

Jacob's Ladder

by Roy Hession

Jesus is the ladder that connects earth to heaven, and we don't need to climb human-made ladders to reach God.

Duration: 47:30

Scripture: Genesis 28:10, John 3:16, John 14:6, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 4:16

Topics: "Deeper Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the feeling of being overwhelmed and the tendency to blame oneself for unhappiness. He emphasizes that even in the most difficult situations, God can bring about a new experience of grace. The speaker also discusses the common reliance on methods and ladders to improve our relationship with God, but highlights the importance of being honest with God and seeking His grace instead. The sermon concludes with the encouragement to have a personal 'fig tree' where we can be open and transparent with God, leading to a deeper understanding of the power of the cross.

Transcript

Now this morning, I want to turn you to Genesis chapter 28, Genesis chapter 28, and then we're going to turn to a New Testament reference to this Old Testament incident. Chapter 28 verse 10, it's a story of Jacob having to flee from his home because he's wronged his brother Esau, who's plotting his death, and he has to leave home on that long journey to relatives hundreds of miles away. Verse 10, And Jacob 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 pillows, 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, he notes each point of the dream, a number of times this phrase, behold, behold the ladder, behold the angels of God, 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, and to thy seed, and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, to the east, north, and south, and in thee, and in thy seed, here's the prophecy of Jesus, shall all families of the earth be blessed.

What a destiny was given to this man, 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 awakened 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 dreadful is this place, this is none other but the house of God, and this, the gate of heaven.

And then we are going to turn over to John's gospel chapter one, where we have a clear illusion spoken by Jesus himself to this dream that Jacob was given. John chapter one, verse forty-five, And Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him 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? He was a thinker, he was a student of the Old Testament scriptures, and as he understood it, Messiah was to come from Bethlehem.

The Old Testament seemed to speak nothing of Nazareth. He said, Can any good thing then come out of Nazareth? How is it possible for Messiah to come from Nazareth? And Philip wisely didn't argue with him, but simply said, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of 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 saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel. Perhaps the quickest conversion in the whole New Testament.

Convinced in a flash, in a moment, simply by those searching words that Jesus said to him, before that Philip called thee. When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. He was convinced.

And then Jesus comments and says, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I shall say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man. And what are those last words but a distinct reference to that vision, that dream, that Jacob had of the ladder.

Because on that ladder he saw angels of God ascending and descending on it. And Jesus in effect said to him, That ladder that you saw linking earth to heaven, that Jacob saw, is a picture of myself. I am the ladder.

On whom? The angels of God are going to ascend and descend. Angels bringing up man's needs to God. Other angels bringing down God's grace to man.

And all, all on the Son of Man. And so you have another wonderful Old Testament picture of Jesus. What a wonderful book this is.

I love it. And I sometimes give it a good hug when I see Jesus in so many glorious, surprising places in its pages. And so indeed there is no doubt at all that Jesus and his cross is the spiritual counterpart of that ladder that Jacob saw linking earth to heaven.

In Jesus, Jacob's dream has come true. Some time ago my wife and I were in Switzerland and we were staying in a certain home, taking meetings in the district. And the daughter of the house was at work and she had to leave the home before we rose that morning.

We were leaving that day. And she wanted to give us a little message of thanks for our visit and to bid us farewell. And she slipped under the door a little note for us to get when we got up.

And this dear girl wrote these precious words. Giving her thanks and wishing us well she said, If your pillow be like a stone, there is a ladder going up from it and angels of God ascending and descending on that ladder. If ever your pillow is like a stone and life is treating you hard and you are down and sad, always remember there is a ladder.

There is a ladder going up from it to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Sometimes when that pillow is like a stone you don't see that ladder. But you can.

And the Holy Spirit wants to reveal to you Jesus in exactly this capacity in those hours and he is exactly what you need in those hours. I want to look first of all at the man to whom this dream was given, Jacob. Then we are going to look at the dream itself.

And then we are going to look at the man in the New Testament who was promised a realisation of that dream in his experience, Nathaniel. First of all then the man to whom that dream was given. It was a very unhappy young man who lay down to sleep that night in the open air.

He was a real homeboy. I imagine he had never been away from home before. But owing to this difficult situation which had arisen, the only safe thing for him to do was to leave home and go to his mother's relatives far away.

And this was his first night out. And of course darkness fell upon him when he was still in the open air. He felt real sad, real homesick as he gathered a stone together for a pillow.

