

BEING PREPARED THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD

Isaiah 40:6-8—The voice of one saying, Cry. And one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever.

I Peter 1:23-25—Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth. For, all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: but the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you.

Hebrews 4:12-13—For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

Revelation 1:8-9—I am the Alphas and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Let us just have a word of prayer:

Beloved Lord, we want to thank You that You are here in our midst. We have been worshipping You together. We thank You for the sense of Your presence. Now we come to the ministry of Your Word, Lord, and we know without You we can do nothing, neither in the speaking of Your Word nor in the hearing of it. But You have provided us with an anointing and we ask for a double portion of that anointing for the speaking of Your Word and for the hearing of it, that in some wonderful way You will touch our hearts as we consider being prepared for the coming of the Lord. Hear our prayer and answer it; we ask in the name of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Amen.

The Word of God Shall Stand Forever

As you well know the theme of this conference are those words of our Lord Jesus in Revelation 22 where He says, "I come quickly." My responsibility is in Revelation 22:17: "Let him that heareth say, 'Come, Lord Jesus.'" I want to speak particularly about the Word of God and the need for us to be prepared by the Spirit of God through the Word of God. It is an amazing thing that Isaiah said all those thousands of years ago that the Word of the Lord shall stand forever. Everything else passes; everything else fades, but the Word of God is as alive and powerful and active as it has ever been. It is amazing to me just to consider it.

Do you believe in God? If once you believe in the everlasting God—not some figment of your imagination—but you believe in the living God, who has neither beginning nor end, is there anything He cannot do? It is amazing to me that God has given us His Word. And through that Word we are born again. It is not just theology; it is not just doctrine. The Word of God has within it the power of God, the ability of God to create something where there was neither desire or hunger for Him. Somehow through the Word of God the Spirit of God can create a hunger and thirst for God, and by His grace that hunger and thirst never leaves us. All through our lives as a child of God the Holy Spirit keeps alive that hunger. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger after God; they shall be filled.”

Some people do not believe in God and they do not believe in the Bible as the Word of God. They believe it is a collection of religious writings by very poor and not so clever editors who shoved together all these records into the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. We are told that the Bible is full of discrepancies, exaggerations and faults. I have heard it for years.

I never read the Bible as a child either as a Jew or a Christian, even though I went to a Christian school. But when the Word of God reached me and I was born of the Spirit of God, something happened. From that moment onwards, I hungered to know the Word of God.

The Assault Upon the Word of God

I believe there is an enormous assault upon the Word of God in our generation. All of the western nations, once called Christian nations, have been the scene of awakening after awakening, renewal after renewal, and revival after revival, which made them great. Many of them became the home for missions, as it were, to the ends of the earth—certainly the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Scandinavians, the Netherlands, even Germany before the Nazi period. It is amazing to me that now there is a rapid collapse of everything that was Christian, whether it is social life, national life, or society. The Word of God has been expunged, taken out of it. It is easier to put up a totem pole than to put up a cross, easier to put up a picture of an idol than the Ten Commandments. This rapidity with which this paganization is taking place is evidence that there are huge demonic forces behind it, and they are preparing the nations of the world for the antichrist. And the removal of the Word of God, the assault on the inspiration of the Word of God, the authenticity of the Word of God, the relevance of the Word of God is the evidence of this assault.

The Bible Is the Word of the Living God

I do not believe any child of God can be prepared for the coming of the Lord if we depart from the living Word of God. In my estimation, this Book we hold in our hands, from the first word of Genesis 1 to the last word of Revelation 22, is the Word of the living God. We discover the most amazing thing in Genesis 1 which is put very simply: “In the beginning God.” It also says in Genesis 1 about 13 times: “and God said, and God said, and God said.” It is the Word of the living God. Hebrews 11 tells us that by faith we understand that this world was created out of nothing by the Word of God. Even we human beings were created in His likeness and after His image.

How can anyone be prepared for the coming of the Lord if this Word of God is not alive to us, is not doing something in us?

We Are Born and Transformed By the Word of God

It is amazing what the apostle Peter said: "We have been born by this Word which lives and abides forever." By the gospel that has been preached to us, we have been born of God.

It is exactly what happened in all these once called Christians countries. When the gospel was preached in these pagan and heathen countries, men and women were born of God and then transformed by the Word of God through the Spirit of the Lord. There is no other way for a man or a woman to be transformed, to be truly converted, and conformed to the likeness of the Lord Jesus but by the living Word of God.

Then there are people who tell me: "Surely you do not believe these sixty-six books of writings are the Word of God. Surely you are a little bit more intelligent than that. You mean to tell me that after all of these thousands of years that inaccuracies, exaggerations, discrepancies have not crept into this Book."

