

Make This Valley Full of Ditches

By Paris Reidhead*

Now we are going to ask you to turn to II Kings, Chapter 3. The 3rd Chapter of II Kings. I am reading a few words, beginning with the first verse. I would like to ask how many knew from the text that was announced what the theme would be. There are certain texts that have been used across the centuries. Just about the time you feel you have something unusual, why this is hardly the case. Now I am reading II Kings, Chapter 3:

Please read II Kings 3:1-20.

Now may the LORD bless this His Word to our hearts.

It is amazing when you discover how weak man is at his very strongest. Here we have three kings, kings that have numbered their horses, numbered their soldiers, numbered their spears, their bowmen; they are prepared to go to this rebellious people Moab, this people that have been under the control of Israel, bringing 100 thousand lambs and 100 thousand rams annually. Quite a tribute for a small country. They are rebelling, refusing to pay. So three kings unite in order that they can discipline this little shepherd people. Certainly there was no question about their ability to do it. Three kings, three armies to subdue one who is called a sheep master. Perhaps we would view him as a desert sheik, someone that has a group of followers, but no particular power.

Now, isn't it amazing that these kings were quite content to make their own plans. Which way shall we go up, said Jehoram to Jehoshaphat? Oh, we'll go up by Edom. They were quite prepared to do everything their own way. Now both of them ought to have known better. Jehoram was the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was the king of Judah. Both had the Scripture, the prophets, had the Law of Moses. They had certain of these writings that would have indicated clearly that God was the captain of His own hosts, and should have been sought. But, until they had reached wits' end corner and were certain that they were going to perish for lack of water, they did not ask if there was a prophet anywhere around. They were not the least interested. As long as things were going seemingly right they were quite content to go on as they were. But you see God would show them they were actually utter weakness. Armies, soldiers, spears, bows, arrows, machines of war, and it all comes to nothing because there is no water for the men or their cattle. It doesn't take a great deal to stop an immense army. Here the Lord is proving that man's strength is but the wisp of wind, and in it one can certainly never confide.

Elisha finally is called. They seek him out. But they were not ready to do it until they had nowhere else to turn. I wonder if this is not true of men in general. I wonder if anyone ever comes to Christ until he has been brought to the place where he does not know where to go. I wonder if we as Christians are not forced by God into that place where we must call upon Him. Well certainly this was the case with the three kings.

But something else that we have to see here. Elisha was not ready to prophesy until he had worshipped. He couldn't just speak. He couldn't just simply turn and raise his hand and lift his voice, for he was afraid that he might speak in and of and from himself, and this then would have compromised the LORD. And so he said, "Bring me a minstrel." Bring me someone that can play the Psalms. Bring me someone that can take that melody and music which will turn my heart to the Lord. "Bring me a minstrel." And as the minstrel came, someone that brought the ancient instrument the lyre and began to strum the hymns and tunes and chants that were used undoubtedly even then in worship, in the tabernacle, in the worship of God, his heart was prepared, and as he lifted his heart in worship the hand of the LORD came upon him, and he was prepared to speak that Word of God, that living Word to their need.

Now I propose to show you first of all that our position can be likened to that of the kings, the position of the individual Christian today, the position of the church today, and particularly our position here in the midst of an immense mission field, New York City. I believe that there are many areas that are parallel, and therefore we do well to see it. Notice first that *they were utterly dependent upon God*. They put themselves in a situation where it was impossible for any ingenuity of man or cleverness of leadership to extricate them. They could not get out. They had gone so far into the desert that if they were to

turn around and go back they would perish before they reached the edge where water was. They had carried a supply expecting to find it in Edom, and there wasn't any in the wilderness, and therefore they just could not go back. They could not go ahead. There was no place to go to the north to find succor. There was no place to go to the south. They were cornered. No water for cattle, no water for kings, no water for men. They were utterly helpless.

And therefore we would see this first as it would begin with the sinner. You say it is an easy thing to repent. Anyone can accept Jesus. Well now is it really as easy as all that? This morning we tried to point out to you that the Christian life begins with a consent to the fact that what God says about us is true. But men have been fighting God for centuries. There must be something extremely difficult about saying the words and meaning them: I am lost. I am helpless. I am a world of sin. My heart is a mountain of iniquity. There must be something extremely difficult about this because men find it so hard to do it. In fact, and I say it reverently, they would rather be damned eternally. They would rather go to hell forever than to stand before God and say, I am sinful. I am lost. I am undone. Oh, there is something in this that just cuts right across the grain of human nature and human personality. And apparently there was this same situation here. It was a terrible thing for kings to say, We have put ourselves in the place where we are helpless, where we are at the end of ourselves. And so we have to say as did the kings, God must help us or we perish; it is identically the same situation with the sinner. God must help or I perish. No wonder we will try everything else, anything else, go everywhere, do anything, to escape from being cornered by the LORD.

