

Digging Ditches in Dry Weather

By Paris Reidhead*

Now will you turn to II Kings, Chapter 3. *Digging ditches in dry weather*. We have been speaking in these days past concerning preparation for God's blessing, and it seemed that there would be a lesson and a message for us here in this portion of the Word of God. I think if I read, beginning with the 4th... Well, let's start with the 1st, so you see it:

“Now Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. And he wrought evil in the sight of the Lord; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom” (II Kin. 3:3).

(Might I just stop to say, here at this point, that the sin of Jeroboam was to set up a calf to be worshipped in Samaria, the ten tribes worshipped not at Jerusalem when they became a separate nation, but they worshipped in Samaria, in the mountain to which the woman pointed there when she spoke to the Lord later. They worshipped the calf. It was political, to pull the unity of the people. If they had gone down to Jerusalem, surely there would have been a reuniting of the two groups, the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes.)

We begin with the 4th vs.:

“And Mesha king of Moab was a sheepmaster, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool. But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel. And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses. And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab! But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may enquire of the Lord by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him. And he said, Thus saith the Lord, May this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones. And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil. And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even in their country. And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kirharaseth left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it. And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land” (II Kin. 3:4-27).

You see, all the days of conflict and test, and difficulty, were not reserved for us upon whom the ends of the ages have come. We understand that we are facing battles. We are facing problems. We are perhaps in as crucial a week, this past week and in the days of the week before us, in regard to what our Government may do respecting the Soviet buildup of arms in Cuba, as crucial a week, I say, as we have had for a long time. Anyone who is aware of the nature of things as they are will recognize that it is not necessary for Cuba to have intercontinental ballistic missiles and other weapons of high artillery in war in order to protect itself from the United States. And yet this is what is happening, and this is what is there, and our Government is facing problems and difficulties; and decisions are going to have to be made which undoubtedly will be bi-partisan in their support and nature. No one knows at this time, save the Lord Himself, what is going to happen.

Suffice it to say that we are living in days of great danger, great difficulty, and great threat. I do not believe, however, that the greatest threat to the 20th century, to America, and to civilization in general comes from mobilized armies and the accumulation of nuclear weapons and the erection of a tremendous structure for offensive as well as defensive warfare. As threatening as this is, there is something that to my mind is even worse; and that is, the fact that we are living in a day which seemingly has lost its moral anchor, and is drifting. The thing as of long standing, and it is an over simplification to try and pinpoint it to any particular time, and I certainly would not do that. I would, however, point out to you that we have come to a time when God seemingly is virtually without voice. And this is the matter that concerns me and troubles me tonight; that with all of our elaborate religious structure, (and it is necessary. When you have three people working together, someone must know what each is to do and when. This we cannot escape. We are going to be dealing in the days of this week with ecclesiastical structure. But there is a certain sense in which it is necessary, whether it is a Sunday School Department, or whether it is just a class. Whatever it is, it is necessary to have order.) ...And so, I am not condemning ecclesiastical structure. This is not my thought at all. I recognize that this is not the cause or any evil in our day. We are in a situation where the land has many organizations, 312 that are registered with the Federal Government, and others that are just small groups of churches. I do not see, as I have mentioned this in the past, anyone of which is preparing itself to be a vehicle for the revelation of the glory of Christ in this hour in which we live. And this troubles me.

We all have responsibilities. Every organization that I know has begun by the development of responsibility. Christian and Missionary Alliance, the Missionary Society aspect, began one night in this church 80 - 78 years ago, or thereabouts, when a young woman, two young women came from India. They had no way of getting back, and Dr. Simpson's¹ great heart was moved with love and burden and said, "We'll send you." Well now that meant they had to have a checking account, they had to have a check book, they had to have someone to take care of it, and out of that response to a need, and an opportunity, and a challenge, rose the mission aspect of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. It came because someone's heart, or many hearts were greatly burdened. And so every organization that now exists came into being to serve some other purpose than is presently pressing on us. I do not know of a single organization that we have in the country today that exists primarily to meet the need of the 20th century, primarily to be a vehicle for revelation of the glory of God tomorrow, primarily for the purpose of releasing the power of Christ into our society. Now there may be such, but I am not acquainted with them. We are facing the fact that all of us have had something else to do, some other responsibilities, some other tasks, and all of a sudden we find we have to drop what we are doing, because we are in a status of emergency. And I think that this is the case. The things we are doing are good; for the most part, they are helpful, they are useful, God has honored them, and God has blessed them. But today we are in the place that we must recognize that there is a tremendous danger confronting us, a tremendous problem facing us, a challenge that is going to tear at the very best of each of us. And the question that you have to ask yourself is this, "Are you sufficiently concerned about the day, and the generation, the need, and the opportunity, the challenge that confronts you, the responsibility that rests upon you, to admit that you do not have the answer?" I am confident that if you have come to that place, the place that the three kings were, facing an enemy, facing the challenge, facing all that was represented by the revolt of Moab (and we could dwell upon the symbolism of this, relating it to the god of this world, to all of his pressures, and powers, and influences. And this is correct.)... But if you've actually brought yourself to face this fact, that today you are living

¹ Albert Benjamin Simpson (1843-1919) founder of The Christian and Missionary Alliance

in a generation that is going to have to decide in some grand manner whether we can have the perpetuation and the survival of the values that are represented by your presence here?

