

Walk with Christ

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Now it was as we were reading from Titus, and I'm sure that Jack will bear with me if I just make reference to this, that in this epistle of Titus, in the verses that we read, we have four specific things which are applicable to us today, which indeed are necessary for each and every one of us as we walk through this scene. The grace of God that bringeth, the first one is salvation.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that's the Christian's education, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live, that's our occupation. [00:01:02] Godly, righteously, childrenly godly in this present world, looking for, that's our expectation.

These are the four things that I always remember about this chapter, and I trust that Jack will bear with me for making these things, but it was the one, the occupation that concerned me, and I thought of this verse from Genesis chapter 26, Isaac did again the wills that they had did in the days of Abraham his father. I like the translation that puts it this way, Isaac did again for himself, Isaac did again for himself the wills of water that they had bid in the days of Abraham his father.

[00:02:06] Now as we go into 1972, I think that it is long after time that we as a company of God's people got our priorities in proper perspective. It's high time that we stopped and we considered and we look not outwards at the other brethren, but look inward at ourselves. How often in 1972 have I heard brethren be mourning the fact that things are not the same as they used to be.

[00:03:03] God's the same, the spirit of God is the same, the Lord Jesus Christ is the same, the same yesterday, today and forever. What's wrong? Why is there this lethargy and apathy amongst the children of God today? And brethren we must face up to these facts if we are going to lead victorious Christian lives in this present evil world. Why are we dwindling in numbers? There are some people you know who just refuse to admit that we are dwindling in numbers. Some people who just refuse to admit that things are getting weaker and I sincerely believe and I want to exalt you this afternoon even as I equally exalt myself. Take stock. Why should it be that we are dwindling in numbers? [00:04:03] Pick up a circular, pick up a letter and all you read in it by and large is that there's a little company here and there's a little company there and there's a little company somewhere else, but you know we're going on and we're getting a blessing. Of course you'll get a blessing. Wherever Christ is in the midst, blessing must flow. But the point that I'm trying to make and the point that I want to attract your attention to today is why should it be that we are dwindling in numbers? Why should it be that we are so apathetic and lethargic in the things of God? I want to suggest and I don't want to take up too much of your time, but I want to suggest this. So far as I can see having

examined my own life and having examined my own heart [00:05:01] is that I'm not doing what I'm said to do. I'm not digging the well for myself. So I want you to challenge your heart. Young, middle-aged, old, it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter who you are. Challenge your heart just as you sit here today. Have you in 1971 been digging? And if you can honestly say that you have, then it's all right. But I doubt very much if anyone here today can honestly say that they've been digging in 1971 as much as they ought to have been digging. Because if we had been digging, brother, the whole tenor of the ministry would have been much higher than it is. Isaac did again for himself the wells of water that they did in the days of Abraham his father.

[00:06:15] Now what I'm saying, this twin link in numbers, we don't have to look far before you must agree. I can remember as a young boy in Edinburgh on January the 1st in the Forest Road Hall. The bridge was packed to capacity. The building was busting at the seams. But what was more important, in those days we had valuable faith-building ministry by gifted godly saints in a past generation.

And I will remember even in a very young Christian coming away feeling that I was totally revitalized, enjoying to hear the things of God.

[00:07:07] But alas, and I say it with head bowed, alas the day when we go away from some of our fellowship meetings, we're discouraged. And we feel has it been worthwhile digging all the distance because of the poor quality of the ministry. I don't pretend, brother, don't for one minute think that I'm excluding myself from this indictment. I'm not. I may be one of the biggest offenders, but at least I've looked at my own heart and I've seen that there is something missing so far as my walk in this world is concerned, so far as my fellowship with my fellow brethren is concerned. And I've come to this conclusion that the reason is that I have not been digging nowhere else of the word of God. [00:08:08] You know if we don't dig, if we don't dig, we'll not taste the refreshing stream. Make no mistake about it, this Christian faith that we have is not pie in the sky.

It is a real vital active thing which works in our lives. But before we can have the energy of faith, we've got to taste the living stream. We've got to dig for ourselves. We've got to find the living water and we've got to drink. And we've got to have our thirst quenched. It's no good me going out into the desert without water. I'm not last very long. And it's no good, as a matter of fact, it's absolutely impossible for you or for me [00:09:05] to do anything at all for God in this world unless we're constantly and continuously drinking of the stream that we find in the word of God. Isaac did again for himself. Brethren, note it. He did it for himself. Don't look at the person next to you and say well what the preacher says or the speaker says is very applicable to that brother or that sister. It's applicable to me and I want you to take the challenge, the challenge into your own heart and I want you above everything else and I pray for this before God that we leave this place today revitalized, re-energized and that we're able to go back to our assemblies wherever they may be and we can be actively engaged in the [00:10:06] things of God, seeking to bring others that they too might taste the rivers of living water. Why was it necessary for Isaac to dig? Why was it necessary? Isaac was in the middle of a desert, middle of a wilderness, and there was absolutely no water to be found anywhere.

