

Ebenezer

By Paris Reidhead*

To 1st Samuel, the 4th Chapter, we will turn for the setting for our thinking tonight. I will read beginning with the 1st verse. 1st Samuel, Chapter 4.... (Verses 1 - 11)

“And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these are the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight. And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.”

It is a sad, sad picture that we have just read, one that ought to stir our hearts with great grief, and one that ought to bring us face to face with our day and our generation, prepared to let the Spirit of God speak to us. Ebenezer was the place against which Israel pitched their camp, and Ebenezer means, “The stone of help.” Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. The ark of God spoke of its presence, and the promise of blessing, and yet Israel failed, fled, was smitten, defeated in spite of all the promises of God, all the provisions of God. Here, though they were pitched at Ebenezer, they knew nothing but defeat and nothing but failure.

But if we were to take the time to read on, we would discover there is another occasion when purging, when purifying, when brokenness accompanied by cleansing has come to the camp, and the people have met God’s terms, God’s conditions, then victory, then triumph, and Samuel raises that stone of remembrance, that stone of help, and cries out, Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped us. And, consequently, I have chosen this word to introduce the theme of the evening, because I want you to realize there is nothing magic about a plan, and there is nothing that is to be considered supernatural about a formula. And we can go through the motions that the fathers employed in other days and pitch over against Ebenezer, and still be smitten by the Lord. It is more than a formula, it is more than a plan, but it involves this. And so with the remembrance that Ebenezer was the place of defeat as well as the place of victory and blessing, may I bring you back again in your thinking to another day. I take you back to a day some eighty years ago when down on 13th Street, Dr. A. B. Simpson¹, a Presbyterian Pastor, whose life had been radically, dynamically changed by the revelation of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ for body and soul and spirit. Dr. Simpson, had, because of the Spirit’s infilling presence, a great love and burden for the people of New York. He sought to witness to them through the avenue of the church that he was pastor of, and found that the people shared not his burden, and cared virtually not a whit for that which God had made so patently clear and real to him. And thus, after just a short ministry there, Dr. Simpson felt that the Spirit of God would lead him out of that church to establish in New York a mission ministry, not a city mission in the manner in which we are accustomed to think, but something that was new, something that was different, something that God taught to be His purpose for the day.

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

Now remember that he was the same pastor when he was in the 13th Street Presbyterian Church as he was when he met with a little group of seven in a room on 23rd street, the same man, the same education, the same background. Everything about him was the same. Remember that the difference lay in his relationship. There he was in a sense the employee of a church, a church that did not share his vision, that was not concerned about whether or not God had given him the vision, that was not the least interested in walking in the way that God had called this man to walk. And so he found it necessary to turn his back upon honor, for it meant shame and stigma, to leave the Presbytery, a place where he was honored and respected, and to step out as an independent to begin a work. It was a terrific, costly step, one that meant through the years of his life embarrassment and heartache. For he testifies that 25 years after that event, walking on the streets of New York, he met fellow clergymen who looked at him and indicated that they recognized him, but refused to speak to him or so much as nod. For he had turned his back on everything that they counted precious, position, honor, esteem, salary. And he held it to be of no value. For remember he was — that church that he pastored, the congregation that he served, was (I have been told) the congregation which later moved up to 5th Avenue and established the 5th Avenue Presbyterian Church. Now of this I have not the word, but this is that which I have been told. At any rate, it was a fluent, wealthy congregation that paid him the munificent sum of \$5,000 a year in 1884, 5, 6, 7, 8, and the equivalent today would be, roughly, \$30 to \$35,000 in terms of purchasing power, And from that time on, Dr. Simpson completely eschewed any remuneration from this church, never taking a salary from it, nor for his services for the Lord.

He had a vision. He had a burden. His vision was to reach New York City. He viewed it as a Mission Field. He left that church in order that he would be free to obey the Lord. He met, I say, with seven, only one of which was from the church of which he had been pastor. They had no plan, they had no procedures. All they had was a vision and a burden, a deep concern pressed upon their hearts by the Lord Jesus Christ. The result of it was that they had to go step by step, and if you will trace carefully those early days, I believe you will discover that without any, to my knowledge, known reference to history, thought there may have been an acquaintanceship such as I sought to give you last Sunday night. And undoubtedly there was in a general sense, but certainly with no reference to it in anything that I have been able to see or read. Dr. Simpson saw the plan that God seemed to be using then. The church was established as a church, but not just as a church, but as an evangelistic center. They moved to several different buildings in various areas, to 23rd Street, to 5th Avenue, and finally settled here on this corner, selling the church which would have been I believe on 45th Street and 5th Avenue because it was too far from the immigrants that were coming in and settling here on the West Side.