But what I think made his unhappiness the more acute was the knowledge that this unhappy situation in which he had found himself was due to his own fault. He had nobody else to blame but himself that he had to leave home as he had. And that was the young man who had this dream.

And as he looked around at that gaunt place where he had to sleep, I imagine he said, if ever there was a God forsaken place, this is it. And I think it was the last place where he or anybody else would have expected to have a new glorious vision of God. And yet it was in that place, in those circumstances in which he was to blame, he was given this thrilling experience.

It was his first experience. Up to then Jehovah had been the God of Abraham and Isaac. From that day he became Jacob's God too.

And he had to confess, the Lord is in this place. And I knew it not. And it could be there are some of us here who may be in just as sad a condition as Jacob was.

It will vary. Not every Christian is happy all the day since he first saw the light. He's got himself into all sorts of difficulties.

Things aren't always happy at home, or at work, or with the children, or with the in-laws, or in the church. They're not always happy in his heart. He's battling with things which are too much for him.

And there are some of us who are in just such a state of heart because of the situation we're in. And what adds to our distress is the fact that deep down you know that you're larger to blame for your own unhappiness. You're larger to blame for that tangled situation.

And as you think of the situation in which you are, you say to yourself, this is a God-forsaken situation I'm in. And it would seem to you to be the very last place in all the world to expect a new experience of grace.

And yet again and again it's when we're in those situations that we do have a brand new experience.

Somebody who's down. I want to tell you that could be the prelude to the most precious, most liberating vision of Jesus you've ever had. And in a moment your shattered world can be reconstructed.

Even if your pillow is like a stone, there is a ladder. Always. And as you see what that ladder means, you see the answer.

And so we go on to have a look at the dream itself. Putting the two passages together in old and new, the first thing about the dream was that he saw that heaven was open. Having done what he'd done and been as wrong as he had been, he thought that heaven would be shut.

There was nothing to be had from God for such a man as he, how wrong he was. He didn't know grace. Ah, grace it is thy boast to come, into unlikeliest hearts and into unlikeliest situations and to the most unworthy.

And Jacob saw, despite of all that, heaven was still open to him. Open to the sinner. More than that, he saw that heaven was accessible.

He saw there were steps up to heaven. There was a ladder. I believe the Hebrew word means a staircase.

And he saw that staircase, beginning there, going up, up, up, right into that open heaven. And then he saw there were angels upon that ladder. Indeed, Jesus seems to emphasise the traffic on the ladder more than the ladder itself.

You will see the angels of God ascending and descending on this other man. And then he saw at the head of that ladder, that staircase, Jehovah himself, speaking words of incredible good to this man. And that for a great while to come.

Things that he could never have dreamed of were in God's mind for him. And in that ladder, we are to see a wonderful picture of Jesus. He not only says, I am the way, I am the door, but I believe he is virtually saying to Nathaniel, I am the ladder.

That links earth to heaven, the sinner with God, and that in his most palpable and needy hours, I am the ladder. And on that ladder he says there's a wonderful traffic going on. All for you, angels of God, ascending and descending.

We'll look at that in detail in a moment. But even that's enough to show us the contrast to the ladders that we have been trying to climb. You know, man has a constitutional love of ladders.

It's built right into us. The answer to our needs is always going to be a ladder of some sort. Especially when it comes to moral and spiritual needs.

If a man wants to get to know God, it's always, he feels, by means of a ladder. Steps he's got to take, heights he's got to attain. Achievements he's got to arrive at if he's to know God.

Improvements he's got to make. Every denomination has its special ladder. They're pretty similar in principle, but they have variations.

And this is what is preached to people. And what we preach too often from our pulpits is simply a ladder. What man's got to do.

The rules he's got to keep. The new heights he's got to attain. The steps he's got to take if he's to know God.

Yes, and it appeals. It's swallowed whole with our thought. Because we naturally gravitate toward ladders.

We all do. That tendency doesn't end with our true conversion. Because of having been converted, we are then concerned to improve our relationship to God.

Thank God you have a relationship with him. You used not to have any at all. You've got a relationship.

But you feel it's a pretty tenuous one sometimes. And I need to improve my relationship to God. And how do you intend to do it? By means of a ladder, you say.

Of course, this is simple. Things I ought to improve upon. Rules I ought to keep.

Longer devotions that I ought to spend. More witnessing I ought to give. More money I ought to share in the Lord's work.