If you would like to get acquainted with what has happened in some lives, the reading of that book Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, the biography of John Bunyan¹, will allow you to see your own heart reflected. Perhaps your flight from His grace wasn't as persistent as was Bunyan's, but it does represent the kind of thing that we have. God has to somehow engineer circumstances and arrange the situation, strip us and break us and crush all the reeds on which we lean before we are really prepared to come to the place where we cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13) But you would think it would stop there, wouldn't you? You would say, Well certainly having done that there is no problem about it any longer. But you know God is not through with us. He has to keep pushing us into the desert. And so after we have been forgiven, after we have known the joy of pardon, after we have known the sweetness of having been born into the Father's family, and then we begin to get busy for the LORD. We begin to serve Him. We begin to work for Him, and it isn't long before we are back in the desert corner again. He has somehow let us get so far from the well; so far we cannot go further on. We are exhausted. We cannot go back. We are in too far. We are just hopeless. And then we say, Well now, Lord, what am I going to do? How many times, even now, but previously in other ministries had so much contact with missionaries that, this is my own case, that there in the heart of Africa on the mission field, utterly without well of water, dry, without — where do you get victory over your personality, how are you going to have deliverance from your temperament and traits? How are you going to live the kind of life and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit that the Scripture says alone glorifies God? You are in the desert. You know, when you can stay near a well and the artificial supply, it isn't too bad. But when God presses you out, when He just forces you out, and moves you out, you cannot go back, you cannot go ahead, how greatly we ought to be for every time that the Lord can corner us. May I put it this way? You'd never make any spiritual progress, nor would I, unless God just forced us to it. Oh, we love to hear truth. We love to be taught. Like the Areopagites, we are delighted with some new thing. Let us just fill out notebooks with outlines, with prophetic structure, with schemes. This delights us to the full. You don't make any progress from that.

Years ago as a smug young pastor in Minnesota, I had the ministry of dear Maude F. Groom who later went down as librarian of the Northern Baptist Seminary. And she had a course in the Christian Life, a wonderful course. Why I look back now. I have lost the notes in the passing years. But I look back now and remember the things she said, and there're things which later on the Lord revealed to me as, shall I say, startling new truths. They weren't at all. I had heard them from Mrs. Groom. She had taught them. But do you know what it was. I hadn't gotten into a desert place yet. Oh, the things she said were wonderful. My heart responded. I leaped to them. And I remember she said, Now you will have to go alone and make these things yours. So I went out into the big auditorium at the First Baptist Church, went way back in the last section, got down between some pews on the cold concrete floor, and I began to take a hold of God. And I stayed there, and I laid hold of God, and I said, Now I am taking by faith these truths. There're mine. I am going to claim them. I am going to live by them. And I was sincere. But you see

¹ John Bunyan (1628-1688) An English Christian Writer and Preacher

I'd never been in the desert. I'd never been there. And so, later, time went on, pressure went on, and I got out to Africa, and in desperation I forgot everything I had been taught, everything I had learned, because filling my note book and filling my memory wasn't enough. It just isn't enough. And so, God loved us enough. He loved me enough. And I trust that you have seen His love in you. That He has crowded us into a corner. I cannot go back. It is too far. I cannot go ahead. I am too weak. There is no way to go on either side. Lord, what am I going to do? And then He says, Well now you are in the place where you are dependent upon Me. And this I believe is the circumstance in which spiritual progress is made, because as long as we have a canteen we can tap, take the cork out, we'll take a good drink and start running. We are going to do it. But when we can turn our canteens over and we can just get nothing but dust and we go to the spring and there is nothing there but mud, and we say, Not a cloud in the sky, not a brook with a drop in it, not a spring that has anything, and all the vessels we brought empty, we say, Where am I going to get it. And there then we are in the place to call upon the Lord, wit's end corner. Man's extremity is God's opportunity.

It is a terrible thing to do, but you know I think we have to pray, Oh, Lord, strip us of all confidence in everything other than Thyself so that finally we will come to trust Thee. It is a terrible way to pray.

