

I don't have a scripture again tonight. I'm just going to talk to you tonight. Whenever I talk with you about experiencing the Lord, I only have two or three sources I can draw from: the scripture, what it says; my own experience; and the experience of others. And of course, when you share in the meetings, you also enter that experience. There has been something that I have tried to help the church with on many occasions, almost from the time I first got here, it's never taken root in the life of the church, and actually, I'm not disturbed about that, I'm not concerned, I'm not even burdened, but I'm going to talk about it again tonight.

It is extremely important; as far as that goes, it's a pillar in my own life. All I can do is share it with you again. One day, you're going to have to get past my words and get into your own personal experience. I don't know if you recognized from last night what was actually said, but what was actually said last night was that you're being thrown on the Lord to know Him yourself in a way that's unique to you. I hope you'll not forget what was said last night. I really hope you won't forget. I believe this morning was fresher for all of us. I believe that. I believe there. Maybe one or two of us hit a dry hole, but for most of you, I know it was fresher. I have a lot more to say, even about this morning.

I got you just as far as getting out of bed. I'm not trying to create a specific routine that a Christian will follow each morning. Every morning is different. So, I'm not saying that what I'm going to mention tonight follows what was said last night. It doesn't. This doesn't, but it is something for you to know and experience.

Do you remember our dealing with Psalm 42? You remember that? What did you learn from that? That in that spirit, there is not a little brook in the desert. There are cataracts: streams flowing down from the hills, creating waterfalls, and the waterfalls spouting and hitting one another, forming cataracts. That is the main point.

Now, brothers and sisters, you come to the Lord in the morning. I believe that you have made some great progress over the last two months in getting past a feeling of condemnation when you come to the Lord. Shake your head yes or something, even if it's not true; encourage me a little. That sense of condemnation that most Christians carry into the Lord's presence; it's just not necessary. We can go right past it. But oh brother, oh sister, it is so difficult to stop "begging" prayers. When you get a hold of yourself, stop them, and start turning them around, you come up with a whole new prayer. It's not like you turn it around. You literally come up with something totally new. You know why? Everything you say has to be altered.

I once said to you that I never understood what Beta Sheirich prayed when she prayed, and I listened intently, but I never understood what that gal was talking about when she prayed. I still don't know. I'm sure if I prayed with her tonight, I wouldn't understand. She and the Lord would have their own wavelength. They had developed their own way of communicating with each other, and you couldn't break into it. Sometimes you knew what she said, but most of the time you didn't know what she was talking about, and you really didn't care. It really didn't matter. But I have found that when I come to the Lord, there's that prayer of my soul standing up there looking at me, wanting to say... some drippy droopy thing, and beg the Lord, and plead, and ask Him for what I've already got, and tell Him how terrible I am. I look that

prayer straight in the face and refuse it, but I look behind it and try to see what it was that really needed to be prayed. I suddenly realized there wasn't even anything. What has to be said is very simple.

I might have this great big agonizing prayer that I want to pray, and I look at it, and I know it's not from the Lord, and then I look at it again, and I know you're not going to be praying, prayer, and then I find something to take its place, and about all I come out with sometimes is...and it's deep...it's felt. "Jesus, You're Lord of absolutely everything." That didn't sound like much of a prayer to the hearer, but it had great significance to me, within my inner being.

I'm going to come back to this now. I want to talk to you about the scripture as prayer. I don't think I'm going to talk for more than five minutes, which means it probably won't last over twenty. I'm not content with the room full of brothers and sisters who use the scripture the way I describe it, not the way I experience it. I don't even know what this passage is about. I only know that I got to the epistles. *What then shall we say, that Abraham, our forefather, according to the flesh, is found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.*

Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness, just as David also spoke of the blessing upon the man to whom God awakens righteousness apart from works. Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.

That passage of scripture sounds very theological. I would hate to ask you to get up in the morning with that passage of scripture. I really would. That'd be hard. What you would do with that scripture, I don't know, but I'm going to talk out of my heart. I don't know anything more about that passage of scripture than you do right now, but I know that if I get up in the morning, that passage of scripture is capable of taking me to places I've never been before. And possibly to take you to an experience, literally, that you've never had with the Lord before in your life. Now how? I don't know. I don't know how to explain it to you. I want you to know that you're capable of such an experience. I cannot tell you how I deal with the scripture as prayer, but I will tell you this: if I did not have the scripture to deal with as prayer, I'd hate to have to go on from this day forward. I could do it, but I sure don't want to.