You know well that in so much of the world tonight, such a thing as just a group of people getting together in a public building, lighted with utilities, and free to take their money and share it with the work, this is an unheard-of thing, this is a liberty that has been forfeited for nearly twenty years in China. And much longer than that, for the most part in Russia and other parts of the world. And the question that we have to ask is this: Are we prepared in our day to recognize that what we are presently doing is not enough, and isn't adequate for that which confronts us. This is what had to happen to Jehoram, Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom. They had to come to the place that they did not know the answers. And they could not smugly say, Well, if we will do a little more of this, a little more of that, and just some more of the other, we are going to make it. One of them, Jehoram, said, God's brought us out here because of our sins, to destroy us. And it would have been quite fitting if He had, for they certainly deserved destruction. There would have been every reason why He should have done it. And Jehoram probably had a burning conscience, because of his sins and the sins of his father, and his mother, and was quite prepared to say, Well, it is up now, and God has caught up with us. He has got us here, and He is going to destroy us. And I hear voices like that in the present, who say the sins of the 20th century are so horrible, we have reached such new depths of depravity and iniquity that God is going to deal with us as He did with Sodom and Gomorrah, and there is nothing we can do. We have just got to recognize that we deserve it, and set our chins and face it like men, and say, It is all over.

I do not believe that this was the answer of God. This was the answer of despair, probably of an unrelieved conscience, but it certainly wasn't what God had brought them out to see. And I do not believe that God has brought us to this place in history just simply that we can stand by and allow Him to pour out judgment and wrath upon us. I believe that there are far more than the ten that He asked for in Sodom and Gomorrah, that Abraham asked for, in Sodom and Gomorrah in our land tonight. But the question you have to ask is, What is your attitude toward the danger? For we are living in a time of danger. We are living in a time when we are confronted with a great international conspiracy of communism on the one hand, the erosion of every value on the other, and with the rise of ecumenical authoritarianism still in another quarter. We are living in challenging days, days that are filled with threatening. And I do not want you to be moved with despair. But I would be less than honest if I were to say that these are days similar to those of the past. It just isn't the case. And very well could be that we are facing certain final chapters in western civilization.

Now we could take the attitude of Jehoram, and we can say, The jig is up. God has caught up with us. He is going to just burn us off the face of the earth, and this is what is to happen. I believe this is wrong. I do not believe this is the answer at all. I do not believe it is what God wants anyone of us to think. I think that Jehoshaphat was there in order that he could, even though he had to admit he did not know what to do, he did not know what attitude to take, he did not know what steps to take rather, but he knew that there was an answer. And he was prepared to go to the proper place to find the answer to the Word of God.

Now he didn't have a Bible that he could tuck into his purse, or a testament that he could keep in his pocket. Remember that we have not had the printed Bible. It is just a few centuries. Back in his time, the Word of God was laboriously copied by hand, and there were very, very few copies of it. It was hard to get and come by. And so he did not have it in the sense that we do, but he knew that God had a spokesman. He said, Isn't there someone here that can tell us what God has to say in this situation? And, Jehoram had had lot of trouble you remember, his father had had a lot of trouble with Elijah, for the day came when Ahab looked at him and said, You are the one who troubled Israel. Why are you troubling Israel. And Elijah looked right back at him and said, No, I am not troubling Israel. You are the one; your sins are the cause of the drought. You are the one that is troubling Israel.

So Jehoram had a little acquaintance with Elijah, and he also realized that God had had a successor to Elijah in Elisha. And he wasn't on too friendly terms with him. It is interesting to realize that he recognizes who he was, but apparently he was quite prepared to do without too much friendship and fellowship with Elisha. But when the need came, he knew where to go. "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him, said Jehoshaphat. And then one of the king of Israel's servants answered, Here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the Lord is with him."

He wanted to find out what God had to say in this day, in this time, and in this hour. Are you prepared tonight to recognize that what is happening is not happening because God has turned His back on humanity; it isn't happening because God has lost interest in the world. These things aren't coming to pass because His arm is shortened that He cannot save, or His ear heavy that He cannot hear. Now this isn't what has taken place at all.