And so on. And for all of us, the natural answer to improve our relationship is a ladder. With its various steps up which we've got to climb.

And if we get into some sort of pit in our experience. A pit, for instance, of depression. Or a pit of guilt.

How am I going to get out of it? Ah, you know how. It's by means of a ladder. If a psychiatrist would tell you what ladder.

They vary, of course, according to his school of thought. There's always something you've got to do. Something you've got to achieve.

To get out of our pits. And we don't need to get it from somebody else. This is the sort of message we preach to ourselves.

All of us are preachers. You're preaching every day to your own heart if to nobody else. And this is the sort of message we all naturally preach to our heart.

As a solution of our various problems. And when it comes to service for God. When it comes to ways in which the church can be more effective and have more outreach.

It's always by means of ladders. New methods. This is a day of new methods.

It's really quite confusing. And if a church discovers a new method that seems to work for them. They issue a pack on the subject.

There's this wonderful way in which you can really transform things. And there are always methods. Ladders.

Pages of them. And as I say, it appeals without any thought on our part. We have a constitutional love of ladders.

These ladders which I've suggested are really at bottom all variants of the way it works. We understand perhaps pretty clearly that by grace are we saved through faith. And not of works.

Not of ourselves. But by faith. And whereas we realise that by grace we're saved.

We nonetheless think that thereafter it will be by something other that we're going to get further on in the Christian life. We're going to get our deeper needs met. And thus it is.

We have our variations of works. It's a wonderful thing. When the Holy Spirit makes revelation to you what is one of these ladders.

That thing you found so hard to do. You say, I can never be a better Christian until I can do it. But I find it so hard to do.

And then the Holy Spirit says that's a ladder. And it can be so subtle. A formula.

A formula for fellowship. A formula for anything. And God in his grace draws near to us.

He's going to bless us so much. And one of the first things he does is to reveal to us what is a ladder in this sense. A variation.

A variant of the way of works. Andrew Murray says law. Next to sin, law is the greatest enemy of spiritual life.

And that's a wonderful thing when I see. That I've been spending my time trying to climb Jacob's ladder. I know the children's chorus says I am climbing Jacob's ladder.

But I've never been able to. Let me say, go into detail a little more about these ladders. It's important to see them.

Because we can't see Jesus as our ladder except by contrast. Three things. First, these ladders that we propose for ourselves.

Or other people propose for us. Do not start where we are. The good advice we are given by others doesn't take account of us being what we are.

Or having done what we've done. Here's a counsellor giving us such good advice. It sounds so good.

And you feel always embarrassed. You see, he doesn't know what I've really been. And he doesn't know what I really am.

He's assuming this lovely little formula he's giving me. I'm well able to start to embark upon it. But the trouble is it doesn't begin where I am.

It doesn't take account of me as I really am. And then the top of these ladders never really reach to heaven. They never really bring you to victory and to peace with God.

If you do manage to keep some of the rules and make some progress up the ladder, consciousness never lets you be satisfied. Ah, he says you've got to get higher still. You haven't done it quite right.

There's always higher, something more you should have done. Take for instance, it's only an illustration, there are many different ladders. Take the matter of our devotions.

We can get tied up with those, can't we? And here's a Christian who's hardly realised that he should be spending daily time with God in prayer over the Word of God. And he comes home to him he ought to. So he rearranges his schedule and he sets aside a quarter of an hour every day for prayer and the Bible.

And he's getting on fairly well when he meets another Christian and this one lets out quite incidentally that he never spends his less than half an hour Oh, a half an hour. Did you say a half an hour? Well, I'd better have me get a half an hour, he says. And so he does, he manages that.

And then, bless my soul, he meets somebody else and they never spend less than an hour. What, a whole hour? And somehow or other he tries to find the time for that. The trouble is he doesn't know how to fill the hour.

The Word doesn't live, the prayer dries up on him but he says, this is the way. And so he struggles on, only to be led by somebody that book about praying hide. And whole night he never went to bed, he was lost in prayer and after that he gives up.

He says, you just can't win. Now this is purely an illustration. I don't want to make a special thing about the fact that our devotions can be ladders.

But many things can. And I tell you, along that line the top never reaches to heaven. You just can't win this way.

And if it's out of a pit you've been trying to get and if by means of some ladder you have got out of it it's only to discover that the ladder was put up against the wrong wall and you've come out the wrong side. Further away from God, rather nearer, more a Pharisee than ever and the proud he knoweth afar off. Oh, these ladders that look so promising.