The other day, I was meeting with the sisters who are now in Hong Kong, and we were reading out of Hebrews 4. I had never met with those sisters; none of them. They're gone, so I'll just talk about it. I looked at the sisters, and I said, there's no need for you and me to get together this morning trying to handle this, because I know what's going to happen. I'm going to dominate. So, you just sit there and listen. They said fine, and I started. Please forgive me again for so many personal references. I don't know how to talk about the things that we're talking about tonight without being personal. Just don't know how to do it. When we had gone for about five minutes, frankly, I forgot those sisters were there. There came a moment when

we were all praying together, and the whole thing blended. It's true, I did more than they did, but the Spirit of the Lord just swept us, and we were no longer, quote, "praying the Scripture", end quote. We had gone somewhere, and from there we had been watered, and from there we had been touched, and from there we had been broken. From there, we were weeping, and from there... we were just so swept up by the Lord. We spent an hour there and didn't even know it. Finally, I said, we need to talk a little bit. One of the sisters said, "It's seven o'clock, and we need to talk a little bit," and one of the sisters said, "It just can't be seven."

Now you can be jealous. You don't know whether to be jealous; be jealous. Be jealous. I can tell you exactly how to take the scripture and turn it to prayer. It's very simple. Read the verse and say something to the Lord. *Therefore, let us fear, while a promise remains of entering His rest.* Any one of you should sing that. *Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of that rest.* Lord, I'm afraid. A promise remains to enter Your rest, and I don't want to come short on it. That's verse 1.

Verse 2. *For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also, but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.* Lord, I have heard the good news preached to me, just as they did, but the word didn't profit them, because it wasn't united by faith. Lord, your word speaks to me, and I want to mingle it with faith when I hear it.

Verse 3 *For we who have believed enter that rest. Just as it is said, "As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.* It's hard for me to do what I'm doing and think back to that morning. Lord, I have believed in you, and therefore I have entered your rest, and your works were finished before the foundation of the world. Now that's taking a verse and praying it, but I think you agree with me, you didn't get a lot out of that. Is that not true? It took us about 20 minutes to get that far that morning, and I think, by the time we had gotten to the end of the page, that's about where we spent the morning. Yet we did not get off that passage of Scripture.

Let me explain, brothers. It is not taking a verse and uttering it to the Lord. That's a ritual. Then Gene, what do I do? I don't know. Do you know how you come into the conscious sense of the Lord's presence? Say it. I do not know. Only this I can tell you: I have come into the Lord's presence so often with the scripture, with the written word, that I can open it almost anywhere, and in two or three minutes, I have disappeared, and I don't know any other way to explain that to you, but that.

This morning, I was reading 1 Thessalonians. Frankly, I don't even remember where it was. When that passage began, it was as dry and as dead to me as it is to you. It was utterly meaningless. It was just words on the page. You've read the Bible that way, have you not? But I have learned to go very, very slow. To take my mind out of gear; to take two or three words and not rush. Whether I get anything out of those words or not, it doesn't matter. I go to three or four more words, maybe a half a sentence, maybe a whole sentence. Brothers, it is not long before something happens somewhere. What happens? Something. Then what happened? Well, I'll tell you what happened this morning. I don't mean to spook you out, but I'm going to

tell you what happened. Please don't put too much stock in the words I use because you'll think I'm... you will really think I'm crazy. But I'm going to tell you, anyway.

I was no more, I mean, as far as I am concerned, if you'd walked into my room and seen me this morning. I wasn't there. I had no consciousness of being there. I was sitting in Thessalonica, watching Paul in a room, mending a tent. I saw someone come in who had a big problem. I watched Paul put that tent cloth down and go over to sit. He put his arm around me, and just talked, and listened, and wept, and prayed, and I sat there, and I listened, and I wept, and I prayed. A minute or two or three later, I was walking through the streets of Thessalonica with Paul, listening to him tell a brother, "Brother, when I leave here, you're going to suffer, just like your brothers in Judea near. Then it just burst on me how much that word came true later. They really did suffer just like the brothers in Judea.

And boy, by the time I got to the next verse, I was ready for it. It said, 'It doesn't matter; go ahead and rejoice anyway.' Then I realized that the brothers in Judea rejoiced when they had all those problems, and Stephen was stoned, and I was just so delighted that the brothers in Judea rejoiced in those days. Then I realized what they did to Paul in Thessalonica, how those Thessalonians were left alone, and they rejoiced, and I rejoiced. Then, deep out of my being, I was just telling the Lord, Lord, it is mine, and it is my brothers in Goleta to suffer as the brothers in Judea did, and the brothers in Thessalonica did, and Lord, we are rejoicing too. We have rejoiced, and we do rejoice.