My dear Christian friend, can you find water in this present world? Can you? Can you? Are you satisfied? Are you satisfied with the water that this world offers? If you are, I pity your Christianity. [00:11:03] What the Christian needs today and though I say it for myself, what I need today is to drink deeply of that water. I'm having drunk deeply of that water, be enabled by the Spirit of God to go in for the things of God.

There's no lethargy or apathy in the Christian that's drinking deeply. People tell me today as I go around that you know you've just got to put up with it. It's a dear small thing. How often have you heard the expression? It's a dear small thing. Brethren, I want to tell you this today. It's no dear small thing. This is the day of the great of God and it's the greatest day that this world has ever seen. It's a dear great thing. Whenever I hear or whenever I see a person coming along and questioning the Lord Jesus Christ [00:12:03] as his or her own personal saviour, I say hallelujah, it's a dear great thing. Don't let Satan come in and delude you that it's a dear small thing. I'll tell you what it is. It's a day of small men. It's a day when men are not big enough to face up to their Christian responsibilities and get down before God on their knees and pray, men of prayer. That's what it is. A day of small men of prayer. We're not drinking and if we're not drinking, we're not being refreshed and if we're not being refreshed, how can we refresh our brethren? How can we go out and tell the story of God's redeeming grace to the 50 souls around? I tell you this afternoon, it's an absolute impossibility and I want to exhort you again and again and again. Do what Isaac did.

[00:13:07] Isaac digged for himself the wells of water that they digged in the days of Abraham, his father.

Now there are one or two wells that are freely available to us each and every one. Just let's look at one or two of them. There's the well of the world. There's the well of the world.

This is where all our comfort, all our encouragement, all our correction, all our rebuke because that's what the previous speaker read, you know, in John's epistle, exhortation and rebuke and sometimes it's not very easy to stand on a platform and say the things that I'm saying. It's not easy but then whenever, whenever was it easy to do something [00:14:08] that was worthwhile? Not easy. If you want to be an active vital force for God in this world, you certainly won't find it easy. Why, they crucified the master. They put him out by way of a manufacturer's gibbet and you expect it to be easy. Never easy, never easy. I know how much better it is, how much more effective we can be if we dig again for ourselves. Brethren, if you forget everything else, remember this. In 1972, let's dig for ourselves. Let's taste the living water. Let's taste the streams that never end. There's no doubt with God. No doubt with God. [00:15:03] There was an Isaac Stein. He was in a parched land. He was in a desert land. He was in a land where rain was infrequent. Unnaturally speaking, there was no water to be had at all. But you know there was one thing, that a godly father had handed down to his son and that was example. That's what Abraham did you know. He handed down an example. And Isaac knew that his father had been in this position. Isaac knew that there was a time when Abraham had been in this position and there was no water to be found. And Isaac knew that Abraham had digged. And having digged, he had drunk the living water. This was what impelled and compelled Isaac. [00:16:06] Now, I want to challenge our parts this afternoon. Most of us here have listened to men in the past who have been gifted ministers of the word. What effect has it had?

Well, I'll tell you what it's had on me. As I think back, and I'm not going to mention names, I could mention 30 or 40 names that are known to most of you. But as I think back upon these men, how they ministered, and not only how they ministered, but how they lived. And I say to myself, how is it, how was it possible that they could live in this way? How was it possible that they could minister the word of God in this way? [00:17:06] I come to the conclusion that they must have been constantly digging into the wells of the world. And I can say this, that what was good enough for them, what produced in them faithfulness, what produced in them activity, is good enough for me today, because it's still with us. It's got its name, the well of the world. Why was it necessary for Isaac to dig? Q first goes on to say, doesn't it, that he digged again the wells that his father Abraham, that were digged in

the days of Abraham, his father, for the Philistines had stopped the well. And if ever, brethren, we're living in a day when the wells of the word of God are stopped, [00:18:08] it's today. I was at a prayer meeting, just the last prayer meeting we had in Glasgow, in 1971. And a brother prayed that over the New Year period at the fellowship meetings, we might have powerful and topical ministry.

Well, I'm going to talk just for a moment about pollution. And if there's anything more topical than that at the moment, I don't know what it is. Scientists of the world are perturbed about the pollution that exists in the world. I want just to refer for a moment to the pollution of the word of God. [00:19:01] Oh, they don't call themselves Philistines today. They're not so old fashioned as that. They've got to bring themselves right into the 20th century. And they call themselves Jehovah's Witnesses, Christadelphians, and all sorts of names. And I believe that for the sake of our young people, these things ought to be said. They call themselves all sorts of things, but you will find if you sit down and study what they believe, in their tongue, each and every one of them detract from this book, the word of the living God. And they're doing everything in their power to pollute it, and to choke it, and to prevent you and me from enjoying the wonderful truth that is to be found in it. There's another world that's being polluted, you know. There's another world that's choked, [00:20:03] and that's the world of prayer. How often do we pray? How often do we pray? A quick five minutes. Last thing at night.

Let's face up to these things, brethren. These are practical issues that affect us. But what's more serious, these are things that affect the assembly of God. And these are the things that affect our testimony to the man in the street outside. How often do we pray? Do you even spare God five minutes in each day? Do you? Last thing at night. Oh, we've been busy, haven't we? Doing our legitimate business. We'll spare no effort. [00:21:06] But when it comes to the things of God, we give God five minutes of the day.

