

## **Yesterday, Today, Forever**

I am going to share some lessons with you that we have learned in the Lord in Holland. I just want to share our heart and burden with you. For those who are praying for us we are so thankful for your prayers and know you are a part of God's revival in Holland. Please know that we do not think we have anything; we are so dependent on your prayers, and we are so thankful for them. We are so far from touching anything of what the Lord is doing. He is doing a sovereign work in Holland, and I will just give you two examples of that work. Last week a young man with a criminal background turned to the Lord, and in the last month we have seen one after another coming to the Lord from different backgrounds. The Lord is moving and working in reality.

The other example is very simple. Last Sunday afternoon after the preaching there was a young boy of sixteen years in our midst, and he was on his smart phone. It took him a little too long, and the Lord convicted him so much of spoiling his time on a smart phone that he was crying and saying he would rather die and be with the Lord than to continue in this way. God is convicting and moving even with the young people. That is what we are seeing God doing. It is not our doing; we have such a feeling that it is completely outside of us. It is a sovereign work and a sovereign touch of the Lord, but it is so encouraging to see what the Lord can do in reality in lives.

### **The Burden for Continuous Revival**

This will be a very simple sharing with you. Our burden for Holland and Europe is for a continuous revival. We did see in the seventies and eighties a revival in Holland, and then the lamp went out; what remained was the golden candlestick as a decoration. This is our burden, that we do not become a decoration with all our knowledge, all our knowing, all our conferences, all the best books on the bookshelf, but there will be a continual revival of the reality of the Lord. The world needs one thing, Europe needs one thing, and Holland wants one thing, and it is a return to the reality of God. People must be touching the reality of what we know. This was the beginning of the work in Holland, but we started living in the past. God was for us, the God who worked yesterday, but where is God in reality today? That was our burden after all the work stopped. And from my heart I want to share something with you, how the Lord taught us, how He started, what our burden was, and the lessons we learned.

### **The Reality of God is Fullness in His People**

Before I share my burden I want to give the bigger picture. In Ephesians 3:14 Paul is coming up from his knees with a burden. It says that he is on his knees and he raises up with a burden,

and it is our burden. If there is one burden I have for Christianity today in Europe it is this burden that Paul had, and I hope that what I share is part of this big burden we have in Twello. It says in verse 19 that the church is to be filled with the fullness of God which means you and I personally are to be filled with the fullness of God. This is God in reality that we are to be so full of God that the fullness of God is not only filling us but is running over. Are we in the fullness of God?

### **The Greatness of Christ and the Radical Love of Christ**

Then it says there are two things you must understand before you can be full and experience this reality. Are you hungry and longing for reality? There are two things that we have to experience before we can be full and come back to this reality of God. Ephesians 3 says we have to understand together, and this word *understand* in the Greek means also “to experience” (see v. 18). So we have to enter into an experience of two things, and the first thing we have to enter in and experience is the greatness of Christ. My great burden is that most of Christianity in Europe is not impressed by the greatness of the Christ that we have. He is so great and we see this greatness in His working. He is able to change any life, any problem, any marriage, anything. We see a God who is moving in reality. He is so great, and it is the greatness of Christ we need again, to have a glimpse of Who He is and what we are brought into.

The second thing it says here is that we are to have a new understanding and a new experience of the love of Christ. Have you ever read here in verse 19 that there is a contradiction about the love of Christ? Paul says you have to understand, and then he says that we cannot understand the love of Christ; it surpasses knowledge and goes far above.

