

The Normal Christian Life

By Paris Reidhead*

It's been a great delight to be with you this week. I have so enjoyed the opportunity of fellowship and I particularly appreciate the introduction just now. It's in contrast to one that I had some years ago where the one presiding said it gives me great pleasure to introduce my brother for the last time. I've been prayerfully trying to avoid that kind of introduction through the years. We've been talking about Hebrews the second chapter and the third verse "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation" and we've been tying it to the gospel in one verse, John 3:16 "For God so love the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not," and we've been translating it as you know, "be wasted but begin to live now here in the fullest of life and go on living that way forever."

I trust God will impress that on your heart when you think of John 3:16 and read it that somehow that will come to your attention and sort of enrich the verse. Tonight, I want you to tie in with this that which is found in Ephesians the third chapter in the second of the apostolic prayers. Would you turn to it, please, beginning with verse 14 of that third chapter of Ephesians? "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith." (Eph. 3:14-17a)

Now remember that whosoever believeth in Him "that Christ shall dwell in your hearts through faith." Now notice the blessings that occur from that. In order that, so that, "you may be rooted and grounded in love." (Eph. 3:17b) The roots of your life thus in if Christ is dwelling in your heart through faith you're like a tree planted by the river of water, your roots are in the flow of His infinite love, your foundation in love. Then notice further that you "may be able to comprehend with all saints" what are the dimensions of his love, "the breadth, the length and the depth and the height of his love." (Eph. 3:18) He wants you to intellectually perceive and spiritually participate in his love as a result of Christ dwelling in your heart through faith. Verse 19 says, "and to know." That's not just have intelligent information concerning. This know is experiential reality that you may know inwardly, maybe genuinely real not just any mental perception but a personal experience that "you may know the love of Christ which" passes the intellect, passes just information and knowledge. Then in order "that you might be filled unto all of the fullness of God."

Now this is the normal Christian life and this is that which He desires for each of us tonight. He wants us to live here, not just today but every day, all of our lives. Therefore, we will not accept this as being the ... or describe this as being the higher life or the fuller life or the deeper life. We just want to call it the biblical life, the Christian life, the normal Christian life. This is what He wants. Anything less than this is subnormal. It's below standard. It's below par. It's so easy for us to attach to a verse like this the idea that a few of God's aggressive, eager saints who are willing to go a little bit beyond what God expects that are a little more diligent and ambitious and spiritually aggressive can go on into a different level and different kind as though this was a reward for the eager.

Now, this is what was done in the centuries past for those that were satisfied with less than the norm or required more than the average. They established monasteries and convents and places to which people could come and there isolate themselves from the world that they might enter into a superior kind of Christian life. Well, I believe it's in the mind and will and purpose of God that every believer should live this life. That every single one of us in whatever responsibilities we have should be living at this level and to be content with less than this is an indication of some kind of spiritual sickness or infirmity. I would like therefore to disabuse your mind right now that I'm talking about something that's a reward for the few that excel. It's the goal for everyone that's born into the family of God. It's a realizable goal. It's God's plan and it's God's purpose for you. How are you going to escape the consequences of being satisfied with less than that which is God's intention for you? Because you see when you stand before Him at the Bema, the judgment seat of Christ, we're going to give an account of the deeds that we have done in the body whether they be bad or good. We're going to be responsible for all that we did that dishonored Him of course. We're going to be responsible for all that we did that was less than the best that we might have done. We're going to be responsible for all that we did within the full powers of our energy and personality. But we're also going to be responsible for all that we might have been and might have done if we had been willing to take Him at His word, believe that He meant

exactly what He said and appropriate that which He provided. To think that we can slip through the screen somehow and that we're going to get by, because we're content to know that if we die and go to heaven ... that we'll go to heaven but that we're really not going to put ourselves out enough to meet these rather clear terms of the Scripture. This is just sort of fooling ourselves. It's childishness.

