending and descending upon it. If your pillow is like a stone, there is a ladder. And that ladder takes this deal to us.

We have it of its own authority that we can take it in that way. And we can have that ladder even when we're having a hard time. Even when our pillow is like a stone.

I want to consider first of all the man to whom this dream was given, Jacob. Then I want you to look with me at the dream itself and then the man in the New Testament who was promised a realization of the dream in his experience, Nathaniel. It was a very unhappy young man who lay down to sleep in the open air that night.

It was his first ever night away from home. He found himself in a strange country on a long journey. Darkness had overtaken him and he had to sleep in the open air gathering stones for his pillow and feeling very homesick.

And what I believe added to his unhappiness was the consciousness that the situation in which he was in was his own fault. It was because he had wronged his brother and stolen by subtlety the birthright from the dying father, Isaac that Esau was infuriated and bound to kill his brother. And his mother told him there's nothing for it but to leave home and go to her relatives hundreds of miles away.

And if Jacob is alone and homesick and disconsolate that night he really has nobody to blame but himself. And I believe the stone on which he made his pillow was symbolic of the fact that he was having a hard time. And I'm quite sure he would have felt he felt that this was the last place in the world where he was going to have a new experience of God.

As he looked round I think he said if anything for God's forsaken place this is. And yet that was the very place where God revealed himself to him so much so that he had to say surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not. Now there may be some of us rather like Jacob.

You may be, if the truth were known in an unhappy state of heart because of the situation you're in. Yes, we often find ourselves in a difficult situation in difficult circumstances. And that sometimes adds to our sorrow about it all is the fact that to some extent it's our own fault.

If we're in a jam we may well be to blame for it. We've acted foolishly, we've put people against us and here we are in this unhappy situation. And deep down you know you have contributed to it.

And you may well feel that your pillow is like a stone. And when we're in these situations you naturally feel that it's the last situation in which to expect a brand new experience of God. And yet as in the case of Jacob it may well be the very place where you're going to have such a new experience so that you'll end by saying surely the Lord is in this place.

This place which I thought so God forsaken and I never knew it. And so this is something of encouragement for some of us here. And I very little bit, very believe if it's true that the old hymn says our grace it is thy boast to come into our unlikeliest hearts we can also say our grace it is thy boast to come into unlikeliest situations even of yours.

And you can have a brand new experience of the Lord even as Jacob did. Indeed in Jacob's case it was his first. Up to then Jehovah had only been the God of Abraham and Isaac but at Bethel he became the God of Jacob.

So how did he have this revelation of God? And it was a revelation of the God of grace that he had. It was of course by means of this dream. And in the dream as he lay there tossing somewhat uneasily on his

pillow of stone he saw heaven opened.

That was new one to him. He thought obviously for a fellow like him heaven would be shut but it wasn't. He saw heaven opened but he saw it wasn't unattainable.

He saw there were steps leading from him right up to that open door. I believe that the Hebrew can be better translated not a ladder but a staircase and he saw a marvellous staircase leading up from where he lay right up to heaven. And more than that he noticed that going up on that staircase there were angels.

And then he looked again and he saw other angels coming down and there he was lying at the base of this staircase. And above the top of that staircase, that ladder there was Jehovah himself speaking words of incredible good for Jacob and his seed. And Jesus would have us see in that ladder a picture of himself.

It is one of the Old Testament foreshadowing of Jesus and I don't know any that teaches us more about the Gospel, about what Jesus has for us as Christians than this beautiful type of the Lord Jesus. Very often we understand things in the Scriptures better by contrast than any other way. And what a contrast this ladder is to the ladders which we have been trying to erect for ourselves.

You know man has a constitutional love of ladders. If we want to get to know the Lord it's always by means of a ladder. By that I mean there are certain steps to take certain heights to attain certain rules to keep.

And if you are assiduous in climbing Jacob's ladder don't be discarded, you're going to get there and you're going to get to know the Lord. And it's very simple, it's by means of a ladder. And if having got to know the Lord we want to improve our relationship with God invariably we see it by means of a ladder.

Once again we frame certain steps we've got to take or rather we're told there are there are certain heights we've got to attain. We must improve, we must do more we must be more devout and there are various rules to keep. And if we seek to keep the rules and do what we're told we will without doubt improve our relationship with God and we'll have a deeper experience of Him in our lives.

