

HAMMOND FIRST BAPTIST PULPIT

A Sunday Evening Sermon

“The First Step to Getting”

By Dr. Jack Hyles

Chapter 2

*“For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”
Isaiah 44:3*

Bill Harvey said that I have a willingness to be repetitious concerning the obvious. I have only twenty subjects on which I preach here at First Baptist Church. Only twenty! I'll use different Scriptures, and different thoughts, and different stories, but I have only twenty subjects. The longer you stay here, the more you'll find that what I preach is wrapped up in a few basics and not something complicated.

The average Christian needs to have it repeated over and over again, that he ought to pray. The average Christian needs to hear soul winning stressed again and again and again. Stewardship, unselfishness – these and sixteen or seventeen other subjects engulf all of my preaching here at First Baptist Church. The obvious. The obvious. Tonight I want to talk to you about the first step in getting things from God.

Many of our folks have seen me preach this sermon. I'm going to do it again tonight for those of you who've never seen it. I'm going to show you in two little steps, without saying one word, I'm going to show you the great secret to the Christian life. Now I've done this before, and I'll do it many times again. Without saying one word, I'm going to show you how to be a good Christian.... That's it! That's it! As I receive something, I simply give it away, but here's what you do: You receive something and stash it away in your own pocket. When you learn how to get things from God, and you learn to give them away when you get them, you're a good Christian. That's what it's all about. Isn't that simple? Think of all you learned tonight, just for a dollar! I mean, that's the secret.

Now, listen to me. I want to give. God knows that's true. I want to give, but I can't give till I learn to get. So, if I'm able to give, I must learn to get. If I am to give to you what I want to give you, if I am to serve others as I want to serve them, if I am to give to others and satisfy their needs, I must learn how to get from God.

As I've said so often, here's your trouble. You get from God and stick it all in your pocket! You skinflint. You tightwad. No, that's not the purpose of the Christian life. The purpose of the Christian life is in losing your own self in order to help somebody else. Now, you need to learn to get. A lot of folks learn to give. You learn to be unselfish and you share what you have, but you never learn to get anything. Good night! How can you give a lot if you don't get a lot?

So, tonight, I want to talk to you about how to get. Ladies and gentlemen, back in 1884, when I went to college, I was not a great student. I worked hard. I usually made a "B," and occasionally an "A," and occasionally a "C." But I was basically a "B-" kind of a student; I mean, I had to work to do that. My IQ's only 185, and I had a hard time. Seriously, I learned a couple of things. One thing I learned as a young preacher was how to get things from God. Now, that's the truth. I've never had any great serious problem getting things from God. Now, God has also taught me not to keep them. Literally millions of dollars have gone through these hands. I said, gone through—not stuck to—these hands. I guess I'm not worth any more now than I was twenty-five years ago. But, I have literally prayed down millions of dollars and other things.

Now, how do you get it? You say, "Hey, Preacher, I've come to the right place, tonight. I want to find out how to get things." The first thing you do is give 'em away when you get them. Then you got room for more. Don't you see?

1. **Get thirsty.** The first step to getting things from God is to get thirsty. What am I saying? Want it! "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." (Isaiah 44:3) "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) And the thirsty can be satisfied. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10b)

Now, I'm saying that if you're going to get things from God, you've got to get to the place where, more than anything else in this world, you want to get something from God. That's the way you get salvation. Isaiah 55:1 is a very, very familiar passage concerning salvation. The prophet said, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

How do you get salvation? The first thing is to get a thirst for salvation. Revelation 22:17 says, "And let him that is athirst, come." Listen to me. If you ever get thirsty to be saved, you're just about to get saved. The reason you don't get saved is that you don't want to be saved. You enjoy your sins too much. You

will not come to God. If anyone gets thirsty for salvation, the Bible says you can be saved. Now don't misunderstand me. There is a line across which you can go. "There's a line by us unseen, a place I know not where, that marks the destiny of man between eternity and despair." There is a time when a person can cross a line, after he's rejected Christ so long, and he will never be able to be saved after he crosses that line.

Young people, Genesis 6:3 says, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found." Romans chapter 1 three times says, "God gave them up," or "God gave them over." I'm saying that if you unsaved people continue to reject Christ, you folks who're not saved, you keep hearing the gospel and saying "No," no doubt there'll come a day when you'll cross a line and you cannot be saved. I mean the spirit of God won't strive anymore, and you cannot be saved; and you will never get thirsty. Don't forget this, ladies and gentlemen. Nobody can be saved unless the Spirit of God convicts, draws, and regenerates him. When the Holy Spirit of God decides He's through with you, He'll tiptoe on and the Heavenly Dove will take His flight, and you will not have a chance to be saved. You will have crossed a line — you're going toward that line, now. Oh, you say, "I'm just young, I've got forty years to live." If you do live forty years, you may cross the deadline before you die; and you're marching toward that deadline, and someday you'll cross over and you'll never have a chance to be saved in this world or in the world to come. Why? Because you've gone too far.

