

Defense Against Discouragement

By Ron Dunn

Ron Dunn:

I wish I were praying for Ron so I could quit.

As a matter of fact, I did pray for him the other day. I said, "Lord, please bless Ron." He said, "Ron who?" And I said, "Ron Hafer." He said, "I haven't heard from him since '69."

It's "Podo," and you know it. Well, it's been good to be with you. Certain portions of the preceding have been good to be with you. And again, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity of having been here this week, and I hope that you have a great time tonight. I was thinking about Ron talking about your attitude towards the visiting team tonight reminded me of what a preacher friend of mine said a few weeks ago when this Iranian crisis came up, and he said, I think we ought to go over there to Iran and just blast them to bits in a Christian manner, of course.

So I hope you beat the daylights out of them tonight... In a Christian way. That's good. But I have enjoyed being with you this week, and I've enjoyed it so much that I have invited myself to come back and I have accepted my invitation. So I want to thank you. Now I want you to open your Bibles this morning to the Old Testament, to the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 15.

And I'm going to read beginning with verse 22 through the end of the chapter, verse 27, Exodus, chapter 15, verses 22 through 27. And of course, the context of this particular passage is

extremely important. God has just delivered the Israelites from the hand of the Egyptians. They have marched through the parted waters of the Red Sea. They have watched as their enemies, the Egyptians, have been drowned in the very same waters through which they were saved.

And as a result, their praises go up. And there is a beautiful Psalm of deliverance found in the first portion of chapter 15. And immediately after that we find these words in verse 22.

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, what shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance. And there he proved them and said, If I will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his Commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you which I have brought upon the Egyptians. For I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve Wells of water and three score and ten palm trees: and then camped there by the waters."

Several years ago I was at a conference in the Eastern part of the country sponsored by our denomination, which is a Southern Baptist. And in one of the meetings in which I was not speaking. And I attended one of the meetings when one of the leaders of our denomination was speaking. And in the course of his talk he threw out a statistic that to me was so unreasonable

that I immediately dismissed it, figuring that either I had misheard what he said or he had mis-said what I heard.

I should have gone to him afterwards and checked it. But I didn't, because I was certain that the statistic was wrong. About three months later I received one of our denominational publications and thumbing through it there was an article about this very thing. And there again I found that same statistic. This time I knew it was right, for it was in one of our publications.

And that's like the Law, the Medes and the Persians, everything printed there is absolutely true.

It staggered me the size of that statistic. And as I read the article, it gave some explanation about it. Now what I heard at that conference that surprised me to so much that I dismissed it as being untrue. Was this. Every year in our denomination that's one denomination of the Baptist Convention.

Every year over 1000 men leave the Ministry. Every year, 1000 ministers in our denomination quit. And that seemed to me such an alarming figure. That's just the ones they know about.

Others depart from the Ministry or quit their Christian vocation.

For various reasons of which no one ever finds out about. No one ever knows the reason. And some don't even know that they've left. But in this article the author went on to explain that our denomination had appointed a committee. Of course, I could have guessed that to study why these men every year quit the Ministry.

And they found that there were a number of contributing factors. But the overall factor, the overall cause was discouragement and disillusionment. And they went on to describe how that there were three definite periods in an individual's life when he became the most vulnerable to discouragement. But the conclusion was, after interviewing a great number of these people who had abandoned their call to the Ministry, was that the number one factor, the number one cause of their abandoning that Ministry, that call was discouragement, disillusionment.

And I couldn't help feeling a great deal of kinship with that. Because I don't know of anybody that one time or another has not been so discouraged to the point that they have wanted us to throw up their hands and give it all up. And I think I could safely say this morning that one of the most effective weapons the devil has ever forged against Christians is the weapon of discouragement. It seems that there's nothing else that soul paralyzes us and so opens us up to all other kinds of sins, this weapon of discouragement, of disillusionment.

