

"AT FLOOD TIDE"

Ezekiel 47:1-9

A flood tide is a rising tide. It flows in and fills up, and spreads out, and covers. Wherever it goes, it cleanses and fertilizes and beautifies. If you have ever stood on the shore of Virginia Beach, of the Atlantic Ocean, you will remember at flood tide - the waves come in higher. They cover more sand and beach. And they smoothe out all of the rough places. And many times, the flood tide takes away all of the debris. And the ugly things that have been left lying on the beach.

For untold centuries, Egypt has depended for its very life upon the yearly flood tide of the Nile River. The rich bottom lands of the area is fertilized every Spring by the rivers flood tide. The green beauty and rich rootage, also comes to valleys in America. Sacramento Valley - which is artificially irrigated by rivers. But it is that which comes from the flood tide. It's caused by the influence from above.

In the ocean and the portions of the river under its (influence) by Heavenly bodies is the river by the fall of rain, snow melting, the upper streams and lakes. The natural streams of fresh water. The large and small brooks or creeks flow down well defined channels which are cut in their course. These are instruments of God's nature. And ultimately empty into the sea.

This is a parable, of your life and my life. Concerning the fullness of the spirit of God. Out of you, your inner most being shall flow rivers of living waters. John 7:38.

This is so suggestive. Did you know in the Bible as we study the Holy Spirit, there are 23 rivers that are mentioned and described by name. And some of these are

connected directly with the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I do not have time to discuss now the great Amazon River, which like the mighty Mississippi which drains over a million square miles of land. But these words which we have here about the flood tide is something that speaks the truth to us.

To me, this is (God's ideal) for man. And it is frequently expressed by a river running at flood tide. Ezekiel's vision of the future capitol of Israel was the central point in a wonderful river that gradually reached flood tide and had untold influence.

John had a companion vision of the future church. In the closing chapters of Revelation, in which there was a river of water of life.

Jesus wanted to give the picture of a Christian man. And express his idea out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. John's explanation, years after that, was - he was speaking of the Holy Spirit, and his presence in the human life.

Jesus gave the idea - and he put our lives at flood tide.

Remember, not ebb tide - nor was there a rise and fall of the tide. But, Jesus put it at a constant flowing in and filling up - flooding over.

This is what God has ambition for us. In the best sense, as I can understand this - God is ambitious for our lives. There has been an old impression that we just get salvation for our soul. That will get us to Heaven. Well, it is for the soul - we will agree. And it is for Heaven, we will agree. But there must be something for this present life. And for this earth upon which we live.

I think some of God's most far reaching plans has to do with this earth. Today, I hope we can get a glimpse of God's ambition for our lives down here. Something in which we can understand the unstrained and unrestrained presence within us of the Holy Spirit.

It is not surprising that some people have mistaken ideas about this. It is a common idea that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is connected with some gifts - or further connected with some mark of success.

Men have thought of Mr. Moody facing great crowds. Who were swayed and melted by his words. And in great multitudes accepted Christ. But perhaps the world has never had a finer illustration, of a spirit-filled man than dear old Moody. And it is not to be wondered at that the rare evangelistic gift of service with which he was endowed, and the great results, that may be turning our minds to say that the spirit-filled life must be put into a certain mold.

In the book of Exodus 31:1-5 - we read about a man named Bezalel. Who was filled with the spirit of God that he might have skill as a carpenter, in metal working, and in weaving of fine fabrics. For the construction of the old tent of God. Will you note further, that a company of 70 men, in Numbers 11:16-17 - were filled in a like

manner that they might be skilled in conducting the business affairs of the nation. And Luke tells us of Elizabeth, in Luke 1:13-17, 41, being filled, that she might become the true mother of John.

There is also another mistaken concept that marks success. Under the Spirit's control. In Bible times, God used men like Isaiah who was called to service. And his service met with barren results. Why does this happen. Now you could not say Isaiah did not have the Spirit. Quite often this happens to preachers and ministers of God today, we preach, we work, we serve. And yet outwardly, are barren of results. As far as outward proof is concerned.

You take the case of Jeremiah. Jeremiah had some fruit - but most of his was fruitless. And most of it was to his great personal peril. His life was constantly in danger.