But, tonight, you are thirsty if have the slightest desire to be saved, if your heart beats a little faster in your breast when I say, "Do you want to go to Heaven; you want to escape the fires of Hell; do you want to know that your sins are forgiven?" If there's the slightest little increase of your pulse, if there's the slightest desire in your soul, that means you're thirsty. That means you have a little thirst, and you can be saved as long as you have thirst. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

I was in Garland, Texas, preaching in a revival meeting in my old church. On a Saturday night, I preached on the unpardonable sin and the fact that there's a line you can cross, and once you cross that line, you can never be saved. A lady came down to see me after the service. She said, "I had written you a letter. I want to talk to you." I said, "All right." She said, "Pastor Hyles, you're my favorite preacher. I have my clock radio tuned in to you; you come on at 6:05 every morning on KSKY in Dallas. I hear you every morning. I wouldn't miss you for the world. Your voice is the first voice that I hear every morning at 6:05. I keep my clock radio on that station. I wake up to your voice." But she said, "I have crossed the line. There was a day when I wanted to be saved. There was a day when I'd hear a preacher preach on Hell and I'd be frightened. I'd say, 'Oh, my God, don't let me go to Hell.' There was a day when I would hear a preacher preach on Heaven, and he'd talk about the glories of the City of God, a city which has foundations whose builder and ruler is God, with gates of pearl

and streets of gold, where no sickness nor darkness nor pain nor suffering nor sin nor sorrow ever enter, and I'd say, 'I want to go to Heaven; I'd like to go to Heaven.' A preacher would preach on forgiveness of sin, and I'd say, 'Oh, what a wonderful thing it'd be to have my sins forgiven.' — But, — Pastor Hyles, I came to a place in my life where I had said 'no' for the last time. All of a sudden, Hell didn't bother me, and Heaven didn't entice me, and forgiveness didn't appeal to me. Oh, I like to hear you preach. You're my favorite preacher. But," she said, "Pastor Hyles, I couldn't be saved if I wanted to; there's no hunger, there's no thirst."

Let me warn you, my precious friend, that when you hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ, when the loving witness comes to tell you to be saved, or a faithful Gospel preacher warns you and begs you to come to Christ, it's not a light thing for you to say, "no." For the day will come when you'll cross the line over which you cannot return, and if you wanted to be saved, you couldn't, for the hunger's gone, the thirst is gone, the conviction is gone, the desire is gone. And though you still live and breathe, you couldn't be saved if you wanted to.

So tonight, if you're thirsty, I mean if there's a slight little touch in your heart that says, "I'd like to be saved," while that little spirit of thirst is still there, you respond to the call of God and receive the Savior before you cross the line. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." (Isaiah 55:1a) "And let him that is athirst come...let him take the water of life freely." (Revelation 22:17) Let's hasten on to the main part of the sermon tonight.

2. Thirst for the power of God. That's what the Bible's talking about when it mentions in Isaiah 44:3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." And over in John 7:37,38 I read, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Did you notice that? What does a river do? A river takes in, and a river gives out. If any man comes, "out of his belly shall flow..." What? "...rivers." Not a lake, rivers. What does it mean? It means the kind of Christian that has the spirit of God, is always receiving and always giving.

Did you ever want to move some furniture, a bunch of chairs, or some sandbags to build a dam for a flood that's coming? So you formed a line and each person takes a sandbag and he gives it to the next person, and on it goes down the line. That's exactly what the Bible is saying. "He that believeth on me and has the Spirit of God, out of his belly shall flow the kind of spirit that receives and gives, receives, gives, receives, gives." Now, it goes on to say, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39) What's the Spirit called here? Water. And what are we to do? To thirst after the power of God.

Listen to me. People often ask this question, and I don't say it because I feel like I'm a big shot. I'm not a big shot, and I know more than anybody else knows that I'm in no way a big shot. That's one reason why folks want to know what makes me tick. You can hear Lee Roberson preach, and know why he's a big preacher. You can hear John Rice preach and know he's smart enough to be a big preacher. You hear me, and you wonder what in the world makes a guy like me tick? So folks often ask, "What's the secret to Jack Hyles?" I'll tell you what it is. As a young preacher, I got thirsty. I got so thirsty for the power of God that I thought I'd die. I was thirsting. I wanted God in my ministry. I wanted the power of God upon my preaching. I wanted the Spirit of God to move when I preached. I wanted men to tremble when I preached on Hell, and men to come to God when I preached on salvation. I wanted men to get right with God when I preached on sin. I hungered and thirsted for God to work when I preached.