One of the ironies of this is that at the time he purchased this property, his well-meaning friends in this city thought he had lost his mind because he had moved so far out from the center of the city. Remember that at that time the shopping center was 14th Street, and these prophets said, "Simpson, you have made a tremendous mistake. New York will never grow out to 44th Street." Our Brother Liermann who I do not see here, but was here this morning, and will soon be 90 years of age, tells me that he can remember in the early days of his youth when up on 72nd Street he could stand on the back porch or upstairs in his house and look straight across the city and see the ships in the harbor at 34th Street, largely corn fields, and just open fields where farmers were still growing vegetables for the markets. Now this has happened in just this brief period of 80 years, the difference has taken place in this time.

And so he had a vision, he had a burden. Essentially the vision and burden was this, that God wanted to bless all of His people, and that many of His people were in such a situation in relation to denominations that there could be no blessing brought to them, or little, through the denominations. And though a church was established here, in those early days he did not seek to establish elsewhere churches as now we do. On the contrary, he just established little groups of people meeting for fellowship. And here is the genius of it. They would go into a city, contact someone that had a hungry heart, and meet in a home, gathering these hungry ones together for fellowship in the Word, and in prayer. But when did they meet it was not on Sunday morning. For Dr. Simpson's concept was that he wanted to be a blessing to the whole community, to the entire body of Christ. And he knew that, if he drew these hungry ones out of the churches to establish a new church, then he had lost the means of contact with the church from which they had come and the means of blessing to that church. And so they met Sunday afternoon. They had joint, dual membership. They were identified with the little group called the Alliance, the Christian Alliance, but this in no way affected their membership in the local church. For they would come together Sunday afternoon to read the Word, to fellowship in Christ, to pray, and then go back home even for Sunday evening to carry the blessing, the

inspiration and the challenge that had come to them in this fellowship. Then they would return again on Thursday evening, not on Wednesday, but on Thursday. So that in this fashion they would not interfere with their responsibilities to their own church in the mid-week. It would not be necessary for them to give up their membership or in any wise interfere with their responsibility.

If you see then this pattern, if you see then this means of ministry, you understand why in the 1st ten years we are told that over a thousand such groups were formed. Now think with me. Here was a church in New York, and a man that had a vision and a burden, that without the benefit of organization or promotion or any of these tools so essential, simply the unfolding of God's plan for that day and that hour, he was instrumental in seeing a thousand such groups begin across the country. We are celebrating this year the 75th Anniversary of the joining of the Missionary Society which was formed with the Christian Alliance. I believe that it behooves us in this 75th year as the local church here from which all of this began to study again those early days, and for this reason I have pressed upon every elder, deacon, Sunday School Teacher, and attending friend and member of the church the obligation, I feel, and certainly the opportunity and responsibility to read again the two lives of Simpson, the one by Mr. A. E. Thompson, The Life of A.B. Simpson, and the one by Dr. Tozer², Wing Spread: A. B. Simpson: A Study in Spiritual Altitude. I believe that the reading of these two volumes will enable you to go back again and discover this genius of which I speak.

Now during these past years, 75 years, since the Christian Society and the Missionary Society and the Christian Alliance joined, there has been by necessity, and certainly not by decision, but there has been by necessity a strengthening of the ties of local church responsibility, and increase of our in a sense denominational life. But at no point along this course of 75 years have we ever repudiated this original genius. And for this reason I make call to you again to believe that God has never changed the franchise that He gave this church and He gave this society, that it is still incumbent upon us if we are to be true to that upon which we were founded to believe that God wants to make us a blessing to the entire Christian community, not simply to be built up by a process of proselytizing, or even of evangelizing, the building up of the local church as the end of our ministry. For you will discover that in those days of which we speak, people journeyed from afar to stay in residences in the area, as well as in the Alliance Home in order that their heart hunger might be met, and in order that, being filled with God, and physical needs met, and the glory of God coming upon them, they might return all over the world as well as the land to carry the testimony of the sufficiency of Christ.