About four years ago now Dr. Tozer² had a service in which this theme was emphasized. Maybe you were one of the people that stood that night. He said, "How many of you are prepared to stand now and say, O God, set in motion tonight the circumstances which will press me to Yourself. Do anything You need to do, strip me, break me, anything You need to do, to bring me to the place where truth becomes real in my experience." Were you one of those that stood that night? Then you said...The next month something began to happen. This little part of your world crumbled. And that little structure fell down. This spring dried up, and that stream was gone. And the dust began to blow where the water had been, and you said, Oh, why are these things happening to me? Well you asked the Lord to make them happen. You said, Lord, I want you more than I want everything else. So every spring, stream, canteen and well we would ever depend on He just touched and withered. Well this is the experience we have.

So it is the experience of the church. I am glad I live in the 20th century. I am glad I live right now. I am glad I am serving the Lord now. And I am glad I have had the privilege of serving the Lord in the last 25 years. I hope I don't look as old as I feel, nor that my senility doesn't show up as clearly as I am experiencing it day by day. But the fact still remains that in July, the 4th, I will have completed 25 years of ministry. Now mind you I was not very old when I started. Of course I had the experience of never being a young people. I went from an adolescent into a preacher, beginning ministry at 18. And so this 25 years this next 4th of July. But you know what has happened during these 25 years? We have seen the church do 4 things that have not been done in the previous 50. Four things that have not taken place have taken place then. First, we have seen the development of wide scale evangelism. I was told when I began training in 1935 that there never again would be wide scale mass evangelism. It had all died with Billy Sunday³. But that was not true. We saw the first of this move back in Philadelphia with Mervin Rosell⁴, and then Hyman Appleman⁵ went to Philadelphia with a great meeting. And this began it. And later on the Youth for Christ Rallies. And finally the ministry of Dr. Billy Graham⁶. And we have seen during these past 20 years the rise of evangelism on a scale never equaled in America. In some ways, in some measurement. But, those that have been closest to it, and most part of it, and most appreciative of what has been done recognize that this is not adequate to meet the church's need. They are the first to say, As grateful as we are for all that has transpired, and all that found the Lord, the answer to our responsibility in the 20th century is not here. This is good. We are not criticizing it. We are simply saying, It is not enough.

So we have seen something else. We have seen the rise of large churches. Before 1935 and 1935, the 25 years under question, there were not as many big churches as there are now. One of the largest in the United States is the one of which I was a member, First Baptist Church in Minneapolis, with 3 thousand members. But 3 thousand members nowadays is like a branch

² Aiden Wilson Tozer (1897-1963) Pastor and Author. Christian and Missionary Alliance

³ William Ashley (Billy) Sunday (1862-1935) An American Evangelist

⁴ Dr. Rev. Mervin E. Rosell (1913 - 2001) was a successful evangelist in the 1940s and 1950s, author and hymn writer and musician, president of Youth for Christ.

⁵ Hyman Appleman (1902-1983)

⁶ William Franklin "Billy" Graham, Jr. (1918-) An American Evangelical Christian Evangelist

Sunday School when you consider that there are two churches in Tennessee that have 15 thousand members and more. And we have seen during this past 25 years churches of 15 to 18 thousand members. And tremendous programs and ministries. And I have had the privilege of being part of it, and praise God for it and rejoice in the things that are being done, in mission ministry. I know of one church where they had over 60 branch Sunday Schools. We had 18 buses, and we had men that were supported from the church, and each bus had an area. There was a bus Pastor who went in and visited the homes, brought the children out, got them there, and took care of them. We had 18 such buses and bus Pastors. Well this was a tremendous ministry, and there is no question about it. But do you know what we have discovered in these past 25 years? That the large church is not the answer, is not the answer, as good as it is. It's not good enough. And the ones that are closest to it and nearest to it are prepared to say, Well we see this. We thought perhaps that this was the ultimate answer, but we know now it isn't.

Then we have seen the rise of another area. We have seen the rise of great Mission Societies during these past 25 years. For it's in this period that the China Inland Mission reached 1500 members. The Sudan Interior Mission reached 1200 members. And there have been these great ministries of evangelical men, armed with all tools, all implements, all means whereby the Gospel could be extended. But those that have been closest to the missionary enterprise are the first to say that this does not represent the answer to the need, for even the areas where we have been in the highest concentration we have not been able to cope with the rise in population or the evangelistic responsibilities.