The consequences of what has been sown in the past being reaped in the present. I have a pet theory. I am not prepared to expound it to you, other than to say this; that I think that we have had in the rise of the industrial revolution for 125 or '30 years, or longer, 150 years, the complete change of our culture and our civilization, from what this land was intended to be, to one now where the whole end of being is the product of men's activity. And the consequence of this change, from emphasis on the process of living and the process of securing a product, to the product itself, is responsible in some degree for this rise of materialism that has so penetrated every area of our life. And unfortunately, you as a Christian are part of it. You have lost the sense of to some degree of emphasis of process in your life, and your interest. It isn't a question of what a person does for his salary in a sense at the factory any more. It isn't that it be a creative experience that fulfills him as an individual. He can sit there. When a red light goes on, he pushes this button. When the green light goes on, he pushes that button. And as long as he does not confuse the buttons, when he pushes his respective lights, he is secure in his job, he has union to protect him, and he has the government to insure him, and he does not need to do anything more creative than just push that button when that light goes on. And something equally destructive to human personality and human dignity. But it is all part of our culture and climate, until in the 20th century we are quite prepared to say, for the most part and we of the church — those that have not had much to say on it — that the whole end of being is just the product of men's efforts. It isn't the question of the process by which we have gotten it that there is some pleasure in the process. It is just getting the thing itself. And so ours is a very materialistic day, a day in which the people have lost the sense of meaning, of being human beings, and Christian men and women; and consequently as long as we can keep having the product of effort, we are quite prepared to let any kind of erosion take place in the freedom, the liberty, and the process that alone can bring happiness.

Let me illustrate it. When our Lord came, He was a carpenter. He went into a carpenter's shop. He did not go into a factory that turned out chairs and tables on assembly line. He went into a carpenter's shop, He took a piece of wood, and He hewed it, and He shaped it, and He molded it, did everything it needed until He presented from that piece of wood a finished product. I believe that our Lord was saying by what He did, that this was the fulfillment of His Own Word back in the Garden when He said, Dress the garden. And He knew that a man did not only need a chair, he needed the sense of creative experience that came from taking the reed tree, the tree that grew in the garden, and shaping it, and molding it into useful an object. He did not only need a chair, but he needed the experience. He needed to do this. He had to have the sense of fulfillment and completeness, completion that came from having participated with God in creation. God made the tree, and the man made the chair.

Now, if this man sits at a table, and only cuts out one little piece and sends it down an assembly line, and somebody else puts it together, there may be a little sense of completion in the person that takes all the pieces and puts them together, but nothing such as our Lord had when He took a tree trunk, and sawed it, and shaped it, and planed it, molded it, and made a completed article out of it. Now our Lord knew the need in human beings for creative experience. He knew the need of being a fulfilled person. And it was not just enough to have a chair. It was not just the product of effort, but it was the process that also had significance to him. And our whole culture today is organized around this end, this principle, that it doesn't make much difference how you get it. The thing that is important is getting it. If it is a chair, it does not make any difference. We don't care who did it, as long as it is the thing we need to set in that corner, for that purpose. And I believe that this is all part of the disintegration that has come to the church because we do not have the sense of total fulfillment of human beings that is so important if a person is to be able to stand upon his feet, and face his day, and face his generation courageously.

Now you might ask, What does this have to do with Jehoshaphat? It has to do with the erosion. It has to do with the disintegration of our total culture. It has to do with the kind of world in which we live, the kind of place in which we live. You might ask, What is the answer? The answer is this, That you as a Christian, living in the 20th century, must understand that there is great responsibility upon you to be acquainted with the Word of God, and the will of God, to do as Socrates said, "Know yourself, but not only to know yourself but to know God's answer, God's provision, and God's purpose for you." And if

you have come to the place that you have seen yourself in relation to day, and seen yourself in relation to God's will and plan, and purpose, then possibly you can stand up as did Elisha and say, "Thus saith the Lord." But if you are dependent in that final sense upon the system that is before you, and of which you are a part, and you have in no sense any liberty, any sense of personal achievement as a human being, as God intended you to be, then you are going to be blown about. My heart is so troubled today when I travel from church to church and talk with men around the land to realize that, though it may be an Alliance Church in Detroit, if everybody is employed by the Motor Companies, there is an entirely different point of view from the standpoint of government and the day and the generation than say a church down in Florida where everybody owns his own store and business. Almost an entirely different church. Theologically the same terms and the same words, but not the same in the sense in which they know what God wants to say, and what God wants to have done. Do you know God's plan and purpose? You say, Well He wants people to be saved. Yes, but what are you going to do with a person that has received Christ? what are you going to do with the individual that has opened his heart to the Son of God, who has been forgiven of his past sins, and now he says, Here is my life. I want my life to count for eternity. I do not feel called to go to Bible School necessarily; I do not feel called to be a preacher. Does Jesus Christ have anything to say about how a person ought to live in the 20th century so that when the pressure is on he can speak, and speak effectively, and speak clearly to his day and to his generation, because this is something that cannot be done for us by an organization and meeting, it cannot be done for us by a group that passes a resolution. You are involved in this. This is your responsibility. It is your responsibility, just as wars are not fought from trenches any more. The next time there is a war there won't be any front, there won't be nearly as much as there was in the last World War, and there were hardly any fronts then. The last time that there was a war where gentlemen fought, someone said, was in 1914 to '18. There will never be another such war again.