And if we fall into a pit of depression and sometimes we do or into a pit of guilt and we feel so bad and guilty about ourselves we're quite sure the way out is by means of a ladder. Indeed Ebenezer Carter Ebenezer Carter has a different sort of ladder but it's always a ladder he suggests to you and he counsels you and he things to do and things not to do things to tell yourself and not to tell yourself and lo and behold you'll soon be out of your pit so he thinks, so he tells us. And then in Christian service today how are we going to enlarge the coast of the church? How are we going to bring souls to the Lord? And invariably that which the church goes to is some sort of ladder, some sort of method.

Today is the great day of methodology. The one thing that's necessary is simply knowing how to and there's a great proliferation of how-to books and everyone is simply putting towards us a ladder which if we climb, if we ought to it will lead us to the desired haven and we shall see blessing and outreach in the church. And so I would say that man has a natural love of ladders and that's a natural thing for us all to gravitate towards.

These ladders are really variants of the way of work. We all know that by grace are we saved through faith not of work. And we're happy to be saved that way but when it comes to going on and getting further and getting the victory and getting the fullness we forsake that way by which we began, the way of grace and subtly, if not quite clearly we resort to some form of work and we begin to fashion and direct our various

ladders.

I want to say three things about these ladders which it is so natural for us to have recourse to and which very often we're taught is the way. First of all, they do not start where we are. This good advice we're given, these things we ought to do don't take account of the fact that we've been what we've been and done what we've done.

They all assume that we are better than we really are and we're well capable. It's only we make up our mind to doing this thing. But you know we're really much lower than our counsellor thinks.

He doesn't know the whole story of our past. And really, these ladders that others would propose to us or which we propose to ourselves do not reach us where we are. They all assume that we are better and more capable than we really are.

And we are hardly able to reach the first rung let alone the subsequent ones. And then secondly, the top of these ladders never really reaches to heaven and to victory. If you do manage to climb the ladder to a certain extent your conscience tells you, but that's not enough.

There's more you should do. There's higher heights that you must get to. And eventually you feel you just can't win.

Take one illustration, and I don't select this because it's any more important than the other things. Take our devotions. They can be a ladder, as many other things can be too.

But just think of our illustrations. Maybe you felt how lacking your personal daily devotions are. What do you say? David? Yes, David.

Oh, are Christians supposed to have a time every day? Yes. Oh, well, no wonder I've not been getting on very well. All right.

I'll set aside a time every day for prayer. Fifteen minutes. And you adjust your schedule accordingly and learn the whole day you are having your little time.

You're getting on quite nicely and finding it helpful. Then someone comes along who tells you, of course, he never spends less than half an hour. Oh, half an hour.

All right, let it be a half an hour. And you make it half an hour. And then to spoil it all, someone comes along and says, of course, the real successful Christians never spend less than an hour.

An hour? And so you say, well, all right, let's make it an hour. And then to your horror you discover you can't kill an hour. There's no prayer beyond a few minutes.

And the Bible says. And to finish you off altogether, you pick up the book about praying hard and you found there were whole nights when you didn't go to bed. And you say, oh, you just can't win.

Do you know, these ladders, they all have something of that order. The top of them never reaches to heaven. They never really land you in victory.

And if you get into a pit and you seek to get out of the pit by means of a ladder, it's only to discover that you put the ladder against the wrong wall and you come out of the wrong side, further away from God than

you were before, more of a Pharisee, and therefore further away than you were before. And these ladders, attractive as they might seem to be and so reasonable, in the event never reach to heaven. And then they all involve climbing.

After all, what's a ladder for? What's a staircase for? But for climbing. And what is that chorus the children sing? We are climbing Japheth's ladder and we think we must climb. And these prophet answers to our needs all involve striving and struggling on our part.

The problem is that though there's nothing wrong with a ladder, there's nothing wrong with the good advice, we are too weak so often to take it and to climb it. And yet the feeble attempt to do so only lands us in despair. Indeed, it would seem to me it were better not to have a ladder than having a ladder rather not having the strength to climb it more than a few steps.

And it simply mocks you. Now this is typical of all the various prophet variants of the way of work. It's the gospel we preach to our heart.

Every one of us is a preacher of the gospel here. You are preaching, I would say, almost every day to your own heart if to no other. And you know you don't always preach the right message.

And very often you tell yourself the trouble with you is you haven't managed to climb those steps of the ladder. You tell yourself if only we're going to get higher up all will be well. But the problem is getting higher up.

And thus these ladders are all a disappointment to us. But how different was the ladder that Jacob saw? That ladder, that staircase, we're told, was set up on the earth. It began exactly where Jacob was lying.

And Jesus and his cross begin just where you are. It's assumed that you have been the sort of Christian you have. He assumes you've done what you know you've done and he tells you he's settled for the lot way out there on Calvary's cross when he said it is finished.