And as I had myself been a victim of this, and there was a time in my life When I was at the very point of quitting the Ministry Because I had become disillusioned, Things hadn't worked out the way I thought they would. Things didn't work out the way my preacher promised they would. When I came to Jesus Christ, I was promised that from then on out, Everything was just going to be wonderful. Life was going to be smooth, and there was no greater calling and no greater joy Than that of serving the Lord, and that if you serve the Lord, Then he was obligated to just keep you 100% happy all the time. And I had certain aspirations, And I had certain visions of what was going to happen.

And the fact of the matter is, very few of those visions came true. And more often than not, things happen unexpectedly that I was not prepared for. And I was plunged into great despair and disillusionment and came to the point, as I said, of almost abandoning the Ministry. And I began to do a study on this, and I found that there are some defenses that we can have against discouragement. And I think the primary cause of discouragement is the fact that things happen that we do not expect to happen.

They don't turn out the way we thought they would turn out. And it seems to me if you and I could have sort of an idea of what to expect in our Christian life after we have committed ourselves to Jesus, and we said, all right, in whatever capacity it may be, I'm going to serve the Lord. If we were prepared, forearmed as it was, and knew what to expect, what could happen so that when it did happen, it wouldn't knock us off balance and we could maintain our spiritual equilibrium, I think that would be a good defense against discouragement. And I think that possibly the person most qualified to talk about this is the man called Moses. I admire Moses as much as any man in the Bible.

Moses was a man who knew what it was to be discouraged. You remember, he spent 40 years in the backside of the desert. Now, it's bad enough to be in the desert, but it's worse to be in the backside of the desert, whatever that is. And actually, the fact is, he had to spend 80 years in the desert. Did you know that?

Not just 40, but 80 years. One time he spent 40 years in the desert with a bunch of sheep. And the next time he spent 40 years with a bunch of backsliders. I think it would have been easier to have the sheep than the backsliders. And you remember when Moses finally was called by God in Exodus chapter three.

One of the excuses that Moses gave for not serving the Lord was that he stuttered that he wasn't Eloquent. He couldn't speak.

Now, if you turn over to the Book of Acts, you'll find that when Stephen is preaching, he mentions that Moses is one of the most eloquent men who ever lived. Have you ever wondered what happened to Moses eloquence? At one time he was Eloquent. But when God spoke to him in Exodus three and four, he wasn't. Well, I'll tell you what happened to that Eloquence.

You spent 40 years talking to nothing but a bunch of dumb sheep, and you'll lose any ability to talk to. I mean, he was a man totally wiped out. And then after God had promised him to deliver the Israelites, they came through the Red Sea and then came 38 years of wandering in that desert again. And if that were not enough, Moses finally died outside the promised land. God took him on the mountaintop and asked him to look over.

And he said, Moses, there it is. You can look, but you cannot touch. And I think Moses was a man who was well acquainted with disappointment and discouragement and knew what it was to live and die right in the suburbs of discouragement and disillusionment. But in this particular incident that I read to you this morning, when they have come to the waters of Marah, I think

that we find another one of those instances where Moses is face to face with disillusionment and discouragement. And there are some things, there are some lessons that I believe come out of this incident that will help us to know what to expect and will be a defense against discouragement.

And I just like to share this with you. First of all, I think it's important that we understand and remember that the greatest successes of life are often followed by failure. It will help us not to be knocked from our feet, spiritually speaking, if we come to understand that oftentimes the greatest successes of our spiritual life are followed by failure. Now that's exactly what has happened here at Marah. As I mentioned earlier, the Israelites have just seen the mighty hand of God deliver them from the Egyptians.

And they have stood on the banks of the Red Sea and watched as the waters washed up the bodies of their former taskmasters. And there comes a great song of praise to God for his deliverance. Now, you would think that after the people had had such a tremendous experience that nothing could defeat them, that nothing could stop them. And yet it seems to me very significant that immediately, immediately after that experience, they come to the waters of Marah, the waters that are not fit to drink. And the people murmur against Moses, and they're plunged into despair.

And Moses cries out to the Lord, I don't know if you've ever noticed it or not, but it seems that God's people are always having trouble with water. Have you ever noticed that? Most of the time that the Lord Jesus had to rebuke his disciples, that it had to do with water, either bread or boats?