If it is God's Word and God knew that that Word was central to everything He would do in this world, He is well able to look after the transmission of that Word. I do not have any problem at all with that. Once you know the Lord, you know just how precise He is, how accurate He is, how on the ball He is, if I may put it so irreverently.

My doctor said to me years ago that the Jews are a problem because the highest percentage of perfectionists are found amongst the Jewish people. And it all came from this belief in the Word of the living God. They do not do things in a haphazard way. For example, every single thing in the lives of the priests and Levites were ordered. What I think is amazing is that the Holy Spirit has watched over the transmission of this text so that sometimes a word that God spoke thousands of years ago leaps out of the page into my heart.

The Word Is Living and Active

The writer of the Hebrew letter, who was probably Apollos (in my estimation), said this amazing thing: "The word of God is living, and active, and sharper than a two-edged sword, dividing between soul and spirit." That spiritual surgery of dividing between soul and spirit saves us from so much error that we could get into. This Word of the Lord is living. It is not inanimate; it is not just theology; it is not just a book. It is alive! Every person who has been born of the Spirit of God surely knows that the Word of God is alive. I can give example after example of people that I have known when suddenly into their experience, the Holy Spirit has breathed something from this Book, and it has transformed them, brought them out of distress, doubt, and fear into a place of trust.

I seriously wonder how near we are to the appearance of the antichrist because the scenery is now in place. Thank God for what the Lord is doing in the Far East, in Asia, in Africa and South America. Thank God, that the Holy Spirit is saving multitudes of people and they are being transformed in the same way that once the Western nations witnessed. But the fact is that it is the Western nations now that are paganizing their lives, society, education, and

national life. Those Biblical principles that were set at the heart of the Western nations once called Christian, and those nations' national constitutions are now being removed. Mark my words: with the removal of them, in the end it will also be the removal of freedom of conscience and faith.

Do we really believe the Lord is coming? I do. I do not know when, but I suspect that some of these things are much nearer than we think. But I am still a little hesitant to say that the Lord will come next week, in a month's time or two years' time. But we have to be ready.

How can we be ready if the Holy Spirit has been unable through the Word of God to do something in our lives? If we are not being transformed or if we are not being conformed to the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, what is the point of our Christian life? What is the point of the Lord coming suddenly or quickly as He said? Of course we know He said that two thousand years ago. When I was first saved, I used to think: how in the world could he say, "I come quickly"? One answer is that the church has never really been ready. Nevertheless, the fact still remains that you and I need to know the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives because He saves us, He delivers us, He transforms us, and He makes us like the Lord Jesus.

The Word Became Flesh

John said in the first chapter of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (v. 1). It is so simple. Then he said this astounding thing: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (v. 14). If you know the Lord, you know it is a fact that He is full of grace and truth. You know that He was born in Bethlehem. You know that as the Messiah, He ministered for those three and a half years. You know that He died on the cross to save us, and it is the power of His resurrection life that comes into us. However, we need to know this Book. It is one thing for me to stand here saying these things, but you and I need to know this Bible.

Some of you young people may feel that you have been forced to read the Scriptures, and the result is that you have almost a kind of inner revulsion for the Bible. I understand that. I remember in the Christian school my sister and I attended that we had to listen to the most boring recital of Scripture every morning. It was so lifeless it was unbelievable. It was enough to put anyone against the Bible. Far from being living and active, it was dead, totally dead.

Jesus Is the Alphabet of God

It is amazing that Jesus should have said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega." He used the first letter of the Greek alphabet and the last letter of the Greek alphabet in which our New Testament was written. And He meant that He is the alphabet of God. When God speaks and it is written, it is through Jesus. He is the alphabet of God which means He is every letter between alpha and omega. This simply means that every time the Lord wants to reach you, it is through God's language; it is through His Word. Have you ever had the experience of being in distress or trouble, everything is dark and you do not know where to turn, and suddenly, out of the blue has come a Scripture which has leapt into your heart and brought you deliverance and hope and faith?

The apostle Paul puts it very simply: "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). That means living faith unites us to the Lord Jesus. It is not only saving faith, not only beginning faith, but every time you need faith to go on with the Lord, faith to overcome, faith to endure, it comes through the Word of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of the Lord. Do you believe it?

God Is the Same in the Old and New Testament

Some Christians tell me that the whole Old Testament is the revelation of a God of judgment, who is severe and distant. I do not find that at all. I find that the God of the Old Testament is a God of love and grace. I think it is amazing that when Moses gave the second giving of the Law, which is Deuteronomy, he added these words: "God did not choose you because you were many people but because He loved you" (7:7). He also said in the same book: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy might" (6:5).