As a kid preacher, I went to the library of the East Texas Baptist College and got all the books about the lives of great men that I could get. I can recall getting a book out of the library, a book by Savonarola, about Savonarola, the great man who I think was every bit as great as Martin Luther. And had he been born at a different time, I think he would've been the great leader of the Reformation. But I read about Savonarola, the great preacher of the sixteenth century. I read how Savonarola went to his pulpit to preach one day, and he wouldn't preach. He refused to get up and preach, and somebody said, "Pastor, why don't you preach?" And Savonarola said, "I'm not going to preach until the power of God comes on me." And he sat there for one hour, then two hours, while the people waited anxiously in the audience. He sat there for the third hour and the fourth hour and, after five hours, his biography said that the Spirit of God came on him. Then, with power and conviction, the man of God stood to speak — maybe he was not as eloquent as somebody else, but the power was there. And I'd read about Savonarola, and when I was just twenty-one and twenty-two years of age — just a kid preacher — my soul began to thirst for something like Savonarola had.

I'd go to my little pulpit and know nothing much was happening, so I got thirsty. Oh, I wanted the power Savonarola had. I went back to the library, and I read biographies. I think every young preacher ought to read every biography of great men he can get his hands on.

I read the biography of John Wesley and in the biography of Wesley, I began to read one night — I think it was in March of 1838 — that Wesley and sixty other preachers went to pray together; and they prayed all night. Wesley said this after they'd prayed until three o'clock in the morning: "At 3:00 in the morning, something happened to me. I didn't know what it was. But," he said, "I was never the same after that. I believe I was filled for the first time with the Holy

Spirit of God." And, oh, as a young preacher, my heart began to get thirsty, and I said, "Whatever Wesley had, I want that. I want that! I want it!"

I read the life of Moody, and it told in his biography how he was in New York City on Wall Street — walking down through that concrete jungle, that little tunnel of a street, that little narrow street where the finances of our nation are determined. He was raising some money for revival meetings, and all of a sudden, two little ladies in his church were praying for him. They'd come by and say, "Mr. Moody, we're praying that you'll get something you don't have now." He said, "I don't need anything else. I've got all I need." And they said, "You'll know later." And he said that day, in New York City, oh, the power of God came on him. He said he had to look up to God, as God struck him on his face, and say, "Oh, God, withhold Your power until I can get alone." He went to a friend's home and borrowed his bedroom, and there he lay before God until the power of God came on him. And, oh, as I read about that as a kid preacher, I began to thirst. I said, "That's what I want. I want it. I don't care if I get happy. I don't care if it makes me feel good. I don't care if I talk in tongues or not. I don't care if I feel electricity coming out my spine, and holler 'Hey!' or not. I don't care about that. I just want men to be convicted when I preach, and I want the power of God on my ministry." And I began to thirst.

I found myself walking in the woods of East Texas, out under the pine trees. I'd walk at night, and I'd say, "Dear God, do you have it for Jack Hyles? I'm just a country East Texas preacher, but you gave Moody something and you gave Wesley something and you gave Savonarola something." And I began to thirst and hunger and thirst for what they had.

I read the lives of other great men — George Whitefield said he was filled with the Spirit of God the night he was ordained to preach. Christmas Evans said he was filled with the Spirit of God riding on his horse one day, and he had to get off his horse and fall on his face. That's when God gave him the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh, I began to say, "I want it! I want it!"

Somebody gave me or let me hear a recording of Uncle Bud Robinson. He was a Nazarene. Uncle Bud Robinson was talking on that tape about how he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He had a southern drawl, and he was a great old preacher, and he said something like this: "I was in Atlanta, Georgia, and I was down in the city of Atlanta in a hospital." To some of you folks from down in Alabama and Kentucky this sounds like real good talking. "I was in the hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, and the 'holy father' walked in the hospital to visit. And the 'holy father' came to the fellow on this side of me. The 'holy father' said, 'Hey, you got any sins you want to confess to me?' Oh, you never heard such sins that man confessed to the 'holy father'." (The 'holy father' probably could've confessed some to him, too, by the way.) Uncle Bud said, "The 'holy father' went over to the fellow on the other side of me and said, 'Any sins you want to confess to me?' Whoo! The sins that man done confessed to the 'holy