The top never reaches to heaven. I'm sorry friend, I can't promise you any success on this new ladder on which you're embarking. The top never reaches to heaven.

And the third thing is this. They all involve climbing. That's what a ladder or a staircase is for.

It's for climbing. In other words, striving and struggling. But the problem is you're too weak to climb.

You know there are books on the victorious life. There's usually one book which tells you the steps you've got to take. Some books make it three.

Some make it seven. And they seem so right. I want to do this, then I do the other.

But the author doesn't seem to understand that we're too weak to take the first step. Let alone all the subsequent ones. And I want to tell you, when I have that sort of thing proposed to me and I don't need other people or another book to do it, I tell myself that's the way.

I am defeated before I ever start because I know from experience I am not going to make it. And the net result is so often despair. Oh, wretched Christian that I am! Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me? How Paul struggled to climb that ladder and he never made it.

The good that he would he didn't do and the evil that he would not that he did. But oh, what a difference! When we turn to that ladder which Jacob saw, which picks us Jesus as our ladder, as our staircase. The first thing I notice about that ladder was this.

It was set up on the earth exactly where Jacob was lying, right there. And Jesus and his cross is set up on the earth exactly where the sinner lies, where the failed saint lies. Jesus takes it for granted that you are what you have been and that you have done what you have done.

He knows the whole story and yet the worst has been taken account of in him. And Jesus and that ladder is available to you at street level. He knows you haven't got what it takes and that's why he makes himself available to you.

You know that great text, Christ in you, the hope of glory. I think perhaps it was quoted perhaps this morning in prayer or in some word that was said. And it is the truth, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

But I hope I'm not spoiling somebody's sermon here. But I don't think that is what is taught in that passage in Colossians 1. The in you, the margin of my King James says, or among you. Christ among you.

And who is the you? The Gentiles. Who way outside all the privileges and the wonderful truth that Paul had to communicate in those epistles was that Jesus was not only for the Jew with all his religious background, but he was available for the Gentile. And for the Gentile, not what he being circumcised, but the Gentile as a Gentile.

This is the secret. Jesus available to us where we are, as we are, available to the Gentiles. I believe, of course, the indwelling of Christ is taught all over scripture, but that one, I believe, is meant to teach something which is very precious, available to the man who hasn't had the background, who doesn't know his Bible as others do, that has made promises and broken them.

They've got nothing to bring but failure. Jesus can make something beautiful, something good. All my confusion he understood, all I had to offer him was emptiness and strife.

He's available to a man like that before he's begun to improve. All he's got to do is to confess the truth. And there, right there, is Calvary's cross, the open fountain filled with blood, Jesus himself in whom all fullness dwells.

Beginning with forgiveness and cleansing, it goes on to fullness and everything else we need. This means, dear friends, that Jesus is not shocked at what you have to tell him. He's the great unshockable one.

You couldn't tell some of your Christian friends certain things, they'd be shocked. Not Jesus. This ladder is set up just where you are and you can afford to tell him the whole terrible truth.

Knowing that he's already taken the shock on the cross. Yes, it was a shock then, but that's over. And so we see this ladder, this staircase, set up on the earth in the place where the failed saint and the sinner lies.

And then the top of this ladder, I tell you, it reaches to heaven. I tell you, if I find Jesus as my ladder, the top really reaches into heaven. It really puts me into the Holy of Holies.

It really brings me to victory, into revival. And the interesting thing is, the way by which Jesus himself entered into the Holy of Holies. Did you know that Jesus was not only raised from the dead because he was the son of God? He went back into the holy place not made with hands, merely because he was the

son of God.

No. Hebrews tells us he was raised from the dead. How? By the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Had there not been power in that blood, he would have been still in that grave. The sins for which he took responsibility would still be condemning him. But the blood was enough.

Answered every claim. And he was raised from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant. And Hebrews 9 goes on to tell us that he entered into the holy place not made with hands.

How? With his own blood. There shall in no wise enter into heaven anything but defilement. How can such a one as Jesus go back there when he's accepted responsibility for the sin of the world? Do you know he had more sins on him than ever I've had? He had the world.

But the blood that he shed was enough for him. It was enough to discharge everything for which he took responsibility. And if he went back into the holy place, it was only by virtue of his own blood.

