

Encouraging Ourselves in the Lord

pre 1966

1. 2 Chronicles 31: 2-6.

- (2) Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their own courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord.
- (3) He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feast, as it is written in the law of the Lord.
- (4) Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord.
- (5) And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all the things brought they in abundantly.
- (6) And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps.

I want to talk this morning about 'encouraging ourselves in the Lord'.

- (7) Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord.

2. Now, my text is taken from a setting of four chapters in the life of Hezekiah. And this great king was the son of Ahab, who was a very wicked idolater. But somehow God had spoken to the heart of Hezekiah as a very young boy. And when he came to the throne at roughly the age of twenty-five, he sought God, and he attempted to put all the law of God into effect in the hearts and lives of the people. And his first attempt in Jerusalem was so effective that he decided that he would attempt it in all Israel. And so, he called them together. And the Scripture tells us that the Levites and the priests weren't sufficiently sanctified and instructed that they were able to carry out the mass sacrifices which were necessary. However, God did so bless them, It says that God had so prepared their hearts, the Spirit of the Lord came upon them suddenly. And this man was responsible for a great revival in Israel. And that's the setting of our text.

3. But I want you to notice something peculiar here about my text in that he encouraged the people by doing something for them. These people had not been going on with God. They had been walking apart from God. And now, as he calls them to take their stand and to serve God, especially the Levites and the priests, your priests in the Levitical order, we find these words that 'Hezekiah encouraged them'. He brought them something tangible before them to make them know it was worth while to serve God.

4. Now that's what I want to bring to us this day, because all last week, as I told you Wednesday night, that God has been, more or less, putting in my heart, this thought: that, if the trials of this life are to be taken calmly, if we are to take the burden which God puts upon us with any degree of peace and hope and faith, then it stands to reason that God somewhere in His divine providence must also have signs of encouragement, because no man could continuously bare the heat of the day and not be rewarded with sweet slumber during the night. No man could constantly put his shoulder to the wheel and not see the progress of that machinery. No man can constantly sow and endure without seeing a harvest. So, God must be in His divine providence always encouraging us, if we only knew where to look or how to encourage ourselves in the Lord.

5. And on Wednesday night, I told you folks that I believe we ought to look for God's encouragement. And I prayed earnestly that you people would believe that within seven days God would give you a token of His encouragement, something that you could look back on after a week from this Wednesday, and you would say, I know that God did something in that week, that I can look back on as a memorial, and I can stand encouraged, and I will look for God to encourage me in the future.

As the offering plate went by, I thought, well, I've only done this once before in my life. I'll empty my pocket book, because God can take care of a man with an empty pocket book, just as well or better as a man with a fat pocket book. I think I had sixteen dollars in American money and two dollars in Canadian. And I wanted to keep the two dollars Canadian. I wasn't going to give that away, because I wanted to send it in Canada, where I am either going to give it to my niece and nephew with three more daughters, or I'm going to buy myself some handkerchiefs, because I like those big handkerchiefs I got out there.

Well, I said, "That's mine; that's not God's, and it wasn't to be given."

I wanted to let you know that.

6. Well, I took the other money, the sixteen dollars and I put them in the plate. And, as I prayed that God would encourage us, you know, I had a little picture come before me of a little twenty dollar bill and some money wrapped up inside of that twenty dollar bill. And it was not within a half an hour that a man who does not attend this church at all here—because he's lived someplace else:

He said, "Bro. Vayle I want to give you something."

And there was a twenty dollar bill with four fives inside. I had my encouragement from God. I need, God knows, not four hundred dollars, not forty dollars, but I'll need this year, money which will far exceed it. And I do not claim for one minute that that forty dollars will take care of six hundred I could use at this moment in need. But I want to tell you that that forty dollars means that God has the four hundred or the four thousand, whichever I have need of, because He answered my prayer to encourage me.

7. And I believe there will not be one of you, if you were sincere when you prayed that night, but you will, before Wednesday night—Wednesday evening—rolls by, you will receive from God such encouragement that you can look back the same as when the rivers of Jordan opened up and they took out those twelve stones and made there a pyramid before God. And they said, 'You'll look back at this time when God led Israel across this river. And every time you see that memorial, you cannot doubt. But you will know that God lives, and because He lives, you live also.'