Just in the same sense that your home is at the front and anything that'll happen, so you are at the front of responsibility. And can it be that confused people in your neighborhood, your community, realize that you have been with God, and you have found how to live the balanced, wholesome, effective, intelligent life, oriented to the whole of the responsibilities that you have. Can people come to you and expect to hear from God? This is the question. They could come to Elisha. Are you to the Lord as the prophet was in his day? You say, Well he had a special revelation. No, but you see, he was independent of Jehoram. He could look into this king's face and say, If it were not that Jehoshaphat is there, I would not even look at you. I would not even see you. I would not hear a word you have said. Or, have you come to the place where it is policy, what the policy is, the policy. Are you a person that can stand in the day in which God has placed you, and the place where you are and simply say, "Thus saith the Lord." This requires a certain stability of character, of Christian character, and of total life. It is not just something that comes from having taken a Bible School Course, or a correspondence course; you do not acquire it there. But when you come to the place that your relationship with God is such that you know Him, and you are no longer looking to the Union, or to the Government, or to the employer for your security. You have learned how to live, you have learned what God intended you to be, and you can stand and face your day and your generation, and say, This is what God has to say today.

Now it isn't enough for one to say it here. If we have the... Suppose that whoever was here should have such a hearing in New York City that it would be necessary to move down to Madison Square Garden. What are 20 thousand among 8 million, if all are coming to hear one man, and just that one man is speaking every Sunday to 20 thousand. Someone might say, Well the blessing of God is on him. Look there are 20 thousand. Well how do you know that the blessing of God does not come until you get 40 thousand and then there would not be any. The question is not how many people are sitting here tonight. The question is, What is happening to you while you sit here tonight? Are you realizing your responsibility to stand for something and be something in the 20th century, not just to have heard something, not just to have thought – to have been taught something, not to have been indoctrinated; but somehow to have become a partaker of Divine Life, to have become a possessor of truth, to have experienced something so that where you go tomorrow, when people are confused and they are in battle with themselves and with Satan, they can come to you and they have something from God for you. Or do you have to say, Come and hear our preacher. Come to the Bible School Class. Or... Have you something from the Lord? This is the issue.

There are confused people that are in battle with their senses, and their appetites, with the god of this world on every hand. This is not a battle that is going to be fought out here ten years, twenty years from now, at some crucial point. It is happening tomorrow. The fact that you are in church, that you are an evangelical Christian, that you know the words of Biblical theology,

and that you type next to that person who does not have any of these things, but that you have the same frustrations, the same confusions, the same perplexities, the same uncertainties that they have, completely nullifies the relevance of Christianity in that office. If you are complaining about the working hours, and you are mad that they put a sign, No more than two minutes for a coffee break, or whatever it is; if this is happening to you, and you are in that office, then you have completely neutralized and nullified you witness there. Have you so related yourself to Christ? Have you so partaken of His life? Have you so established yourself in His Word, and in His truth, that you can stand and face the people that are in your day, and in your generation and say to one king, If it weren't for him, I wouldn't even look at you, and say to the other, This is what God said.

Now I submit to you that this is the kind of Christian character that He wants to produce in the 20th century. And He is going to make it out of people like us. He hasn't got some super breed that he is going to bring from some place. You know, it has been awfully nice for some folks to say that God was going to do everything that He wanted to do by some nation in the tribulation. Well I have just come to the conclusion that God is going to work with people like us. And it is not going to be some super generation of intellectual giants. He is just going to take plain old clay, such as we are, and He is going to do something to us, and for us, and in us, so that we can stand in our generation and know where we stand, and why we stand, and what we stand, and we will be able to speak, even to the confused kings, that have no answer for the things they are facing.

And you say, Well what do I have to do in order to become this kind of a Christian? What do I have to do to become the kind of a person that Elisha was, having an answer from God for the need of His day? Now do you have any desire for this? That is the first thing? Are you simply content to be part of the problem, or do you want to be part of God's answer. And if you are prepared to be part of God's answer, to stand for Him, then the first thing you have got to recognize is that you have gone to make preparation in advance.