Now this is part of that original genius that God is interested in the blessing of His people. I recall when I was asked some years when I was a deputation secretary for the Sudan Interior Mission, the year being 1949, that one of the older members of that staff and of the Mission took me aside. And he said, "Brother Reidhead, you are going to have a great temptation as you go out to the churches of the country to try to seek something for the Mission. But I want you to know that the entire deputation ministry of this society was founded on a different basis. When Dr. Simpson sent me out the first time, and he was the original one of the staff, he said to me, 'Be it known to you now and to all who may come that the purpose of deputational ministry in this Society is not to get something for the mission, but it is to give something to the body of Christ.'" And he said, "If we can give to God's people and be a blessing to them, God will make them a blessing to us. Now I simply testify to this because I want you to understand that I sought diligently to obey that and to follow it, and from that first time of deputation ministry, my great concern of heart was to bring to those to whom I spoke the blessing of burden, to share the fellowship of our Lord's suffering, and to bring to them the blessing of the fullness of provisions of Christ to the degree to which I knew those provisions. And I would say to you that this God on earth, for I can tell you of churches that we entered, where for a week we would speak concerning the sufficiency of Christ from the Word, and simply use the material, the literature, and the films to lay a burden on the hearts of the people with no ulterior motive." There were needs. Yes. And of them we spoke, but the purpose in being there was to lay upon the hearts the blessing of burden and the burden— and the sense of the provisions of God in His grace. And we have seen God honor that, giving from little churches thousands of dollars for missions—from a little conference \$25,000 dollars from no more than some 40 guests. There was a reason for it. There was a principle involved in it. The purpose of it was not to get, but to give. And since God knew that this was the case, He was then prepared to move upon the hearts of the people to give.

2 Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963) Pastor and Author, Christian and Missionary Alliance Magazine Editor

Now this has been my experience. I asked the man about it. And he said that the founder of the mission had been profoundly influenced by Dr. Simpson in the earliest days of his work. For you will recall that the three young men, or perhaps you won't recall, but I inform you, that the three young men who formed the Sudan Interior Mission were Gowans, Kent, and Bingham, had first gone to Dr. Simpson and asked him to open the work in Nigeria. But because he had just taken on the work in Congo and French West Africa, he felt that it was not wise or propitious to do it, and so they went ahead and established the work. But it was the vision, it was the burden of those early days, and one of the facets, one of the primary principles was this, Let your whole purpose be to be a blessing to the people of God.

Now, beloved, I believe that this must characterize us, if we are to meet the opportunity in the world today. We must remember that God never called us to be primarily a great denomination, but he called us to be a channel for great blessing to people of all denominations. He called us to be simply a funnel through which he could pour of Himself to satisfy the hungry hearts, that they in turn might be brought back. I call you, therefore, tonight to see this as a cardinal principle, that we are to think of ourselves here as having a part in and a concern for the entire body of Christ, not simply our own local interests, and our own local concerns. If it were a question of taking some hungry hearted person from another church and incorporating him in this church life I would personally say to that one if asked, If you can receive from the Lord that which will equip you to better serve Him, then you return to the place from which you have come to share that which God has done for you. You say, But how will that ever mean then the building of the local work. God is quite able to send here those whom He wishes to stand in this place and maintain this channel of blessing. You have got to make a choice. Your choice is either to build around yourself, which is the essentially egocentric, or it is a choice to pour out from yourself to those on every hand who are capable of receiving, appreciating, and experiencing the truth. And so one of the primary principles that underlay this work, and was the reason why God could bless it was that those who gathered with Dr. Simpson here in those early days shared his burden, shared his vision, and shared his concern that the whole body of Christ should be blessed.

Now the second principle and I join it closely to the one I have just sought to establish, is this. We recognize that the purpose of preaching is essentially to stir with discontent and at the present status and indicate that there is something better ahead. I want to repeat that. The primary purpose of preaching, and of teaching, and of writing is to be salt in the water, to stir thirst, and to quicken hunger, and to stimulate desire. I am convinced that as hard as I have tried to communicate to you over a period of over five and a half years the truth that I set forth in perspective this morning, and so fast that many of you I am sure could only record the terms rather than grasp the thing that we were saying. But nonetheless the pulpit is hardly the place to establish Christians in the truth. It is good for establishing a path. It is good for establishing doctrine. It is good for stirring hunger. It is good for revealing need. But I believe that as important as it is, it is only one aspect of bringing Christians to maturation, and so I would bring you to the second principle which we find clearly set forth in Acts, the 2nd Chapter, and the 42nd verse. This is that which was revealed in the ministry that the Lord gave to the one of whom we are speaking.