The everlasting doors lifted up their heads. And the King of Glory came in. Why did they lift up their heads? They shut their doors against others.

Because he came in with the answer to sin. And the blood of Jesus had to avail first to Jesus before it could avail for him, for you. And it's enough.

And all God was satisfied with the blood of Christ is sufficient for God. It's certainly sufficient for you. And I want to tell you, the head of this ladder, this staircase reaches right into the holy places.

Right into heaven, right here and now. Into blessing, into victory. And all you've got to do is somehow or other to get to the foot of that ladder, the foot of that cross on street level and immediately in him, you are at heaven's level.

And you've got to believe it. You don't come to the cross and then need further blessings to get into the holy place. The blood is enough if you're prepared to believe it.

I believe if we're prepared to see the full power of the blood of Jesus, we don't need then to go into further exercises of soul as to how to be filled with the Spirit. I've been cleansed by the blood, but now, Lord, there's something further to be filled with the Spirit. For myself, I dare to believe that where the blood's applied, that's enough for God.

It's of such power to attract Him to my poor old heart, all that I need. And the top of this ladder reaches unto heaven. Get to Him, friend, at street level.

Humble yourself to get there. And in Him, at Calvary, He is made to you. All you need, wisdom, righteousness and power, holiness, this very hour.

Such is the power of His precious blood. And then a third thing is that for this ladder that Jacob saw, there was no need for him to do any climbing. Actually, he was about to brace himself to start the climb.

It was wonderful that heaven should be opened for him. And it was wonderful there was a staircase at all. All right, now, now, let me begin.

And he was about to try to climb the steep ascent to heaven when suddenly he saw there were angels ascending that ladder. And other angels descending that ladder right down to him. I take it that the ladders going up, the angels going up, were bringing up his knees and sighs and sorrows to God.

And the angels coming down were bringing God's mercy and grace and provision for all his need. And he didn't have to climb. It was all being done for him.

All he had got to do was to get to the foot of the ladder and stay there. I like to think that perhaps an angel going up met one coming down and they had a conversation and the one going up said, you know, that fellow down there, he's in a terrible state. I've never met anybody so depressed and so down in all my life.

He's beating himself, he's blaming himself, he hasn't got a glimmer of joy or happiness at all. And the angel coming down said, I know, but God sent me down to bring mercy and grace and restoration and fullness to that very man. And you know, it's the same with us.

This is perhaps the most important thing for you to do. Because just as you are bracing yourself for that new attempt to climb the steep ascent to heaven, God says, stop it. Look again at Jesus and understand He's done it all.

In Him, your needs and sorrows and lacks have already been brought up to heaven. And in Him, God's grace for sinners has already been brought down right to street level. And you don't need that struggling and striving to improve and get higher.

All you need to do is to get to the foot to that old rugged cross, that ladder. I believe this part about the angels of God is important. Jesus concentrated on it.

It's the traffic on the ladder He pointed to. I don't believe this incident is meant to teach us about the ministry of angels. I believe in angels.

Billy Graham's written a book on the subject. Very good, I'm sure. But, here I don't think it's teaching us about the ministry of angels.

It's teaching us about Jesus. And it needs every single part of this incident to give us an adequate picture. It needs the ladder set up on the earth.

It needs that ladder reaching to heaven. And it needs the picture of those angels to tell us that it pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell. And you don't need to go any further than Him and the foot of His cross to enjoy that fullness.

Of course you can't get to the cross except as a sinner. It's set up only for wrong ones. And if you're not wrong you don't qualify.

But if you're prepared to admit that fact, then as you come to Jesus, you come to Jesus! The one in whom all fullness dwells. You don't then need prayer to climb is to go on to the resurrection or even to Pentecost. I get it all at the foot of the cross when I start repenting and being honest about my current position.

And my current position is very often not in good shape. Well I admit that fact. And the fact that I know that there is this ladder, there is this Jesus in whom all fullness dwells gives me greater boldness to admit just where I am and what I am at any given moment.

And I find if the blood of Christ was sufficient for God it's sufficient for me. And I tell you this simple gospel way of holiness really works. I can't promise you much success on any other ladder you might attempt but Jesus in whom all fullness dwells who's available to me on street level is certainly all I need.

And now a last word about the man in the New Testament who was promised a realization of this dream in his experience, Nathaniel. As Nathaniel was coming to Jesus Jesus said of him Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile. What did Jesus mean in whom is no guile? I don't think he meant in whom is no sin.