God wants to encourage His people, and I believe that He does. In this life, there is always adversity. I'm not going to apologize for that, but I want to tell you that God is bigger than the devil. I don't care how big a problem there is, if we would just encourage ourselves in the Lord, we will overcome that problem.

8. I like what one fellow said. He said, "It says in the Bible that, if God be for us, who can be against us?" He said, "This is the way I say it. If God be for us, the devil's up against us."

I thought, "That's true. That's absolutely true, because we are victorious in Jesus Christ. And the fact that He has a victory, he didn't win that victory for you and me... The grave and the resurrection was not for him, but it was for us, that we may share in the transfiguration and the transformation of our Savior."

9. I want you to go back, if you will, to Deuteronomy 28. We haven't got time to read It, but if you'll go back to Deuteronomy 28, you will find there two mountains. One mountain was Ebal and one was Gerazim. Upon the Mt. Ebal, the cursings came forth.

And It said, if thou wilt not obey the law of the Lord, and if you will turn away and seek idols, if you will go out of your way to please the world of the flesh and of the devil, God says this: "Cursed shall be thy city. As a community, you're going to be cursed. It says, "Cursed shall be thy fields. Cursed shall be thy basket. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body." "Cursed shall be thy flock." "Cursed will you be when you come in and when you go out."

10. But I want you to notice It also says this: "**Blessed** shall be thy city." And so many people get so conscience of the curse of this world. They get so conscience of the troubles of this world. They get so conscience of their own problems, they forget that God has a bigger blessing than there is a curse.

I want to tell you, if the curse could take man and destroy him, if the curse could take his body and bring it down to the grave, the blessing of God gives us a resurrection! Hallelujah! And it sets us up in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

And I can say with Job, "Though skin worms eat this flesh and this body of mine, yet shall I see God in the flesh whom I shall see with mine own self and none other. And I shall behold Him, though my reigns be consumed within me."

That's the blessing of Almighty God. You believe it? Well, hallelujah I do, because I know it's true!

11. It says over here: (3) "Blessed *shall* (thou) *be* (in) thy city. Blessed *shall* (thou) *be* (in) thy field. (4) Blessed shall be thy flock. Blessed *shall be* the fruit of thy body." That's what my Bible says. If my body has reproduced children, I can claim the promise of God in the face of the devil, and I can see victory in Jesus Name, because my God said so!

Let the neighbors try to take your kids and destroy them, as they've tried to take mine. I can face them in Jesus' Name and say my children, go on with God, because my God says, "Blessed shall be the fruit of my body." You believe it? Well, hallelujah! Let's begin to get pepped up this morning and rejoice in Jesus Christ, because, as I tell you, we're serving God; we're not serving the devil. Our alliance is with Him who liveth forever, and He cannot be destroyed.

12. Yes, there may be a curse upon the old mount, you may look at Mt. Sinai trembling, but one day I saw Calvary. I saw sin destroyed. And I saw the curse removed from mankind, and I saw Him who liveth forever more. Hallelujah. I like what Bro. Tom said when Jesus appeared to him. He said no longer the cross on the cross on Calvary, no longer in the tomb of the resurrection and the coming King, bless God. You can call him a babe in Bethlehem, if you want, but this morning I see Him as God manifested as the One who's coming again.

Yes, the curses may be on old Mt. Ebal, and I want to tell, you may be listening to those curses. But this morning there is a voice coming from Gerazim, the mount of blessing, that says my God is greater than the curse. Oh, hallelujah! If the devil can put a curse on God that's bigger than the devil, then God's got a blessing. And God tells us to encourage ourselves in the Lord.

13. I think of Psalm 1 back over here. I ought to memorize all these Psalms, but I have such a poor memory. (Who cares?) It says:

- (1) Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.
(Blessed is the man) that standeth not in the way of sinners. (Blessed is the man) that sitteth not in the seat of the scornful.
- (2) But his delight *is* in the law of the Lord.

I want you to notice now, my friend, here, that God pronounces a blessing. God pronounces a blessing, before He pronounces a curse. The blessing of God supersedes the curse. When God looked down upon the earth, He saw it was all good. It was only by sin that the curse came. And then He came and removed the curse, thank God.