I begin with verse 41. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." This is the purpose of preaching, to convict, yes to convert, to bring to repentance and faith. But you remember from what you heard this morning and have heard and known elsewhere that God's purpose is not simply to get us converted, but it is to get us conformed to the image of His Son. And that I do not believe can be done in just the pulpit-pew situation, as we find it here. And I think I can enforce this from this 42nd verse of Acts chapter 2. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" And so as I think of those early groups, that thousand groups that were meeting Sunday afternoons, and on Thursday night, I see the 19th century approximation of Acts 2:42. And for this reason I believe that Dr. Simpson with the minimum expenditure of effort was able to have an effect upon the day and the generation out of all proportion to the significance of this pulpit.

Let me go back. What did he do? Through his writings, through The Word, The Work, and The World, I believe it was called, the earliest form of the Alliance Witness, he was able to put salt in the water of people that drank of the truth. Through his preaching as he went from city to city, through his books, he was able to stir folk with hunger. But getting a little thirst, a little hunger, they were not satisfied. And so they would write to, went, right to him and say, "What can we do to see these things established?" And he would say, "Gather a group of people together in a neutral place, a YMCA, or a Woman's Club, or some other building or home, and open God's Word and study God's Word, and pray and talk and share together." There were not a

thousand preachers for these groups. They did not have them. There were not pastors for them. It was just hungry hearted people that were together seeking to know and understand the provisions of Christ for them.

Now I believe that if Dr. Simpson had not seen this and established these groups, that his influence would have been just a fraction of what it proved to be, and he would have significantly failed the Lord. That writing is good, but it is not enough. That preaching is good, but it is not enough. Ultimately those who have been stirred by reading, and stirred by listening, must come somewhere where their hunger can be fed on the level far beyond that which can be shared with them over the pulpit. And so they established these class meetings. They were called Alliance. No. We are not interested in terms. And they would meet together and share together. Men of like mind, women of hungry heart; they would come, and they would talk, and they would share. They did not have form. They did not have number. There were no restrictions. There was no plan in the sense of something that might be more specific, as we see and shall refer to later happening today. They simply came together, people that were Presbyterian, and Episcopalian, and Methodist, and Baptist, came together to talk about the things of the Lord, and to feel upon them.

You see it here. You pick up your hymnal and you will get some idea of it. Or if you acquaint yourself with the work, there would be Dr. Henry Wilson³, an Episcopalian clergyman, having a meeting over there, an Episcopalian service; that is why it is called Wilson Chapel. And then there is Rainsford, who was a Salvation Army Officer. In those early days you found the Episcopalian, with the Salvation Army, Baptist, Presbyterians, Methodists, joining themselves to this vision, to this movement, to this thing that God was seeing fit to honor and to bless. Why? Why should God bless it? Because it represents the original genius of Christianity. We see it here in the text I have brought to your attention. They did not meet, 3,000 plus 120 or 500. There was not room for them. There was not the building in Jerusalem that would accommodate them all. We find that they were meeting from house to house in small groups. This was the order. This was the plan. And these groups were not officially designated, necessarily. It was just that the people were hungry, and those whom they knew – with them they had fellowship. Those in whom they had confidence, they sought. Those who could answer their questions, to them they came, “continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.”

This I believe is the reason why that movement back there 80 years ago spread so rapidly, because people were encouraged to share together, to pray together, to talk together, to fellowship together. And think of it, a thousand groups without promotion, in something like 10 years. Now, we have had, as I said, of necessity to change. The years have passed, and now we come to the place where we are almost a Denomination in every sense that any other would be, though we might like to avoid saying it. Yet the facts are stubborn things, and we function as one whether we are prepared to say it or not. Does the fact that it has been necessary for us to come to the place of having somewhat rigid pattern preclude the possibility of living up to and enjoying the blessing of that original franchise. I think not. And so I would exhort you to understand that if you are the rightful heirs of this testimony, it includes the importance of the small group meeting for study, for prayer, for worship, and sharing. Now it has not taken route in our society in the last ten years. But, because of our Society, it is taking root elsewhere. You see it for instance in the group in New York known as Faith at Work, in little groups meeting all over the city. You have been here will know that for five years I have been pleading in every way and word I know how to use for this church to get a vision that our primary strategy of evangelism and Christian service is the small group meeting in the home. To my knowledge, as of today, we possibly have the beginning of one, but I know of none other.