And this Jesus and his blood are available to you on street level. And he is not shocked at what you have to tell him. This really is the truth.

He is available to you as the true sinner you've been. As the one who's done those shameful things. Who's manifested that spirit you have.

And you're not given something that begins up there where you've never been. But right down there as deep as sin is so is the cross of Jesus erected. And Jesus is available to us on street level.

And then I want you to notice that Jacob's ladder the top of it reached unto heaven. There was the staircase and it didn't fall short of the objective but it entered right up there within the veil. And this ladder which is simply Jesus and his finished work brings you right into heaven right into victory.

I remind you that Jesus was raised from the dead and went back right into the holy places not made with hands the top of that ladder reached unto heaven and listen he entered he was raised from the dead and went back into glory do you know how Hebrews tells us? By his own blood. Did you know that? Jesus wasn't raised from the dead just because he was the son of God.

Jesus went back to glory he didn't go back just because he was the son of God but Hebrews 13 tells us he was raised from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant he'd taken our sins and our sorrows

he'd made them his very own therefore the penalty of taxing to our sins death was his and then he would have remained had there not been power wonder-working power and the blood of the Lamb and it tells us in Hebrews 13 he was raised again by the blood of the everlasting covenant and then Hebrews 9 tells us he entered into the holy place not made with hands with his own blood but for that blood he couldn't have gone back there he'd become an effigy of sin he was made sin but they shall in no wise enter into heaven anything but defile it not even the son of God could have gone back

there except for the fact there was power wonder-working power and the blood that he said that blood's taste of the judgment of God for the sins he'd accepted on our behalf as being exhausted and the everlasting gates lifted up their heads and the king of glory went in how? with his own blood and if that blood was enough for Jesus it's certainly enough for me he had on himself more sins than any man had the most any man can have are his own sins but Jesus had the world and yet the blood was enough for him and it's certainly enough for you and your father and that is not what your spiritual condition or lack of it it covered it which is into heaven and the way by which he entered you must enter too by the blood of the everlasting covenant and if only you're willing to get to him at street

level immediately in him you're at heaven's level of course getting to him at street level is a matter of you're willing because you don't get there without repenting but when you get there such is the power of the blood of Jesus you're in him at heaven's level and the prophecy reaches unto heaven I want to tell you Jesus really does bring me to him in a way that man's ladders never did and then with regard to Jacob's ladder Jacob was surprised to find there was no climbing for him he was very glad to see that not only was heaven open there was a staircase leading up there just fine he was about to take his coat off and start the steep ascent to heaven when he noticed there were angels ascending and the rather angels descending those angels ascending were bringing up his need to God and

those descending were bringing down God's mercy to him and he didn't have to do any climbing the angels did it it was all done there for him in that blessed heaven the traffic on the on the land on the staircase on the ladder and I like to think that an angel going up met one coming down and I like to think they had a little word or two together and the one going up said that fellow down there he's in a bad shape you know he's as homesick as I've ever seen anybody he's so full of unhappiness and so fitty and he's blaming himself like anything down there it's all right said the other angel coming down he said I'm just I'm bringing down God's mercy and God's grace for a man in just that condition and he's discovered that this wonderful ladder was different than any other one he didn't have

to do the climbing I want to remind you the big point when Jesus told the story was not the ladder in fact Jesus didn't actually mention the ladder the big point was the traffic on the ladder and do you know it's interesting that famous hymn Blessed Assurance fits on this very thing angels descending bringing from above echoes of mercy whispers of love I tell you the hymn writers seem to know their Bible better than we do and they see the point and this is a picture of this ladder which is Jesus himself it's good to know there's a ladder it's good to know there's a staircase and just as you're bracing yourself for a new promise and a new attempt to be the better Christian and climb that steep ascent to heaven you discover you don't need to do it it's already been done for you in that very

Jesus for in Jesus all our needs have already been brought up to God and in Jesus all grace has already been brought down to our level there's nothing more that I can do since Jesus did it all there's a new cause I don't believe that this particular incident is really teaching us anything about angels I believe in angels Billy Gray has written a book on angels but I don't think this particular incident is meant to teach us

anything about angels it's meant to teach us about Jesus and it needs all these aspects of the picture to give us an adequate picture of Him what it simply means is it teaches the Father that in this Jesus all fullness should dwell that in Him the climbing up has already been done the coming down has already happened there's no need firstly to aspire to heaven or humble