Then we have seen something else. We have seen the development of the outstanding youth ministry. For I believe that during this period with the rise of Youth for Christ, Word of Life and these other ministries, we see the ultimate achievement that can be wrought by intelligent planning, preparation, prayer and faithful preaching of the Christian message. And we are grateful for the multitudes of children and young people that have come to know the Lord through these ministries. But the ones closest to them, the ones nearest to them are the first to say when in candid and open conversation the matter is discussed, This, as good as it is, and as needful as it is, does not represent the ultimate need. It doesn't meet the need on the level it should be met. And so these that have been part of that which from a distance would say, Well this must be it, this must be God's answer, the ones that are there in the midst of it, appreciative as they are, recognize that it isn't.

We are somewhat like the kings in church and Christian ministry and missions; we've been pushed into the desert of responsibility to witness to a world that is under the sentence of death, and somehow or other, with all the plans, preparation, programs, ministries, and all the enterprises that we have been able to develop, we have to admit with all candor and fairness, as good as it is, it does not meet the need.

Christianity is not a matter of mechanics. It is not a matter of programs. It is not a matter of institutions. It is not a matter of operations. This is a spiritual ministry, and it can only be sustained by spiritual means. And so we discover that, whereas we have had underlying each of the ministries that I have described a great sense of spiritual urgency (I am not going to suggest for a moment they could not have been achieved apart from the blessing of God.) This isn't in my mind at all. I am still saying that when we achieve here in Memphis, Tennessee, a church of 18 thousand members, as great a spectacle as it is, and as our hearts say, This certainly is a tremendous evidence of work and labor and enterprise and ministry, we recognize that the answer doesn't lie in every church, every city becoming this size. This isn't the answer, because the spiritual dynamic there, even from the testimony of the Pastor under whose ministry it was built, is such as to say to his people, As large as we are, as endowed as we are, we still are in desperate need of the power of the Holy Ghost and of the moving of the Lord.

So I believe in the forefront of these men would be the first to say, We are in the midst of the desert, we are caught in a great need that is there, we are too far to go back, it is too far out, what will we do? We must send for a prophet. Those that are the first to call are the ones that are in the midst of that which we consider the most successful enterprise in our land today. Well, if that is the case with these men whom God has so signally allowed to test for all of us what all of us would like to achieve, then I think we can say, Let us do now at our point of development what they are doing at their point of development and call for a prophet, and say, Lord, what is your answer? What is your provision for us in the day and the hour in which we live? Now we must understand from what we have here that all that is done is going to be done by God. We have no might of our self.

We have no power of our own. “Without Me, ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5) But driving the other day with Dr. Redpath⁷ over the George Washington Bridge, we were discussing this. For we had had some very revealing questions asked by the pastors back at Hawthorne in the Hawthorne Gospel Church as they had met on Tuesday morning for fellowship, And afterwards a time of questioning. And as we were driving, I pointed out that I considered the George Washington Bridge to be the most beautiful, aesthetically satisfying structure that has been erected by man in the North American Continent. And he remarked that he felt somewhat similar. And then we tied it in with this verse, “Without Me, ye can do nothing.” He said, Well, we have done that without Him. Yes, but (the answer was that one of us made,) when He comes all these things are going to be dissolved, and nothing will be left. It will all just evaporate. It shall be dissolved with a fervent heat. Our Lord says, “Without Me ye can do nothing” that will abide, nothing that will endure, and nothing that will stand the test of the fire, nothing that will be for eternity. And the only quality that will give to work an enduring essence is that it is done according to the plan of God, by the power of God, to the one single sole purpose, that God has set and ordained. And consequently we have to come back to this, that all work that endures, all work that is going to be to His glory is by Him.

Therefore, sinners are saved by His awakening ministry, His bringing them to conviction, quickening faith, bringing them to repentance, and then regenerating them. Everyone that is born again, it is a miracle. Human enterprise, human effort, human ministry enter into it, but God has to do the miracle. Every Christian that lives victoriously and, triumphantly does it by the miraculous power of the risen Christ. If you are experiencing victory over yourself, over temptation, if you are walking triumphantly in the day God has placed you, you are doing it because you see that in yourself there is nothing but weakness, nothing but sin.