It either had to do with a lack of bread or it had to do with some storm on the sea? It's the same with the Israelites. At one time they came to the Red Sea and there was too much water.

How are they going to escape from the Egyptians? And then after they got from the Red Sea, they went out in the wilderness where there was no water. And then finally when they came to a place where there was water, it was too bitter to drink, and it seemed that they were always having trouble with water. I have an idea that God keeps taking us through certain kinds of trials until we learn to face up to them. I said the other day in one of the classes that one of the things that I've learned about the Lord is that you never flunk out of his school.

He'll keep giving it a test, friend, until you pass it. And that seems to be what God is doing with Israel. He just keeps giving them the test to see if they pass it. And the greatest success of their life was immediately followed by failure. And, you know, I find this a pattern throughout the word of God.

I mentioned a little bit of this last night in our session, but have you noticed how throughout the Scriptures there are those people who experience a great success, and immediately it seems to be followed by failure? For instance, Joshua, when he led the children of Israel into the land of Canaan, and they overcame practically without firing a shot, the city of Jericho. There is a tremendous success because Jericho was the strongest city in all the land. And after that, of course, there's nothing to fear. And the next city right down the road is a little one horse town by the name of Ai is about the same size of Podo brother Ahn, and anybody who could overcome Jericho wouldn't have any trouble with Ai.

But you know the story there, the greatest success of their life was followed by failure, and they lost 36 men. I think about Simon Peter and Matthew, chapter 16, when he finally says something right, and the Lord says, who do men say that I am? And the other disciples give their opinions. And then he said, well, who do you say that I am? Simon Peter says, Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.

And Jesus says, Blessed art thou. Simon Bar-Jonah. Now, I don't mean to be irreverent, but I hear a note of relief and joy in the words of Jesus, because Simon has a way of walking around with 1ft in his mouth and wondering why he can't keep his balance. And finally, Simon has said something right, and Jesus said, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you. But my Father, which is in heaven.

Now, what a moment, what a high hour, what a tremendous spiritual experience. And the very next moment, Jesus is saying to that same disciple, "Get thee behind me, Satan. You do not understand the things of God." Greatest successes of life, often followed by failure. You can just remember Elijah and Mount Carmel. And after that tremendous victory, then running for his life from Jezebel and winding under a little tree, wishing that God would kill him all the way through the scripture, you see that same pattern. Now, what do I mean by failure?

What do I mean by failure? What I'm saying to you is this, that there come those times in our lives when suddenly that which once was a source of joy and delight and nourishment to us becomes bitter. It's when the water that nourishes and refreshes us suddenly becomes bitter. It's

when that which was once the source of joy and the source of life becomes so bitter we really can't stomach it. Suddenly it's lost all of its taste.

For instance, these men and women that I mentioned earlier, who have been so discouraged that they've quit the Ministry at one time, serving the Lord, was the greatest source of their joy. It's what made their lives worth living. But now those waters have turned bitter and what at one time was the source of their joy has been the source of their bitterness. God takes you through an experience and he feeds you some water that you don't know if you can even swallow. And if you can swallow it, you don't know if you can keep it down.

God takes you through some experience that makes you sick at your stomach and there's no joy in it, there's only despair and discouragement. I talked to a mother and father just a few days ago, a wonderful Christian couple who live in our city. And yet their son has just been, in the last three or four years, a constant source of pain and discouragement and affliction. The boy is in trouble with the police. From one day to another, there looks to be no Salvation for him at all.

And as they said in our room and wept, I couldn't help but think to myself, that young boy at one time was the source of their greatest joy. And now he is the source of their greatest misery. They're at the place of Marah. Now, what happens usually in the Christians life is that when he winds up at Marah, he thinks somehow he's missed God. He really does.

I remember when I resigned my Church to go into this kind of work. And I'd been at this Church for about nine years. And I love the Church, I love the people. We loved each other and I was

deliriously happy there. I had intended to spend the rest of my life there, but I really felt, I really felt that God was leading me into this kind of Ministry.