When we stand before Him we're not only going to give an account of what we did, but what we could have done. If we had loved him as much as we try to convince Him we do when we sing, "Oh how I love Jesus."¹ Well, that's what we're talking about tonight. That's what we're concerned about tonight that you should understand that there is for you, as you know so well, deliverance from the penalty of sin, pardon, new life in Christ indeed. You also know that there is cleansing and pardon from that into which we fall when overtaken by a fault after which after we've been born of God. There is victory for us. Indeed, there is and it's our responsibility therefore to come to the laver as we saw last night for cleansing. To go to the cross for victory. It's our responsibility to be filled with the Spirit. This is the normal Christian experience. "Be, ye being filled with the Spirit" is a simple commandment of the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 5:18) But just having the assurance that we have been filled with the Spirit hardly suffices in the face of a text such as we have tonight. To know that one has at some time in the past met the conditions, abandoned all that they are and have to the Lord Jesus, have exercised faith to receive the gift of the filling of the Spirit or the baptism of the Spirit, wonderful indeed.

As Dr. Tozer² said in his little book on that subject many years ago, "Everyone who's filled with the Spirit knows it. And everyone who is filled with the Spirit was filled suddenly and everyone who's filled with the Spirit knows when he first became aware of that fullness of the Holy Ghost." Well, that is essential and that is important but what about walking in the Spirit. That's what the text that we have here in verse 17 of this portion instructs us in. "That Christ shall dwell in your heart by faith." Faith or believing is therefore crucial not just to all of the experiences that we've enumerated in the past, but it is also to be the basis for our ongoing relationship. "Christ shall dwell, reside, live, make his effective dwelling place in our hearts through faith." Now we've talked a lot about believing. We've talked a lot about faith during these days but so far I haven't attempted to define it. It's really rather difficult to define. I've had several books in my library about faith written by good men who took the subject "what is faith." I find that in two or three hundred pages they end up with the question of what is faith. They haven't answered it terribly well, but they certainly enjoyed discussing it. I have in the past myself preached many messages on faith without really coming to grips with what is it. Well, the definition that I'm to give you may not please the schools of theology, it may not please those that are looking for the ultimate in theological exactitude but as far as I'm concerned I'm just a simple practical sort of a guy who wants something that works. So, the definition is going to be the simple practical kind for people that want to have faith worked in their lives. Here it is.

Faith is the sight of the soul. Faith is the eyes of the human spirit. Faith is the ability of the mind to see what the eyes of flesh can't see yet because it's not there to see. But it's going to be there sometime, because it ought to be there. Now again I think it might be helpful if I back out and drive in just a little bit slowly and you put it down. I think somewhere I've talked to you about that since I've been here come to think of it but you deserve to hear it again. I'm not at all close on that sort of thing. You know it's like the old preacher said, "First, what's your homiletic system?" He said well, "First I'd tell them what I'm going to tell them, then I tell them, and then I tell them what I told them." I'd like to do that. Faith is the sight of the soul. The eyes of the human spirit, the ability of the mind to see what the eyes of flesh can't see yet. That the publican came down to the temple and stood before the veil beating his breast crying God be merciful to me a sinner and he went down to his house justified and therefore, we know he came in faith because we are justified by faith. What does that mean?

That means that somewhere back where the publican lived he was aware, he discovered in the light of God's law and holiness that he was a sinner and he was under the sentence of death and he came to the place that he didn't want to continue in this revolt against God. He wanted pardon and he wanted peace and so he could picture in his mind that if somehow he could get to Jerusalem and he could stand in front of the veil knowing that in the holiest of all was the mercy seat to which the high

¹ O How I Love Jesus – Words by Frederick Whitfield. Music 19th Century American melody

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

priest went once a year with blood sprinkling the same between the wings of the cherubim dwelt the Shekinah presence of God that if he could get there and stand in front of that veil and express what he felt, that something would happen and he could see himself before he left home to come on that trip, coming back changed. Now that's faith. That's the ability to see in the eyes of the mind what's going to happen. Everybody would believe if they could see it after it happened but faith is the ability to see beforehand what's going to happen if you obey and so he left his home and came into Jerusalem and he went into the temple and he expressed what he felt. "God be merciful to me a sinner" and he went down to his house justified, that's faith. (Luke 18:13) The ability to see the difference that God is going to make.