ourselves low or something like that it's all done and all the fullness of the Godhead bodily is made available to us right where we are in our misery and need and defeat and it only needs the willingness to acknowledge that fact and there I am at the foot of the ladder but coming to the foot of the ladder in Him I'm at heaven's level and I want to tell you that's happened in my experience again and again I want to tell you I haven't been able and I haven't needed to try and climb into the highest of all by my own improvement I've had to simply admit where I am and come as a failure to Jesus on any new point He may show me and when I come that is the power of His blood I'm through into victory and that without struggling and climbing but you say what about these things in our Christian

life aren't we meant to do something don't we ought we not to be witnessing ought we not to be spending times in prayer yes of course we should but not in order to get into the holiest of all but because through this ladder we got there I want to tell you you're going to have a longer devotions are you just fine how are you going to manage having a half an hour prayer every day when your heart's cold when there's no song in your heart I want to tell you prayer will never take away sin I do not read in my Bible that prayer bore my sins in its body on the tree even reading the Bible will not take away sin this Bible wasn't crucified for me it's me coming as I am as a failure as a needy empty Christian again repenting of what God what's gone wrong and then seeing Jesus has done it all and

the blood of Jesus brings me right through into victory with what without I want to pray oh I only can say to you not that I can't fill up your lot in time but it isn't long enough and the word I'm having such a good time but I've got to rush off to work or the children call or they're out of duty and it's delight I want to tell you these means of breakfast are not the way to Jesus but Jesus found as that ladder available to me where I am that is the way to these things and that it is I find I'm not committed to weary strugglings which never come off promises which are never fulfilled but I continue coming to Jesus as I am and I find my chains fall off my heart becomes free I rise, go forth and follow Him because He's already done it all because all fullness flows in Him I don't need to

have to come to the cross and then think well I better go on to Pentecost no no it's all multiplied to be there at the foot of the cross in that place of brokenness where I confess my name what a wonderful picture this is what a wonderful picture so there is that second part and now a word or two about the last we've looked at the man to whom the dream was given we've looked at the dream itself and then the man in the New Testament who was promised a realisation of the dream in his experience Nathanael very wisely Philip didn't try to argue with him and try and answer his intellectual doubts he just said come and see and as Philip, as Nathanael was coming to Jesus Jesus said behold and is the light in whom is no guile and Nathanael heard him saying this and he said whence knowest thou me

I don't think we've ever met Jesus said before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree I saw you now that was deeply significant to Nathanael I can only imagine that that fig tree was a very special tree for Nathanael I can only imagine it was that tree under which he used to sit when he wanted to sit, when he wanted to perhaps try and pray he wasn't much at praying but there were times when he thought he needed God though he didn't as yet know the Lord there were times when the most innermost experiences of his heart were expressed that tree and it would seem to me the previous day was a very

special time for Nathanael under his fig tree.

I can only infer and I'll tell you why in a moment that on that occasion there'd been a taking off the mask, off his face and off his heart with regard to God as never before because as a result of what happened under the fig tree Jesus could say of him an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile and I believe under that fig tree he said oh God I'm a failure oh God I'm supposed to be a godly man and a synagogue but I'm a I'm a failure I'm a failure as a father I'm not the head, spiritual head of my house and in every other ways I'm a failure and frankly Lord in spite of my religious upbringing I don't know about you so I don't really know you and the Lord was content to let Nathanael be honest about himself and Jesus knew that and that's why when he said there's an Israelite indeed in whom is

no guile he didn't say an Israelite indeed in whom is no sin, there was plenty of sin in Nathanael but there was no hiding of sin Jesus knew that by what went on under the fig tree and when Nathanael heard that he said you saw me when I was under the fig tree and you knew apparently what went on under the fig tree there were only two people who ever did know it, one was me and the other was God you must be God and he's convinced of it without the Christ, the son of the living God and then it was to that man that Jesus said you're going to see more than that you're going to see heaven and this vision of the cross with the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man now these are the ones who are given a vision of the cross a vision of the ladder a vision of the staircase such

as Nathanael was talking, those of us who perhaps are learning to be honest who perhaps I don't know whether there's a special place a special place where you pray but it doesn't matter but perhaps some of us are beginning to take the witness box against ourselves before God and we're daring witness in God's presence against ourselves telling the truth that we're phony in this area we're phony in the other and I want to tell you something tremendously restful, instead of climbing to climb the ladder starting admitting what we really are and I want to tell you the Lord is very interesting you know if anybody in a prayer meeting doesn't pray the usual prayer of aspiration in the first person plural but begins to pray a prayer in the first person singular, I and starts admitting where they