We had prayed about it for a number of months, even in the years, and we felt certain that this was what God was doing and we had perfect peace about it. And I just expected that since I was willing to make such a great sacrifice and leave that Church and go on the road, that the Lord was obligated just to make everything absolutely wonderful. The fact of the matter is, the first four meetings I had after I left my Church were the worst I've ever been in my life. And I came home one day and my wife and I got together on our knees in prayer. And I actually thought I said, Lord, I've missed you somewhere.

I must be out of the will of God, because every place I've been I've been at the First Baptist Church of Marah for four straight weeks. And certainly, surely I've missed God's will, or there wouldn't be this. But the fact of the matter is Marah, friend, is right on the map. I mean, God led these folks there. They were following the leadership of God, and God himself leads us many times into the place of Mora, into the place of bitterness.

Now, why is that? Well, the Scripture says in verse 25 that he brought them tomorrow and noticed in the last phrase of the 25th verse there, he proved them there, he tested them there. He put them to the test to prove them, to discover what they were really like. Now, to me, that is surprising. I would have thought that they had been proved at the Red Sea, wouldn't you?

It seems to me that the place to prove a person's spirituality and his commitment would be at the Red Sea. There is a tremendously sensational miracle that God has wrought there's where God proved them. No, God didn't prove them there. God proved them at Marah. And I want you to know that the real proof and the real test of our relationship to Jesus Christ does not come ordinarily in the great, tremendous sensational acts of God in our lives.

It usually comes from the day by day routine of just trusting God for your next drink of water. You see, the great test of my Christianity is not my preaching. As a matter of fact, my preaching is about the easiest thing I do. I rarely ever sin while I'm preaching. I figured it out.

If I could just stay preaching 24 hours a day with the rest of my life, I think I could become everything ought to be, because rarely do I succumb to temptation in the course of my preaching. That's not the big test of my spiritual life. That's the easiest thing I do. I'll tell you the hardest thing I do is to be the right kind of husband, the right kind of father in the everyday affairs of life. The greatest test of my spiritual life is not am I going to be able to deliver the message?

But can I trust God to meet the bills for next month? That's the great test and God will bring us through one period after another. And there he proved them. And the greatest successes of life are often followed by failure. And the reason that they are is the Lord wants to know if we've yet learned to trust him.

And I'm convinced of the great lesson that God, the great task that God has is to teach us to trust him. I believe it all boils down to this. The Lord is trying to teach us to trust him and friends. Miracles don't produce faith. Miracles do not produce faith.

It is not at the place of the Red Sea, but it is at the place of ball, of seeing God. Just meet the everyday needs, the everyday necessities of life. That's where our faith is tried and where our faith is proven. All right. The second thing is this.

Not only are the greatest successes of life often followed by failure, but the greatest successes of life. The greatest services of life are often followed by forgetfulness. The greatest services of life are often followed by forgetfulness. Now, it's very interesting how the people responded to Moses. 1 minute he's a hero, and the next minute he's a zero.

If you notice in verse 24, it says, and the people murmured against Moses saying, what shall we drink? And it's an interesting study just to follow Moses and the Israelites all the way through their exodus. And you'll find that again and again they turned against him. And the people murmured against Moses. The greatest services of life are often followed by forgetfulness.

I'm always amazed at how forgetful the people of God are. I'm amazed at how forgetful we are of the Lord's goodness. Has this ever happened to you? You've been in a real fix financially. I mean, you've really been in a tight place financially.

And it looks as though you're going to go down for the third time and nothing's going to help you. And you prayed and the Lord seemingly hasn't heard. But just 1 minute before the clock strikes midnight, God comes through. He delivers you. He meets your need.

And you say, Well, I've learned my lesson this time. I'll never doubt God again. Man, I'll never doubt the Lord again. I've really learned my lesson this time. Has that ever happened to you?