14. I want you to see that God encourages you this morning. He's trying to get your eyes upon Him that you'll say there's a blessing for me. Start looking for the blessing. Start thanking God for His goodness. What if the waves do roll? You can see the old ship going down like Paul of old, as he stood upon those old timbers, rotting, squeaking, swaying, knowing that the ship would disintegrate under his feet. He said, "Be of good cheer, for this night the Angel of the Lord has appeared unto me.

Oh, beloved! That's what we want to do! That's the only secret this morning. That's the only way we're going to get ahead. Stop looking to any source, except Jesus Christ, because He is the only One who can help us. Yes, blessed is that man.

15. Oh, you may look further down, and It says, (4) "The ungodly are not so." But that doesn't include us, because we're godly in Christ Jesus. It says they're like the chaff; they're like woods that the wind driveth away. They're going to stand in the judgment and be condemned by God. They'll not be in the congregation of the righteous.

But beloved, listen; I want you to see, here's a sequence. God is pronouncing blessing. God is superseding curses with blessing. You say that's hard for me to understand. You know why? Because you won't let yourself understand it. You won't give yourself time to believe it. You won't deliberately step out in your faith and apprehend it. My God shall supply all your needs by His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. There isn't a life, I don't believe for one minute, but what God can mend. I don't care how much you crush that life. I don't care how hard you take that life down to destroy it. There is a God in heaven, as Nebuchadnezzar said, Who sets His hand over times and all nations. And He's got a respect for you and for me. Beloved, the blessing of God supersedes the curses every single time.

16. Oh, I like that first Psalm. I've been reading the psalms, and I've always known that the Book of Psalms was the heart's cry of a man toward God. It wasn't particularly inspired in the sense that God breathed every word of It. But God put It there because some man cried unto Him. And I could read the passages where man was crying out of his heart unto God, bewildered, not knowing what to do.

And then, I'd read those verses where God would speak back to that man. And God spoke peace and assurance and blessing. He spoke that there was a power greater than temptation. He showed success was greater than failure. He showed that life was more powerful than death. And He showed that God was over all. And my heart would thrill as I read these psalms, and It became real to me, because I've seen, as maybe I've never seen in my life before, how rich It is that God is nigh unto all who call upon Him. O bless God! There may be trials and temptations, but I want to tell you, God's bigger than that.

17. I look back in the Book of Deuteronomy once more, just preceding the Book... prior to the Book of Joshua. And I see God calling Joshua, and He says to Moses 'but charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him for he shall go in over before this people.' He shall go over before this people. And he

shall call them to inherit the land that thou shall see. How wonderful this verse of Scripture is, because It says here to Moses, you encourage Joshua.

My beloved friend there was a great problem in the life of Joshua. God had given him a burden beyond the skill of a natural man and beyond the strength of man, but now God says to Moses, “Encourage that man. Never mind the temptations that lie ahead. Never mind the defeat that comes up” summarily before him that would almost plunge him into defeat. “Never mind that one man shall steal in Jericho and then Ai shall not fall. Never mind...!” But He said, “Encourage that man. Encourage him.”

There on the battlefield, the walls of Jericho were about to fall. Joshua had this great army of people gathered. Men without even staves, I suppose. They hadn't any instruments of war. It would take an act of God, and a man draws nigh. Joshua goes forth and said, “Who are you? For us or against us?”

And he said, “Nay, but I am the captain of the host of Israel. I've come with salvation.” [Josh 5:13-14] And God encouraged that man, because God doesn't discourage anybody.

18. My friend, God never accused anybody. It's the devil that accuses the brethren. God doesn't kill anybody: it's the devil that has the power of death. Why do we want to mix light and darkness? God said they wouldn't mix. God's a God of blessing, because the curse was not only assumed, but absorbed, by Jesus. And today we're a people of blessing, if we'll only believe.

19. I will take you this morning to the example of Jesus Christ our Savior. I've been pondering... Someday I hope you'll be able to sit down with some good person, maybe like Bro. Branham or some scholar of the Word, and we're going to talk about the humanity of Jesus. I've never got to the bottom...some Scripture leaves me just pathetic. I don't understand it. But I know there's great truth here, and I see something about even Jesus. And here's what It says about him: [Heb 12:2]

- (2) Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.