I think I told you of someone that was counseling with me a while ago, and in speaking of himself he said, You know I have discovered that I am bad, I am wicked, And he went on. He said, You know there is nothing good about me. I am absolutely terrible. And when he had finished describing himself, all I could say was, Well fine. I am glad you have found it out. He said, What do you mean? You are glad I have found it out. Well I said, I have known that about you for a long time. And he looked rather chagrined, and rather shocked to think that I would say such a thing. I said, Yes it is true. Everything you have said is absolutely true. But, I said, you know why you are in the trouble you are? He said, Why? I said, You have been trying to prove something else. You have been searching around in the refuse trying to look through and find something that you could wave in God’s eyes and say, It is not as bad as you said it was. Well if you are living triumphantly and victoriously, and gloriously and happily, it is because you have come to the place that this is what you are, and Jesus Christ is everything you aren’t, and that you cannot live the Christian life but only He can. And when you come to the place where you say, I can’t, then He will say, I can. And He will move in and do for you what you never could do for yourself. So, being born of God is all of Him, and living the Christian life is all of Him, and so the church in its corporate expression and ministry must be all of Christ, must be the Lord doing it all. He must be the One.

And thus we are at the place where the kings were. In the desert, a responsibility to witness, to defeat an enemy or to exercise the defeat that has already been brought upon him that we are without water. And how interesting it is that water in the Scripture is the picture, the type of the Holy Spirit. “Out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:38) “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” (John 7:37) And water, therefore is the picture, is the type of the Holy Ghost. And thus it is that it is the work of the Holy Ghost in bringing sinners to life, it’s the work of the Holy Ghost making real the life of Christ in Christians, and it’s the work of the Holy Ghost fulfilling God’s purpose for the church.

Well, here it is, without water. Are we without water? Are we without that manifestation of the Spirit of God to the degree that we need? Now you say, Well, yes. I know I have been born of God. This is settled. This is clear. I know I have passed from death to life. Well rejoice and be exceeding glad. Do not ever underestimate what has been done; in your eagerness for what needs to be done, do not minimize what has been done. Then secondly, Are you experiencing victory? Well dear heart, do not let any body’s reticence or any body’s reluctance, or anyone’s lethargy keep you from what God has for you. It doesn’t make a difference to you in any way what anyone else does. You can know Him and His indwelling fullness, and you can know His

⁷ Dr. Alan Redpath (1907-1989) Born in the United Kingdom; Pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago

victory, and you can know His life. It doesn't make any difference what I do, or what anybody does. You and the Lord can meet on this ground and He can satisfy your heart and you.

You say, Well the church... Oh, now wait a minute. Meet Him. You meet Him. He will meet your need regardless of anybody else if you will come to Him. This we must recognize. This is a personal matter between you and the Lord. But what of the church? What of the church? Yes, I firmly believe that it is the purpose of God to pour out of His Spirit upon the church, and it is as you enter into all that He has intended you to be, with Paul testify, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2:20) That you are walking in the fullness of His Spirit, that the Church is going to be able to be what the Lord wants it to be. And so we recognize that it is a personal responsibility, but it is a personality responsibility that reflects out to the Body and to the group in corporate fellowship. And consequently it is extremely important.

If you were to say, for instance, tonight, Well, I know I have been forgiven and I consent to sit in the desert with nothing for myself to drink or to share with others, you are robbing. Oh, you are robbing, and so you have got to find the place of your need and realize that if your need is not met you are robbing sinners of the testimony they deserve from your life, you are robbing fellow Christians of the testimony they deserve and the encouragement God ought to bring to them through you, and you are robbing the church of what the blessing you should be to it. And you are robbing the Lord Jesus of the spoils of His suffering and the reward of His suffering if you are content with less than everything the Lord Jesus died for. So with the kings, let us say, We must have water, and then call for the prophet, call for the Scripture, call for the record, find out what it is.

Now what is our duty, as it is told us by the Prophet? The first thing we find is this, that when he came and the hand of the Lord was upon him he had something to say to these three kings that were there with him. First he said, was this, "Make this valley full of ditches." Now I cannot imagine anything that was more ridiculous than this. They were in the desert. In the valley. And it is arid. It is dry. And he says, Prepare the ground as though a flood were coming. And I have not been there and have not seen it, but we are told by the geographers that this particular valley where they were was raised, so that the water flowed down from it, not down upon it. It was at a high level so that the water would flow off of it. Well now, Here they are, and they are told to dig ditches. Can you see them? Of all the ridiculous things. There isn't a spring up there, there's not a lake up there, there's no wells up there. Dig ditches. How are we going to do that? You know the pattern, don't you? The Nile River overflows. Before it overflows, and the people anticipate it because for thousands of years they have kept a record of the flood of the Nile. They know just what is going to happen. They are down there on the Delta, below Cairo, digging their ditches, preparing for the flood water that they are going to lead out into their fields. It will carry the rich silt from the Sudan and Ethiopia, and this water is going to come in and fertilize and nourish and prepare for a bumper crop. And so the man that is wise has the ditches prepared that when the water comes he will be ready.