father'! Then the 'holy father' came to me and said, 'Mr. Robinson, any sins you want to confess to me?' And I said, 'I'd like to confess one thing to you, 'holy father'. The 'holy father' said, 'Go ahead and confess.' And I said, 'I want to confess it right in your ear.' And so he put his ear down close to my mouth and I said, 'I want your ear right on my mouth, so I can confess it to you real good.' And the 'holy father' said, 'Okay, confess away.' And he put his ear on my mouth, and I opened my mouth and said, 'Glory to God! I'm saved and sanctified. Glory to God! I'm saved and sanctified, and full of the Holy Ghost, and on my way to Glory!'" Uncle Bud said, "The last time I saw the 'holy father', he was running down the hall of the hospital." I began to read about that old saint of God, Uncle Bud Robinson; he didn't use very good English, but he knew God and he walked with God. I would read about Uncle Bud Robinson, and I'd begin to thirst, and I'd say, "I want what he had."

I read of the life of Billy Bray, the old Cornish coal miner. Oh, if there's anybody I admire, it's Billy Bray. He wasn't an ordained preacher, but the Holy Ghost came on him. What a powerful man of God he was. It is said that Billy Bray shouted everywhere he went. And somebody said, "Billy, you shouldn't shout all the time. You should keep your mouth shut." And he said, "If I shut my mouth, my feet would shout. Every time my right foot hits the ground, it says, 'Amen.' When my left foot hits the ground, it says, 'Glory to God.'" Somebody said, "Billy, you're about to die. You're going to die soon." He said, "Glory to God, I'll be in Heaven with Jesus." And the person said, "What if you don't go to Heaven?" He said, "I'll just shout all the way to Hell. I'm saved and full of the Holy Spirit. I'll just shout and I'll get down to Hell and I'll just praise the Lord. I'll say, 'Praise the Lord! I'm in Hell, but I'm still born again. I'm still saved, and look at all the prospects I've got to work on!' The Devil will come up to me and say, 'You can't shout like that down here.' And I'll say, 'Well, if it's okay with you, I'd just as soon get transferred anyhow.' I'll just shout all the way to Heaven, glory to God." I'd read about Billy Bray and the power of God that came on that man, and I said, "Dear God, do you have that for a little East Texas country preacher like you had it for Billy Bray, the Cornish coal miner? And like you had it for Uncle Bud Robinson, and like you had it for Moody and Wesley and Sunday and Finney and Cartwright, and Savonarola, and Martin Luther, and John Calvin? Do you have the same thing you gave to Moody and Billy Sunday?" Ma Sunday said that every time Billy preached, his Bible was open to Isaiah 61:1, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings." It didn't matter what the sermon was, his Bible was always open to Isaiah 61:1.

I can recall that I'd walk and say, "God, I'm so thirsty. Oh, I'm thirsty. I want that power." I can recall, we had a lady in our church named Mrs. Jim Ford, and Mrs. Ford used to love to pray. She was a Nazarene lady—by the way, she joined our church because I happened to have more Nazarene blood than her Nazarene pastor had. So, she joined our church and she used to pray all night,

and she used to shout and get happy. I can recall walking up and down the little pine-thicket trails of East Texas on Saturday night, I'd say, "Dear God, I'm so thirsty. I want what Moody got. I want what Billy Sunday had. I want what Savonarola had. I want what John Wesley had. I want what those men of God had." And one blessed day, I think I got it. You know why? Because I was thirsty. I was thirsty! "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." Again and again the Scripture says it. For example, listen, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1,2) Listen to this, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." (Psalm 63:1) Listen to this, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land." (Psalm 143:6) Again and again the Psalmist said, "My soul thirsteth...I'm thirsty."

Listen! The power of God is available for those who thirst for the power of God. "Oh," you say, "I'd like to have a big church, and I'd like to have a church that has six thousand in Sunday school." You miss the whole idea. The idea is not to have six thousand in Sunday school. The idea is to get the power of God on your life. The idea is to get the dear Lord working on your life, so when you preach, something will happen. Time and time again, I've seen folks walk in those doors back there with smirks on their faces, and sit down in the service. I've seen them. You may think it's funny, but what you need is a good old-fashioned dose of the Holy Ghost. You little smart aleck pipsqueak folks that think you know more than God does. God's liable to kill you for smirking at a man of God while he's preaching. You keep on and I'll pray for Him to do it, and we'll find out whether God will do it or not. The very idea of anybody coming where a man of God's preaching the Bible, and smirking like a heathen or like an infidel! What kind of heathenism is that? Somebody ought to take you out and give you a good old-fashioned thrashing behind the smokehouse. If you see me after the service, I may do it. Man alive! Sometimes students come here and they think they're smarter than the Word of God and the power of God. What we need is an old-fashioned baptism of Holy Ghost power in our country. We need some young preachers to go to our schools who have the breath of God upon them, that will transform the lives of men. Then the Holy Ghost of God will use them to call this nation back to God. The power of God comes because people thirst for the power of God.