I remember years and years ago, one of the first or second or third times I visited here back in the '50s and something was said about the fact that Bethany Fellowship was going to have an auditorium seating 1200 people. I've been going around and speaking in a lot of them and had some ideas and so we're having a little fellowship in the dining room afterwards and I took a napkin and doodled on it and wrote out some things and said, "Here, consider this if you ever build that auditorium." Mr. Hegre³ said the three months or so later he asked one of the men to make a model of it. Well, you're sitting in it now, what was doodled there on a napkin. I didn't have any particular faith, I had some ideas but the folks here at Bethany had faith. They saw a building here to house you tonight and through the years past and the years to come before there was a building here. This was a pasture and if you'd have come and looked at it, you wouldn't have seen what you see now. It was to be seen in the minds of the people, it was built by faith. Seeing it as though it were erected before it had been erected and I suppose everything is done is to some degree done that way.

Thus faith is a rather common practice. You get in your car and get on your side of the road and drive 55 miles an hour down the highway with implicit confidence and faith that the fellow that's coming at 55 or more as the case may be toward you is going to stay on his side of the road. You don't accelerate. You don't go over in the ditch and hide your car. You just keep rolling. And he goes by, maybe the wind blowing and he's 18 inches from the yellow line and you're 18 inches from the yellow line and you pass each other at a combined speed of a 110 miles an hour and you don't think anything about it. Because you see, you could see yourself getting to your destination before you left home. At times it's interrupted of course but basically, this is how we go on the highways, we just have faith. We see ourselves passing the oncoming car and going along our way.

Somebody hands you a check at the end of a week or two. I promise to pay. Why do you take that check? You gave your actual presence and time and education and energy and life. You exchanged two weeks of your life for a piece of paper and in a paper drive that wouldn't be worth anything. It's just trash if it's a paper that big on the city park. They'll put somebody out with the stick with a point on it to pick it up and put it in a bag. But that little piece of paper is awfully important to you, why? Because you can see yourself going into the bank and offering it to them and they're going to accept it just as though it were real money, put it into your account and you can pay bills with it, that's faith, seeing the difference that a little piece of paper is going to make. All right, we don't have any trouble driving our car to have faith. We don't have any trouble accepting a paycheck in a form of a piece of paper where somebody says he promises to pay. We have faith there. We don't even have too much trouble about seeing a new house we're going to buy or an apartment we're going to rent or a church we're going to build. We're accustomed to this principle of using the eyes of our mind to see what isn't there, to see with the eyes of flesh yet but what's going to be there. It seems as though as soon as many people have made one grand leap of faith have looked 2000 years back into the past and have seen Christ dying for them and they've received Him as dying for them that they're so exhausted by having savingly believed on Christ that they're pretty unable to exercise any faith thereafter. And so instead of being he that believeth, it's he that believed, once, finished, it's...I'm done, but really that believer ought to be a praying change perhaps until we call ourselves believers because we're to go right on believing, always believing God, always exercising faith.

There's three times that the Word "the just shall live by faith." (Heb. 10:38) Once you would underline Just and the other one, the second time you'd underline live and the third time you'd underline faith. "The **just** shall live by faith," "the just shall **live** by faith" and "the just shall live by **faith**." It depends on how you say it, right, three times it's used and each word is important. Now, "Christ shall dwell in your hearts through faith." He's already come in redeeming love and at this point, he has already come to fill them with the Holy Spirit. These are spirit-filled people. If you think not, read the Book of Acts and discover that

³ T.A. Hegre (1908-1984) Founder of Bethany Fellowship

when Paul met these Ephesian believers he found out they'd been baptized with John's baptism. He found out that they truly believed on Christ so he baptized them again and then he prayed for them that they might be filled with the Holy Ghost and it says, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and they were satisfied him that it was genuine and it was real. (Acts 19:4-6) Now he's writing to them later from the Mamertine Prison in Rome and he is saying "Christ shall dwell in our hearts through faith" and he's speaking not so much of the crisis of being filled with the Spirit as he's talking about the walking in the fullness of the Spirit. Shall dwell, shall ... "Christ shall dwell in our hearts through faith."