The love of Christ is like an ocean, and the greatness of Christ is like an ocean, and we have to get lost into that ocean of the greatness of Christ and the love of Christ. Have you lost yourself in God? That is our burden that we get lost again in God, in Christ. We need to jump in the ocean and get lost in Him. Do you know what happens then? When we get lost in God, He pours Himself into you; but He waits until we are lost in Him. That is our great problem; we give a little or we give much, but He wants all. If we jump in and get a glimpse of the love of Christ, we will see lives changed because they will get a glimpse of the love of Christ. If we jump in, I can tell you that you will be filled with a new love and a new reality of God. So this is the big burden—a new reality of seeing the greatness of Christ, losing ourselves in Christ and His greatness, and getting a new touch of the love of Christ. His love for us was so radical that he never doubted about giving His life for you. He was so radical in His love for you that He gave all for you. So why do you doubt about God? He did not doubt about you; He gave all. He did not say, “Oh, I know Gerhard; I know this guy. Should I give Myself or not?” He gave Himself, and He gave all. His love is radical, and what God wants is for us to answer with a radical love for Him.

I want to share with you a part of this burden and some lessons we have learned in Holland. There is a tendency to look up to the leading brothers, but we are all involved. There is need of

every member of the body to be involved in continual revival. Nobody can say, “Okay, that is not me.” We all are needed, but the way we come to that is with a willingness to pay the price. Revival and continuous revival is not without a price; it is costly. And God is looking down for those whose hearts are so hungry for Him. Are you hungry for God? Are you thirsty for Him? He is looking for those people who say, “I will lose myself in You,” so that He can give revival.

### **The Oil for the Lamp**

Leviticus 24:1-4 is a portion of the Old Testament of the golden candlestick which was in the tabernacle and had only one function. It was not there for decoration; it was there to give light.

“And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee pure beaten olive oil for the light, to light the lamp continually. Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, shall Aaron dress it from evening to morning before Jehovah continually: It is an everlasting statute throughout your generations. Upon the pure candlestick shall he arrange the lamps before Jehovah continually.”

This portion of Scripture says that this is a command from God and an everlasting statute. So we touch here the heart of God; it is an everlasting statute. There is something here which is in the everlasting heart of God, and it is so important to Him that He calls it an everlasting statute. It was something that was not only meant for the tabernacle; it was something in God’s heart of what He wanted to express in the burning candlestick. There was something burning in God’s heart in this golden candlestick that I want as a reality forever, and this is the reality we need to have in the church.

### **A Lamp that Burned Continually**

What was the reality that God was seeking for? It was a lamp which was burning continually, and three times it says continually, meaning it may never die out. God is seeking for a continual burning lamp, a continual revival amongst His people. And you can ask yourself: Is this possible in 2018? We have seen with our own eyes that it is possible. But how? How is it possible? How can this lamp keep burning continually? It says here very clearly what is necessary according to this portion. In verse 1 it says, “Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel that they bring unto thee pure beaten olive oil for the light, to light the lamp continually.”

What was necessary? There were people who had to bring the oil for the lamp. This is what God is seeking—lives from whom He can draw the oil to keep His testimony burning. And do you want to be spent on His testimony? Do you want to be that guy, that woman who brings the oil to the Lord so that the lamp can burn continually? That is the question. We ask over and over again in Holland: “Lord, is the oil coming forth out of my life?” It is so easy to have a certain attitude towards the church or what is preached. There is sometimes criticism, but it is not the

church or the other brothers and sisters or the leading brothers; the question is whether oil is coming from your life. Are you contributing to the lamp of God which is burning continually? That is the question. The only way God could keep the lamp burning was by the oil which was brought by the people of God.

### **The Sons of Oil**

Does it say there were some people who brought in oil? No, all of the people of Israel were involved in bringing the oil. However, mostly what we see is a few people bringing oil. The others are just looking and looking. You are called, but whatever the thing is that you are doing in the church, that is not your first calling. Do you know that? Your first calling is not your ministry; your first calling is to bring in oil for the lamp. That is what we tell the brothers and sisters in Holland because when God is going to work, they are so quick to say, "This is my work; this is my ministry, this is my thing." The only real thing God is looking for from every saint is whether you are bringing in oil.

In Zechariah 4:2 there was a vision given to Zechariah, and it has to do with the oil coming into the lamp. Zechariah is asking: "What does this mean?" And the Lord does not answer him in a straight way; He answers him in two steps. In the first step the Lord shows him two things in verse 6 and onwards that the work of the Lord is done by the Spirit of God. It has nothing to do with you and me. The Spirit, the oil must come forth to build the church.