Before there was any cross to endure, there was joy set before him. Before there was any trial or great temptation, my Bible says that Jesus was filled with the Holy Ghost, and then, he was led to the wilderness. It wasn't before, but it was after he had been blessed with the spirit of God coming in. Beloved, I want to tell you this morning, there isn't one trial in your life but what you're well prepared for, because God's already blessed you. You're already been prepared, if you've had a heart to serve God.

My friend, begin looking for the blessings of God. Begin looking to encourage yourself in Almighty God. God encouraged His Own Son, and It says he shall see the travail of his soul. He shall see his seed. He shall prolong his days, and then the travail of his soul shall be satisfied.

20. And again, the Scripture over in Romans, the literal translation, tells us, ‘For I know the imponderable weight of glory, which shall descend upon me, is far greater than any trial I've come through.’ God sets before us not a cross, my friend, but God sets before us life. He may take us down to the valley of the shadow of death. He may allow us to go down to the depths of despair. But I want to tell you that God has already had a blessing in store for us to encourage us and to take us on.

Oh, I think we've got the cart before the horse. We say, “Well, bless God, we go into the valley of despair and go on and see light.”

I don't believe that. I believe, my friend, that God's sandwiches are made of blessing, trial, and blessing. A lot of folks think that God's sandwiches are trial and blessing and trial, where the trials are the two pieces of bread; but that's not so. God's sandwiches upon which He feeds us are blessing and

trial and blessing, because He encourages us before and after, building us up in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

21. I think also up here...old David. David being hunted by Saul, ready to go into destruction, saying there is a step betwixt me and death. Time after time he had Saul within his hands to destroy him. But each time he refused to touch Saul, and he encouraged himself in the Lord saying, 'I had fainted, except I believe to see the goodness of the Lord.'

He encouraged himself. He said, "I'm like a flea before you, Saul. I'm like a particle in the wilderness. Why do you bother with me? Why do you attempt to kill me? And he said, "I could have killed you." "But," he said, "I would have fainted. It would have gotten me down. But," he said, "I couldn't faint, because I was looking for encouragement."

22. My friend, you can't believe the devil's lie and God's truth at the same time. You can't go down-up at the same time. You can't have faith and fear at the same time. So, David said, "I'm going to encourage myself. I'm going to believe God. I'm going to look for evidence of God's goodness. I'm going to look back upon those times when God did something and when I get so weak that my sc—— begins to fail, I'll say, 'God, do something special, that I can hang on. Encourage me, God.'" And he began to look for God's encouragement.

The Bible says he did. He says, "I would have fainted. But I began to look for God's encouragement. I've had enough of the devil's discouragement." So, he began to look to God, and God encouraged him.

23. And God wants us encouraged. He says a broken spirit dries up the bones, but a merry heart doeth good like a medicine. God wants His people healthy and happy. And He says in His Word, 'Discouragement dries up your bones, but encouragement makes you happy, and it makes you healthy.'

Beloved, I want to tell you that's what God has this morning for us: He has encouragement. And He wants us to be encouraged in Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle speaks of being swallowed up by over much sorrow. But you never hear of him speak once of a man being swallowed up by being too encouraged. But he said get together in church and encourage each other. Encourage each other! And encourage yourself. "Be still and know that I am GOD." That man knows that he's encouraged, because he knows God's for him.

24. My friends, this morning, how many years of your life have you been looking at discouragement? Some of you married women look at your husbands and been discouraged. Well, you're going to keep on being discouraged, long as you look at them, because they're not the Lord. Some of you husbands look at your wives and say, 'Well, if it weren't for my wife, I'd be so-and-so.'

I don't think there's any man living under heaven who can't say that, and I don't think that there's any wife that can't say the same thing. That's right. You can find all you want to be discouraged in looking at people. But the Bible says we see Jesus. That's what counts. You never get discouraged with Jesus. You will, if you don't start looking for Him. You will, if you don't start looking for His blessings, and you get fear-minded, and you get trial-minded. But, when you begin to look for encouragement, bless God, you'll see something!

25. I could tell you something right now, but I won't do it. I think I've said enough to make anybody here that I've got in mind really start thinking just what I said. Let us encourage ourselves in the Lord. Even if all these men did... I think of Elijah upon Mt. Carmel. He said, "Go and look for a cloud. Do you see anything? And he said, "Go again." And again and again. Seven times he went and the man came back and he said, "My, I see a cloud the size of a man's hand, like a man's hand." And he said, "I hear the sound of abundance of rain."