Out west where Mrs. Reidhead grew up in Colorado they had land that was irrigated. And regardless of the time of day or night they were notified when the water would be through, and when the water was coming through it was coming through. And if you did not open up and take it into your field well that was too bad. It went on. It was not there. So this is the pattern. Irrigation ditches. Here they are. And so the prophet says to the kings, Do something ridiculous. Do something foolish. Do something that has no relevance to the job at hand. And so with their remaining strength he says, Dig ditches. Can you see them? Taking their spears, their little shovels, sticks, and they are digging ditches. It seems absurd, doesn't it? What are they doing? They are making preparation to receive something that is desperately needed, ditches made for water. And so they had irrigation ditches. This is what the Spirit of God says unto us.

If you find your need is for the fullness of the Spirit for victory in your life, if the church finds its need is for the power of God, God says, Dig ditches. Dig ditches. Do you know what you have to do when you dig a ditch? Well here is a stone. You cannot just bring your ditch up to the stone and leave it. You have somehow got to pry that stone out. You have got to dig around it. You have got to break it off; you have got to lead your ditch around it, because that stone is going to stop the flow. And digging ditches does not only mean to take up the loose soil that is easy to turn, but it means to take up the deep, imbedded rocks. It means confession. It means brokenness. It means heart searching. It means dealing ruthlessly with anything that could impede the flow. It means making right anything in the past, digging up that which the Spirit of God points out, removing that which would hinder. And so, if you are desirous of God meeting you in the fullness of His Spirit and blessing in power there have to be

ditches dug. And ditches mean the dirt has to be taken out, a way has to be made, rocks have to be removed, roots have to be cut, anything that is going to stop the flow. A lot of people want to sit by and say, "Well, revival is the sovereign work of the Spirit of God. Let Him revive me if He can. Let Him bless if He can." And just sit back and say, "Well, it is all up to God." No. The prophet says, "Dig ditches. Dig ditches." And so if there is to be the meeting of your need there has got to be preparation.

Now you have to do this in faith. They had to believe that the prophet spoke for God. They had to believe that their labor wasn't in vain. They had to believe that the leaning on the stick, and the piling up of the rock and the hammering with their short spear at the roots that were there, and their tugging at the shrubbery, this was all for a purpose, had to be. I know this, He says, "Ye shall search for Me and find Me when ye shall seek for Me with all your heart." (Jer. 29:13) God never gives us a hunger to mock us, and gives us instructions to taunt us. You've got to do it in faith. You've got to believe that this is of more importance to God than it ever could be to you.

Then of course the other thing, you have got to *prepare largely*. If you are prepared and satisfied just to have a little plot like an herb garden that is what you will get. But when you are desperate enough to say, Lord, I want you in your fullness, I want you to have all there is of my life, I want everything that can possibly come from me to the glory of Christ to be realized. Then you are going to prepare thoroughly, and you are going to prepare largely.

I wonder if it is possible for us to take an axiom tonight? By whatever means God chooses, by life or death, by success or failure, (and there is another, and I reluctantly put it in) by sickness or health, by being known or unknown, I want Jesus Christ to get out of my life the greatest possible glory. Are you...Do you love Him enough and trust Him enough that you are willing to turn the little plot of your life over to Him and say, Lord, grow any crop you want into it. Do anything you want to with it, but just get the greatest glory out of it. Are you willing to turn your life over to Him like a sponge and say, O Lord, You squeeze it. I don't care how you do it, but just squeeze out of it the greatest glory. Well now, if He is going to squeeze anything out He has to put something in, because there is nothing there but dearth and dross. The devil says to anyone that listens to him, Don't trust God with your life, don't surrender to Him, don't yield to Him. Oh, you can trust Him to take you to Heaven, because He has a big hotel there and He wants to fill it, but don't trust Him with your life. Don't do that. He is going to take all the pleasure and happiness and joy and blessing out. He will just leave you dry husks.