I believe that this means we have got to come back to the place where we have something vital to share, something dynamic to share, something glorious to share. You cannot account for those early days as Dr. Simpson stood in the pulpit and whipped the congregation and said, “This you must do, This is God’s plan, This is God’s procedure.” That is not why they did it. They did it because they had a revelation of Christ, Christ was glorious, filling them with His fullness, filling them with His life, and they had to share because God had done something glorious in them. And if we are not sharing, my dear, it can only mean that we have been content with less than the glory that God gave our Fathers, and less than the fullness that He bestowed upon them, and less than that which He is prepared to give us, because we see this same thing happening today elsewhere. I pointed out to you last Lord’s Day evening that this is the year, this last year, the Council of Bishops, meeting together in the West, the Council of Bishops in the West in the Methodist Church said, “We must during 1962 reestablish the class meeting. We are

³ Henry B. Wilson (1841-1908) Worked with A.B. Simpson. Wilson Chapel is named after him.

discovering that our meeting in our churches is not enough for the nurture, and the strengthening, and the teaching of our people. Therefore, we must return to Wesley's original premise and original principle;" and the Methodist church is doing this.

By the same token we see that the great United Presbyterian Church, great in numbers, has recognized that the service from the pulpit is inadequate. I do not know if you saw the article in last Monday's paper, but it was shown to me on Tuesday evening, and it came with shock, and with no little heart ache. The Pastor, and his name I have forgotten, of the Central Presbyterian Church, just came to this city a few months ago; a large article in one of the newspapers said that he had two things that he had instituted, the first was that they repeat on Wednesday night the Sunday morning service for those who could not attend, or chose not to. And, secondly, he said, they had established groups of twelve, all through the congregation that were meeting together to study the Word of God and to pray. Now, my dear, I want to say this with all seriousness, with all earnestness. Any group of people that will do that with sincerity, and openness, and hunger, and earnestness, will receive from God. And any group of people today who will do that will pass us in every vital particular if we do not do it. Now I want to repeat myself. Any group of people that are Trinitarian, and evangelical to the degree that they will come to the Word of God, who will do what this church is doing, gather their people in groups of twelve to study the Word, and to pray and to share, will have blessing from God. And any group, however glorious their heritage may be who will not do it will forfeit blessing. For it is utterly impossible for any people to prosper, to be nurtured, to be strengthened, unless they will give to God the time, the opportunity, the occasion, the atmosphere where He can bless.

And the original genius of the Alliance was the fact that Dr. Simpson saw that here and there, and there were hungry people who wanted God, and so he simply set a table in the wilderness and called them together. They ate, and were blessed, and returned. He honored it, and used it. God did. And I submit to you that we are here in the place where it all began and have the pattern to see, the heritage to view, the truth to consider and contemplate, and therefore there is greater responsibility upon us than upon any other group in the city. And I call you with me therefore in this 75th year of our Society's life, and 80th year of the church's life to give yourself anew to that which God was pleased to bless and use, for your sake, for the sake of those whom you can touch, and for the sake of God's entire testimony through us here.

It ought not to be restricted to our own people, though undoubtedly God is going to have to do much for us if we are to have much to share with others. But our idea should not be to get them into this church organically as members. This is the Lord's task, to build up the church, to add to this church. I have had people come to me and say, "Haven't you felt that God's responsibility on you is to build up the Gospel Tabernacle?" And I have said, "If I did, I would be untrue to the man who was first its pastor, and its founder." He did not come for that purpose. His purpose was not to build up the church but to exalt Christ, and bless the community, and bless the world. And if God can bring us to the place where this is our passion God will add to us those of like mind, and support with all whom He can use here those whom He needs. You have to choose somewhere along the line. You have to choose whether you are going to make an egocentric and build for the sake of reputation and numbers, and name, or whether your primary purpose is to come to the place that we can be a channel of blessing to the entire community and the world thereby, and allow God to do the building.