Sure it has. And about two weeks later, you're in the same fix, in the same situation. What do you do? Well, you're over there in a corner feeling sorry for yourself, wondering where in the world God has gone, and you've already forgotten all that he has done for you previously. There is something about human nature that finds it easy to forget the goodness of God.

A psychologist did a study a few years ago and he found that it takes 20 times as long to unlearn a bad habit as it does to learn a good habit. He specifically put this test through pianist and he found that when a pianist learns a wrong note it takes that person 20 times as long to unlearn the wrong note as it does to learn the right note. There seems to be something about human nature that takes to error like water takes to a duck's back and there's something about human nature that finds it very difficult to remember the goodness of God. A couple of years ago my daughter took up the flute wanted to learn to play the flute and so we found a teacher and then we went down and got the flute we brought it home, it was the weekend and our teacher called and asked us if we had yet purchased a flute and we said yes she said well don't let her blow on it and she sounded very serious and she said do not let her blow on it I said Well I'm sure that she'll want to

play with a little bit and put it together she said don't let her blow on it she can put it together, she can look at it but don't let her blow on it.

I said well why not? She said if she blows on it she'll blow on it wrong because she's not been trained, she doesn't know how to do it she'll blow on it in the wrong way she'll have her lips in the wrong way and it'll take me forever to get her to do it the right way. Don't let her blow on until I've shown her how to do it the right way there is something about human nature that just naturally takes the doing things the wrong way we're so forgetful and these people in the moment of trial they have totally forgotten all the good things that Moses has done for them and they murmur against him. Now listen, you need to be prepared for this the greatest services of your life will often be followed by forgetfulness what do I mean by this? Friend, prepare to be unappreciated. Now you may as well mark it down the average person is never going to appreciate just how wonderful you are. They're going to be too blind to see your genius and they're going to be too hard hearted to really fully appreciate all that you do and I'll tell you one of the reasons that so many people today are quitting the Ministry is because they are unappreciated.

I was with a friend some time ago and I thought of another acquaintance of ours that I'd not heard from in several years and I said, "hey whatever happened to so and so?" And they said "oh he quit yeah he quit." I said "well why is that?" "Well, he had a bad experience," and I asked him to tell me about it, and he had had a bad experience. But every time I hear that, I wonder, whoever told them that they would never have bad experiences.

I can imagine the Lord Jesus Christ returning to heaven ahead of time. And the Angels there was shocked faces. Look at him. And they said, Master, Lord, what are you doing back so soon? And he said, Well, I had a bad experience.

And I read in my Bible that if they have not loved the Master, they will not love the servant. If they have hated the Master, they will hate the servant. You see, you and I, if we're going to commit our lives to Jesus Christ, we're going to have to understand that sometimes the greatest successes of life, the greatest services of life, may be followed by forgetfulness. But I have some suggestions. When that happens, I have three suggestions.

Number one, don't take it personally. Don't take it personally in your Christian life, in your endeavor to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. If people somehow don't seem to appreciate what you're doing for Jesus Christ, do not take it personally. If you go over into the 16th chapter of Exodus, you'll find that once again the people are murmuring against Moses. And in verse eight, we find these words.

"And Moses said, this shall be when the Lord shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full. For that the Lord heareth your murmurings, which you murmur against him. And what are we? Your murmurings are not against us but against the Lord." "Your murmurings are not against us but against the Lord."

The first thing I would suggest is, don't take it personally. Why? Because you are an ambassador for Jesus Christ and you stand in his service. And when the people murmur, they do not murmur against you. They murmur against the Lord.

When the people do not appreciate your Christian commitment, your Christian service, it is the Lord that they are not appreciating. You must not take it personally. The second suggestion is, don't take it out on the people. Now, I admire Moses for this. I don't know about you, but I'd given up on that bunch a long time ago.

About the second or third time, they turned against me and murmured, I would have said, all right, all right. You don't like the way things are going? Let somebody else lead for a while. I'm going back to the sheep. At least they don't murmur.

They just eat and mind their own business. It's amazing that Moses, as far as we know, never really turned against the people and vented himself and took it out on them. The third suggestion I have is this, don't take it personally. Don't take it out on people, but take it to the Lord. Just take it to the Lord.

