

EMCC Archives

You Stayed Long Enough – Mark Bolender 1982

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(0:00) Thank you, Brother Sloss. Thank you, friends, for coming to share this afternoon. (0:07) We're thankful to the Lord for His faithfulness and grace in causing there to be His instruction (0:12) to our hearts.

And it has been a tremendous privilege for me to be able to share the Word (0:18) with you since Friday evening. And it's been a real highlight of my life, and I thank you for (0:25) this opportunity. And also express appreciation to Brother Grant for particularly this last year (0:33) in helping me get started in this rather new dimension in my own life and ministry. (0:39) And the expressions of support and interest as well from across the conference as we're (0:45) trusting Him during these days of church extension and church planting. It's amazing to (0:51) see what is taking place. And I just stand back and say, Lord, thank you for what you're doing, because (1:00) certainly what is occurring isn't because of a lot of promotion being made or a lot of beating (1:07) of the bushes.

But it seemed that when our conference took a step of faith a year ago, (1:13) and when we took a step of faith together, God then began to open some doors in a very beautiful way. (1:21) So that our churches that have just been planted recently in communities like Bright's Grove near (1:27) Sarnia and in Oakville and in Sudbury, the two congregations emerging there, the English-speaking (1:35) and Chinese-speaking and Waterloo Beachwood, are all experiencing very, very fine growth, for which (1:42) I praise the Lord. And this weekend, the Wiley's are moving to New Market.

All their stuff, I mean (1:50) all their things, is on the moving van now on its way somewhere between Elkhart, Indiana and (1:57) New Market. And Brother Wiley has been leading a Bible

study there on Wednesday evenings since he (2:04) actually began the first of June, averaging about a dozen folks each Wednesday night. (2:11) And we're hoping to be able to start services there Sunday mornings in September.

And then the (2:18) Pecks have recently moved to South River, and there in that community about 40 miles south of (2:24) North Bay have moved in and are getting settled. Last Sunday, they had their first informal gathering (2:32) and had eight folks in their living room as they had their first service of what we're trusting (2:37) will become known as the Almaguen Missionary Church. Almaguen is apparently the name of the (2:42) township in the area, and Brother George is very excited about the possibilities for the days ahead.

(2:48) We've targeted Thunder Bay and Ottawa and Windsor and the Fergus-Ellora area for four (2:56) target areas where we're trusting God during these next years He'll enable us to plant churches. (3:01) And I've been deeply grateful to the Lord for a group of men on our evangelism board (3:07) and for pastors and lay folk alike who together have this spirit to be at this work of church (3:14) extension. Some of you have heard that the Clarks, Pastor and Mrs. Bruce Clark, have just (3:20) recently moved to Thunder Bay, and they have felt that this city has been on their heart for the (3:26) last six or seven years.

They made a survey trip there in June, secured employment, and (3:35) found some housing, and the conference is assisting them in a way, in a small way, in their housing. (3:41) And we're trusting that God will work out His purposes for the Clarks being in the city of (3:46) Thunder Bay. They've received a very warm welcome from other members of the body of Christ there, (3:51) and there seems to be a unanimous spirit concerning where they have located in the northeast (3:57) section of town, that that's where we're trusting perhaps God would ultimately raise up a missionary (4:01) church.

And then Ian and Anna Edgehill have begun a Bible study in their home in Fergus, (4:07) and we're trusting that God will sow water and care for these early days, that someday there'll (4:14) be a strong congregation there. And I look and see what is happening, and in Montreal, among the (4:19) Haitian people, God has given us a pastor and a Haitian congregation there, and perhaps opportunities (4:25) for the days ahead. We're to make a survey trip in September to Thunder Bay to meet with a Chinese (4:31) group there that wants our Chinese pastor in North Bay to come over and look after them.