Jesus, in his public work, was led to a rough path, a crown of thorns, and a cross. Stephen's testimony brought him a storm of stones. Paul passed through great dangers and distresses to be lodged in a prison cell, and then to the keen edged axe. Now these leaders were among Spirit-filled men.

Paul teaches in Cor. the clear understanding about results. He explained that while it is one spirit dwelling, in all who acknowledge Jesus as Lord, yet - the evidence of his presence differs widely in different persons. It is one God working all things, and all persons. But with a great variety of gifts, bestowed upon them for service.

What results then may be expected to follow the filling of the Holy Spirit. It may be said in a sentence that Jesus fills us with the same Spirit, that filled himself. That he may work out in us, his own image and his own ideal.

When we think of the Spirit at flood tide in your life - there are three or four things that we might say. One thing is, the Spirit cuts its own course. Another thing, the Spirit is an instrument of God within you. And finally, the Spirit ultimately empties into the sea.

I. CUTS ITS OWN COURSE

As we think about the results in your life and in your inner experiences, in your habits, and in your personality. Without a doubt, the first result experienced will be a new sense or a new longing to do God's will. When the Holy Spirit cuts its course in your life - there will be some things that will happen.

First, there will be an inner experience of peace. I think a new sense of glad, quiet stillness, which nothing else is able to disturb. The heart will be filled with a peace that is so still--and so calm as the depths of the sea, on a quiet night. It will be so peaceful.

How many thousands of people have loved the sweet words - the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your heart and thought in Christ Jesus. It is God's peace.

It is an act as though an armed guard stands around your heart and keeps out the unrest. You cannot understand it but you can feel it. You cannot get hold of it with your head - but you can with your heart. You do not get it - it gets you.

Well now you do not need to understand in order to experience. Blessed are they that have not understood but have yielded to that experience. Peace beginning to be deep as the sea, the sleep of the sea, when the stars their faces glass. The hearts of men upon earth that rest as the wild waters rest.

Did you know that with this peace, there is a course that is cut through your life.

A second thing is, there will be an intense longing to please him. As the days come and go, this new life - the new drive - the new purpose. This one thing becomes literally the thing that dominates your life.

With all of this, you come with a new desire to pray to your Master. To talk with Him. And to listen to what He has to say. There is something in this experience that you want to get better acquainted with him. You want to draw aside and talk to him. There is pleasure that just abounds. And there is nothing that really inspires you so, as to pray and listen to his voice.

And prayer will come as a part of service. It will become a mission in your life.

Third, temptation will come as the Holy Spirit cuts its own course through your life. I think I can say this very frankly. That there will be conflict. You will be tempted more than ever. Temptations will come with a rush of a storm. They will be unexpected. Like lightning. You see the act of surrender to Jesus is a notice that the temptation is on.

You understand, you have changed Masters. And you don't discard Masters because Satan doesn't let you go easily. He is a trained and a tough fighter. You think that you never had so many temptations after you became a Christian. They'll be strong, they'll be subtle, they'll be unexpected.

But listen, there will be victory. Truth goes - you will be tempted. The Devil will be around you. That is one truth. But the other truth is, that you will have victory over this because you have a new Master. He will attend to that. Do not under-rate the power of the Holy Spirit. For greater is He that is in you. You cannot over-rate this enemy. You've got the victory. And he'll be with you through the span of your life because he is in full control.

Fourth, there will be intense sensitiveness to sin. You will have a new feeling about sin when the Holy Spirit cuts his own course through your life. There will be an increase, hatefulness against the cultured things that you have been involved in. From the contact with these. There will grow a sense of sinfulness in your old heart. Then too, there will grow a yearning in your new heart that you will not have words for. You want to be pure - you'll really want a pure heart. And you are really going to work on this. To get you a new heart.

Fifth, there will be an intense desire to get others to know your Master.

This will become a desire - a strong one gripping you. That he is such a wonderful Master. So loving, so kind, so wonderful - and you get to thinking - if only my friend knew him. And you'll have a desire that you will be able to lead somebody else to your Lord. And to your Christ.

So Ezekiel said, afterwards he brought me again to the door of the house, and behold waters issued out from under the threshold of the house, and the fore-front of the house. And the waters came down from under the right side, of the house. In other words, the waters cut. The flood tide cut, its own course. And when the Holy Spirit comes down and comes into your life, that is exactly the transforming experience that you will have.