Are you surprised we are so ineffective and ineffectual? Are you surprised that we are so sluggish and so lazy in the things of God? Because the wells of prayer have been choked and polluted until today. We have been taken in to get down on our bended knee before God and ask for his guidance.

And he's like, these are practical things. These are things that need to be said, especially to our younger brethren, because don't forget that the young brethren of today, they are the assembly of the Lord. [00:22:02] And it is our responsibility, those of us who are slightly older, to try and exalt them and encourage them in the right and proper way. And this is the only way. Digging the wells again for ourselves.

Oh, we're very active. Perhaps there never has been a day in the history of Brethren when we've been so active. Christian activity, gospel outreach and all this.

And it's all very well and very proper and very good. How often do we really pray about these things?

How often do we actually pray about the activity in the gospel at our local meeting? Do you come along to the prayer meeting just before the gospel? Are you really interested in the gospel? Or is it just another meeting? [00:23:02] You know, I'm becoming more and more convinced as the older I get, that we're getting into a state of formality. It's a matter of form. We've always done it.

And I suppose as long as God's bear this, we'll always go on doing it. It's many years ago, since our late brother, Mr. David Ross said from a platform, that we as a company of Brethren, we're rapidly becoming a company of bread breakers. We're rapidly becoming a company of bread breakers.

Oh yes, let's go along to the Lord's Day morning. And that is the most priceless privilege that any Christian can have. [00:24:04] But don't ask us to go to the Bible reading, much less to the prayer meeting or any of the other meetings. Are you a bread breaker? Are you a bread breaker?

Because if you're a bread breaker this afternoon, just let me ask you to sit and challenge your past. Look back over 1971. See where you went wrong, if you went wrong at all.

And from this moment, henceforward, make sure that you take the remedy, because the remedy is here in this book. You can dig again for yourself, the wells that your spiritual fathers dig for themselves, and you can taste the same refreshing stream that they tasted. And you can be revitalized and re-energized in the things of God.

[00:25:11] In relation to our gospel efforts, those different meetings, oh, how we bend over backwards, don't we? To try and be nubble, to introduce new methods, different presentations.

Not new methods we need, not new methods we need. We don't depend, God doesn't depend on the 20th century gimmicks in preaching the gospel, but God does depend on men, and he depends on men and women of prayer.

And if you're not a man or a woman of prayer, you might as well stop that activity [00:26:04] that you're trying to do for God. Why? Because the power, the power only flows when you have communion, intimate communion, constant communion with the risen Christ. You remember the tramcars in Edinburgh? You remember how just on the top of them, on the roof of them, there was a little trolley, and the trolley was connected to the electric wire overhead? And you know what happened when the trolley wasn't connected to the wire overhead? The tramcar stopped. Why? Because the power didn't flow into the generator. And I fear, brethren, that we're becoming just like the tramcar in that respect. The power is not flowing, because the trolley of prayer is not in contact [00:27:04] with the source of power, irrespective of where we are or what we do. And this is possibly the reason for our lethargy, our apathy, and our sluggishness in the things of God. Now I'm not suggesting for a moment, and with this I close, I'm not suggesting for a moment that it's easy to dig the well. It's not easy. Isaac didn't find it easy. Isaac didn't find it easy. If you read on that chapter, you'll find two verses further on that he discovered that he was no man of strife. He didn't find it easy because he had to go out and dig under the heat of the fierce sun. Labor was involved. Energy was involved. I, even striving, was involved.

[00:28:02] But you know, what a wonderful thing it was that he persisted despite all the obstacles.

He persisted, and he did. And having did, he discovered. And having discovered, he drank. And having drank, it's said of Isaac that he was fruitful in the land.

My dear young Christian friend, I, and don't let's forget the middle-aged, because you know it's when you get middle-aged that you tend to become a little lethargic. You tend to let your sit down after your day's work and your feet up and your head back and your sleep. I know. I know because these things happen to me and I'm not telling you anything new. But these are the dangerous, the dangerous days. These are the dangerous years. So those of you [00:29:02] who like myself are in middle age, let's take these special heat. It's not easy. There are lots of difficulties in digging the wells that Isaac did.

We like to come home and we like to relax and we like to rest. There's nothing wrong with that. But what proportion of our time do we give to digging? Let's see to it that each and every one of us challenge our own hearts in relation to this matter. And I would make a forecast that in 1972, God willing, you would see a tremendous difference in our assembly life. You would see a tremendous difference in our individual lives. You would see the power of God flowing through us. The hymn was quoted by the previous speaker. [00:30:07] Then you would see the power that can only come from heaven itself. You would see that power flowing through us. And you know, the men round about us wouldn't need to ask if we were Christians. They would know.

They would know. Not by what they say. It's the easiest thing in the world to talk. It's a very much more difficult thing, beloved brother, beloved sister, to walk.

Walk in communion with the risen Christ, to experience the power that he alone can give. And in receiving that power, to go out to a dry, thirsty land, telling others of the Savior's life.