Secondly we see Zerubbabel, a man, and these two things work together to bring forth the oil. It says in verse 10 that when the seven see this happen, He is glad for this happening. In my Dutch Bible in the same verse it says, "... these seven are the eyes of the Lord who go over the whole earth." I believe these seven are the seven eyes of the Lord which go over the whole earth, and when He sees the Spirit coming forth, the oil coming forth out of a man, a brother, a sister, Zerubbabel, He says, "Yes, here I am. I am going to build this testimony." There the Lord's heart gets satisfied, but the lamp must be burning continually. The Lord's eyes are continually running all over the world looking and looking for men and women who can give this flow of oil to the lamp. And when He finds one, when He finds two, when He finds a brother and sister whose first focus is not more on ministry but giving themselves completely for this oil of the lamp, there God's heart is truly satisfied.

This is the sobering lesson we learned in Holland; God is not after me for some big thing for myself. God is after me for oil for His lamp, and when He finds me in that position and I say, "Yes Lord, I want to be a life that pours out oil for Your lamp." It is there that God's heart is satisfied. Do you want God's heart to be satisfied with your life? Don't think in big things, just go to the Lord and say, "Lord, let me be such a man."

The second answer from the Lord is in verse 14: "These are the two anointing ones, or the sons of oil that stand before the face of the Lord." I know there are many, many explanations for

these two sons of oil, one being Christ and the church, and I say I do not know. But one thing I believe is that it speaks about Zerubbabel or Joshua, ones who can stand before the face of the Lord and be sons of oil. I think there is no more precious name the Lord can give you than a son or daughter of oil. Then you have reached the heart of God. We do not care what the brothers and sisters in Holland may say about this or this, but one thing we have learned: Are you really standing before the Lord? Are you really a son and daughter of oil? That is the only real question that matters for your life. If we come to that day, *the* day, and there is only one *the* day when we meet our Lord Jesus Christ and see Him eye to eye, it is my impression that He will not be impressed with what I did for Him. Am I going to tell Him how many people I have saved or helped and other works that I have done, even preaching in Richmond which should be a plus, it will not do anything! The only thing that will give any glory to Him, any satisfaction to His heart is the pouring out of my life for the lamp.

### **Are We Living on the God of Yesterday?**

There is a booklet by Lance Lambert entitled, WHAT IS GOD DOING? They are lessons from church history, and it is quite sobering. Lance is proving that after twenty years of the start of a testimony the lamp is already diminishing. After forty years you can forget the testimony; it has become a decoration; that is church history. So I looked at church history and said, "If this is church history it must be right." But in these last few years I know I am wrong. It is not necessary that the testimony of the Lord has this Inescapable going up and down, going up and down.

We had a celebration of the revival in Wales in 2004. Do you know what we celebrated? We had a revival that happened one hundred years ago, and we sang and were happy about the revival which was one hundred years ago. What a tragedy! It moved me to tears. What a tragedy! We were looking at the God who had begun a work yesterday, and we began to realize that we lived on the God of yesterday.

Oh, what great things God did for Hudson Taylor and George Mueller! We have read all their books, and they were great. That was our God of yesterday, but there was no reality today. We recognized that, and it brought such a hunger in our hearts because Hebrews 13 says, "He is the same yesterday and today." He was the God of Hudson Taylor, George Mueller, Watchman Nee, Bakht Singh, a man of God, but that was yesterday. There was Bakht Singh, there was Watchman Nee, there was George Mueller. No, it was not George Mueller, it was not Hudson Taylor, it was not Bakht Singh; it was the God of Bakht Singh, the God of Hudson Taylor, and that same God is today the same.

How can He express the reality of the same God today that He was yesterday? He needs you today. The problem is not God, the problem is not that we had a revival one hundred years ago and then twenty years nothing, and then a little revival again and then twenty years nothing. The problem is that God cannot find the right people. God wants to pour Himself out again and again

and again and again as long as He finds the right vessels. You know the story about the widow who was instructed to bring in vessels that was to be filled with oil, and when no more vessels were found, there was no more oil (see II Kings 4:1-7). The stream of oil had stopped. How many times God wants to pour Himself out! He has such a desire to pour Himself out completely if we are willing to pour ourselves out for God, and we jump into this ocean of the greatness and the love of Christ. Do you believe He can be a reality again today? Do you believe He can move America again today? He needs you. We were no longer satisfied to live on the God of yesterday.

### **A People Who Delight Him**

One of the Psalms that brought us to our knees in tears was Psalm 44:1: "O God, with our ears have we heard, our fathers have told us, the work thou wroughtest in their days, in the days of old." They sat at the feet of the fathers and heard all the big stories, and they were rejoicing over it, but it was yesterday.

Verse 2: "Thou, by thy hand, didst dispossess the nations, but them thou didst plant; thou didst afflict the peoples, but them didst thou cause to spread out. For not by their own sword did they take possession of the land, neither did their own arm save them; but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst delight in them."

That is why He did those big things that we read of in Psalm 44; He was delighted in them, and He could use them. It was a people who had known His heart and that is why God could do those things. We were so dissatisfied from living on God's wisdom that was only real yesterday. We discovered that our greatest problem we had in Holland was that we had so much knowledge. I am not agreeing with everything Spurgeon says, but this I do believe. He said, "I give not one dollar for a Christianity that says one thing and lives the other." No reality. We can pray, and we do pray, but we are looking up to God and saying, "Oh God, we want this continual revival. Oh God, send Your Spirit." We have discovered that God is looking down on us, and sometimes we tell Him in a godly prayer that we are waiting on Him, but God is waiting on us.

### **God wants a People Who are Hungry and Thirsty for Him**

Do you realize that God is waiting on you that He might give revival? And if there is no revival do not go to God and complain. Come to His feet and say, "Lord, what is missing in my life?" God is the same God as yesterday. God is the God of revival. God is the God who wants to pour Himself out, and if He cannot, we have said to the Lord: "Oh Lord, it is us. It is us." We have prayed and wept until God broke us and did a new thing. What is the challenge before us? There is a little book by Ravenhill, a great brother and one of my favorite authors. He says, "Do you know why we do not have revival? Because we can do without it. We are not hungry; we are not thirsty; we are not willing to pay the price."

Two years ago there was a big revival in South Africa. We have contact with one of the men there who is being used mightily by God. Every time there is a campaign hundreds of people come to the Lord. It is amazing what God is doing there. It is physically now a church, and I was so curious as to why God was not working here as He was in Africa. What was the difference? And I have never forgotten his answer. He sat on my couch and I said, "Brother, what is it? What is the secret?" And this African brother said to me: "You do not have hunger enough for God. In Africa they hungered after God; they searched after God; they chased after God." We can do without Him. The first thing God is seeking for is dissatisfied people, "God, I will not let You go until You give us revival." Secondly, He seeks people who are willing to pay the price.

This oil which was given to the lamp has three characteristics. First it had to be pure oil. Secondly, it was beaten and pressed oil. And thirdly, it had to be brought over and over again, and in Zechariah we read that these were the sons of oil. It must be pure; it must be beaten; it must be fresh.

### **Three Lessons on how the Oil can Keep on Flowing**

I just want to share with you three lessons we have learned on how this oil can keep on flowing. Once it is flowing, once we have given our lives completely to the Lord and gotten lost in God, there are three secrets that I want to share, and of course I know there are many more.

#### ***Painful Honesty and Transparency***

Painful honesty and transparency is where everything begins. Secondly, the priority of prayer, and thirdly the perpetual burning fire on the altar. I cannot do an extensive teaching on all of these, but I just want to share a few notes touching on these three things God is looking for, these kind of people through whom the oil can flow who know a painful transparency and honesty, the priority of prayer and perpetual burning fire on the altar.

The first thing we learned was to come into an honesty with God and with one another and to keep that above everything. There is a revival team here in America that went to 6,000 different churches in a period of forty years to give revival lectures. I am not for revival lectures, but I know this story. Almost in every church the problem for the lack of revival was that there was bitterness or an unforgiving heart, things between brothers and sister which were not right. And God will never give revival if you are not completely transparent and open before the Lord. How much the children of God and the church are missing because God cannot pour out His fullness as long as we have a grumble in our hearts towards one another and we are not willing to confess it. Sometimes it is so painful to go to another brother or sister and say, "Sorry, I just talked about you; sorry, I have misjudged you; sorry, you said something to me and I kept it in my heart like a grumble." That is painful, but God is a God of honesty. We have to be humbled

under His hand towards one another. Oh yes, in our houses and in our prayer rooms we can say, “God, forgive me,” but we have to go to a brother or sister and keep relationships clean. That is the first painful necessity for ongoing revival.

Ephesians 4:30 says, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which ye have been sealed for the day of redemption.” How do we grieve the Spirit? Often this verse is taken out of context and we have all kinds of explanations of how we grieve the Spirit, but if we read it in context it is very simple. The Spirit of revival is grieved.

It goes on in verse 31: “Let all bitterness (Is there somebody who has bitterness in his heart? Be honest, is there any bitterness in your heart? Is there any unforgiveness in your heart?) It goes on: “And heat of passion, and wrath, and clamour, and injurious language, be removed from you, with all malice; and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you.” This is reality. Are you a person who is willing to forgive and forgive and forgive even if it is the one hundredth time to forgive? When you come to the Lord the hundredth time with the same sin, what does God say to you? Does He say, “It is enough, isn’t it? It is the one hundredth time; that is enough.” No, I believe He says, “I do not know about the other ninety-nine; this is the first one I know.” Is that the way we live with one another? I can tell you that it is painful because we are so quick tempered in our mind, aren’t we? We are so proud in our flesh—oh this brother is blessed—oh, grumble, grumble, why not me? This sister is getting something. Why not me? Are we honest with one another?

Colossians 3:12 says, “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye. And to all these add love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful.”

Do you ever ask yourself what these last words “be thankful” mean in this context? I have asked myself what these words “be thankful” mean in this context. It says to be thankful that you are part of a body because in the body you learn forgiveness, bearing one another, and so on; all those things God is going to teach you by your brothers and sisters. So be thankful for that. I try to be thankful when brothers and sisters step on my toes because that means I am still alive on this issue. Real honesty begins when we are thankful for one another.

Luke 8:15 says, “Why was the good seed coming up and bearing much fruit?” It was because it had an honest heart. Do you want the Lord to produce fruit in your life? Have an honest heart towards God. In your inner room go in and be honest with Him about every known victory in your life, every defeat in your life, everything which is not right and you know it in your heart. Without that there is no revival. The reward of being honest with God and with one another is revival. Without it there is no revival and surely no continuous revival.

## ***The Priority of Prayer***

The second point we learned was the emphasis on prayer. It is something we learned afresh in the last few years of what it is to pray and to give priority to prayer. We ask this question often in Holland to one another: "How is it with your prayer life?" Here in Richmond may I ask you: "How much time do you spend in prayer personally in your inner room? Have you ever considered this beautiful verse in Matthew 7 that says, "Go into your inner room and pray"? Have you ever wondered why it does not say, "and God will hear you"? Instead, it says, "God will see you and reward you." His eyes are looking all over the world for those who are on their knees. They are the men and women God is seeking. That is why He says, "If you are in your inner room and you pray, I will see and will reward you." And the reward is far greater than the price of prayer. Is prayer your priority? Is it number one in your life? Or is your work, your ministry, whatever it is, name it; what is the priority in your life?

In Luke 5:15-16 it says, "But the report concerning him was spread abroad still more, and great crowds came together to hear, and to be healed from their infirmities." Wow, what an opportunity! Great crowds came to hear Him, not just to be cured by Him, not just to be healed by Him, but to hear from Him. What a need! What a ministry! What a success He could have had if He had taken this moment and made His ministry great in the eyes of man! What is greater than this moment?

Verse 16: "The next word in verse 16 in this translation says, "But" and we colored this word "but" orange because this word gives the priority of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment of His life when the need was there, the crowd was there, and it says "but." But what? "But he withdrew himself, and was about in the desert places and praying." That was His priority. Whatever the need or pressure of anything, even ministry, it was not His priority. His priority was prayer to be separated in fellowship with the Father.

We have learned in Holland that everything comes first after prayer. In Philippians 4:6 there is this wonderful verse which says we can bring all our needs to God and there are three words in this verse "all by prayer." And we have seen that God can do all by prayer. We have seen situations which were absolutely out of control in the church and prayer made a difference. God Himself began to speak and act and change things. As leading brothers we used to go very quickly when there was something wrong with a brother or sister and say, "Brother or sister, come here." I am not saying anything else. We have learned that ninety-five percent of all the problems are dealt with by God Himself if we are on our knees, and the advantage of that is we learn so much more of God Himself. Is prayer your priority even above your greatest need? Only then is God going to move; only then will there be revival. God does not mix Himself in your ministry or your work for Him. God is the sovereign God, and He wants to act alone on our prayers.

I am very impressed with Paul. We are studying Philippians, having come out of Colossians and Ephesians, and most of these letters were written by Paul on his knees. He says, "I am

praying.” Paul spoke from his knees, do you know that? He does not speak from his mind; he spoke from his knees. You may know of or heard of Bakht Singh. He came to Holland, and when you asked him what the secret of the great revival in India was, he let us see his knees. His knees were praying knees. We should turn back to the very simple truth of being a praying people, and it is there that we may have to pay the highest price. Are you a faithful attendant of the prayer meeting of the church? If not, then does prayer have priority in your life? Are you willing to pay the price to join your brothers and sisters in prayer to stand together and give yourself to God in prayer?

In Mark 6:46 there was another wonderful situation in which the Lord Jesus could have been considered great. He had just fed the five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fishes. The multitudes were so happy with Him, and He could have spent some time with His disciples. But it says, “And, having dismissed them, he departed into the mountain to pray.” How good it was there after having done this miracle. It would not have been wrong to stay a little longer with His disciples, maybe making a campfire, eating together, having some fellowship, but sometimes we have to dismiss things from our lives for the priority of prayer. I think this is the greatest problem of our lives. We do not want to dismiss things which are not bad in themselves to make time for more prayer. We have learned that the only way God is moving in revival is on our knees. There is no other.

What does it say about Paul? The first lesson in the Christian life God says is to see that Paul was praying, and I think Paul never forgot that. The second thing we have learned is that the shallowness, the easiness of our prayer life had to be changed in order to be really sons and daughters of oil. Are you willing?

### ***The Perpetual Burning in the Heart of God***

I believe there is a necessity for pouring out our lives in complete dedication to the Lord all the time. There is a big burning desire in the heart of God to have His testimony. There may be many unsaved souls, but there is an even bigger burning thing in God’s heart to keep His testimony alive. We are not special in Holland, but in every place where He can find sons and daughters of fresh oil He will pour Himself out. We need fresh oil, we need prayer, we need pure oil, and we need brokenness and honesty. Oh, how the Lord has crushed us and broken us and still we are in process. We are not as far as you think we are, but we are in process. The Lord is doing a painful work, but are we willing to give our lives to Christ for revival? I believe if there are one or two today who will say, “I will jump into the greatness of Christ; I will jump into this ocean of love; I will give my life and lose myself on Christ, God will take you and deal with you, and He will give revival. He has done it in so many countries in so many ways. He is the same yesterday and today. Is He? Shall we make God a reality again? That is what America needs. That is what Europe needs if only He can find us. Amen.