That was all the encouragement he needed. And he knew there'd be a flood.

He said, "Tell Ahab to get down, because the heavens are going to open."

Before they got down off of little old Mt. Carmel, (It isn't a very big mountain, you know.) before they got down there, the rain was beginning to pelt down, but, oh Elijah, (I think he even had been fasting for all I know. He'd gone through the mill.) he beat the horses down the hill, bless God. Why? Because he encouraged himself in the Lord.

When they said, "You are the one who troubles Israel, he said, "I'm not the one, Ahab, but you and Jezebel are the one that trouble Israel." And he said, "I'm going to tell you what, according to the Word of the Lord..."

And encouragement? You tell me he didn't take encouragement to go up there on the mountain and face those idolatrous priests? It didn't take encouragement to go up there and put a bullock upon the altar? It didn't take encouragement to pour the water upon the altar? I tell you, it took encouragement. He encouraged himself in God by His Word. And he said, "If God be for me, who can be against us?"

26. Yes, beloved, even death may come, but the Bible says we sorrow not as those who have no hope. Poverty may come, but we're to start looking for God to do something. Yes, beloved, that's it. We're to encourage ourselves. Let poverty come. Let poverty come. Let trials and tribulations come. Get down to the place, bless God, where you're not only in troubles, but where you're in real trouble. You're really in debt. And then, begin to look for God's encouragement.

27. Sometimes God may try to encourage you by believing His Word more. Have you folks learned your secret when you get down, and you're almost broke, and you're broke to give your last cent to God? Have you learned it? I've been trying to get it across to some folk. I don't see them here this morning. Maybe they left town for good. I don't know where people are these days. The same old story all across America in every place, but the house of God.

I've tried my best to get them to see that the way to get people to do for you what you want them to do, is to do for them what you want them to do. If you're in debt up to your ears, if you haven't got any money, that's the time to give to God as you've never given before, because someone will come along and give it to you. I'm learning that.

Oh, don't look at me as though it doesn't work, my friend. You're not hearing a preacher this morning that doesn't know what he's talking about. I know what I'm talking about. I've done it. I never in my life tried to be anything but sincere. If I've got one fault, it's that I usually talk too fast and too much. And I'm sorry that I said that, but I said it. But you can't doubt my sincerity, because I know I've had the experience from God. If you want something done, the thing is to do is, to do it for the other fellow, because God says the whole law of the prophets is summed up in that one verse: the old golden standard of Almighty God. The Golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

You say then, "Well, should I then praise God?"

Sure, God wants to encourage you. God said you're to praise Him and magnify Him; He's going to encourage and magnify you, and make you..., yet sickness may abound.

28. But I want to tell you, my friends, the crumbs of Jesus' slice of bread that came from the table is a whole lot better than the whole loaf of science bread, if we'll only believe it.

Oh, you say, "Well, Bro. Vayle, I don't believe I'm healed."

Oh well, many people, they're prayed for, and they don't realize that God said you're to "call those things which are not as though they were." You're to decree the things with your mouth that shall be established unto you. You say, "That sounds crazy!"

Well, my friend, you talk to God. Don't talk to me. I never wrote the Bible. I'm only here to preach it. That's all my job is. God didn't even say explain it. He just said preach it. That's all.

And I've preached the Word, this morning. And that Word is this: that God's crumbs, off of one slice of His bread, are better than the whole loaf of science bread. See? Because science will fail, but God can't fail.

29. We saw science fail down in Jeffersonville last Sunday morning. Dr. Ackerman, a physician in Jasper, Indiana, sent a man down there, a Presbyterian, to go to Bro. Branham to get prayed for. He was blind and he could not walk. He could just stand up, but he couldn't walk. His balance was gone and science didn't know what was wrong. They tried everything. They couldn't do a thing for him. And so, he came there, and Bro. Branham had a vision. When he prayed for that man, he said, "Stand to your feet and walk."

And the man said, "I can stand, but I can't walk, because I can't see." Then, he said, "Oh, yes I can!"