The Bible says, and he cried. Moses cried unto the Lord. Moses cried unto the Lord. Now notice. And the Lord showed him a tree which, when he had passed into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

Now, let me say to you, when you find yourself in a situation in your Christian life where you're discouraged, disheartened, disillusioned. You're wanting to just cash it all in, forget about it. Walk away from it. People haven't appreciated you. Maybe you've been misjudged, mistreated by people. What do you do?

You take it to the Lord, and I tell you what the Lord will do. The Lord will show you a way to make that bitter experience sweet.

I have found and I know there are many others here today that could testify to this truth, that some of the greatest and sweetest experiences I have ever had with the Lord in my entire Christian life have happened at Marah.

That seems to be God's way out of death comes life. And Moses cried into the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. The tree was there all along. But Moses could not begin to comprehend the power of that little tree. God had to open his eyes.

As long as we're feeling sorry for ourselves, as long as we're trying to get even with people, we'll never see the tree. But the moment we turn to the Lord and cast this thing upon him and cry into the Lord, I promise you, he will show you a way in which that bitter experience can be made sweet. And Moses cast the tree into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. One final suggestion.

The greatest successes of life are often followed by failure. The greatest services of life are often followed by forgetfulness. And the greatest shortages of life are always followed by fullness. I love those that last verse, verse 27. And they came to Elim.

There were twelve wells of water and threescore and ten palm trees. And they encamped there by the waters. They came to Elim. And what did they find? Twelve Wells of water and 70 palm trees.

At one moment they were at Marah, where there was water that was not fit to drink. And they came to Elim, where they found twelve Wells of water. That's one for each tribe and 70 palm trees. That's one for each elder to sit under. They didn't really need the palm trees God just threw that in, I think, as a bonus. But each tribe had its own well of water, and each elder had a palm tree to set under. At one moment there was shortage, and the next moment there was fullness. And I want to say to you, dear friend, that when you and I commit our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, he definitely will lead us into the desert places and he definitely will lead us to the places of bitter waters. But I want you to know the greatest shortages of our life were always followed by fullness.

He brought them to Elim. They came to the place where there was an abundance. And this is always the case with God. One of my favorite portions of scripture and it's one that I preach from quite frequently has to do with the Lord's feeding of the 5000 and the 4000. And I talked about this a little bit in one of the classes the other day.

And after every feeding of those thousands, the Lord commanded the disciples to gather up that which was left behind. And when he fed 50, they gathered up twelve basket-fulls. That's one for each disciple. At one time, they had nothing. Now every disciple has its own basket.

The other time they gathered up seven baskets. And there the Greek word is not the regular word for basket. It's the same word that's used in the book of Acts when Paul was lowered over the wall in a basket. That basket is big enough to hold an entire human being. And they gathered up seven basket-fulls.

In other words, every time. Every time there was absolutely nothing to eat and God multiplied the food, the disciples ended up with an abundance. That's the way God works. That's the way he works. The greatest shortages are always followed by fullness.

And they came to Elim. Do you know how far Elim is from Marah?

5 miles. That's 5 miles. Can you imagine what would have happened if they had quit at Mara? Some of you may have seen this movie on TV the other night called Survive. It's about one of the plane crashes in the Andes. I believe it was. There've been several there and several stories have come out of it. But one of the interesting things, I believe it was in this particular one in Survive, it may have been one of the others. But one of the very interesting things is the narrator said that when a group of those people who had been wrecked and stranded started out looking for help, they went in one direction. But if they had gone in the other direction, they were only 5 miles from a resort hotel.

Just 5 miles in the other direction was a resort hotel where there was plenty of food and shelter. What a tragedy to die just 5 miles from Elim. Can you imagine becoming so disillusioned and discouraged at Marah that you say, I quit. I've had it. And just 5 miles, just a little ways down the road there's Elim.

I'm glad I didn't quit it, Marah, you say, "well, how do you get there, preacher? How do you get to Elim?" You just keep going. It's just that simple. You just keep going.