are Lord I've had a bad day today Lord I've let you down at the office Lord I haven't been a witness today I'm in bad shape today if someone prayed like that what would happen? do you know what would happen to you? you'd be praying here you'd hear that prayer and you'd and you wouldn't be the only one that said a man would get the interest of people it would certainly get heaven's interest if you want to catch get God's ear start taking off the mask I'm not necessarily talking about open public confession but in actual fact between you and God it sometimes involves honesty with ourselves too but basically with the Lord and God will be able to say to you whatever else he is, he's a saviour everything he says about himself is completely true but I'll say this about him he's not hiding it

and that man is now a candidate for that vision of the cross which is going to make all things new he is going to see in the hour of his honesty heaven open for him and the angels of God ascending and descending upon that dear son of man echoes of mercy whispers of love to that man and he's going to find that he who felt himself so far off isn't far off at all by the mighty power of the blood of Jesus he's been brought into the haven of God's presence and he's back there and this is a step that is often reiterated it's only until the next time when something goes wrong and when something goes wrong you know what to do before you didn't the best you knew before was a frantic climbing which got you nowhere but you know there's a ladder there's a ladder custom made for me and those things

are gone now and you needn't be down and defeated for any longer than it takes you to get to the foot of that ladder again only to find Jesus there the one who forgave still ready to forgive the one who cleansed still ready to cleanse and that power of the blood bringing you once again into the haven and it could be that some of us the best we know in our Christian life is being facetious, climbing and trying to adhere to rules and formulas we've all done it no one has done it more than I and you know I can very easily slip back to the old way and the Lord has to convince me Roy you're striving again you're not coming to the cross struggling instead of repenting but oh I praise God he brings me back to that old rugged cross in your hymn books we haven't got them here of course it doesn't

matter we have the hymn beneath the cross of Jesus in most American books you only have three verses we have five and the two omitted verses are probably some of the best here's one of them Oh safe and happy shelter speaking of the cross Oh safe and happy shelter Oh refuge tried and sweet Oh Christ in place where heavens love and heavens justice meet as to the holy patriarch the wonders dreams of gift so soon my Saviour's cross to me a ladder up to heaven that lies beneath its shadow but on the farther side the darkness of an awful grave that gapes both deep and wide but there between it stands the cross two arms outstretched to save like a watchman set to guard the way to that eternal grave but you know these old hymn writers they got it I believe what's needed is for the preachers to

come up to the in their preaching to come up to the words of the song the message of grace and mercy is in our hymns if it's been lost so often in our books and there it is as to the holy patriarch the wonders dreams of gift so soon my Saviour's cross to me a ladder up to heaven and that little note on our bedroom door says even if your pillow be like faith dear one and you're as down as you've ever known there is a ladder leading up from it to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on it and that ladder whose foot is on the earth and the cup in heaven is these and the foot of that ladder is available to you as it possibly can just be an evangelist, just start taking off the mask, just can start taking a knee and you're at the foot of the cross and if you're really at the

foot of the cross you've got to into victory, into peace such is the mighty power of the blood of Jesus, Amen now let's sing a hymn because Pam you ready Pam are you to add a word number 50 there is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole can anybody tell me what verse this hymn is based on, can you tell me the book of the bible where it comes from there is a balm in Gilead oh there's no good singing these things you might think it's just a hymn writer making it up well I don't blame you it's not a very well known one but a beautiful one listen, at the end of Jeremiah 8 is there no balm in Gilead is there no physician there why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered is there no balm in Gilead, that was where the balsam trees grew in Gilead, they were there in

abundance, is there no physician there, of course there are there were more doctors in Gilead than anywhere else then why in the world is the health of the daughter of my people not recovered, I don't know it's not the lack of balm and it's not the lack of physician the blood of Jesus has never lost it's power is there no balm in Gilead, no power in precious blood, of course there is is there no physician there, of course then the question is why then is not the health of the daughter of my people not recovered, well it can only be we're not calling sin sin or we're not daring to believe there's something better than many struggling up a ladder yes there is balm in Gilead as this hymn says, alright now you've sat for a bit quite a bit while I've been talking, just stand and sing a verse

or two of this great one there is a balm in Gilead there is a balm there in Gilead there is a balm in Gilead in Gilead there is a balm well now please sit down, that's not exactly what you call a great success I was as

much to blame as you I hadn't really checked up on what version of the music we had our pianist did the best, he didn't know where it was going and you didn't either but never mind, hallelujah there is a balm in Gilead, there is power in the precious blood of Jesus, now let me rig my wife up for a moment praise the Lord that there is balm in Gilead I wonder whether as you've been listening to Roy you began to feel there is a balm in Gilead, did you?