His eyes were opened, and he began following Bro. Branham down that middle of the isle. And before the service was over, just a few minutes ago, he took that wheelchair, pushed that wheelchair out, and walked down steps, because God had healed that man.

30. I want to tell you: one little crumb off God's plate is a whole lot better than a whole loaf of science bread. But I tell you this, my friend, you've got to encourage yourself in God. You've got to encourage yourself in God. You don't look at your symptoms and say, "Well, Bro. Vayle, I was prayed for, but it's still here."

My friend, I want to tell you something: you don't know whether a pain here means it's there or not. It may be way back here because your body's funny. I can get bit by a mosquito here, and I'll scratch down here, because I'm kinda funny. I'm allergic to mosquitoes and bedbugs. One bite of either one, and I'll scratch all over, and I'll break out where the bug never bit me! Why? Is it something in the blood; I don't know. It's something in the nerves. And when I get bit up here, I've got to scratch here all over. I start scratching many places. Why? You talk about getting hives from strawberries. Where are the strawberries? In your skin or out in your tummy? They're in your tummy, but you'll start itching up here.

You don't know about your body. You're fearfully and wonderfully made. You just better leave it to God and not discourage yourself and say, "Well, I guess I'm no better, this and that."

Better put your faith in God and say, "Lord, if you said so, it is so," because You call those things which are not as though they were. Sure, you can discourage yourself. Oh, you can discourage yourself!

31. You know, I was discouraging myself, too, until just a week or so ago. I read a little article on certain symptoms. I have those symptoms right now. After worrying about one solid year, I found the devil's a liar, and the guy that wrote the book was lying, and I was a liar too. But Jesus is true, bless God. Didn't have it at all.

Encourage yourself in God! Encourage yourself in God! See? That's the only way to live. God has encouragement for you, if you'll start to look for it. The devil's got discouragement for you, if you look for it. He'll give to you, too, if you'll take it. But encourage yourselves in God.

32. I think of Jesus' last sermon. He was preaching about his second coming. He said, "I'm going to come again," and he said, "There's going to be signs upon the earth. There's going to be tribulation such

as man's never seen. But, in the midst of it all," he said, "take the parable of the fig tree. When you see her put forth her shoots, her branches, it means you know that spring is nigh." In other words, he said, 'In the midst of all this trouble, be encouraged. Look up because your redemption draweth nigh.' He didn't say get involved with what's coming upon the earth.

He didn't say, as one fellow said, "Oh, I don't want to go through the Great Tribulation. I'd sooner die." So, he died.

And as a lady once said, "Well, I can't stand to hear what Kenneth Goth said will come upon the world," because she didn't want to hear any more from Kenneth Goth.

33. My friend, listen to me. Take courage in God. Certainly it's going to come. Certainly it's going to come. Do you believe you're going to die someday? But, don't you believe that He's going to be in the boat as you cross over Jordan?

"I don't have to cross Jordan alone? Jesus died, my sins to atone."

You believe that? Then, my friend, death is coming, and certainly, all these things are coming. But Jesus said, "Look up, and when you see the fig tree put forth its little leaves and shoots and branches," he said, "know that spring is nigh." Oh, my friends, this morning, God said, "Jacob, I know you're a worm, but I'm going to take a worm to scratch a mountain." He said to Moses, "What have you got in your hand?" And dear, O Israel, old Jacob rose up and become a man to scratch a mountain. Moses became a man to take his rod and open up the Red Sea to defy Pharaoh and to bring out the children of Israel. He did it because God encouraged him. He said, "I'll be with your mouth. I'll be your God."

What does the Scripture say? "Fear not, I am with you. For I am THY God." Why, He said, "I'll help you a little bit. Is that enough? I'll take ahold of your hand." He said, "If that's not enough, I'll take you right in my arms and carry you through."

34. God says He'll encourage us. Every man of faith, beloved, if you're going to be a man of faith you've got to begin to have evidence of God's goodness. You've got to begin to look up and believe God. You've got to see that little first gold blade in the spring, that little first shoot of green grass. It doesn't make a spring, I know, bless God. One swallow does not make a summer, but I want to tell you: one swallow presages the summer, and summer's coming, even as one blade of grass means that spring is just around the corner.

God wants to give His people evidence this morning that He is a good God. He wants to encourage us, and I know that, because what He is, we are. And we're to look at that this morning. We're to forget the discouragements of life. We're to forget those things which are behind and not dwell on them. But this morning, we're to remember what He is and what we are in Him.