Well now, you know the only way to deal with that is to fly right into the face of the devil and say, All right. If God wants my life to be dry husks and get glory out of dry husks let it be. I am prepared for that. I want Him to get all of the glory that He can out of my life. That is all that I ask, that God will put His wisdom and His sovereignty and His power to the task of taking my little blood ransomed life and getting for Jesus Christ all the glory He can possibly get. Let Him choose how it is done. I'll sign the check, Lord. You fill it in. Are you prepared to do that? This is digging ditches. Preparing largely.

But you know something else about this. They had to do it then. We have to prepare at once. We are all putting it off. It is so easy to say, Well next week, next year, next Christian Life Convention, next Missionary Conference, next...We are going to do it later. But, friends, later will never do. They were desperate. They had to do it now. Now is the accepted time.

And then the 3rd thing we see, *they prepared diligently*. They did it with desire. They did it with expectation. They did it with determination. They knew that they were not going to be able to go on unless they had water. They did it faithfully. They did it vehemently. They did it desperately. And so you are going to have to faithfully, vehemently, and desperately deal with all that is in the way. You are going to have to dig those ditches and whatever is involved in giving to Him your time, giving to Him your reputation, giving to Him your name, giving to Him your body, giving to Him anything, everything, all just comes down in inventory. All right, Lord, this and this and this. This is digging ditches. The whole matter given over to Him until the ground is open, all the plugs are out, all the keys are on the ring, and everything is there.

Well then what do we find happened. I think this is so blessed. I would like to have you see it. In the 20th verse. "And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was [Tape cuts-off] offered, that behold there came water by the way of Edom." Have you ever heard of water flowing uphill? Well it did here. [Tape starts up here] Water flowed, uphill. So much water came that it rose over the top of the rise and it just flooded down into their ditches. Now there was not any wind. There were not any clouds. There was not any thunder. And you say, Well where did the water come from. [Tape cuts-off] Well my

dear, I do not know. And to tell you the truth they did not know. But the important thing is not where it comes from, but it is that it comes. Do you see? And God is just so delightfully Himself that you cannot put Him into a strait jacket. You say, Well now, I heard the testimony of Brother so-and-so, and he told me that this was how the Lord met him. You know I used to think I knew just exactly how God was going to meet people. [Tape starts up here] But He does not. Just about the time I got a nice little formula that was all set, then the Lord began to show me that He did not need my formula at all. It was not His need. He did not need it at all. I am so glad; you know I get a lot of consolation out of Peter in many different ways. I am sure you do, too. We are very much like each other. But Peter was so smug, so sure he knew just how God was working, and so finally the Lord gave him a vision. An angel came, all the rest, to prepare Peter to go to the house of Cornelius, and Peter has a formula. He knew just what the Lord is going to do. So he starts to speak, and the water comes from Edom. And the first thing you know, the Spirit of God has fallen upon the household of Cornelius and they are flooded and poor Peter stands back with his little sprinkling plant and no place to pour. The Lord has gotten there ahead of him. His little formula was just so utterly inadequate, because God took over.

Now God is sovereign. The place where He will work is when we have prepared. Then He will meet. He will deal with it. The waters came from Edom, by way of Edom. Well we know that it came sovereignly. God did this just the way He wanted to do. And God is going to meet your need just that way. And we know that the waters came sufficiently. There was enough. Enough for all and enough for the whole country side, enough for the soldiers, enough for the cattle, enough for the kings. I believe that God is waiting on this parapet of glory, waiting, waiting for a church, waiting for hearts upon whom He can pour. I believe God wants to pour out of His Spirit. I think that the great cry of my heart for the 5½ now nearly 6 years I have been with you is that somehow in this heart of the city, near Times Square where sin abounds, there might be a people that would love God, and love His Word and follow His truth, meet His conditions, dig ditches, so that God could show again that He can pour water upon them that are thirsty, and pour floods upon the dry ground, because dear heart, with New York before us, its multiplied millions, who is sufficient for those things? Unless God pours water upon us, what are we? What are we among so many? It must be. Why just think what could happen if we here in the heart of the city could so meet God in brokenness, so dig ditches, so minister in faith and expectancy, and God meet us... You know if God could work in New York City the whole world would hear about it in just a little while, because everybody is here, representatives are here. It is like Jerusalem.