I've seen it again and again. Somebody will come in the back, and maybe they smirk a little bit; they don't want what you have, and they come to sort of "slum it," you know. They came out to see the old fundamentalists, and slum it a little bit. You know why you come? You come because your kind can't get a crowd. You want to see a lot of folks come to church, and your kind can't get a crowd unless you have a soup-and-soap supper for 'em. You can't get a crowd, so you come to hear a man of God. I've seen them as the song service goes on, as the

man of God begins to preach, all of a sudden, they begin to get sober looks on their faces and the breath of God begins to breathe. And, all of a sudden, there's the breath of Heaven and conviction, and they come down the aisle and say, "I want to get born again. I want to get born again." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty."

3. Thirst for success. Thirsting brings plain old success. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6) How do you get filled? Hunger and thirst. How do you get filled with righteousness? The word "righteousness" here means the "revealed will of God."

Young people, how do you find the revealed will of God? You thirst for it.

*Only to be what He wants me to be,
Every moment of every day;
Yielded completely to Jesus alone,
Every step of this pilgrim way:
Just to be clay in the Potter's hands,
Ready to do what His Word commands;
Only to be what He wants me to be,
Every moment of every day.*

Oh, my Christian friend, if you want to do something for God—if you want God to bless you—thirst after it. Make it the biggest thing in your life.

Let me give you an example. I was down in Indianapolis, Indiana. There's a wonderful young preacher there. I say he's young—he was young when I was younger, his name is Greg Dixon. What a tremendous man of God he is, and what a faithful servant of God. Greg went down to Indianapolis and took a church fifteen, sixteen, maybe seventeen years ago, I guess. He had about a hundred and twenty people in Sunday school. Now, the church is running three thousand and over and thousands of people saved every year. One day I was talking to Dr. Dixon, and I said, "Greg, you've done wonderful work here. God has used you mightily. Greg, what do you think the secret is?" Greg's lip began to tremble, and he said, "Dr. Hyles, when I came here to Indianapolis, and went out and saw that little building, and I saw those hundred and twenty people, I wanted to build a big work for God here more than anything in all the world. That's what I wanted. I wanted to get people saved in Indianapolis, and build a great soul-winning church." He said, "It's been my passion; it's been my desire, it's been my goal. I've hungered, I've thirsted." And that's why he has a great church in Indianapolis that's making all the theologs down there that said it couldn't be done watch somebody do it, because he's thirsting after it. Oh, thirsting....

Oh, listen to me. If you want to build a great department, you can, if you say, "I've got to do it. I've got to build a great department. I've got to build a great

Sunday school class. I've got to build a big bus route." "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

Don't you recall the story in Luke 11? Our folks have heard me tell about it. This fellow was sitting in his house one night and all of a sudden somebody knocked on the door. He went to the door. "Well, hello there, Brother Colsten." By the way, it was Colstenstein because it was a Jewish fellow. Brother Colstenstein came to see old Hylestein, here. But anyway, "Hey, you hungry?" He's hungry. So the fellow went to the cupboard, and he opened the cupboard and there was no bread. Well, that was, and still is, an insult in the Middle East; for someone not to have something to feed a guest is a sign of being a very improper host.

So the fellow realized he didn't have any bread, "I'll get some. I've got a friend down the road here. I'll get some for you." He goes to his friend down the road and says, "Hey, friend...." Now, if you've been to the Middle East you know all the people in those little places in the Middle East, they sleep on one bed. You folks that've been to the Holy Land know they have one bed all the way across one side of the room. One bed! I mean papa sleeps here and mama sleeps here and Johnny sleeps here and Susie sleeps here and grandpa sleeps here and grandma sleeps here. And he woke 'em all up. "Hey, friend." The man woke up and his wife woke up and Johnny woke up and Susie woke up and Uncle George woke up and Aunt Sue woke up and grandpa woke up and grandma woke up—they were all in the same bed.

The friend said, "Yeah, what do you want?" He said, "Hey, Mr. Colstenstein has come to my house. A friend has come to me, and I don't have any bread. Could you loan me three loaves, please? I want to borrow three loaves of bread." He said, "I'm sorry; my wife and my family—they're in bed with me; if you'll come back in the morning, you can have it." But the fellow wasn't going to quit that easily. And I can see him as he walks back home and says to himself, "Dr. Billingstein is waiting for some bread. My friend came, and I don't have any bread for him. I wish I did. But I don't want to go back there because he'll kill me if I wake him up again." But he stops and he begins to think, "I can't face my friend without any bread. I'm going to go back and get it."