(4:37) And he already has three congregations, one in North Bay Sunday afternoons, (4:42) one in Sudbury Sunday night, and then once a month he travels to Timmins to care for a service there, (4:48) and they wondered if he could come to Thunder Bay once in a while, and he got that request when he (4:52) was flat on his back in the hospital from exhaustion. And the evangelism board is negotiating with a (4:58) now in Singapore, and we're trusting that God will just care for all of the potential pitfalls (5:05) and perils and lead us along. And thinking about the extension work, as you'll understand that (5:10) it's particularly close to my own heart, and

thinking about our conference together, (5:16) and thinking about what particular work the Lord may have for each of us as individuals.

(5:23) Some time ago, my mind was attracted to Deuteronomy chapter one, and I would invite (5:29) you to follow along in the reading and consideration of the word from this particular portion this (5:33) afternoon. Deuteronomy chapter one, reading together verses one through eight, and I trust (5:42) that there will be a sense in which the word is personally applied to our hearts. Camp is a (5:51) place where many of us had our beginnings spiritually. I'll never forget at the age of five, (5:57) when I was here with my parents and family on one of the furloughs my folks were enjoying while (6:03) they were home from Nigeria, that it was after a service one night I inquired of my parents why (6:10) people were here at the altar, and it was explained to me that many were there because they were (6:15) asking Christ to be their Savior. And I'll never forget later on in the tent that night, it was (6:21) still back in the days where you had straw on the floor. I realize that's not as ancient as a lot (6:26) of others among us today, but it was a while ago anyhow, and I remember that night inviting Christ (6:31) to be my Savior.

And then for others it's not only a time to start, but it's a time of renewal. (6:39) It's a time of reaffirming our surrender and our commitment to the Lordship of Christ, (6:45) regardless of our age, regardless of our development and our walk with Him. It's a real high point in (6:51) our life year by year.

I was 16 when at Kitchener Camp, when Jim Reese and Ken Campbell were (6:58) ministering, that I really sensed the call of God into the ministry, and I had fought that thing for (7:03) about as long as I could fight it. You see, my grandfather had been a preacher and my father was (7:08) a missionary, and I didn't want to follow in their footsteps because I thought everybody would say, (7:13) see, he can't make up his own mind, he's just doing what the men before him have done. (7:18) And that was a real battle, friends, it really was, until during that particular camp, (7:23) God really settled it in my heart that this is what He would have me do. And I just would like (7:30) to encourage us together that we make these as great days as we possibly can. And as Brother (7:38) Larson comes in tonight, I'm looking forward to his ministry this first week, and Dr. Peters and (7:43) the Stumpf family the second week, that God might do what He wants to do in our lives personally, (7:49) in our lives as families, in our lives as local churches, and also in our lives as a conference. (7:56) And there's a word here in Deuteronomy chapter 1, beginning with verse 6. The Lord our God (8:02) spoke to us at Horeb, saying, you have stayed long enough at this mountain.

Turn and set your journey (8:13) and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all their neighbors in the Araba, in the hill (8:18) country and in the lowland and the Negev, and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon, (8:25) as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. See, I have placed the land before you. Go in (8:34) and possess the land which the

Lord swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, (8:41) and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.

There's a sense in which this afternoon I'm (8:50) taking this word to apply it to my own personal situation in the work of church extension. (8:56) You've stayed on this mountain long enough, verse 6. Verse 7, turn and set your journey. (9:04) Verse 8, go in and possess the land. And I pray that there will be a spirit among us across our (9:12) conference to take this word collectively for the days ahead. And the Lord knows how the word (9:19) becomes applied personally to each of our lives, although the specific area of ministry and (9:26) responsibility may differ. Could it be this afternoon that the Lord is saying to many among us, (9:32) you've stayed long enough on this mountain.

Turn and set your journey. Go in and possess the land (9:42) that I swore to your fathers. I'd like to suggest that there is included in these three verses (9:49) a reminder concerning the church's danger in verse 6. You've stayed long enough at this mountain.

(9:57) I'd like to suggest in verse 7 that the Lord gives the church direction. (10:05) Turn and set your journey. And I'd like to suggest in verse 8 that the Lord gives the church a (10:12) destiny. Go in and possess the land. The danger, the direction, and the destiny. You'll notice (10:22) first of all in verse 6 and the danger facing Israel, and I believe perhaps facing segments (10:29) of the missionary church today, is the peril of staying on the mountain too long.