35. Brother/sister what I am in myself... If I were to tell you my intimate family's personal history, you'd say, well that's the last guy in all the world that could even talk any kind of faith at all. I get so discouraged. I look back upon my own life; I can get so discouraged. I realize who I am and what I am in this place. I'm even ashamed to look people in the face. But I can tell you one thing, if I look up to Him, I forget about who I am. When I realize what I am in Christ, it doesn't matter what the world sees, or what I think. It matters what I am in Him, and that's what counts. I can be discouraged. I think that I don't like my education. I don't like the talents I've got. I don't like my inhibitions. I don't like this, my life. And my friend, I can go down in my discouragement.

When I begin to look at Him and see what He is, and what He is to me and what I am to Him; what we are in each other, then I can be encouraged, because that's what God wants. You can't get encouraged in yourself, but you get encouraged in Him.

36. And my friend, I want to tell you: this one thing is just as true as any thing you'll ever hear, that it takes discipline to make you look for encouragement. It takes discipline. You're going to have to get ahold of yourself and start looking for the encouraging things of God. Well, why is a Christian up one day and down the next? Why is he on the mountain top when he hears a sermon to build him up, and the next day he goes out to face life, and he forgets the sermon he heard.

He's just like the sower went forth to sow. It went upon the hard pavement and the fowls of the earth came and they took the seed and cast it away—ate it up. Like the sower went forth to sow, and it fell amongst the rocks, and there wasn't enough life there—nourishment to feed it—and the seed died. It was like the sower went forth to sow, and it went into the briars and the weeds, and they gobbled it up. They took the nourishment away. You know why? Because the people didn't discipline themselves.

And my friend, you can leave this church this morning and say what Bro. Vayle said was true. Just a simple, little sermon, every thing was true, and you could lose everything you could have gained, because when old devil comes, and discouragement comes, you'll start looking at the things and saying, "That's right, devil. That's right." You'll forget that God said something else. You'll shake hands with the devil and turn your back on God.

37. Now this morning, I'm trying to get you to stop shaking hands with the devil and turn your face to God and get encouraged. Start looking for the encouraging things. Start looking for the good things. Start looking for them. It's disciplinary! It's a disciplinary tactic. But there's nothing else will do it, my friend. Because listen; the devil's realm is invisible, and God's realm is invisible. And you have to take your pick. But once you take your pick from the invisible, it will become visible, because the visible things are not made of things which do appear. That's right isn't it? So therefore, if you link up with the invisible God, the visible things of God will be yours! So, start looking for God's physical things that he'll materialize for us. Start looking for them.

38. I think of a story I read in Reader's Digest just the other day. A man died at the age of 80-some, and when he died the doctor said, "My heaven's, woman, this man had a stroke. He an embolism; he had this; he had that. He should have been dead 30 years ago. How did he keep living so healthy and spry despite of his condition?"

And she said, "I'll tell you what it is. As far as I know, every night he went to bed saying tomorrow I'll be better." He was looking to be better. Encourage yourself in the Lord. Get ahold of the things of God which count. David one day said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me?" Then he said, "Hope in God, for I shall yet see..." What? What are you going to see? Well, he was going to see God. He was going to be encouraged by His Presence. He was going to get help. He said so. This morning you can, too, and I can too, if we encourage ourselves in the Lord.

39. Brother/sister, Christianity is not simply going to church and hearing a sermon. Christianity is a way of life. The way of God's life is to encourage yourself in God. That's when it shows you're going to walk in faith. That will build your faith up. That'll get you over the top. See? Begin looking from this moment on.

You folks that were here Wednesday night. I challenge you to look in the next few days, or less, to see God answer, to see God do something for you—tangible, real—that you can look back on and say, this is my memorial. Start looking for some sign of encouragement. Go to the door expecting the best letter you ever got in your life, for someone to cheer you up. Go to the Bible expecting the greatest faith to pour into your heart. Go to your friends expecting a reception.

[Bro. Vayles then interjects the following statement: "Now this part of the recording, although it was the very end of the message, with about one thought to go, was not properly recorded, so I just erased it and hope that the message was a value to you. I think it's been a value to me."]