He goes back, "Hey, friend." And he wakes up and his wife wakes up and Uncle George wakes up and Aunt Sue wakes up and little Susie wakes up and Johnny wakes up and grandma wakes up and grandpa wakes up. "Hey, friend." "What is it?" "Look, I've got to have some bread. My friend's back yonder. He came at midnight, and I don't have any bread for him. And I've got to have some bread. Lend me three loaves." The man shuts the window and says, "Leave me alone. Get out of here. Come back in the morning." And the fellow says, "Okay." He starts to go back home, and the closer he gets the more he sees the hungry face of Mr. Colstenstein. Look at that hungry, sad looking face. And he sees the hungry face, and the fellow says, "I can't face my friend without any

bread. I'm going to go back, and I'm going to get some bread." He goes back and he looks up, "Oh, good night, he'll kill me. I better not do that. I better go back." He goes back and he begins to picture facing his friend without any bread, and he says, "I can't do it. I can't do it. I don't care if he kills me, I'm going to go back and ask him for some bread." "Hey, friend." He wakes up, his wife wakes up, and Uncle George wakes up, and Aunt Sue wakes up, and Johnny wakes up, and Susie wakes up, and grandpa wakes up, and grandma wakes up. "What do you want?" "Hey, friend, you may as well make up your mind; I'm going to bark all night long until you give my some bread. Now if you hope to get any...." This is all in the Greek, by the way, students, you won't get this in the English — it's all in the Greek. He says, "If you expect to get any sleep at all tonight, you may as well give me some bread. Now, I'm just going to stay down here. I've got to have bread. I've got to have bread!"

The fellow says, "Okay, I'll give you a bakery if you'll shut up!" He gives him the bread, and the fellow goes back and feeds his friend. The Bible says he didn't give him his bread because he was his friend. He gave him his bread because of his importunity. And the word "importunity" means because he begged and begged and begged and begged.

Read Luke 18:1 sometime where it says, "Men ought always to pray, and not to...." what? "faint." And he tells a story about a widow who went to a judge. She walked in and she said to the judge, "Your Honor, a man has done me wrong. Would you avenge me of mine adversary? Would you avenge me of my enemy? Would you take my case and treat me right and punish my enemy, my adversary?" And the judge said, "Now, listen, lady! We have other cases before yours now. You have to get on the docket; you just can't walk in there like that."

But she says, "Judge, Your Honor, my adversary did me wrong, would you avenge me?" And the judge says, "Now I told you not to bother me." "But," she said, "he did me wrong. Avenge me." The judge said, "Throw her out." And so they throw her out of the courtroom. And this is all in the Greek, too; you won't get this in the English, either. But here's about what I think she did. She kept on and she wore him out; she kept on begging. And as Dr. Bill Rice says, "She probably...."

When the judge got through for the evening and was ready to go home, guess who was waiting outside the door when he walked out? A little lady said, "Your Honor?" He said, "Yes? Oh, good night! It's you again." "Your Honor, avenge me of mine adversary. A man did me wrong. Would you avenge me?" "I told you to leave me alone. You're not even on the docket... your case hasn't even come up. Now, leave me alone." He takes off, and he waits for the bus to go home, and guess who's waiting for the bus at the same stop? The little widow. She says, "Judge?" He says, "You again? Good night! You're in my hair all the time." "Judge, avenge me of mine adversary." He gets on the bus and kicks

her off; she can't afford to pay anyway. He gets home, and guess who's waiting at the bus stop where he gets off the bus? A little widow. She says, "Judge? Your Honor?" "Oh, good night!" She says, "Avenge me of mine adversary." "Leave me alone." He goes in his house and gets the newspaper, and he's sitting there reading the newspaper, and all of a sudden, the telephone rings and the judge answers it. The voice says, "Judge? Your Honor? This is the little widow. A man did me wrong. Avenge me of mine adversary." He slams the phone down. He gets comfortable again, and the doorbell rings. He goes to the door, and it's a Western Union Boy — this has been recently in Israel. The judge opens the telegram and it says, "Dear Judge stop I'm the widow stop Avenge me of mine adversary stop." And the judge tears up the telegram. He goes out to take the dog for a walk that night before he goes to bed, and this dog is a Jewish dog; it was called "Roverstein." And so he takes the dog for a walk and guess who's walking her dog — a little widow. And the little widow says, "Judge, avenge me of mine adversary." And the judge says, "You're about to wear me out. Let me have your adversary; I'll kill him!" You know why she got vengeance? She was thirsty. She was thirsty!