I'm not even sure I can find that passage of scripture, but... gee whiz, I hope I can. I wonder where it is. I don't know if I began with the very first verse; I don't think so. I think I was in about verse 4. I'll read it. *For you yourselves know, brother, that my coming to you wasn't in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God. I'm in much opposition. It's 1 Thessalonians 2:3, For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by the way of deceit, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, that God examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor did we come with a pretext for greed. God is witness. Now, did we seek glory from men?*

This is where I started reading. I think right about here. At least, this is where I began to be stirred by Him. *Either from you or from others, even as apostles of Christ, we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, and that's where it all started, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children.* That dear brother, who has got such an image of being so tender, sat down there and tenderly, tenderly, tenderly held somebody in His arm.

I remember verse 8, too. *Having thus a fond affection for you, we're well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel, but also we imparted to you our souls. Because you have become beloved to us.* That just meant so much to me, and I'm just, brothers, I can't explain it, but I disappeared in there. *For you recall, brethren, our labor and our hardship, how, working night and day, so as not to be a burden to any of you. We proclaim to you the gospel of God.* That's as far as I got.

I cannot communicate anything to you, but I can tell you, if you'll start using the scriptures from the neck down, instead of from the neck up, if you cease having a strong consciousness of the scripture...I don't know how to say it, brother, but that page is a wall, or maybe it's a door, and you can walk through it. There are times when you can feel that you know exactly how that brother felt, and you can feel every emotion he felt. You keep on praying and keep on receiving a few simple words. You keep on letting it touch you deeply, until finally, there's just a total identification between what was written, your spirit, and the Lord Himself. You suddenly not only have a new book, but you also have something as living and as vibrant as a human being in front of you.

How do you do that? I don't know, but you can find out. Please don't pick up the scripture and say, "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands. Lord, I want to be a submissive wife. Husbands, love your wife. Lord, I want to love my wife." You can go all through the Bible that way and never get anywhere. Brothers, I want to assure you that there are several thousand Christians who are doing that. Let them do that. Let them stake out that corner of that. Would you come and be *disseminated* into God? You can learn to disappear in your spirit.

That's number one. Here's number two. I mentioned to y'all recently about how to read. I get a suggestion, and I use my wife as an illustration. It didn't work for most of you. I have read some with a few sisters, and it's just perfect. I read with some brothers and some sisters, and it just moves too fast. I remember one day a sister was reading something to me, and boy, I was really touched. I just forgot, and I was sitting there, glorying in that sentence, and I hadn't said anything. I said to the Lord, and I was just sneaking up on what was going on inside me, and she began reading again. I wanted to say, no, you don't understand, stop, and yet that sister, she couldn't know.

Then I remembered something. I forgot to tell you this. I told you that it was my wife who sometimes reads to me, but I forgot to tell you how that got started. Do you know how it got started? It started with periods of time in my life when I was so depressed. I would have resigned if I had ever found a place to resign. I would have quit or walked out, I was below the bottom. I had to reach five feet to get to the bottom. I was below the bottom rung. I was below anything you could find. Just gone, broken, crushed, weeping, defeated, and my wife just read to me. The Lord stirred my heart and my spirit, and I just began to gush out prayers. When I would finish, and be very, very still and totally spent, she'd begin again, and then I would begin again. That's how I learned to listen to my wife read the scripture to me and other things. Now, do you recognize that that cannot be patented? That can't be explained, and that can't be taught. But it can be had.

Well, what can you do? I want you to know that if you have had a real, deep, abiding experience with the Lord and have found something that worked, I would want you to tell me and explain it to me. I would want to sit down with you, and I have something to tell you that will knock you off your foundations. It was an overwhelming experience, but I cannot give it to you. You're going to have to find it all on your own. But if you seek, you'll find. I want to come back and say again about reading the scripture: I want to be really practical. When I have talked to brothers about dealing with the scriptures, I've usually sat down with three

brothers, one, two, three, and myself, four. We take a passage, and I say to the brothers, "Now you're going to start, and you're going to be next, and you're going to be next, and I'm going to be next. We all agree, and the brother begins, and it's pretty tinny. It's pretty tinny. The next brother. It's tinny. And the next brother, it's tinny. Maybe even me, it's tinny, and we start again. We go around, and about the fifth time around, it's not tinny anymore. Somewhere along the line, we get to the Lord.

Now, other times I've sat down with four brothers, and a brother, you know, does something, but maybe he prays two words over his verse. I don't know what happens, but the next brother gets confused. He doesn't take that verse. He goes somewhere else. Then this brother breaks in and prays. That brother breaks in and prays. I pray, and we're sitting, waiting for that brother to come to his verse, and nothing happens. We sit, and we sit, and we sit, and we sit, and we wait, and we wait, and we wait, and that brother hadn't done his part. These two brothers don't have the simple Yankee initiative to take that verse and do something with it, and if they do, this brother now says...something's going on in his mind. What it is, I don't know, but when he sees someone else take his verse, he either gets his feelings hurt or something, he still won't say anything, and the whole thing bogs down.