Divine
II. AN INSTRUMENT OF GOD IN NATURE - V. 3-4

We find that this all inclusive passion will become God's very nature. As a channel is cut in your life, it will become one of the love of God. The Holy Spirit has been given unto us. Rom. 5:5. The result all inclusive will be love. The marvelous, tender passion - the height, the depth. All of this shall flood our hearts. Making us gentle, making us tender-hearted. Making us self-sacrificing. Making us gracious. Every phase of life will become a phase of love. Peace is resting in love.

Prayer is love. Keeping our prayer time. Conflict in sin. Our hatred for sin. Our enthusiasm will burn with love. This is revolutionary - this love that has come. As the fruit of the Spirit. Gal. 5:22-23. Love, peace, and joy, long-suffering,

gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. Love is not only the finest fruit - but it is the final test of a Christian life.

How many splendid men of God have seemed to lack here. What a giant strength Elijah was - such intense hatred for sin. Fearlessness denunciation. Tremendous faith, about even the Heavens. Power in prayer. But yet, he is critical of the faithful remnant whom God lovingly defended. God seems to understand his need and helps him to go down before him and have a new vision of his Master. And then he revealed himself in the whirl-wind, the earthquake, but he did not find God there. They suited his temple, but something soft, gentle and still. Hushed and awe, was a new concept that came into his life.

And this is the Spirit that is lacking in so many lives - that Spirit love. Some people are so cutting and so critical at times. There is no magnetism in their lives to draw people to Christ. But they are sharp like a razor with a critical spirit. And have a sharp-edged tongue.

But when God's instrument - just like the flood tide of the Holy Spirit comes in - love is the flood tide that he brings. Have you ever seen a flood. Well, I remember some of these hurricanes that we have had. They go back to my boyhood days. And how they - the strong waters and the strong wind impressed me to watch the flood tide coming up. Even to the house where we lived. And filling the yards and the fields. And how the waters came rushing down and cutting out new channels. And tearing up valuable property. We have had some of these floods in Virginia. Up in the mountains. And all that man can do is stand back - he is helpless.

Let me ask you a question. Would you care to have a flood tide of love flushed into the channel ways of your life. It would cleanse out something that you have preferred keeping. It would with quiet, powerful strength, tear away some prized possessions that you have tied up and would set them a drift downstream and on out. It is high waters - and they would put out some of the fires on the lower levels. But ah, it would cut some new channels, and broaden and deepen the old ones. And what a harvest would follow in your life. Floods are out to do peculiar things. So does this one.

It washes out the friction grit from between the wheels. It does not dull the edge of the tongue - but it washes the bitter out of the mouth, and gets the green out of the eyes. Now this is a strange flood. Would that we all knew more about it. Ezekiel said, V. 3 - and the man that had the line in his hand, went forth Eastward and measured a thousand cubits. And he brought me through the waters and the waters were to my ankles. V. 4 - Again he measured a thousand and brought me through the waters. And the waters were to the knees. Again, he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters to the loins. Isn't that a marvelous picture. Little by little this flood tide covers his shoes, his ankles, his knees, it is up to his loins. It is getting deeper all the time. God's great instrument of nature is at work and somehow if we could get the picture of the Holy Spirit coming in anpossessing us - just a little bit, a little more, and a little more and cutting a real channel of love.

III. IT ULTIMATELY EMPTIES INTO THE SEA

Now let us move on to the fullness of the resources. And what really happens when the flood tide comes in and God sends the Spirit - unrestrained in His presence. Without

a doubt, the face of everything is going to be changed and it is difficult to describe it. There will be peace in the heart. There will be a real secret of winsome beauty in your life. There will be a wonderful purpose in the touch of your hand. You will be changed and you may be the least conscious of it.

Neither Moses nor Stephen knew about their transfigured faces. But other people could see it. And other people knew about it. And as the flood tide takes place and goes in - there will come an ultimately natural endowment and development of gifts and talents.

First, talents that have been unused will come alive. Here are things that have been lying around, unmatured, unused. Undeveloped resources.

Did you know that many of us today are one-sided in our development. There are very few of us that are well-rounded individuals. We are strangers to the real possibility of our lives that are within us. We are unconscious of some of the powers with which we are endowed and entrusted with.

Now the Holy Spirit, when given a free hand, works out the fullness of the life that has been put in. The growth will be an addition.