So that it (10:37) becomes easy to settle down. It becomes easy to yearn for a smooth, undisturbed, relatively blessed (10:45) existence. Now mountains are valid, aren't they? Mountains are very, very important in our walk (10:53) with Jesus.

Israel had been at Sinai or at Horeb for about a year, and her stay there had been good (11:00) while it lasted. And God was accomplishing his purposes for Israel while they camped there at (11:07) Mount Sinai. But it was now time to move on again.

And there's something in all of us, maybe not as (11:16) strong in you as it is in me, that resists change, that resists growth, that resists stretching, (11:24) that resists making adjustments. And every once in a while I feel like crying out to the Lord and (11:30) saying, stop stretching me so hard. Stop making me try to cope with all the adjustments and changes (11:38) that take place.

Particularly when things are going well, and we're experiencing the unusual outpouring (11:46) of God's grace. There's a sense in which Stainer Camp is a mountaintop. Year by year we gather (11:53) together, and we bring friends, and newcomers mingle among us, and this is good.

But there are times when (12:01) denominations stay at a mountain for years. There are times when churches stay at a mountain (12:09) for generations. And many of us believers periodically say with Peter, as he did to the Lord (12:16) on the Mount of Transfiguration, oh Lord, it's so good for us to be here.

Let's build three tabernacles, (12:23) one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah. And Peter had forgotten that life is not usually lived (12:30) on the mountaintop. Life is lived in the valleys and

in the plain, not because mountains are invalid, (12:38) not because mountains are unimportant.

There are mountains of victory when we defeat together (12:45) the forces of the evil one.

There are mountains of revelation, as with the children of Israel in (12:51) their particular case, God revealed himself in all of his glory, and splendor, and power, and gave the (12:58) ten words of the ten commandments. There are mountains of deliverance, as God had taken Israel (13:05) out of the bondage and the furnace of Egypt, and passed through the Red Sea, and through two years (13:11) of wandering through the wilderness.

There are mountains of rest, and mountains of reflection, (13:18) when in a retreat or in a setting set aside from the pressure, we look back and evaluate what has (13:25) occurred and what has taken place. And sometimes there's a danger that we as a church enjoy the (13:31) mountain of rest and the mountain of reflection. And I wonder if the Missionary Church Canada East (13:38) needs to hear God's word.

You have stayed long enough at this mountain. (13:45) The danger is that we'll settle down too long and we'll overstay our welcome. We must remember our (13:52) mandate, Matthew 28, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore and teach (14:01) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And lo I am (14:09) with you always. We need to hear Jesus' last will and testament, Acts 1 8, but ye shall receive (14:16) power.

After that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem (14:22) and in Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost or the remotest parts of the earth. (14:29) And we need to be reminded concerning our mission, that evangelism is not simply a department of the (14:35) church. Evangelism is the purpose for which the church exists.

That our world may hear that Jesus (14:42) Christ is the Savior, that he's King of Kings, and that he's Lord of Lords. And I have a feeling that (14:48) there's a developing spirit and sense that is awakening among us during these days for which (14:54) I give praise to God, that this is our feeling, this is our spirit, this is our direction, that we're (15:01) facing the days ahead and we're saying, yes Lord, if I've been camped too long, help me to see the (15:08) danger, help me to turn, set my journey, go and possess the land that you have for me. One preacher (15:15) has written, we luxuriate in retired communion, in restful fellowship with God, and we think how (15:21) sweet it would be if this could always last, but we are wrong.

Life cannot be lived in total on the (15:30) mountains. Mountains are valid, mountains are important, but life is lived generally in the (15:37) valleys and in the plains where you and I tangle together with the forces of the evil one, and by (15:44) God's grace we know his overcoming power. The danger, you've stayed long enough at this mountain.

(15:52) The direction, verse 7, turn and set your journey. The New International Version renders that break (15:58) camp and advance. Notice the direction, it's forward.