I guess there was much sin in Nathaniel than in anybody but rather in whom is no hiding of sin. Who's honest about himself. And that to me seems to be amplified by that strange word that Jesus said.

Nathaniel said How did you know me? We've never met. You seem to know. You said things about me.

I thought you were going to say something terrible about me. You said something a bit well in a sense almost complimentary. But even that's a surprise to me.

How do you know me? And Jesus said before Philip called you when you were under the fig tree I saw thee. I can only assume that this man had a favorite fig tree to which he used to go when he wanted to think. When he wanted to be quiet.

When he wanted to try and pray. He wasn't much of a hand at praying but when he tried it was always under that fig tree. And I can only assume that the previous day before Philip called him Nathaniel had a very special time under that fig tree.

I can only assume that he didn't do his usual trying to pray but he started being plain honest with God. He said Lord I'm not the dad I should be to my kids. I'm a failure there.

I'm not the husband I should be. And as for a leader in the synagogue I don't know the first thing really about you. And he started telling God what he wasn't.

It was a very humbling time. A very important time. And it was because Jesus knew he'd taken that line that he said a man in whom is no guile.

Had there not been some such experience he couldn't have said it. And when Jesus said that to him he said you saw me under the fig tree and you knew what happened under the fig tree. He said there were only two people who didn't know.

One was me and the other was God. You must be God. And was on his face.

He didn't need any other argument. And Jesus said Nathaniel you said some hard things about yourself and they're all true but just because you've got to that sort of place I'm going to promise you you're going to see heaven open. And the angels of God ascending and descending you're going to see the cross and understand what it means.

And I want to tell you those are the ones who get the vision that Jacob got. That ladder, that staircase set up on the earth the top of which reaches to heaven and the angels of God coming down and ministering all fullness dwelling in him. I want to tell you you haven't been under your fig tree very long before the Holy Spirit will come.

And you're going to get a vision of Calvary of the power of the blood on your behalf that you've never had before and your burdens are going to roll away. I want to ask you have you got a fig tree? Are there seasons when it's your habit to start telling the truth to God? So often we say Lord help me not to be this. Don't say that.

Say Lord I am this. And what else? And I'm the other. And what else? And the other.

Come on, bring it all out. That's what the fig tree is for. That makes you a candidate for the grace of God that flows from Calvary.

And as we take that place you're going to see the cross as you never did before. People have loved this old story. Hymn writers have put it into their hymns.

The famous hymn Beneath the Cross of Jesus at last you only have three verses in your hymn books. There were five originally. And one of the missing verses is this.

Oh safe and blessed shelter Oh refuge tried and sweet Oh Christing place Where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet As to the holy patriarch The wondrous dream was given So seems my Saviour's cross to me A ladder up to heaven Love and justice have met Mercy is available That stands perhaps beyond its shadow But on the Father's side The darkness of an awful grave The gates goes deep and wide And there between us stands the cross Two arms outstretched to save Like a watchman Set to guard the way To that eternal grave Oh safe and blessed shelter Oh refuge tried and sweet Oh Christing place Where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet And everything is made available To the sinner, to the faint saint Unconditionally admits that fact Mercy there is great And grace is free Pardon there is multiplied to us So praise the Lord Let's sing it It is surely sufficient for me It is surely sufficient for me Is our pianist there? Perhaps not It is surely sufficient for me It is surely sufficient for me If the blood of Christ Is sufficient for God Amen It is surely sufficient for me And the great struggle in the Christian life Is not the struggle to improve But the struggle to admit you're wrong and get to the cross I remind you it doesn't say we're to grow in goodness But to grow in grace And that means a deeper understanding of my sinfulness And of almighty grace Which is greater than almighty Now the man who's growing in grace I can tell you how I can discern it The rapidity with which he wits himself wrong goes to the cross The rapidity with which he comes into freedom again I say to myself That man has got a side of grace Perhaps more than I have He was so down He was so depressed But look at him So quickly set free Because there's power in the blood And he's learning to take his rightful place quickly And get to the foot of that old cross That old ladder again And he's free It's surely sufficient for me So praise God for these lovely pictures Sweet, aren't they? Pictures of mercy Pictures of grace I don't know any other way in which I could continue There is a ladder There is a ladder This ladder When you're down When the pillow is like stone There is a ladder I've got to preach this message to my own soul again and again Because I need it I'm down sometimes But I know the way out

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