They came to Elim. The Lord didn't come along with taxi clouds and bear them up and carry them over to Elim. He didn't transport them. Just in the flash of a moment, they got up and they walked. How do you get to Elim.

You keep going. I was speaking at Baylor University some time ago and I was talking about reading the Bible and praying and keeping your accounts with God. And afterwards the young man came up and he said, well, our preacher, I agree with everything you said, but what should I do when I don't feel like reading my Bible? I said, Read your Bible. He said, now there are times when I don't feel like praying.

What should I do when I don't feel like praying? I said, pray. But he said, Wouldn't that be hypocritical? I said, Low motive is better than none at all. I said, Just keep going. What do I do when I don't feel like obeying? You obey.

What do I do when I don't feel like witnessing? You witness. What do I do when I don't feel like sharing my faith? You share your faith. What do I do when I don't feel like praying and reading the Bible and doing the things that God has asked me to do? You just do them.

You keep on going, you keep on obeying. The only way to get to Elim, my friend, is not to sit around waiting for some tremendous ecstatic experience that will catapult you the 5 miles to Elim. The only way to get to Elim is just by discipline yourself to do the things that God has called you to do. You keep on going and you will come to Elim.

One of the wonderful things about our Lord is that he is no man's debtor. There has no man that has left houses and lands and friends and family, but that God will not restore him. I want you to know that when you commit your life to Jesus Christ, even though he may lead you through the desert, even though he may lead you through the bitter waters, friend, he will always lead you to Elim. God is no man's debtor. He always has his reward.

This last fall I was at the Filey conference in England, and a very interesting thing happened. On Thursday, during that conference, they set aside for mission emphasis and they bring in some missionaries, or many missionaries are already there and they allow these men to speak and give their testimonies. And that evening there are about between six and 7000 people attending the conference. And that evening the speakers were all seated on the platform and they were having various missionaries to come and give their testimonies. I was sitting here with my wife and Dr. Steven Olford and his wife were sitting right next to us and this one missionary stood, went to the platform and gave his testimony. And basically this is what he said. 27 years ago. 27 years

ago, he attended the Keswick convention in England. He said, at that time I was just an average Christian, didn't have much purpose in mind. I had never really thought about committing my life to Jesus.

But he said that night during that Keswick service, I heard a man preach a message on missions and service and committing your life to Jesus. And he said, for the first time in my entire Christian life, I considered doing that. I really thought about that. It had never dawned upon me that God had such a claim on my life. And he said at the end of the service, when they asked for people to come forward who were willing to commit their lives to Christian service.

He said that man's message had such power upon it. And God spoke to me in such a way through it, I immediately went forward. He said, that was 27 years ago. For the past 25 years, I have been serving the Lord in Ethiopia. And he said, I have never yet had an opportunity to thank that man who 27 years ago preached that message.

But he said, tonight I'm going to thank that man for his message. And he turned and went over to Dr. Olford and took his hand and shook his hand and said, thank you, Dr. Olford, for being faithful to God. And there was just an electricity all over that place.

And I couldn't help but remember again that the Lord is no man's debtor. When you commit your life to Jesus Christ, God will always repay you. And you couldn't ask for a greater reward than what Dr. Olford had that night. And I personally know that the Lord has led him through many bitter water experiences.

But God always brings us to Elim. And so I think if we can remember this, it might help us to defend against discouragement. Just remember the greatest successes of your Christian life will often be followed by failure. And the greatest services of your life may often be followed by forgetfulness. But the greatest shortages of your life will always be followed by fullness. May we pray together.

Heavenly Father, we're grateful this morning for the time that we've had together during these days of conference. We're thankful for the way in which you've spoken to us. In the ways in which our hearts have been challenged. Both speakers and listeners alike. And father, we commit this week to thee and pray that you will take it and use it as an instrument of your will.

We pray thy richest blessings upon every young person. And we pray that all of them may come to know what is that good and perfect acceptable will of God for their lives. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.