Now let me illustrate it. This morning I used an illustration of the parents that yell at the family, yell at the children and are sarcastic and critical and whatever else things we parents have done and are prone to do. Let's have a situation develop. Here's a home and they are awfully active. It's awfully hard to get up in the morning because it's hard to go to bed at night and the mother knows she has to get them off to school and the father off to the office and to his work so she gets up in the morning and she's tired of course but she gets up to get breakfast and prepare the day. She calls them as she goes along and telling them breakfast will be ready. Well, it's just so easy to turn over and catch a few more z's as my boys used to say and to get a little more of sleep and go back to sleep. That next 10 minutes seems to be the best of the whole night's rest. She goes downstairs. They've all said yes, mom, yes, dear. She sets the table and she gets breakfast and she's trying to be sweet and nice and loving and she says breakfast and there's no sound. She goes up and they've all gone back to sleep. Now, she wants to be charitable and sweet and loving and nice but she said, "Get up!" Somehow the whole day gets soured because everybody's now off on the wrong foot and she criticizes them. You know I come down here and get breakfast and you're not ready and everything gets cold and if you want to sleep, why don't I sleep too and then we'll all sleep and then you can go or not go. She says some of the things that we're all thinking about. Then said well, you don't need to be so cross about it. I have an awful busy day and I didn't sleep too well last night. First thing you know, let's say the blessing. Lord, bless our food and growl at God for half a minute.

Read the three verses of Scripture, say well, we'll read tonight and off they go. Everything is just sixes and sevens, out of step. After the family is gone, mother goes in, she gets down by the bed and she says, "Oh God. It seems as though every day I get up I don't want to have this crossness and this tension. What can we do, Lord? Just help me. Help me Lord not to" And you see that prayer is hardly answered because that's not particularly the way the Lord wanted to solve the problem.

The "help me to not to" is not a very effective prayer. It doesn't seem to get answered nearly as frequently as we'd like it to, because that wasn't how God intended us to get that to have this. You see the Lord Jesus is everything we're not and in order for us to be what He wants us to be and live the kind of a life that He wants us to live, He didn't just die that He could go to heaven and sit down and sort of preside from a distance. When He left heaven to come into the world, you know what His destination was?

Well, certainly it wasn't Bethlehem where he was born. He only stayed there for a year or two and then they had to flee from Bethlehem to Egypt where they hid as refugees for a few years. His destination wasn't Egypt. Then they went from Egypt back to Nazareth where He lived till He was 30 but when He left heaven and came into the world His destination wasn't Nazareth.

When He began His ministry He went to Capernaum in the cities along the Galilee and He called Capernaum His home but when He left heaven His destination wasn't Capernaum. No, He ministered in Jerusalem and it was in Jerusalem He died and where He was buried and raised again from the dead, but His destination when He left heaven wasn't Jerusalem. Then He ascended and went back into heaven but when He left heaven to come into the world His destination wasn't to go back where He'd been from eternity past.

Do you know what His destination was when He came into the world? I'll tell you, your life, your heart. He made that long journey through time from eternity past into Bethlehem and Egypt, and Nazareth, and Capernaum, and Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives, and heaven so that He could come and live in you and dwell in you and walk in you. You see, the old covenant didn't work because God was too far from his people. He dwelt between the wings of the cherubim in the tabernacle in the wilderness.

There was a pillar of cloud by day and a fire by night but when you got over those hills, it was pretty hard to see that cloud and that fire and God was way back there 30 miles away and you're out here living your life as an Israelite and it's just too far away. It failed because God was so far away so he says I'm going to do a new thing.

The old thing is going to pass away. I'm going to do a new thing. I will dwell in them. I will walk in them. I will put my spirit within them. I will cause them to walk in my statute. (Eze. 36:26,27) In order to accomplish that, He made that long journey from the throne back to the throne so that He could remove all the legal barriers that stood in the way of His dwelling in you. That's where He wants to dwell. But you see, He said "Christ shall dwell in your heart through faith."

Now, let's go back to that mother and her problem or father or you and your problem. You see she's been born of God in my illustration. She's even learned victory because she knows that she's got to go for cleansing after she's lost her temper and she can have victory but she's going to have more than that. It's more than just not saying something. There's got to be love and joy and peace and long suffering and gentleness and goodness, and she's not finding that easy to come by but now, a new day dawns. (Gal. 5:22) Before she went to sleep that night, she said tomorrow Lord Jesus, when I get up, I want it to be that it's not just me but it's you Lord Jesus living in me, you're everything I'm not, your wisdom to know what to do and your grace and power to do it.

And you see she's lying there in bed and she's getting ready for rest and she's picturing herself the next day going through all the responsibilities and tasks she did this day or the days before. The difference is she's picturing herself now with new attitudes and new relationships and new expressions and new words because she's seeing Christ in her being patience and long suffering and gentleness and wisdom, being everything she's not.