I want to suggest that you do a little experimenting with the scripture, but that all four of you take an old pirate oath. You're going to carry your end of the log. Continue with this until something comes out in your life. You'll need some help. That is one way to pray this with the scriptures. It is not the only way; it is one way. Another way is two of you. Another way is for you to simply read a scripture, then turn it to prayer. Read a scripture, turn it to prayer. Read a scripture, turn it to prayer. There is another way. You don't read the scripture at all, and frankly, brothers, this is what I usually do when I'm alone. I do not read it at all. It's kind of hard to explain, but I think you can catch on. I look straight at the scripture, and as I go along. I pray, without first reading that verse.

Brothers, I don't get very far, although it may take me a while to even get to a verse or two, because I'm not going anywhere fast. I'm not here to learn or study. I am there to absorb. As I told you, there is yet another way: have someone else read you the scripture, and you do not even look at it. You need a good reader. Pick on my wife. There are two or three other sisters. I've forgotten now who they are, but I'm sure there are many more than that, and a few with whom I have prayed. It's just a glorious thing to sit there and have the scripture read to you, but maybe that's postgraduate. Maybe you can't handle that, but I do want you to know two things, and I wish you would listen to this.

I don't know what holds my life up, but whatever the foundation is under my life, my experience with scripture is one of the largest pillars holding my life up, and it will be 40 years from now. If I had to choose between speaking in tongues and taking the scripture to the Lord, I would, without question, take the scripture. What else can I say to contrast? I don't know. It is...I'm talking about any particular given morning. I would forgo...I would forego my mornings in the scripture to raise a dead man. But if I had to choose between the two on a morning-to-morning basis, there'd just be a lot of people who'd stay dead. Because otherwise, I'm afraid the dead would be raising the dead. My heart must stay the Lord's.

Then what can I say to the brothers in Goleta, California? I can say that, on this sheet of paper, which we're all carrying around now, there are verses of Scripture. I'm a little concerned that some of you may have just boiled down to the place of reading passages of Scripture to one another. That's no good. You did that in Sunday school. You know, you open it, read it to one, then close it, and you'll pray. That was never my intention when I said, 'reading the scripture to one another.' It's far different from that; it's an encounter with the Lord. How will you deal with the scripture? I don't know. But I can tell you this. There is a way... There is a way that will shake your whole being.

Now I just got one other thing to say, and this is again the sounding of a note that will be sounded again and again and again and again among us. We are not having morning devotionals. Here's what a morning devotional is. I get up in the morning, I go to a brother's home, and spiritually, I'm about here. We get together, and we begin something, and in the process of a moment or two, we move to about here. We go for about 45 minutes to an hour, then stop. We praise the Lord and say goodbye. Now that's a morning devotional.

Brothers, if that's all, if that's as far as we in Isla Vista, California, are going to go, I am for taking the chairs we have and dumping them in the Pacific. Taking our three chairs, mimeograph machines, pouring gasoline on them, burning them, and taking our lamps, giving them to the poor, and taking our sofas and putting them on the junkyard heap. What else is there? Anything else? The podium...we'll make firewood out of it, and all of us will go back to where we came from. That is not my fault, not my intention, and certainly not what God wants. That is pure religion, and if it's not, it'll become that.

My brother and my sister, my Lord, if my Lord didn't live, I would never have dared to introduce to you the things that have been introduced in the last two months. I am gambling that you, the brothers and sisters in Goleta, can have experiences with Jesus Christ that are better, absolutely shattering. That you can come out of morning encounters with the Lord, torn to shreds by the presence of His Life. Shaken, filled with glory, weeping, or shouting, or crying, or something, but somewhere in that morning time, you have met, encountered, known, the living God.

I know one thing, that when you get to that plane, you can't level off. Something inside you has got to crumble, that natural human resistance to emotion, or the loss of clear consciousness, or what am I trying to say, I don't know, but somewhere there before the Lord, there's got to be a yielding, a crumbling, and then a disappearing right into Him. Every day, Gene? I don't know how to answer that question. Alright, praise God, for right now, yes. Later, God gives postgraduate experiences, but after postgraduate experiences, there are experiences beyond that. And sometimes you get right back where you started. I will tell you this, that He will not always be so real, because He will not allow you to fall in love with an experience. Phil, your words are wise. For right now, yes, it is possible. It's possible, and it is not only possible, but it can also be more or less normal. I'm here tonight to put you under the pile.

Your Lord has been known, and you can know Him.