Well then we find something else. The blessing of God's presence, the water came suddenly, suddenly. Ah yes. You say, "Well, I am going to go through, Lord. I am going to dig ditches. I am going to meet you. I am going to lay hold. I am going to pray. Nothing is going to stop me. Nothing is going to deter me. I am determined. I am not going to rest till You have done in me all You want to do, and done in the church all You want to do, and then water came suddenly."

But wait, it didn't stop there. It was not where it stopped He didn't say, Just, that they would have water. This is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord. O my, you know that was some minstrel wasn't it? Wasn't that something, to have this man come to the place where he not only saw exactly what to do and how to do it, but then he spoke and said, God is going to bring water, "and this is but a light thing, to bring water," He won't use wind. He won't use thunder clouds. He won't do it any way He has ever done it before. "It is but a light thing to give you water. He will also deliver the Moabites into your hand. He is going to give the victory to His Name, to His cause." And this, I believe, is the reason why you should want Him to pour water upon you and fill you and fill the church, so that the Lord Jesus could have the victory that He has already accomplished rendered to Him, and the glory that would come from seeing that victory wrought out. This is why we should pray. Not just that you be satisfied. Not just that the soldiers drink. The cattle drink. The kings drink. No, but that the Name of Jehovah be glorified in the defeat of the enemy that had flaunted Him and held to their idols. And so it is that the purpose of your heart ought not to be just to have your own need met, but to have Him glorified. And how He longs to bless you so that He can be glorified. How He longs to meet us together so that He can get the glory that is His due. Let's remember, He did not say, Dig wells. He said, Dig ditches. Wells mean, we will get it by our effort. And ditches means, It's got to come from Him. Do you see? Make this valley full of ditches. It all depends upon you. No one else can dig your ditch. No one else can make your preparation. And then God can bring us together to the place where we are hearing and heeding the Word of instruction, suddenly, sovereignly, sufficiently, the waters rise, and He is glorified. "Make this valley full of ditches." Shall we pray.

[Tape cuts-off] What of you, dear heart. Are you here tonight with a load of guilt and sin? What of you? What of your need? You say, Oh, I have never been forgiven. I have never known pardon. Well bless you heart, He is here tonight to pardon and forgive you, to cleanse you, to save you and make you wholly His. What about you, Christian friend. You say, Oh, I have been hearing for a long time about victory, but I have not had victory. Tonight I want to dig ditches. Tonight I want to come to the end of myself. I know cannot do it. I am really to the place where I believe this is the night. What about you, dear heart, as you see the church. Have you begun to get discouraged and disheartened and say, Oh, nothing can come. Look, the ditches are not dug. Let us dig ditches. Let us let God bring the water. He will do it sovereignly, suddenly, sufficiently. Let's you and I stay to the ditches, shall we? Leave the water to Him. Are you prepared tonight to put yourself in the place of saying, O God, I know that in this desperate hour where we have drunk at every well that man can dig. We have tried the best we know. Nothing will meet the need but the pouring out of Thy Spirit upon the church. We are prepared to pay any price, meet any cost, do anything you ask that you can have something that is Yours, a vessel, a vehicle, an instrument of blessing in this needy day.

I wonder if someone tonight is saying this? God has spoken to me. I know it. I have felt His voice. My need has been exposed and I am so glad because I know that with this need revealed there is an answer provided. (Invitation)

Now let us stand for the Benediction. [Tape starts up here] We close this service tonight, our Father, thanking Thee that Thou hast spoken again through this of the Old Testament, for New Testament need and New Testament promise of blessing. We believe that Thou art the same, and the principles here are unchangeable and eternal. We believe it is Thy desire now in this day and this decade, yea, in this year to pour out of Thy Spirit upon that hungry heart and life and church that is willing to meet Thee on Thy terms, and we would be that people, Father. And so we would go tonight, hearing the prophet say, "Make this valley full of ditches," and prepare our own heart, and see that all the stones and roots and shrubs and everything that would hinder the flow of Thy Spirit upon us, that in faith and expectancy, and in deep desire and anticipation, we will prepare for all that we are trusting Thee to do for us. We ask Thee, Lord, that Thou wilt bless the hungry, those whose hands have been raised, those who have special need. Might there be a time of victory tonight as we lay hold upon the promises Thou hast given us.

Now may Thy grace and mercy and peace be and abide with us now and until Jesus comes again. In His worthy Name. Amen.

* Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, March 11, 1962 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor.