How Far Can You Run On Empty?

Psalms 23:5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Running on Empty
Just to be frank about it, I am going to preach, tonight, from a thought that I have preached from before.

• It has been about 4 years since I preached it but some here tonight might possibly remember when I preached on this thought previously.
• However I felt very strongly that God laid this thought on my heart this morning so I want to revisit it tonight.
• If it seems familiar to you, please bear with me, I believe that God is quite capable of doing a new work in a familiar place.

About 5 years ago I became aware of a young man named Justin Davis.

• Justin Davis is, by his own admission, a man on a mission.
  o In his own words he is striving to solve a mystery
    ▪ that has puzzled mankind for years.
  o He wants to know the answer to the age old question:
    ▪ “How far can you run on empty.”
  o To put it more succinctly:
    ▪ How far will your car go after the fuel light comes on?
• To some folks, this is a serious question.
  o To others its only a trivial matter.
  o But there is no doubt that it is a question that has confounded motorists ever since Henry Ford first uttered those immortal words –
    ▪ "Hey, guys, this thing needs a “gas light."
• Most of us muddle through life not knowing the answer to that timeless question.
  o And, for the most part, we would rather not find out the hard way.
  o Many of us live in mortal fear of what happens if we let the needle slide too close to its final resting place.
• Not Justin Davis, though.
  o He refuses to be held captive by the unknown.
  o He is determined to provide an answer to the question.
• One would assume that the trip computer gives you that precise information,
  o mine usually tells me I can go around 30 miles once the fuel light comes on.
• However, the brave souls that have been helping him answer the question
  o have discovered that the trip computer is not at all dependable.
    ▪ Some folks tell of driving 10-20 miles beyond the point where the trip computer says that you have zero miles left until empty.

I have long believed that the Internet, while being a great tool, is also the world’s greatest reservoir of useless information.
• One shining example of that truth is the fact that Justin Davis has a website called TankOnEmpty.com.
• If you are an adventuresome soul, you can visit TankOnEmpty.com and you can input the make and model of your own car and discover the average answer for your vehicle.
  o If you are really adventuresome, you can add to the growing database of acquired knowledge
    ▪ by running your car out of gas
    ▪ and recording how far it drove after it told you it could go no further.
  o Incidentally, I looked my truck up and it will run 14 miles on zero!
• If you’re really amazed by this cultural phenomenon,
  o you can read from his library of stories
    ▪ of the brave individuals who have pressed the limits
    ▪ and have discovered exactly how far their particular car would go before it finally gives up the ghost.
• However, before you go out and join the legions of fuel economy researchers
  o to see just how far your ride will run on empty,
    ▪ you must be warned!
• Driving on empty is risky business.
  o There are adverse side-effects,
    ▪ ranging from clogged fuel filters
      • to burned up fuel pumps.
• These effects can be further compounded by long walks to remote gas stations.
  o Years ago while on such a walk with my lovely bride,
    ▪ I reminded her that one of the benefits of running out of fuel was a romantic moonlit walk
    • Needless to say, she wasn’t too impressed!
• I’ve got a news flash for you tonight:
  o There is a fuel light in your car for a reason.
  o There is a reason why your trip computer counts down the miles you can drive before you are empty.
    ▪ Its because its really not a good idea to drive your car on empty.
  o But there is something about Human Nature that drives some of us to push the limits.
    ▪ To go as far as we can go on empty before we stop and refill the tank.
    ▪ My wife’s van frustrates me because, when the fuel light comes on, the trip computer stops telling you how far you can drive.
      • It simply says, LOW FUEL
      • Well, hello!
        o When I’m five miles from the gas station and wondering if I can make it
        o I’d rather know how far I can go than just to know that I’ve got LOW FUEL!

However, while I find all of this quite interesting, my point tonight is not really to explore the fuel economy of your particular vehicles.
• Rather, I want you to understand tonight that, just like in the physical realm, there is a great spiritual temptation to run on empty.
  o There is something inside of you that longs to be filled with the presence of God.
    ▪ There is a certain spiritual longing that signifies the fact that it is time for a refilling.
      • But there exists within our nature, the desire to push things to the limit.
      • To go just as far as we can go, on empty.

Consider Naomi!
• The scripture tells me that Namoi left the house of God FULL!
  o Her tank was full when she journeyed into the land of Moab.
    ■ But she didn’t come home again until she was empty.
• It was a broken and destitute Namoi who finally limped back to the house of God.
  o Surely there were times during her sojourn into the land of Moab that she recognized the fact, I need to go home…
    ▪ I need to get back to the presence of God.
    ▪ My spirit is getting depleted,
      • my soul is running on empty…
      • I need a refilling!
      • But somehow she pushed it off.
• Her husband died,
  o and as her heart was dragged down in her sorrow,
    ▪ no doubt there arose a longing to return home,
      • but somehow she pushed it off.
      • And she stayed in Moab,
      • She continued to run on empty.

• Ladies and Gentelmen, let me tell you tonight, It is dangerous to run on empty.
  o It is a dangerous thing to ignore that longing in your soul.
    ▪ When Moab was finished with Naomi
      • she would limp back to the house of God broken and desolate and proclaim,
      • “I went out full, but I came home again empty!”

• My dad used to tell me that it costs more to drive on empty than it does to keep your tank full.
  o For the longest time I struggled to understand the concept.
    ▪ I would drive until I was almost empty
      • then put $5 in my tank.
      • Back when fuel was 99¢ a gallon $5 would actually take you places.
    ▪ And run again until I was almost empty.
  o The problem was that I had this old truck that had a faulty fuel gauge.
    ▪ This thing would hang up at ¼ tank and just stick there.
o If I wasn’t careful I’d run myself empty thinking I still had gas in the tank.
   • It was during one of those moonlit strolls that it dawned on me,
     • it doesn’t cost me any more money to keep the tank full,
     • but it will save me a lot of time and effort.

• I’ve come to put the lie to the myth that it doesn’t cost anything to run on empty.
  o The enemy of your soul would like to convince you
    • that it is perfectly acceptable to conduct your life in a perpetual state of nearly empty.
  o But I’m here to tell you tonight that it will cost you more than you’ve even begun to imagine.

Saul’s Army
• The bible records the story of a time when King Saul sent his army into battle with a foolish vow.
  o He declared that any man who eats anything today will pay for it with his life.
    • In the account of the battle, the courageous efforts of Jonathan, his son, led to a victory over their foes.
  o However as the battle progresses,
    • Saul’s weary army finds itself in a grove where there was honey on the ground.
      • As they moved thru that grove, honey fell from the trees.
  • Many of you may remember the story,
    o how a war weary Jonathan dipped the end of his rod in the honey
      • and refreshed himself on the much needed nourishment.
  • The Bible says the soldiers around him were faint,
    o they were wearied from the fighting
      • but they advised Jonathan of his father’s command
        • and reproached him for eating the honey.
  • Upon hearing of the foolish decree that his father had made,
Jonathan lamented that if the people had eaten freely there would have been a much greater victory.

- Running on empty is a dangerous thing.
  - I wonder if there can be heard in heaven tonight, the sound of lamenting.
- I can just imagine God commenting to the archangel Michael,
  - “If my people were not running on empty, there would be a much greater revival!”
    - Only eternity will reveal the true cost of running on empty.
- How many spiritual opportunities are missed because you and I are spiritually depleted to recognize them
  - or to weary to act upon them.
- I have walked away from certain situations
  - and realized after the fact that I had missed an extraordinary opportunity.
    - Because I was empty,
    - because I was tired,
    - because I was spiritually deficient.
- I hadn’t run out of fuel yet,
  - but I didn’t have the abundant supply that I needed either.
- When you run on empty
  - you keep yourself in a perpetual situation where you are destitute of spiritual power and authority.
- When the disciples failed to cast the demon from the child, Jesus didn’t berate them for having lost their faith…
  - He simply reminded them that they were running on empty!
    - These come out only by prayer and fasting.
- What kind of revival would there be, if the church wasn’t running on empty?

The Danger Of Running On Empty

- David said, “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.”
  - To be in the presence of your enemies, implies that you are in the middle of a battle.
• When a soldier is in the presence of his enemies,
  o if he eats at all he snatches a quick meal,
  o and returns to the fight.
• Perhaps that’s where our problem lies.
  o We tend to get so engaged in the fight
    ▪ that we fail to maintain our walk with God.
• Like Martha, we get so busy in the kitchen
  o that we neglect the “better thing.”
• There is so much that needs to be done that,
  o if we are not careful,
    ▪ we will leave the most important thing undone.
• Listen to what David says,
  o In the presence of mine enemy…
    ▪ Right in the middle of the battle,
      • "Thou preparest a table"
• This is not a rushed event,
  o this isn’t fast food,
    ▪ or an on-the-go remedy.
• But David said, thou preparest a table…
  o just as a servant does when he unfolds the cloth
    ▪ and displays the ornaments
    ▪ and prepares the feast.
• Nothing is hurried,
  o there is no confusion,
  o no disturbance.
• The enemy is at the door,
  o and yet God prepares a table,
    ▪ for his people to partake of his blessings
      • as if they were in perfect peace.
• David implies that there is a banquet feast to be had in the middle of the battle.
  o Perhaps this is why the scripture speaks of a peace that passes understanding.
    ▪ In the middle of the struggle,
      • in the fervent heat of battle,
      • there is a rest and a refreshing
      • that is reserved for those that will but seek it.

• I’m here to tell you tonight that running on empty is dangerous!
The spirit of God within in you is renewable.

- The scripture says, Romans 12:2 “Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed…”
  - How? “By the renewing of your mind.”
- This world drains you.
  - The struggles and battles suck your soul dry.
    - It is critical that you find your way into the presence of God
      - and make sure your mind is renewed.
  - Your walk with God requires a regular, daily renewal right in the middle of the battle!
    - You can’t afford to go extended periods of time
      - without allowing the influence of the Holy Ghost to work in your life.
- Don’t kid yourself and say, well it will get better on it’s own.
  - I’m just struggling a little but I’ll come thru it eventually.
    - My friend, if you don’t get refilling somewhere along the way you’re gonna run out of fuel!
- I want you to know tonight that running on empty is dangerous.
  - It’s possible to do irreparable damage to your soul.
    - You need a refilling.
  - It’s been too long since you got lost in the Holy Ghost.
    - It’s been too long since your heart was under the influence of the presence of God.
  - It’s been too long since you allowed God to search your heart,
    - test your intentions,
    - and quench the thirsting in your soul!
- God has prepared for you tonight, a table in the presence of your enemies!

David doesn’t stop there
- He goes on to say “Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”
  - In the East the people frequently anoint their special visitors with a very fragrant perfume;
    - and give them a cup or glass of precious water, which they are careful to fill till it runs over.
- The first was designed to show their love and respect
It was a statement of love.

- The lord anoints my head with oil, David said.
  - What he is saying is that God lets the one who sits at the Lord's table know that God LOVES them.

- God doesn’t want you to get lost in the battle.
  - He doesn’t want you to lose sight of his love for you
    - In the middle of the battle.
    - While you are fighting the fury of Hell.
    - God says, "Let me show you how much I love you"
      - I’m going to prepare you a table and anoint your head with oil!
  - He desires to step into your circumstance and anoint your head with oil!
    - If you continue to battle without his anointing
      - your efforts are fruitless anyway.
  - God says, “Let me anoint you!”

- David went on to say, my cup runneth over.
  - The host would fill the visitor’s cup with water
    - until it was literally running over
    - He did this to imply that
      - As long as they were a guest at his table
      - they would have an abundance of everything they need!
  - There was no resource more precious than water!
    - But the host would purposefully waste that precious water!
    - They were saying, I’ve got more than enough o meet your every need!

- Has it ever occurred to you
  - that while you are so busy running on empty
    - Just getting by
      - there is one watching over you
      - that has an abundant supply
      - that is yours for the asking

- This is the vision that David gives us in our text.
  - The warrior has feasted,
  - he has been anointed,
and all his needs have been abundantly met.
  ▪ Now he is ready to return to the battle.

- God wants to step into your life tonight and refill your soul.
  o HE wants to anoint you
  o and bless you with his abundance.
    ▪ He desires to equip you for the battle…
    ▪ The question is not the willingness of God to give.
    ▪ The question is your willingness to receive.
      ▪ Will you let God refill your soul tonight?

Perhaps the most pivotal time in the life of the prophet Elijah is contained in 1 Kings chapters 17-19.
- His deepest valleys and his greatest victories are contained within those pages of the Holy Word.
  o However, if you push past the victories and the valleys you find the miraculous provision of God.
- God, by three different avenues, works miracles in Elijah’s life
  o to insure that he’s not running on empty in his most critical hour.
- First the ravens brought him bread by the brook,
  o then the widow fed him from her never ending supply of meal.
  o Finally in chapter 19, an angel prepared him a meal,
    ▪ not once but twice
    ▪ as he rested in the middle of his battle.
- I’ve come to tell someone tonight that right here, tonight, in the middle of your struggle,
  o God has established place of refreshing for your weary soul.
    ▪ He has prepared for you a table,
      ▪ in the presence of your enemies.

Avianca Flight 52
- On January 25, 1990, Avianca Flight 52 had been in a holding pattern over New York for over one hour
  o due to fog limiting arrivals and departures into John F. Kennedy International Airport.
- Seventy-seven minutes after entering the holding pattern,
  o New York Air Traffic Control asked the crew if they had enough fuel to continue to hold.
• The First Officer replied in the affirmative.
  • After 89 minutes the controller cleared the aircraft for an approach to runway.
    • As Flight 52 flew the approach,
      • they encountered wind shear at an altitude of less than 500 feet
        • and the plane descended below the glideslope,
        • almost crashing into the ground short of the runway.
    • As a result, a missed approach was initiated.
      • As the plane began to gain altitude an emergency message was broadcast,
        • ”We're running out of fuel.”
  • The controller asked the crew to climb for a second approach
    • to which the first officer replied
      • ”No, sir, we're running out of fuel.”
  • Moments later, the number four engine flamed out,
    • shortly followed by the other three.
  • Within seconds, the aircraft had lost thrust from its 4 engines,
    • causing it to plunge into the small village of Cove Neck, New York in northern Long Island,
      • 15 miles from the airport.
  • The subsequent investigation contained this revelatory statement:
    • There is no doubt that the Avianca pilot, a 17-year veteran, knew he had a fuel problem,
      • **But it is likely that he never fully realized just how serious it was!**
  • I wonder tonight how many there are that realize that they have problem
    • But they haven’t fully realized yet just how serious it is!
      • Let me put it in plain language
        • if you don’t take on a fresh supply of fuel, you’re going to crash!
        • You simply cannot keep running on empty!

**Close**
• The 25th chapter of Matthew contains the very familiar story of the 10 Virgins.
o One of the greatest tragedies of scripture is contained within those 5 foolish virgins
  ▪ that fell short in that critical hour when the bridegroom returned.

• Have you ever stopped to ponder what horrible wrong kept the 5 virgins from the wedding feast?
  o After all, they were still virgins,
    ▪ they had kept themselves unspotted from the world.
    ▪ They were still pure and clean.

• What possibly could be their sin?
  o Matthew 25:3 *They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:*
    ▪ I submit to you tonight that their biggest flaw,
      • the thing that kept them from heaven’s open door
        o was the fact that they were empty!

• When the shout came that the bridegroom had returned, they hurried to trim their wicks and stoke the fire.
• In that critical moment they discovered that they were running on empty at the wrong time!
  o It was the day they had been living for,
    ▪ it was the moment they had been preparing for all their lives.
  o And, when it finally arrived, they discovered that they didn’t have enough fuel for the journey.
    ▪ What a tragedy!

If the question tonight is how far can you run on empty?
• I’ve got an answer:
  o The answer is simple:
    ▪ **You’ve already gone too far!**
      • It’s time for a refilling!

• How long can you make it on empty?
  o It’s already been too long!

• The Lord is here tonight and I believe that he has prepared a table right in the midst of your battle.
  o I can hear the master calling tonight.
    ▪ Come and drink from springs of living water.
    ▪ Come and feast from fountains of refreshing
• You shouldn’t leave this place tonight until you can join your voice with David’s and exclaim:
  o My cup runneth over!
• The Lord wants to restore your soul,
  o He wants to raise up those who have fallen
    ▪ Refresh those who have grown weary
    ▪ Renew those who have fully spent themselves.
• If you are running on empty tonight, why don’t you linger for a moment in the presence of God
  o And let his glory minister to your soul?