She's programming herself for the next day, if you want to use the computer idea. She's picturing herself. Faith is saying this is the way it's going to be because Christ is living in me. She has enough imagination. If you wish, she has enough faith to see the difference the Lord Jesus is going to be make the next day in her home with her family because Christ is dwelling in her heart and she is now, if you may use the word, reverently releasing Him to be Himself in her. So the next day she awakens and everything is different, why? Because she's permitting the Lord Jesus to do in her and through her what He wants to do though faith. She has the ability beforehand to see the difference that the Lord was going to make.

Now, translate that to father going to work. He has problems in his business. He has personality problems with his boss, with his fellow workers and the pressure has been heavy and the tendency has been for him to do what the pressure was designed to do, make him get angry and become difficult to work with. But he knows that his Christian testimony is at stake and so he says someday after he's had days of meager success or outright failure, the Lord Jesus is dwelling in me and He's everything I'm not and He's able to do everything that needs to be done.

When he goes to sleep that night, he pictures himself in the office the next day relating to that boss or those fellow workers not on the basis of his own past failure but on the basis of the fact that Christ is in him, the Lord Jesus is dwelling in him and he is being able to see the difference the Lord is going to make. He says, if you please, programming himself for that day when the tension comes instead of responding, he is now by faith as it were release the Lord Jesus to be Himself in that situation in him.

Remember when the Lord Jesus after his baptism and his temptation went back into Nazareth, the problem there was that His neighbors and His friends whom He loves so much knew Him so well that they didn't know Him at all. That's our problem. We know the Lord Jesus so well that we don't really know Him at all. That's what happened in Nazareth. He was concerned about Nathan the blind man. He was concerned about the leper who sat at the edge of town and scraped his sores with a broken piece of clay pot. He was concerned about the man that was crippled, the cerebral palsy man in the village, the demon-possessed boy. He was concerned about them and when He went back, saying the Spirit of the Lord has anointed me to set at liberty them that are bound.

His desire was to be able to see the blind man's eyesight restored and the leper's disease cleansed and the crippled man's limbs straightened and the demon-possessed boy released. But you know what the testimony is? When he left the city, Nathan was still feeling along the wall to find his way, the palsy boy was still staggering in his palsy, the crippled man was dragging his limbs, the leper was still sitting there scrapping his sores and the demon-possessed boy was still howling, why? The Holy Ghost said "He could do there no mighty works because of their unbelief." (Matt. 13:58) They did not see the difference He could

make and because they couldn't see the difference He could make, He couldn't make the difference. Now Israel, it was said they limited the Holy One of Israel by their unbelief. Now it says "Christ shall dwell in our hearts through faith."

I had the joy before he went to be with the Lord of spending several days, weeks in fact with RG LeTourneau and I remember one occasion he told at the table of an experience that he had had. He had been working on the new scraper. He's the man who revolutionized the earth-moving industry. He invented the first bulldozer. He invented the first front-end loader. He invented the sheepsfoot packer. He invented the scraper. He just revolutionized. He's the first man who took the front wheels off of a tractor so as to make it more maneuverable and he just was a great developer.

Now he was trying to build a new scraper that wasn't like the old camelback that had a lot of pulleys and cables and so on had been the first one. But he was having problems. He said there was a power transmission between the tractor and the scraper that was — he just couldn't get it, he worked for weeks on it. He made models and it didn't work and it came up to the time when he was to ... Well, it was Saturday noon, he'd been working all week and he's just leaned over his drawings and said heavenly Father, there is an answer. There is an answer because whatever the human mind can conceive and believe it can achieve and I've been working so long that I don't know the answer but the Lord Jesus who dwells in me He knows the answer so I'm just believing that the Lord Jesus is going to give me the answer.

I've got to go home and have lunch and then we're flying off. I speak at the rally tonight and tomorrow and the church and the rally tomorrow afternoon and Lord Jesus, I just leave this in Your hands, You've got to help me, I can't do it. Thank you for giving it, because we need it so badly. He went home, had lunch, took a little nap, went out to the airport, got in the Lodestar plane and with him was a man who was acting as a consultant on some labor problems, man by the name of Napoleon Hill.