Someone said, When is the best time to start training a child? And the answer that came was, With his grandmother. And undoubtedly this is true, because there is going to be a tremendous carry over from the past. When is the time to start training yourself to stand under great test and great difficulty that may lie ahead in the future? or to serve in some hour? It is simply to begin today; if you cannot begin yesterday, begin today.

Well, what are you going to do? Elisha gave us the answer. The answer for every life; it is the answer for your life. And it is what you are going to have to face. First, you are going to have to recognize that preparation has to be made before blessing comes. Everyone would like to be saved, if they could feel saved before they repented and believed. Everyone would like to be filled with the Spirit, if they should know they were filled with the Spirit before they trusted God. Everyone would like to be able to have faith for ministry and miracles, if they could simply know it was going to happen before it did. And so everyone would like to be a hero, if it did not require so much strenuous preparation in advance. You have got to prepare now for whatever you are going to be tomorrow. You are not just going to accidentally come into valiant Christian character, and effective Christian ministry, simply because some accident of events take place. This is what Elisha is telling us. He says, Dig ditches, dig ditches. And digging ditches simply means that long before you see any sign of water, any sign of blessing, you are prepared to make any preparation necessary.

Now do you believe that God still meets people? Do you believe that God still teaches people? Do you believe that God still fills people with the fullness of His Spirit? Do you believe the Lord Jesus Christ still takes a life, and moves into that life to bring joy, and peace, and blessing, and fruitfulness in some measure as He intends and purposes? Do you believe that a personal God, who loves to personally reveal Himself to you? Do you believe that God can do more for you than has been done up until tonight? Well, if you have any idea that God is adequate to meet your personal need? (And remember, everything that is going to happen in the future depends upon what happens to you. This is a personal response.) Are you prepared to make the preparation necessary now.

Elisha said to these three kings, I want you to understand that God has told me to tell you that today you go out there and start digging ditches. Do you know what this meant? Arid soil, a desert. And it meant they had to throw back the dirt and make troughs, that would lead to pits, and ponds, and throw up banks. Why? God was going to bless. And I can see some of them

sitting down and saying, Oh this is nonsense. Wait until the water comes, and that will be plenty good enough. I can hear people say, Wait till revival comes, then I will meet God. Wait till God does something, then I am prepared. But I am not going to dig any ditches while it is as dry as a bone, and not a cloud in the sky.

My friend, if you are to have for this generation the ministry that God wants you to have, the message God wants you to have, and to be to it what God intends for you to be, you've got to begin tonight. You cannot wait. There will never be a better time. Now. What is digging ditches going to mean?

Well, first it is going to mean that you are going to recognize that you do not have what you ought to have, but you can. And so there is an element of faith right here. Elisha was the instrument of revelation. He said to these kings, Get your soldiers out there, get them to lay their spears and arrows down, and get them shovels, and make ponds, and make pits, and make places where when the water comes you can store. Otherwise it is all going to rush away, and you won't have it when you need it. And so they were prepared to do the thing that they were told to do. They did it, not on the basis of what they felt, not on the basis of what they had seen; they did it on the basis of confidence on the one who spoke, and certain that he was going to be well instructed.

Now I believe that I am well instructed of God when I say to you that God is blessing today, God is finding people He can bless, God is finding groups He can bless, and He wants to bless you. But if there is going to be blessing, then right now before you see, or sense, or feel a thing, you have got to dig ditches. It is going to mean that you are going to take the rocks out, big heavy boulders that may have to be moved, and shale that is piled up. What is this? Well, let us allow that it is our attitudes. Wrong attitudes toward yourself — some of you have depreciated yourself far beyond what God ever intended. You have just written yourself off. Certainly the Scripture says, "In me and my flesh there is no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). And that is true. But if there wasn't something there that God wanted, why would He have said, "Present your body a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1). And so, if you rightly view yourself, you are going to see that, whereas you do not have the resources to be the kind of a Christian that this hour demands, you have something that is indispensable to God for it. And so you cannot depreciate yourself to the point where you say, I am nothing. Well in one sense, that is true. But in another sense, I am a man, I am a person, a man, I am a human being, and God loved human beings enough to give His Son for them. And they are so important to God that everything He did at Calvary now mediates through human beings. And so you have got to change your attitude toward yourself.

You say, Well I am nothing. I have not had any Bible School training. I have not a personality. Maybe this is a rock, maybe this is a great barrier in the way of God's blessing, that you have just come to the place where you have written yourself off, and you should not have done that. And if anything that I have said from the pulpit has given that impression, then I certainly want to qualify it. This is the problem. When you are saying one thing, so many times people sense and feel another. You are important to God. You are so important that He cannot do what He wants to do in that office without you. He cannot do what He wants to do in that home without you. He cannot do what He wants to do in that place, apartment building without you. You are tremendously important to God. Now He cannot do it without you. The other thing of course is, You cannot do it without Him. And so many times when we are trying to get you to see that you cannot do it without Him, we may give you the impression that He does not need you at all. Well in one sense that is true. But there is another sense in which you are tremendously important. Your life is important. I do not care how old you are. The days that you have left, rightly related to God's will and purpose, can change things. Not one here is too old to have a valiant, glorious finish to your life. And it is this that I covet for you.

Perhaps one of the things you are going to have to do is to realize that you are just as good as anybody God has used. Just as bad, too, but just as good. Some to whom I speak might say, Well you know, I have been such a sinner. I do not see how God call possibly use anyone that has sinned the way I have sinned. Well, my friend, if you have repented of your sins, and forsaken your sins, and have known the cleansing of the Blood, it may be a blow to your ego to know how bad you have been, but I want you to know God has forgotten your sins. He has remembered them against you no more forever, and He is not going to intimidate you with them, and you ought to change your attitude about that.

Then some perhaps might have this that they have got to say, Well I just do not have faith. I do not have the kind of faith that I have read about in the missionary biographies, and I do not think I have. No. We will agree to that, that you do not have. But digging ditches is going to have you come to the place that when you are prepared to meet Him on His terms, then He furnishes everything. He is going to furnish the faith. He is going to furnish the answer to the faith. Digging ditches then is not just a matter of confession of sin. It is a matter of changed attitudes.

The next thing that I would suggest that we see in digging of ditches is this: That it means there must be expectancy on your part that everything that you do toward God, God is going to receive. Now, if you confess your sin in brokenness, hating it, because of what it has done to you and Him, then I believe that it is digging of ditches to confess it, knowing that He has forgiven it. We have said this in several different ways, but I want to say it again tonight.

Perhaps it means that you have surrendered in the past, and then something has come in to cause you to deviate and twist, and swerve from the clear purpose that you made a few months ago. And perhaps you might say, Well, God has just written me off. I don't expect... No. Digging your ditches is going to mean that you come back again, like a little child learning to walk, you fell down, and you have been creeping for a few weeks, all right. You get up, and you surrender yourself wholly and completely to the Lord, and believe that when you do that the vessel that your surrendered life makes He is prepared to fill and to use.

Now digging of ditches then means that everything that is necessary for preparation for us to be usable to God we do, confidently, cheerfully, happily, knowing that we are not doing it in vain. This is the reason why I have pled with you in these weeks past to break completely before the Lord, to deal with all sin, everything that you know that is wrong, and everything that you know has grieved Him, just to confess it, forsake it, and leave it under the Blood. Why? Because it makes a depression, if you please, it makes a pool in your heart. Now God has something that He can fill. Now He has something that He can use. This is why. Confession and brokenness is not revival in the final sense, but it is just the digging of ditches, it is just the making of the trough, it is the excavating of the pit, it is the preparing of the place for when God does send that for which we so desperately need, you have made preparation to receive it.

Now what is the consequence of not doing it? Suppose the person next to you believes what is being said here. And I do not in any sense equate myself with Elisha, but I say the testimony is the same. The day, the need, the danger is the same, and the responsibility of you to fit yourself to serve God today is the same. Suppose the person next to you, just right next to you, the one sitting next to you, takes seriously every word that I am saying, believes that this is a day of great challenge, a day of great opportunity, breaks before the Lord, deals with every sin that has been committed. Deals with every wrong attitude, makes a full and complete surrender to God, and has dug ditches. Now that is not going to be too apparent. They may have done this in the weeks past, and have been sitting next to you. You say, I see nothing different. I do not see a thing that is different. But I know this, that if you will check the life of the person next to you that has met God in preparation, and yourself refuse to meet God in preparation, this you will see. A few years from now the one who was sitting next to you is not next to you any longer. They have gone on into usefulness. They have gone on into fruitfulness. They have gone into blessing. And you are right where you were, failing every day to glorify Christ in the office, in the home, in the shop, in your apartment building where you live, having no testimony, and no ministry. Why? Because you see, the Word of God was, Dig ditches. Make preparation. You did not do it. The other one did. God met the one who did. And He has not been able to meet you. He loves you just a much, but you have been useless to Him, you have failed Him.

We that are associated with young pastors, and have been young pastors ourselves, often times in conversing will say this about some young man in the ministry, My, if he would just break, if that young man would just break, if he'd just bend before the Lord, and if he'd just bow before God, how God could use him.

I had this experience a few years ago up in Canada. Two young men, both pastors of their first church... I'll never forget. During these meetings, we tried to bring them to see the truths that are really before you now. And the service progressed to the place of an invitation. And at the altar that night there were two young men, side by side, both Bible School graduates, both

pastors in their first church. One of the men wept. I'll never forget it. O God, I am such a failure. I came into this task so cocky, so proud, so arrogant, so self-assured. Lord, I do not deserve the ministry. I am absolutely without anything to offer. He broke.

The other man sobbed. He sobbed, but he never broke. He was pitying himself, feeling sorry for himself, wouldn't accept responsibility, and while the one man was down there broken before God, the other one got up, went and got his violin, and started to softly play music behind the altar. And I talked with the one, who was in charge at the meeting, and he looked at me through his great concerned eyes, and he said, He has never broken. He has never broken.

Well, what happened? Two young men. Far as one could see, they had equal opportunity, equal talent. The one is back in the family hardware business, given up the ministry; and the other is a District Superintendent of that District. Why? The one man broke, he bent, he bowed, he dug ditches. And then he went back to an impossible task, the task that he was resenting, the task that he hated, but he went back, broken. And God caused the waters to flow.

Now, my dear, if you are prepared to dig ditches tonight, if you are prepared to meet God's conditions tonight, the promise is, the water is going to come up. "This valley shall be filled with water." There wasn't a storm. He said, You won't see thunder, you won't see lightening. You won't see the rain. It is going to come over there, and it is going to just sweep up. And you see we have such a preconceived idea of what revival ought to be, and this is why some people miss. Oh, they have heard people tell about it, they have read stories about it, when revival comes the emotional atmosphere becomes electric. Well it may become electric, and it has, and God has worked that way, but you know it does not seem to me at the present time that He is working that way. But I am meeting pastors and people through this area that have broken before the Lord, they have bent before the Lord, they have dug ditches, and the water, apparently the rain has been somewhere else, because the water just came right down into this place and where there were troughs, and pools; they were filled. And I find that happening today. It is happening in this church. It is happening all around us. The people that are prepared to meet God are finding God meeting them.

What about you? God has so much for you. This is such a tremendous day, such a tremendous responsibility. How are you going to rightly relate yourself to such a complex culture as ours? How are you going to be able to find the way through this jungle of philosophies that conflict with one another so violently. How are you going to be able to stand in that place where God has put you to work, as a wholesome, happy, fulfilled individual, that has something to say to the people around you? How are you going to do it? You do not have the resources within yourself. You are tremendously important to God, as the vehicle by which He can reveal how gloriously He meets human needs. Are you that kind of a testimony and a witness? Are people going home at night after having spent some time with you saying, What is there about her? O my! There is something there. Do you sense that the great empty place in your life has been filled with the Water? Is there something cool, and refreshing, and restful about you? Do the people that are in the school where you teach, shop where you work, want to get near you, just because there is something of Heaven, something of God, something of eternity. Do you carry with you, by your demeanor, your poise, your life, that epistle that is known and read of all men. You say, Well I haven't thought of it that way. I guess I do not.

Well what are you going to do? Go back to the office the way you left it Friday? go back to your work the way you left Friday? You ought to do something more than that. You owe it to these people. You owe it to the people in the apartment building where you are. You owe it to the people that work with you. You owe it to the people that know you, the people from whom you buy your produce and your food. You owe them something more than that. You cannot just say, Come and hear my preacher. You are the preacher. You are the epistle. You are the letter. You are the sample. You are the whole of the Gospel. You are the Bible. You are the only Christ they know. What are you going to do?

Well I suggest that tonight you start digging some ditches, dig a pit, dig a valley, dig a trough. How? Take away everything that stands in the way. Deal with all sin, all the rocks that clutter, all the dirt that impedes. Just get it out. Take the shovel of confession, but get it out. Get it out, get rid of it, get a valley there, get a trough there. Then surrender yourself to Him. Just give Him everything, realizing how important you are to Him, and how wonderfully important He is to you. Without you He can do nothing, and without Him, you can do nothing. Do that, and if you will, then I assure you that the water — oh, it may not be

that everybody in the church meets God at the one time, but God will meet you. And that is what we are concerned about. And you are going to become what He wants you to be. But if you wait for everybody else, you won't have the ditch dug, the pit dug, you won't be in a place to receive. What would happen, if right now, at this very moment, the Spirit of God would be poured out upon this congregation. And only the ones that have completely broken before the Lord, in confession of all sin, were filled with His Spirit, and only the ones that have completely surrendered their lives to Him, were filled with the Spirit. If the Spirit of God were poured out, as it was on the Day of Pentecost, and only those that have completely broken before the Lord, and have completely surrendered to the Lord were filled, what would happen to you? Would it make any difference to you? Would it? Have you done that? This is what you ought to do. This is what we ought always to do. We ought to make preparation now, knowing that when we do God meets us.

Let's pray. Our Father, we have a tremendous responsibility to Thee with truths such as we hold, that Jesus Christ did not die just to take us to Heaven, but to fill us with Himself, and to live His life in us in the most complicated and difficult of situations, to prove to those that are in such situations how adequate He is. And here we are, Lord, a people that have been in the heart of this city, seeking to serve Thee, and somehow failing to understand that we are part of the battle, that we are part of the conflict, that we are part of this day and generation. We have been sort of standing on the sidelines, spectators to life, instead of realizing that maybe that young man that lives in our building that talked with us in the elevator became completely disillusioned with life because in talking with us, having heard we were Christians sensed so little that was different. Father, if Thou canst get this people that are before Thee now, in this room, to realize that they are essential to Thy purpose, valuable in Thy eyes, worth more than all the world, one soul more than all the gold in the world. And, whereas we cannot do it, Thou art ready, and willing, and able to do it in us and through us. And Thou canst not do it in one sense, because of Thy decree, without us. Lord, grant that there may be tonight some digging of ditches, some preparation, that is going to mean that Thou canst fill with Thy fullness. Oh, how wonderful to realize that the Spirit of God wants to fill us with Himself, and make real the presence of Christ in our lives.

Dear friends, while we are waiting here bowed in prayer, I want to ask this question, if the water were to rise tonight, do you have the ditches dug? Do you? Or, is there just no place yet where the blessing of God could rest. Now if there is bitterness in your heart, if there is unforgiving spirit, if there is unconfessed sin, then there is no ditch, no pit, no basin, no place for the water to stay. Oh, tonight out of concern, not just for yourself, but the people who are looking to you and have a right to look to you, do you not feel that it is imperative that you deal with the things that the Spirit of God has shown you? And as I have been speaking, you know your heart; you know what He has shown you, you know what is standing in the way of His meeting you. Do you not feel that the wise thing is just now, tonight, to put yourself in the way of blessing, so that God can meet you, use you, make you that channel for the revelation of Himself? Let me ask you, will you do it? Are you prepared to say, Yes, tonight, I am just going to deal with everything. I want to deal with absolutely everything that stands in the way of God using me. I know what it is. I am prepared to break before Him. I am prepared to confess as sin, and that which He has shown me. I am prepared to surrender all I am and have to Him. I want to be on blessing ground. I haven't been the kind of a Christian I ought to have been, and I do not want it to go on this way any longer.

Would you just quietly stand right where you are if this is your desire tonight, and you really are prepared to break, completely break, and deal with everything that God has shown you that stands in the way of your being a fruitful, effective, useful child of God, witness for Christ. Would you stand right where you are. Wait just a moment.

Now I am going to ask another question. Have the waters risen in your life? Have you sensed the indwelling presence of our wonderful Lord, the fullness of the Spirit. You do not need to answer this. It is not just rhetorical either. Do you sense that God has brought you to this place called the normal Christian life, that Christ is living in you, unhindered, unimpeded, unrestricted, the joy of His presence has become the joy of your life. Do you? You can you know. This is what He wants. But before the waters could fill the pits, the pits had to be dug, troughs had to be dug, and ditches had to be dug. For you perhaps this is a night of digging.

Just a moment now. Let me repeat it. You are child of God. You know you have been born of God, but you know that there have been things standing in the way of God's meeting you, and tonight you are prepared to deal with those things,

completely, totally. Would you just stand to be remembered in prayer? Thank you, yes, I see it. Thank you. Yes. God bless you. Yes. Just remain standing if you will...

Let us stand now and be dismissed in prayer. Our Father, we thank Thee for Thy presence with us. We thank Thee for Thy speaking voice. We rejoice that Thou dost honor obedience and faith. When they dug the ditches Thou didst send the water. We believe that when we have done this, when we have made preparation, when we have made spiritual preparation of brokenness, and surrender, that this prepares us for all else before us. And so we pray for everyone that is here. We thank Thee for those that Thou hast met, and art meeting. We thank Thee, our Father, for Thy dealings with us. And now Thou knowest hearts that are here to whom Thou hast spoken, and they have heard something, but not as much as they need to hear. Father that Thou wilt just bring them on, and carry them on, until all Thy good purpose is realized, until the waters have risen have filled every heart, flooding to overflowing the prepared life. Dismiss us now as we part. Help us to go prayerfully, and thoughtfully, and to ask ourselves tomorrow as we approach whatever our task may be, Am I here all that Jesus Christ would have me to be, and could make me be. And if we are not, Lord, help us to realize that there is much more in Christ than we have received. May Thy grace, and mercy, and peace, be and abide with us, now and forever. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, September 9, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.

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