The Pharisees came to Jesus shortly before He died with a trick question. They had heard how He turned the Sadducees upside down with His wisdom, which gave them courage. They said, "What is the greatest commandment in the Word of God?" And Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy soul, with all thy strength and with all thy might. And the second is like it, also from the law: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Then He said an incredible thing: "Upon these two lie the whole Law and the prophets" (see Matthew 22:34:40). People tell me that the God of the Old Testament is a God of severity and judgment. I think they are crazy because nowhere in the whole sixty-six books is there a book like Revelation with Judgment after judgment of the most colossal kind. So much for the idea that the New Testament has nothing about the judgments of God.

Jesus Is the Alpha and the Omega

In this apocalypse, which means from the Greek "unveiling, the revelation of the heart and mind of God," we hear this word: "I am the Alpha and the Omega." It is not just once but three or four times right through the Book to the very end that Jesus says: "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." In other words, it is the Lord Jesus. He is everything. Right at the beginning of the book of Revelation, John said, "I was in Patmos for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

Patmos was a forced labor camp in the Roman Empire in which they put the people whom they wanted to take out of civilian life because they considered them to be a threat. He worked in the copper mines, and I can hardly think that would be conducive to hearing the Lord or seeing the Lord. He worked from the early morning to late at night. People sometimes go to Patmos today and they tell me how lovely and green the island is; but it was not lovely for John. And in those conditions, God gave him revelation after revelation after revelation. He understood that it was all to do with the "Word of God and the testimony of Jesus."

The Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus

This climax of the battle of the ages, this enormous final seeming breakthrough of Satan to finally tear the whole planet from the hands of the Lord Jesus, is all to do with the “Word of God and the testimony of Jesus.” How can you and I be prepared for the coming of the Lord if we do not understand this sentence—“the word of God and the testimony of Jesus”? This incredible Book that I can hold in one hand has within it the whole love of God, the whole mercy of God, the whole grace of God, the whole purpose of God, and the aim and goal of everything.

When people do not read it, do not live in it, it means they are unprepared for the coming of the Lord. You need to let the Word of God get into you, and you need to get into the Word of God.

The Word of God Is Implanted Within His People

James puts it very simply in his letter in a very typical Jewish way: “Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls, but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing” (James 1:21-25).

The Holy Spirit wrote that through dear James who was the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

Listen to the apostle Paul in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you in all wisdom.” How can we let the Word of God dwell in us? It is not rushing through a little portion of the Scriptures each day and then on with our life or business. This is something else. It is as if this Word of the Lord is living in us. It is almost as if because we are in Christ and Christ is in us, we are in the Word of God, and the Word of God is in us that the Lord will use all the normal problems and troubles of our routine life to bring that Word to life. It is tremendous.

If Christ is in us, the Word is in us. Jesus puts it so beautifully in John 8: “Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him; if ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples, and ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free” (v. 31). If you abide in My word, and My word abides in you, you shall be free.

God’s People are to be Walking Bibles

What I am trying to say is this: the Spirit of God would like to make you a walking Bible. Oh, you say, “No, surely not.” I do not mean just theology and doctrine. He wants to make you a marvelous example of the Word of God. Paul wrote to some Christians that they were an epistle, a letter written by the Spirit of God. That is what every child of God can be. Can you imagine the impact it would have on society all around us if every one of us here was a living letter written by the Spirit of God to those we work with, those we live with, to the nation we live in, to the community we are part of? Would it not be tremendous? That is exactly what

happened when the gospel was preached in all these parts and a huge awakening followed it. Men and women were transformed and became like a letter that God had written.

The Welsh Revival

I remember years ago speaking to two very old ladies in western Wales. And I said, "Do you remember the Welsh revival that swept a hundred thousand people into the kingdom of God within a year? "Yes, they said, "we were in it." I said, "Tell me the most amazing thing that happened." And they said, "Apart from course and vulgar lives being absolutely transformed so that a beauty came into them, the other thing that amazed us was everywhere we went in this town, we heard music coming from under the ground. At first we could not understand it, but it turned out to be the miners. So many of them had been saved by the grace of God and as they were in that difficult work of mining the coal they sang, as only the Welsh can, with hymns of praise to God. It came up through the ground everywhere. You could not get away from it. Everywhere we went we could hear these wonderful Welsh hymns coming out of the ground." Then they said, "Do you know that the pit mules and donkeys stopped working? They were so used to being kicked and obscenities yelled at them to get them to move that when these men got saved, they no longer kicked them or shouted obscenities at them, and the mules and donkeys would not move." It is amazing when God does something.