I was thinking as I was listening to him that the message of grace really only comes to us as power when we've been trying to climb these ladders and we've just got discouraged and we felt that we really couldn't make it and then the message of grace comes and you feel my there's something else, this is something else, there's some verses in Job don't worry too turn to it it's Job 14 and it says there's hope of a tree if it be cut down that it will sprout again and that the tender branch thereof will not cease though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stalk thereof die in the ground yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant and I feel really that the message of grace is like the scent of water you begin to hear something different and it's

the Lord saying if your pillar has seemed like a stone there is a ladder there is balm in the land there is power in the blood and you know sometimes as we're going round people say well what really are you doing? what sort of message are you bringing? a message of revival, repentance of renewal of the blood of Jesus and we really like to say well really we feel that the Lord is helping us to share the message of grace as we are finding it and I think it is a very misunderstood word theologically in our churches today people say oh grace keep grace go on living as you like go on coming back asking the Lord to forgive you but you just go on really grace if we truly understand it is much more demanding than law you know we can be very good church going people we can go Sunday Sunday morning

evening Sunday school Wednesday prayer meeting be involved in all sorts of things if really the Lord started to shine his light into our homes into our relationships with one another into our work that's something different and the Lord is not content with these things as I gave my testimony last night and we can be doing things but not really walking the feet of and I just praise the Lord for this grace and what it's meant to me I can't tell you what it means to know that I can come to the Lord as I am that I don't have to climb this ladder you know we are all I believe in in our churches even the best of our churches climbing ladders and we're not real you know it comes across somehow it comes through books it comes very often through preaching it comes sort of down through tradition

somehow that we've got to climb a ladder and so we look at each other and we feel that so and so well they're up a bit further than we are and so we can't be real because we don't want other people to see that we are not climbing there and I just feel it's terribly important that we get hold of this and I praise the Lord as I was thinking of dear old Jacob how different he was from Nathaniel Jesus said of Nathaniel an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile but Jacob was an Israelite indeed in who was full of guile I mean that's the whole picture of Jacob isn't it I mean you know the story so well better than I do probably and how his name was supplanter, deceiver and how he was always engineering everything in order to get things to turn out his way and yet God spoke into his eyes

just when things seemed to be really so terribly difficult for him and he had messed everything up and there he was and yet God came and God spoke to him words of incredible good what grace that God came to Jacob at that time Roy and I read together just as the Lord seems to lead us from book to book and as much as we feel he guides us to read day by day and a time ago we were very much in the Old Testament and I think probably we started in Exodus and we saw there with Moses do you remember how

Moses said to the Lord I beseech thee show me thy glory do you remember that bit and how the Lord put him in the cliff and the rock and he passed by and he proclaimed the name of the Lord and do you know how it said he proclaimed the name of the Lord merciful and gracious I don't want to read all

this it's going to take too long and we started off thinking about that the Lord merciful and gracious and then as we were reading in the Old Testament we saw that phrase of the Lord repeated again and again wherever we were reading in Exodus and the Psalms Deuteronomy this was the name of the Lord and really the name means the character as you know and we were thrilled with that and it meant a lot to us now you've got all, I don't know if you've got King James you've got different versions and I think it probably is different but in the King James that's what it is but then we were thrilled to see another pair of words and that was the poor and the needy you see if you've got a King James if you read the King James just how often the poor and the needy comes and it was something that we

kept on seeing there you are, there it is again and it's quite interesting to see how often these two pairs of words come but then we saw something else we saw that again and again the Lord's merciful and gracious was on the side of the poor and the needy and that is everywhere and that was tremendously encouraging to me I thought well praise the Lord how wonderful it is that she's on the side of the poor and the needy not on the side of Joseph climbing some sort of ladder those of us who think we're getting on well or feel perhaps that we ought to be getting on well but on the side of those who are willing to see that they're poor and needy poor without any means of meeting any spiritual Jesus says, doesn't he blessed for the poor and the needy well that blessed me so much I can't tell

you it was just a new sight of grace for me I knew about coming to Jesus as I was finding in him all I needed and finding that there is power in the blood but it encouraged me to go on and you know if I felt down I'd say well Lord, well I do feel down but thank you that you're on the side of the poor and the needy and forgive me for feeling down I mean this is something you know you not because I'm saying it I'd like to say you don't know what you're listening to it's dynamite really it really is I know I'm saying this in a very soft, gentle sort of way that sort of voice I've got but it really is, if you can get hold of this this is what the ladder's all about this is Jesus this is grace this is the scent of water this is the balm and Gilliland that makes the wounded whole you know this