It happens that I had at least this conviction, whether insight or not, in coming 5½ years ago to you that this is the way it has to be done. It has to be done now the way it was done then. It has to be done by seeking God that we can become the means of blessing to the entire community. And when that is done, God will see to it that we are blessed with all that we can contain, with all that we can use. The original genius: Here is a world of hungry people. We have found them in the Episcopalian, the Baptist, the Methodist, and Presbyterian. You cannot throw a stick into a bush but what the hungry roll out to you saying, Tell me more. Never has there been such an opportunity. Never has God been so stirring hearts with desire for Himself, and has there been such a privilege of leadership as there is today. It has been my privilege to speak on two occasions to the Evangelical Pastors of Nassau-Suffolk up at Hudson House. The pastors of the community, an interdenominational group, and I have had these pastors sit there hour after hour with upturned faces, saying, "Tell us more. Their request was, We want you to talk about the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit in Relation to the Christian's Life." I have never known anything like it. Last year as far as I can recall, though I have not statistically enumerated them, but checking as near as I can, there have been upwards of 75 invitations that have come over my desk, asking that I should go to their churches for conferences, because people are hungry for God. And these are not Alliance churches essentially. They are Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Bible

Presbyterian, Orthodox Presbyterian, people that are seeing that they are living in a desert and they must find fountains from which to drink.

O dear heart, here with the heritage that is ours, there is no people anywhere that have such a privilege of being a blessing to the body of Christ as we have, if we will be true to that heritage and to that testimony and to that ministry. But if our eyes turn away from them, and in upon ourselves we have written Ichabod where there should have been Ebenezer. The glory of the Lord is departed, instead of Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. And in the light of what God has done in the past, Oh, will you not join me in this year of years in our history in rededicating ourselves to these cardinal principles, seeking to be a blessing to the whole body of Christ, and using this understanding of the small group of people gathering, to hear, to study, to seek, to pray, to return to their places of worship, and then trust God to bring to us those whom He would have stand with us.

To this I call you, to this I am committed, and should it be that we fail, I know this, We will be the losers, but God will raise up others, for the principle has been so blessed of Him that there will be wise men who will see it. But let us remember it is ours from the Lord if we will but use it. Oh, here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by Thy help I have come. And let us return to this Ebenezer the rock of help, and ask God to make real in our lives His own presence that we go not into failure, but we go in victory to serve our way and our generation. Great is our opportunity. We stand at a crisis; a crisis is a dangerous opportunity, an opportunity if we walk in it, a danger if we fail to, and ours together then to serve the Lord in our generation as the landmarks that were laid by the fathers.

Shall we pray. We believe, our Father, that this Thou hast done in the past, hitherto Thou hast helped us. We believe that Thou hast not withdrawn the franchise, nor Thou hast not repudiated the principles. They abide today. And if we as a people can see that our reason for being is to be a blessing to the whole body of Christ, and that the means that Thou hast ordained for that blessing above all others that we're used we're to gather the hungry together wherever they were found, and to share with them the things of Christ, then we believe, our Father, Thou canst pour out from Heaven upon us blessings we are not able to contain, but we will not be interested in being blessed, but in being a blessing, and so we will not revel in what Thou hast done for us, but what Thou art doing through us to the hungry on every hand: Oh, bring elders and deacons, and officers and teachers, and the entire church and society back to this that Thou hast so ordered, and help us to treasure it, to realize it, to appreciate it, to hold it dear and precious, and neither by decision nor carelessness to abandon this that Thou hast taught us is Thy way for us as a people. We pray, Lord, for those among us that are hungry. We pray, Lord, for those that have a deep desire for fellowship with Christ, to go on in the things of the Lord, who saw in the ministry where they are, and they want to go on. O God, that they might begin to ask, that there might be calls come, that Thou mightst stir up hearts for fellowship, that it can begin spontaneously. Lord, we have been so afraid of starting something mechanical, and in death. We want it to start in life as it did where Thou art in the midst, and Thou art causing groups to form because of hunger and desire. Let it begin with us and spread, Lord, until every member of our fellowship is incorporated, and until Thou art blessing out far beyond our precincts to the whole church of Christ. So receive our thanks, bless that which we have remembered, which we have seen, and stir us up again, Lord, not to squander our inheritance, but to cherish it and use it in such a day of opportunity and challenge as that we now face.

With our heads bowed and eyes closed, let me ask you if you are here and have spiritual need, and desire conversation, consultation and prayer, we will be happy to talk with you after the service, or arrange for a time to talk with you during the week. We want to help you. If you will be willing to stay, we will be so glad to pray with you tonight. Do not go if you have need without making that need known. This is our invitation God bless you as you respond to it.

Let us stand for the Benediction. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the communion and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost be and abide with us now and until Jesus comes again. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, January 14, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.