Out in Denver, Colorado, Dr. Ed Nelson's building the largest church in the state of Colorado. I can recall when Dr. Nelson had a church running a hundred seventy-five in Sunday school. I'd go out and preach for him, and Dr. Nelson would come to my motel room. Big tears would roll down his cheeks, and he'd say, "Dr. Hyles, what am I doing wrong? Please help me." I tried to help him. He'd come to our Pastors' School, and go back; but it seemed like it just didn't work too well. I'd go back the next year, and he'd have a couple hundred, or two hundred twenty-five. He'd sit outside my motel room, and he'd say, "Tell me what it is. Help me, Brother Hyles." And he'd pump everybody. He was thirsty. He wanted to build a great work for God. Just an old country farm kid, a farm boy. He was just an old raw-boned kind of a Hell-fire and brimstone preacher, but he was thirsty. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty."

Don't you recall Jacob who went to Jabok? He said, "Lord, I'm not going to let You go till You bless me." He wrestled with the angel, and the angel wrestled. I don't think the angel really wanted to get away; I think he wanted to know how thirsty Jacob was. And he wrestled and he wrestled and the angel said, "I've got to go back to Heaven." Jacob got hold of the angel and said, "I won't let you go." And did you know that Jacob wrestled with the angel until his thigh got out of socket? Did you know that Jacob limped everywhere he went? I suspect that when Jacob would walk to the pulpit to preach, if he ever preached, I suspect folks would say, "Jacob, I'm sorry about your limp." And Jacob would say, "I'm not sorry about it. I got that limp when I got the power of God and the blessings of God upon me. I got that in a wrestling match." "Who was it with?" "An angel." "Oh, you're about to crack up, that's what you're about to do!"

I wonder how Jacob got it? Jacob said, "I've got to meet Esau tomorrow. My brother's threatened to kill me. He's been wanting to kill me for twenty years or more. I've got to meet him tomorrow. And I'm not going to go alone. Bless me." And the dear Lord said, "I'm going to change your name from Jacob..." — which means "a supplanter," or "a trickster," or a "heel-grabber." "I'm going to change your name to Israel, which means 'a prince.'"

Ladies and gentlemen, you can be blessed of God if you get thirsty enough. You can build a great Sunday school class if you get thirsty enough. You can have a great department if you get thirsty enough. You can have a great bus route if you get thirsty enough. Young men, young preachers, you can be blessed of God if you get thirsty. "I'll pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

Look at me very carefully. Humanly speaking, there's no reason in this world why I ought to pastor a church as great as this. Not a one! But I got thirsty. I can recall, when I was at the Grange Hall Baptist Church of Marshall, Texas, opening my Bible every Saturday night and many other nights to Psalm one. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)

As a kid preacher, I got on my knees in that little ole country church; I'd open my Bible to Psalm one, and put my hand on it and say, "Dear God, you promised that whatsoever I do would prosper if I'd do these things. I want to build a great work out here in the country, and I want the blessing of God upon me in the country." And oh, the blessing of God came and that little country church was known far and near for its soul winning. You know why? I was thirsty! I was thirsty! I was thirsty!

I went to Miller Road Baptist Church, in Garland, Texas. Forty-four people showed up the first Sunday. I got on my knees at the altar in that little church — I didn't have an office. We had an old black table that we got second-hand from a furniture store, about that wide, and it had marks all over it. I'd get at that table on Saturday night, and I'd write. By the way, everybody that visited our church, I'd write a letter in longhand to them myself. I'd write a letter in longhand, thanking them for their visit, telling them we were glad to have had them, and inviting them back. I didn't have a typewriter; I didn't have a mimeograph machine; I'd write a personal letter in longhand. I wrote about a hundred personal letters every week in longhand. I'd get down beside that little table, and I'd say, "Dear God, I'm going to do the same thing I did in East Texas." I'd open my Bible to the first Psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly..." and so forth, and I'd say, "Lord, whatsoever I do ought

to prosper in this church." And I saw that church grow from forty-four people to over four thousand members in six years and eight months.

Then I came to Hammond in 1959. I recall the first Saturday night I was here. I walked in that old auditorium over there, built in 1913. I got on my face over the first Psalm, and I said, "Dear God, whatsoever I do will prosper. You said it here; You said it." Trouble came. We had opposition and we had a church split as you recall. And yet, every Saturday night, I'd open my Bible to the first Psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners."