is not talking about people who are outside of Christ this is talking about us Christians who've been finding it such hard dare who feel we can't really make it well now if you feel that that's not true all I can say is that you haven't tried hard enough you try hard enough to make the Christian life work and you'll soon find you can't make it work if you're real well this is balm as I say to me I rejoice in it now Roy and I have been married only since 1968 his best wife Revel you will see on those books which they draw in Revel Heston I don't know if you've noticed that she was my dear and great friend and she meant so much to me and she was killed in a car crash in 1967 and that was a tremendous thing for all of us in England we loved her so much the Lord had used her so much amongst

us, she was so anointed of the Lord, I'd never heard a woman speak with such anointing as Revel and when the Lord took her we felt what a tremendous thing it was, what a loss it was, and yet we praised for her because she knew she was with him but you know Roy and Revel were so close I can remember when a friend of mine called me on the telephone and gave me the news of this accident they said you know we have to tell you that the Lord's taken Revel and I said how Joy and they said we don't know she's been injured but we don't know how badly and I can remember my words at that time and I said it would be a mercy if the Lord took him too I don't know what he'd do without Revel and that was true because

they were so close and the Lord used them so much as they came together that the Lord

healed Roy and brought him back to us and then in about a year not as long as that we were brought together in a most wonderful way well now this is a day big thing for me because as I said Revel was very gifted and she was very much loved at home and over here and you know I thought well how am I going to follow her much as I love her how do I follow her and then one day Roy said to me he said you know and this was right early on either just before you married or just after he said you know I asked Revel one day if she could sum up in a few words what she felt the Lord had done for her what the Lord had shown her since the days when she met him in Revival years ago and she told me that she thought of it and she said well I feel that I've seen a new sight of the character of God whereby I

can afford to be real got it I've seen a new sight of the character of God whereby I can afford to be real now that meant so much to me I just praised the Lord and I thought praise the Lord I've seen a new sight of him the character of God too I've seen he's merciful and gracious and I can afford to be poor and needy and it just set me free in a new way I felt well much as I liked her I didn't have to try to be like her and climb some sort of ladder that I could never climb but I could afford just to be real and to be me and I praised God for that it meant so much to me but you know it's so easy to know these things and yet not to put them into practice and you know you catch yourself out climbing ladders at evenings you'd go around like this and there was a time in South Africa we were

on a tour like this and you know I'd been sharing this various thing that had blessed my heart so much and then one day we were staying in a guest house missing a guest house where we enjoyed the fellowship with a lot of people who you know were in fellowship and just enjoying things with the Lord together and one day I'd made up my mind that I was going down to the shops and we were talking at breakfast time with some people and I said to Roy why don't I just go off and go down to the shops get my coat so I left the room and I left him talking with these people and I went upstairs to get my coat to go off down to the shops and then before I left he came up and he said oh you know those people we were talking with they'd asked me to go and pray with them one of the ladies there hasn't

been well and they asked me to go and have a special time of prayer so I said well that's fine, did they ask me to come and he said well no as a matter of fact they didn't and so I said well that's alright and he said well of course they don't think you're as spiritual as I am which of course is true you know it's just so mind shaking and anyhow we laughed about it you know how these things happen didn't think any more about it and I said okay you go and pray I'll go down to the shops but do you know as I walked down to those shops the devil came to me and he's the accuser for breaking and he said well there you are you see told you sir you haven't made it after all of these years if they thought you were someone you know a woman of prayer they would have said she should have been your

wife wouldn't she you see you really haven't made it and he showed me how I hadn't climbed that ladder I hadn't got there and you know I listened to him and I got so in the dark and I really felt so sort of despondent and I thought really you know after all this time I still haven't made it as a Christian and I really did get in the dark but if the devil is the accuser the Holy Spirit is the encourager of the virgin and you know he came along and he said to me on the other side he said but Pam what have you been saying what have you been saying with people about the Lord the merciful and gracious being on your side you're poor and needy and if they don't ensure anything much aren't you poor and needy and if you haven't come to some spiritual heights aren't you poor and needy and I said oh