Moses complained that he was slow of speech, slow of tongue. Now God does not promise him a new tongue. He will be with him and train his tongue.

Now listen to him 40 years afterwards in the plains of Moab. His tongue is loose,

it has been trained, and he gives the series of farewell talks. Fairly burning with eloquence. No one can read Deut. and not say that these are noble messages. Now they have come because a man has grown and developed in the Spirit of God.

Moses or Stephen were men who had a face or faces that were transfigured. It was not because they practiced make-up - but it was when they were offered to work for God. And they accepted it. But the Spirit developed the talents that were otherwise unsuspected, and unused.

Second, talents will be developed to the highest pitch. I think, it will be like tuning a piano. And getting the note up, to the proper pitch. And maybe you can get it higher. Not only, will the undeveloped talents - but those that are already developed will somehow know a new life. In other words, the Holy presence of the Spirit will bring fire to the imagination of that person. It will make his logic cleaner - his will will be steady. And he will be more alert.

I think the civil engineer will be more accurate with his measurements. The scientific man will be more keenly observant of the facts than just generalizing things. The train engineer will handle his huge machine more skillfully. The lawyer will be more thorough in his sifting of evidence and more convincing in planning his case. The businessman will be even more sharply alive to business. The college student will be better in grasping his studies. The man who writes will write with clearer diction. The man who cooks - will cook with a finer flavor in the food. We could go on to the end of the list. But why should we do this. And why does this happen. Do you say it is magic.

It is simply because God created man to be dominated by the Spirit of God. That is his normal condition. The Spirit of God is his natural atmosphere.

Did you know a machine works best when it is run under the inventors direction. Only a man, any man - who is at flood tide in the midst of the Holy Spirit, will his powers rise to his best. The man is not doing his best, otherwise.

Third, a talent's reclaimed. I think at flood tide, in the Holy Spirit, there will be some talents that may have been warped or dwarfed or hurt. By sinfulness and selfishness. A man may have gone to all kinds of excesses. But I think he may have been lazy or hasty in his judgement. But I think the results of the Holy Spirit will gradually help that man to get better control of some of these things in his life. Where he has been shallow-minded before. Where he has been lazy before. Where he has been hasty in his judgement. He will become a reverent student of the Word of God. And the Spirit will fit him for some service. And will move him to some victory. And, the Master will give him better control of his talent.

Fourth, his talents will grow. I think this is one of the natural things that will come with the Holy Spirit. Ultimately coming in at flood tide. Where there is moral crookedness - that will be straightened out. Where there are things such as the temper of James, with the in-filling - there is a new experience. Jonathan Edwards develops his marvelous talent and uses it to influence men. Charles Finney developed the logic of his mind, which was good. But it began to grow. And he began to build fires in every direction. Moody had neither of these gifts. But he had the wonderful presence which left an imprint upon him. His faculties were not changed or added too. They were developed and wonderfully used.

George Mueller never became a great preacher like Moody or some of the others. But there was a development in his administrative skills. He had the ability to grow. Charles Studd, remained a poor speaker, and had no organization or knack - but through the fire of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit, had a missionary zeal to go to the British universities. And the hearts of the people were melted as they listened. Shaftsbury, who had great mental processes, he went forth lovingly. Whether it was in the daytime or at midnight. And he picked up men on the docks of London and in the alleyways. We think of Clough, who was refused by the missionary board because he lacked certain required qualifications. Who went on, and when he finally reached the field, these qualities appear. But his skill as an engineer gave him a hold upon thousands whom his presence and the flood tide of the Holy Spirit, was able to win to Jesus Christ.

The growth produced by the Spirit, in Carey and others. Put them in a groove and helped them to develop. God will do the same thing for you.

Fifth, service at flood tide. It is like a heart in tune. The Holy Spirit will divide his work to every man as he will. He chooses Peter to open the door to another nation. He asks Paul to enter an open door. He wanted Philip to go down to Samaria. He called upon Titus to guide the church in matters. He took Livingston and sent him to the heart of Africa. He took a nurse, whose name is unknown, to be used for God. In the development of a child. In English history. Earl Shaftsbury, one of the truly filled men of the world. Sphear is used to breathe a new spirit of devotion upon college students. John R. Mott, was to organize the service around the world. The Spirit, is in us. He administers our plans. He never sleeps. He can be trusted.

I want you to remember that these are flood tide results. Some good people will