Well, they flew up and had landed as near as they could to the town where the Saturday evening rally was, they had the rally. Next day he spoke in a local church then had a Sunday afternoon rally in another town. They drove back. They had to fly from where they were back to Peoria and he had to spend a couple of hours there, then he had to fly down to Vicksburg because he was taking some executives down there and he had to do some things there and then they had to fly from Vicksburg back to Toccoa where he was living and where he was working and so there was most of the night on the plane. There was a couch on the long side of the Lodestar where Mr. LeTourneau would lie down. There were seats for the others. Seated in one of those seats was Napoleon Hill who'd gone along on this particular weekend. Mr. LeTourneau, who told the story said that he laid down as he always did. He took a pencil and a little notebook out of his pocket and put it down on the side, little reading stand with the light there by his couch. Mr. Hill said that during the night and Mr. LeTourneau reached over, picked up his little book and his pencil and put it in his pocket and started off with the others off the plane, the apron at the hanger and Mr. Hill said, "Mr. LeTourneau, twice last night you awakened and you wrote in that notebook." "Oh, I never did any such thing." He said, "I'm sorry, sir, but I was awake. You were sleeping and twice you awakened and you wrote in that notebook." "Well," he said, "I better see what I'm writing when I'm asleep." So he opened the book and he stood there and he said, "Praise the Lord! Here's the answer I've been working for, for months, all written out." You see he had dared to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ dwelling in him was able to give him the answer. Able to give him the answer and he went there and gave it to the designers and they drew it up the way he described and it became and still is the power to the transmission unit in the Roadster Grader.

You see, we've got to understand who this Christ is. The Scripture tells us, "in Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." (Col. 2:3) It tells us that Christ is made unto us the wisdom of God and the power of God. In other words, the One who condescends to dwell in you is the One who has all wisdom and all power in heaven and in earth. If the Lord Jesus is living in you, you have in Him access to infinite intelligence and limitless power.

Right here in this room tonight are human beings redeemed by the blood of Christ, washed in the blood of God's dear Son, born of His spirit, filled with His spirit that if you would learn "that Christ is to dwell in your hearts through faith," there are enough people within this room to solve all of the crucial problems of our generation because every one of us have access to infinite intelligence and unlimited power.

A spoiled young fellow that was so despised by his brothers that they considered it a blessing to humanity if they could sell the rascal as a slave and so they did. Put him in a well, we're going to kill him and then somebody said here comes the Midianite

slave traders, let's get a buck out of him and sell him. That serves him right because killing is too good for that guy and they pulled him out and they took the money and he got the thongs around his wrist and if he didn't keep up the camels dragged him through the desert till they got to Egypt where he was sold. Then he started his education and God began to deal with him.

Then he went into prison for how many years we know not but probably somewhere the better part of 20. Went into prison and there he was disciplined and there he was broken and there he went to seek the God of his father and somewhere in this, he came into an experience of the fullness of God, the fullness of His Spirit because what you find about this man Joseph is the exercise of the gifts of the spirit. He talked to the baker and he talked to the butler.

He told the baker what was going to happen to him and it did and he told the butler what was going to happen to him and it did and one day when Pharaoh was terribly disturbed he had dreams and no one could interpret the dreams. The butler said there's a fellow that told me what was going to happen to me and he's in prison and I think you better get him here because he could probably help and so they took Joseph out of prison. Because he was in a vital relationship with the Spirit of God, he had the courage to face the problem. That's the first thing. He had the courage to articulate the problem. Some of them may have known, I don't think they did but if they had known they wouldn't have told Pharaoh because they were afraid he'd be offended. It's very difficult when you get, I understand, into that position to find out the true facts because you're so sheltered from the sources of information. But he called Joseph and Joseph said this is what your dream means. There's going to be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. If you don't do something about it, the whole nation is going to go into chaos and destruction. Now, that's courage, moral courage, intellectual courage to tell the ruler of the land what's going to happen. He could have been angry and said take him away and kill him but what difference did it make? He had to tell the truth, he knew God. Then Pharaoh said, what should I do about it? Now here's where the gifts of the word of knowledge comes into play and he knows what he couldn't have known. He hears a problem that's never been faced before, the whole world afflicted with a famine. You can't go to the library and find out what you do when the whole world is affected with the famine because up till then the whole world hadn't been affected with one.

He had to have instant information, where is he going to get it? "In Christ there hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," so the world of knowledge operates and he says, "This is what you do." Pharaoh looks at him and finds him to be a man of integrity and intelligence and knows God and he says excellent. He takes the chain off of his neck and puts it around Joseph and said, "Now, you devise the plan, implement it." Because Joseph was a channel by which infinite intelligence could flow to solve a problem, Joseph made a place for the people of God that lasted for 400 years that became a womb that a nation might be born, why? Because he had access to infinite intelligence and to unlimited power. (Gen. 37:23-41:42)

I have dared to believe for these 20 years and more that this great charismatic revival that's touched so many would be God's means of raising up a great corporate Joseph for this end of the age. Tragically, I've been afraid that I've seen it become more a time when people were prepared to play parlor games with the supernatural than they were to face the issues of their generation. But I read in the Old Testament when Amos, a fig dresser and a goat herder, is filled with the spirit of God he becomes concerned about the problems of his nation and he becomes a channel by which the wisdom of God can flow into the affairs of that nation.

Right here in this room tonight is enough life potential to change the world for God's dear Son, if you dared to believe "that Christ will dwell in your heart through faith" and that He indeed has ... He has made unto us the wisdom of God and the power of God. So what is this? What does this mean? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" If Jesus Christ is growing in you and you are content that His presence should be nothing more than the source of joy and peace and blessing, reinforcing your joy and peace and blessing, blessing your heart.

If you're satisfied that that is all the Lord Jesus in His infinite wisdom and power is to do then that is all He will be able to do, because you set a bounds upon the revelation of His presence in your life and through you. But if on the other hand you believe that the Lord Jesus wants to live in you, that living in you He can use your eyes to see the lost and the problems that confront the lost, to use your mind to perceive the difficulties and problems of your generation, to use your heart to be moved with concern and compassion. To use your feet to go wherever He would have you go, your hands to do whatever He would have you do, your lips to speak His word of redeeming love or counsel or rebuke or whatever it is He wants to say.

If you believe that it's your responsibility and privilege to present your body and all the powers of your personality to the Lord Jesus Christ, so that living in you, He can use that personality, that blood ransomed body with all of its gifts and talents anywhere in any way that He desires and that any problem that is honestly thrust upon you does have an answer. Not in you but in the One who dwells in you.

I believe that it is still God's purpose that in this great pouring out of the spirit of God we've seen in these last 25 years or 30 years. That there should be raised up a great corporate Joseph. That will have that kind of concern and have that kind of relationship and be available, and I believe that he wants to include you but you're not going to begin by advising nations and counseling leaders of governments.

You're going to begin in your own home, in your own heart, in your own life, in the circle of your immediate responsibilities and your immediate opportunities. You begin where you are. There are many people that are waiting for the great break and the big opportunity. You know what the great big opportunity is? It's helping your wife do the dishes in the morning that's what it is, with the love and joy and peace of the Holy Spirit, is caring for the kids and to help doing your job at the office a little better tomorrow than you did last Friday.

Your opportunity is right at your hand, right at your hand now to whom much is given are only those that have been proven that they're capable of handling little, if you're faithful in the little then you can be made responsible for more. The Lord Jesus Christ wants to be unto you wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption in the little things that you think because in the Christian life, nothing is little.

In Pittsburgh some years ago, in one of the department stores was a clerk. A lady came in rather dowdy-looking, she had on a funny old-fashioned hat and cloth coat with a little fur around it, it didn't look very prepossessing at all. She came up to the clerk and said, "Could you help me?" The clerk said, "Well, they're there, help yourself. If you want anything let me know." There was another man over there, just a new man in the floor and he walked over and said, "Madam, I would be very pleased to assist you, how could I help you?" "Well, I've been concerned about so and so." "Well, yes, Ma'am, now let me go and I have some other things back here in the store room. There's some new material we haven't put out and we'll be glad to order anything you might need." He had no idea in the world who she was, but he was courteous and he was polite and he was helpful. And you know what happened? That lady was Mrs. Andrew Carnegie and she brought hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of things from the store but she wouldn't buy it from anybody but the man that at that moment, not knowing who she was, gave that second mile in politeness, in courtesy and in helpfulness.

You know where the great opportunity is? It's right where you are, doing right what you're doing, because friend if you're aren't going to do that to the glory of God, there is no ghost of a chance that you'll ever do anything else for His glory. There isn't any task too menial, too low. I remember when Fred Johnson came here on his year of outside work. He came to New York. He was going to help me, I needed someone very badly. First day he was there, Fred came down all dressed to go into a city church. I said, "No, Fred. I'm sorry, you're going to be staying here today." He said, "I am." I said, "Do you have any work clothes?" He said, "Yes." I said, "If you'd get them, I'd appreciate it."

He came down in his work clothes a few minutes later, we went downstairs and I said, "Fred, I want you to take the wire brush and scrape down all these beams and scrape off all the loose paint and I want you to paint this basement for me. Will you do it?" He said, "Sure." He was taught at Bethany to do anything that was there to do.

I came in that night and he painted over the cobwebs and he painted over the paint, over the loose paint and I said, "Oh Fred, I'm awfully sorry, you're going to have to scrape that all off." I came back the next day and I made him scrape it off again. Finally, he had all scrapped off and he had it all painted. When we finished we sat down in the steps in the basement and I said, Fred, I want you to understand something. As long as you live you're going to be cleaning basements for God. It doesn't make any difference where you go or what you do, you're going to have a problem, it's going to have difficulties and unless we can learn to do the thing that is at our hand just as well as we possibly can, nothing else has meaning or value or purpose. Whatever we do in word or deed we have to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And "Christ wants to dwell in your heart through faith" that you being filled with the fullness of God will be responsible to do everything that He puts to your hand to do to His glory.

As you have demonstrated your ability and increased your capacity then you'll come to the place for some of these other problems but if you cheat any place along the way you're going to stand in the way, you're going to limit the Holy One of Israel. You'll not be able to do the works He wants to do. No, "Christ shall dwell in your heart by faith," what, to enable you to do what is before you to do to fulfill your responsibility now, today to His glory and to His praise. With each single triumph thus to expand your capacity, enlarge your ability until the time will come sooner for some than for others when some of the major problems that we have will be faced by you.

Remember before Joseph could stand with Pharaoh he had to go into a well and stay in prison and even God hasn't found any other way to make men and to make women apart from a well and a prison. If we're prepared to pay the price God is prepared to take the weak things of the world, the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are. He wants you to learn what it is for "Christ to dwell in your hearts through faith," both in your personal life in relation to the fruit of the spirit and relation to any ministry and every ministry that God may give you in the years that are to come.

We are facing, as Mr. Hooverson said on Wednesday and on Thursday, great crises, great problems and great difficulties, but the answer is not going to come by those that are playing to the gallery and cheating on the responsibilities. It's going to come from those that have learned that in everything that we are entrusted to by Christ we do it all on account of the reputation and for the glory of the Son of God. There isn't any limit to what God can do through you except the limit that you impose by your faith and by your obedience.

And so tonight as we come to the close of this conference I bring again the word we've used these days. "How are we going to escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Part of that salvation is that Christ should dwell in our hearts. How are we going to escape the responsibility for what might have been done if you had been prepared to learn what it is to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to be Himself in you. It's a tremendous responsibility and a glorious privilege and I trust that each of us has formed within us by the Holy Ghost a passionate desire that when we stand before Him at the judgment seat we'll hear Him say well done, you have done what you could.

That's the only reward we should seek or ask for that we did what we could, that we were utterly and totally available to Him for the outworking of His purpose, the fulfilling of His plan. Can you see that if you don't avail yourself of the cleansing at the laver that you cherish sin, it's not been forgiven or pardoned, you're carrying an infection that interferes with all of God's plan and purpose for your life? Can you not see that if you fail to appropriate the victory that comes through your identification and union with Christ in His death that instead of your being an instrument to reveal his resurrection power, you're just an embarrassment to Him and to yourself and the church? Can you not see that if you fail to appropriate the fullness of His spirit you're limiting yourself just to act in the energy of your own meager abilities and personality? Can you not see that having been filled with the spirit it's not enough but daily we are to permit the Lord Jesus to live in us, being unto us everything we're not? Where do you stop? Where do you stop with so great salvation and what can you afford to neglect? "How will we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

* Reference such as: Delivered at Bethany Fellowship, Bloomington, MN on Sunday Evening, July 1, 1979 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.