Lord thank you thank you for showing me again thank you for being on my side when I'm like that and I just came back like that missionary I told you about yesterday as I was walking and I said Lord forgive me for forgetting and forgive me for all the things that make me poor and needy and I found that there was pines of life and there was barns of earth and the darkness went and the sun came up and I was praising the Lord and I went back to Roy and I said Roy this is a wonderful thing and if people can really see that the devil cannot put them down too far that Jesus is there because he's on the side of the poor and the needy and there's pines of life you can't back win every time and that's true, you can't back win if you walk in prayer now isn't that the center portion isn't that barn

isn't that something to rejoice about you know when we hear about revival we think that we're into a sort of traumatic time of weeping and all that kind of thing but revival is really the saint rejoicing again you know when the angels announced that Jesus was born behold great tidings of great joy sad tidings of great joy but you wouldn't think it really would you when we're all climbing ladders and not able to get there we get so sort of well you know you wouldn't think it was sad tidings of great joy but when we see those pines of life when you see there's balm in Gilead when you see that this Lord master and basic is always on the side of the poor and needy that there is a matter we rejoice let's sing there's a balm in Gilead let's record it I think you're all right on that say the

word please heal is the word in the original to heal the sins of God all right there's a balm let's look at the words of number 49 right across the page turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace turn your thoughts upon Jesus think deep of his comforting love and the thought of self and of sin and strife will be lost in that rapture above give your heart unto Jesus cast each heavy burden aside and the joy and peace of his presence near will enter and ever abide today as Roy and Pam shared with me for about three hours at lunch the thing that they did was to help turn my eyes upon Jesus and that's what they've done tonight and as we go away I think that would be the uppermost thought in our

mind that we've seen Jesus in them and their honesty and their love and love for us and love for the Lord and love for each other so let's stand together for prayer and be dismissed one of the reasons that I'm not asking you for sharing your testimony tonight is because we're a we're a fairly new church not yet six months old we're not even sure what God's trying to do this week we know he wants to do a lot and we're open to whatever it is he's trying to do but we're just trying to find out what he's trying to teach us and frankly as pastor I don't know I know he's already said a lot to my heart this week and although we're not going to worry about too many steps but I think he is taking a step at a time and this is now the end of the third service and I think after the next four services

we'll have a pretty good idea of what God is trying to say to us and then Sunday morning and maybe tomorrow night and the next night Thursday night or Friday night we'll have a time of sharing and anytime you want to praise the Lord in a word of testimony you're welcome to do that you're welcome to do it now if you just really have to and we'll be glad for you to do that but however the Lord works this week and I and several of you have prayed that we're not going to try to put the Lord in a mold you know we don't know how he's going to work and he's sovereign and we're going to allow him to do that this week he's even sovereign through my mistakes that I made Sunday morning I give the people an order of service and totally missed part of it and yet by Sunday evening I was rejoicing in

the Lord in spite of that because of the blood of Jesus and that's what time says again that's under the blood so everything that happens is under the blood good or bad it's under the blood and we need to turn

our eyes upon Jesus but Sunday morning we want to have a time of sharing and a time of praising and we may have some of that this week and we may not but we'll just touch the Lord to leave but I do know that God is working in my heart and I'm looking forward to if not before then sharing many of the things that he shared with me and then I know he's working in many of your hearts and so we probably won't have any preaching Sunday morning so that we can just share with each other what God has done during this week let's bow our heads together Father I continue to be amazed at your

mercy and your grace and have you continue to focus our eyes upon yourself Father I'm inclined to look at people I'm inclined to look at myself I'm inclined to look at a week like this and think I know what you're going to do even when I say that I don't Father I praise you for the precious word that was shared tonight through Roy and his hand I thank you that you have caused my eyes today once again to be turned upon you I praise you from the depths of my heart Lord that I have ceased at least today to struggle and strive and please anybody except you I thank you that it's such a delight and I find it very easy to put all of my sins my entire life under the blood of Christ and I rejoice tonight in the word that I've heard and the encouragement that I've had today through these dear

people and I thank you for what you're doing in the heart and the lives of our people sometimes it's not obvious and yet it doesn't have to be as Brother Roy said revival and spiritual expression is just the life of Jesus and Father we come to you just wanting his life to be lived through us and we don't know how that's going to take place except through the message of brokenness and repentance and turning our eyes upon you but I thank you as a pastor for the word that's put my heart tonight and I saw a new vision of grace and mercy and although what Pam said is true that under grace there are more demands than lost I recognize all of those demands were made in the person of Christ and kept in him not by me so I thank you for this body of believers and we commit this entire week to you

and pray that you would bring each night those people that you want cause us to be faithful because we know Father unless we're hungry and thirsty and poor and needy then we'll feel that we don't need it and we're sufficient but we come Father tomorrow night we look forward that we anticipate the service tomorrow night to serve your feet as you can through Lord and Pam bless each one of us as we go our way and may we just remember that every sin that we commit tonight and tomorrow immediately should be placed under the blood so that we can experience your mercy and your grace we pray in Jesus precious name and for his sake Amen

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