By the way, that's one reason why I don't run with the wrong crowd. God won't let you prosper if you do. And that's one reason why I don't stand around sinners. God won't let you prosper if you do. And that's one reason why I don't sit in the seat of the scornful. I don't criticize other men of God. You know why? Because God won't let you prosper if you do. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of waters that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." And I said, "God here it is." I can recall going in that building over there every Saturday night. I can recall opening my Bible to the first Psalm and going up to the balcony. I'd stand in the balcony up there, way up in the other building, and I'd say, "Oh, God, may the people in the balcony feel the presence of God tomorrow. Oh, God!" And I thirsted, and I thirsted, and I thirsted, and I thirsted.

I can recall going over to Chicago to preach for some preachers over there. They asked me to come and preach for a ministerial group on the twelfth floor of the Conrad-Hilton Hotel, and I went up and preached on soul winning. And they made fun of me. They laughed because I was a fool and a fanatic. Those preachers up there in that ministerial conference — fundamental preachers — were laughing at me because I addressed soul winning. Then I walked down on the corner of Michigan Avenue, in front of the Conrad-Hilton Hotel, and I saw the thousands of people walking by in Chicago. I remembered the days of Moody and Sunday and Rader and Torrey, when Chicago had the greatest revivals of any city in the whole world. I saw the people and I fell on my face on the sidewalk in Chicago, and began to cry like a baby, and I said, "Somebody ought to do something in this area. It ought to be done. It ought to be done!" And my soul began to thirst. "Somebody ought to shake Chicago. Somebody ought to show Chicago it can be done. Somebody ought to knock on every door in Chicago. Somebody ought to have a great church in Chicago." And they said it couldn't be done.

You know why it's being done? Look at this crowd tonight and look at the gigantic crowd we had in Sunday school this morning. You know why it's being done? "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." I'm not a great preacher, but I'm thirsty. I'm not a great theologian, but I can get thirsty. I'm not a dynamic person, but I can get thirsty. I'm not very deep, but I can get thirsty.

I'm not a handsome fellow, but I can get thirsty. I'm not a muscle-bound Charles Atlas, but I can get thirsty. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty."

Oh, are you hungering and thirsting tonight for the breath of God? Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Are you hungering and thirsting for success? Are you hungering and thirsting for the blessings of God? "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty." Thirsty! Thirsty! Thirsty! I know the great preachers in America personally. I know Dr. Beauchamp Vick intimately. I know Dr. John Rawlings and Dr. Lee Roberson intimately. I've eaten with them, I've preached for them, and had them preach for me. I know them well. I've stayed in motels with them and shared conference programs with them. I know the great preachers in America. Believe me when I say this. The greatest theologians aren't building the greatest churches and, in some cases, the greatest pulpiteers aren't building the greatest churches. You know who's building the greatest churches? The thirsty ones. The thirsty ones. "Ho, every one that thirsteth." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty."

Have you been thirsty? Are you satisfied with that little handful of people in your Sunday school class not growing? Are you satisfied not to reach dozens and dozens and scores for God on that bus route? Are you satisfied with that Sunday school department to stay where it is and has been, or is there a hunger and a thirst in your soul? Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, my God, I've got to have it! Paul said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." (Romans 10:1) Thirsty! Thirsty! Thirsty! Thirsty! That's the way you begin to get things from God.

I'm thinking of a boy in this church, and he's here tonight. He's really ugly. He's a man now. He's really ugly. You say, "You're talking about me." Well, you qualify, but it happens not to be you. He married one of the prettiest girls. You know why? Because he wouldn't take no for an answer. He just kept on and kept on and kept on and she had to marry him so he'd leave her alone. But he was going to get her. He was just going to get her. He wasn't going to take no for an answer.

I happened to think of an old, old story the other day. It's about this Negro boy down South; he was walking across the graveyard one night. He fell into an empty grave that had just been dug. He tried to get out and he couldn't get out; it was too high. He jumped and he jumped and he jumped. Finally, he gave up and said, "I'll wait till morning. I'll just lay down and go to sleep here, and tomorrow morning I'll call for help when somebody comes out."

He laid down and went to sleep at the bottom of the grave. Another Negro fellow walked through the graveyard; he couldn't see very well and he fell into the open grave. There he was lying on the body of what he thought was a corpse. So the first fellow thought, "I'm just going to lie still here." And the second fellow tried to get out; he jumped and tried to get out. The first fellow never moved. The second fellow jumped and jumped and jumped and tried to get

out. Finally the first fellow said, "No need to try, you can't get out of here." But the second fellow did. He did. He did! It's how badly you want it, isn't it? It's how badly you want it.

How badly do you want it?

Preachers all across this country, good men, smart men, learned men, educated men, trained men, are doing almost nothing for God. You know why? They don't want anything. The way you start is to get thirsty...like that poor widow, like that fellow at midnight that had to have bread, and yes, in some sense, like this preacher. Thirsty!

Let us pray.