The Hebrides Revival

It is the same with the Hebrides Revival when the Holy Spirit fell upon some fishermen as they were out fishing in their trawlers. As they were lifting up the net, they fell on their face before God, and the holiness of God so touched them that they cried out for His mercy. They pulled in the nets a little later with the fish and returned home saved by the grace of God.

So great was the holiness of God during that revival that shepherds fell on the wet heather that was on the hills and found the Lord. There is something so tremendous about the Word of God once the Holy Spirit begins to work.

Apostasy is now very prevalent in Christianity around us. It is a listless, lifeless religious type of Christianity. But when the Word of God comes by the Spirit of God and lives are changed and transformed and they begin to love the Word of God, something happens.

The Word of God Is to be Supreme Over Every Area of Our Lives

People sometimes come to Israel and see Jews praying at the Western Wall and elsewhere, and they find it a little bit strange when they see them wrap a little box around their head and on their hands. Why do they do it? God told them to, because He said in that little box is the Word of the Lord, which means your mind has to be under the government of God and His Word. Your hands must work for the Lord under the government of the Holy Spirit. That is why they put a mezuzah with a little Scripture in it on the doorposts and the lintels. Religious Jews will touch it and kiss their hand; but people say it is just religious. Originally it was meant to speak of something; everything one does in business, in work, in education, in social life is to have the Word of God over it. When you go in and out of those doors, the Word of God is

written on them. I do not think you are meant to put things between your eyes or on your hands, but if you are a child of God that is exactly what happens. The Word of God is to be supreme over your mind, your will, your emotions, your being, over your hands which do the work, and your feet which carry you backwards and forwards doing various things. Everything is to be under the will and mind and Word of God.

In Psalm 119:105 it says: "Your word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path." But in the same amazing psalm, verse 11, it says, "I have laid up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." In the New King James Version it says, "I have kept Your word in my heart." In the New American Standard Bible it says, "I have treasured Your word in my heart." The Hebrew simply means "to keep, to put in your heart." But I like the most this 1901 translation, "I have laid up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Memorizing Scriptures

Memorization of Scriptures is now a lost art. When I was saved over seventy years ago, young people used to memorize Scriptures. Sometimes they wrote it on cards and they would look at it and try to say it. When they tried to say it and found it was all wrong, they looked again and again until finally they got it. But when you have laid up God's Word in your heart, in a great time of tribulation or trouble, the Holy Spirit is able to bring back what you have memorized. I can give you many examples of those I have known through my life when suddenly in a moment of tremendous crisis, the Scripture has waltzed back into their spirit. The Holy Spirit brought something back that they had memorized and that word of the living God became almost their food and their deliverance. There is going to come, in my estimation, a famine of the Word of the Lord. It is already in the atmosphere. We no longer have this feeling of an open wonderful society, but one of heaviness.

When I was first saved, and missionaries used to say to us when they came, "You are so fortunate to live in a Christian country (I was living in Britain). We find we can pray here but we cannot pray in the country where we came from. It is as if there is something that stops us and makes it difficult to get through. But all that has gone from the Western nations. However, when you have memorized God's Word, He can bring it back to you at a point of great need.

I remember dear Lady Ogle who had on the wall a piece of wood and written on it were these words: "My peace I give to you." I was alone in this beautiful room, and as I looked at it I thought to myself; how trite. There are so many Scriptures that she could have put on the wall. A few weeks later when talking with her, Lady Ogle said to me, "When I lost my husband in the flu epidemic in 1917, I did not know what to do. I was in terrible torment, and I did not know where to turn. I was a child of God, but I was in such torment. I had memorized that Scripture: "My peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you." And she said, "In a single moment, the Holy Spirit said to me: "The peace I leave with you is peace I did not need. It is peace for sins forgiven. I have left it to you through My work. But My peace I give to you is the peace I had in Gethsemane when I said, "Not my will but Thine be done." Then she said, "When He was on the cross, at the moment of greatest desolation, He finally said, 'Into Your Spirit I commend Mine to the Father.'" He never gives us a peace He did not experience Himself. It is His peace given to us. I felt so terrible; I never said to her that I thought that was terribly trite. But I thought to myself,

when you memorize God's Word, the Holy Spirit is able to bring it back suddenly, and it can be deliverance and bring peace, even bring some kind of comfort and joy.

We cannot be ready for the coming of the Lord or if the Lord should tarry a little longer we cannot be ready to face what we are going to face when the man of sin appears unless we know the Word of God. How long before we are raptured I do not know, but you and I need to know the Word of God. We need to live in it and it in us.

May God touch our hearts and make it real to us all. We ask it in the name of the Lord Jesus.