God doesn't know any other direction. (16:05) It's too easy to become accustomed to going other ways. We talk about holding our own when in reality (16:12) we're losing ground. We talk about consolidation when what we really mean is retreat. Brother Sloss (16:19) challenged us at a conference this spring and reminded us that during 1981 the (16:26) missionary church recorded a two percent increase in membership and a one and a half increase in (16:32) morning average attendance, and as you reminded us of those statistics, Brother Grant, I thought is that (16:40) all that happened? For all of our activity, for all of our busyness, did we just add two for every (16:48) hundred across our churches? Did we just add one and a half for every hundred to all of our churches? (16:56) And there's a sense in which we need to hear the Lord saying break camp and advance. Turn and set (17:03) your journey. But somehow we console ourselves that financial givings are up, not remembering (17:10) that the dollar is shrinking and inflation is rising, and that it takes more dollars to fund (17:16) the existing work of God, much less the future work of God. But God's direction is forward, and he (17:23) knows nothing of retreat and withdrawal, and I am personally convinced that God is saying to us as a (17:29) conference, you've stayed long enough at this mountain. Turn and set your journey.

And the only (17:36) hope for the future of our conference is to continue an aggressive God-anointed pursuit in (17:43) this matter of evangelism and church planting, with tens of thousands unreached in our land, (17:51) thousands in our hometowns, yours and mine, who know not the Savior. One of our pastors was telling (17:56) me recently that he's having a Bible study during the one morning of the week, and some of the (18:04) friends from the community are coming in, and as he concluded one of the studies, one of the leaders (18:09) stayed behind and said, Pastor, I would just like you to know that what you shared with these (18:14) friends this morning is absolutely new to them. They've never heard the gospel.

They've never heard (18:21) about Jesus, and they live in your counties and mine. They live in your towns and mine, your cities (18:27) and mine. The direction must be forward in proclaiming Christ to our Canada.

I picked up a (18:34) hitchhiker one morning. I was on my way to the Bruce Peninsula, and just outside of Guelph, a young (18:41) man was standing there, and it was freezing rain, and he jumped in the car, and he was going up to Fergus, (18:48) and we talked for a while. In fact, I didn't want to talk too much.

Sometimes I'd rather not say (18:55) anything to anybody, and we began talking, and he said, What line of work are you in? And sometimes (19:02) I wish they wouldn't ask that question. I said, Well, I'm a minister, and I turned the radio up a (19:06) little bit louder to listen to the news, and he asked a few more questions, and I finally heard (19:11) what God was saying and turned off the radio and entered into a discussion with him, and just that (19:17) morning I'd read from John 3 in my devotions about, For God so loved the world that he gave his

only (19:22) son, his one and only, his unique son to be our saviour, and as we shared together, I quoted that (19:30) verse to him and reminded him of the fact that this is why Jesus had come, and he said, I think I've (19:38) heard that somewhere before, and with that, he said, This is where I get out, jumped out of the car, slammed the door, and that was it. (19:46) And how many folks there are in our cities and towns, in our rural areas, who are lost and without (19:52) hope in this world of ours, bound for a Christless eternity, and the Lord has given to you and to me (20:00) the very answer, the very meaning, fulfillment in living, and he's settled our fear.

He's cleansed (20:07) us from our sin. He's made us new creation in God, and we come together, and the Lord says, (20:15) You have stayed long enough at this mountain. It's time to turn your journey and go in and possess (20:21) the land, and God describes the land to Israel. Verse 7, Go to the hill country of the Amorites, (20:28) to all their neighbors in the Araba, in the hill country and in the low land in the Negev and by (20:33) the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. (20:40) And I'd like to adjust that to fit the Missionary Church Canada East. Would you allow me the liberty (20:44) of doing that? I'd like to see the words there, Turn and set your journey, and go from Windsor to (20:49) Chatham, and Woodstock to Brantford, and Welland to Niagara, and Burlington to Mississauga, and Oshawa (20:56) to Peterborough, and Belleville to Kingston, and Brockville to Cornwall, and up through the Ottawa (21:02) Valley to our capital, and cross our great north to Timmins, and New Liskerd, and Cochrane, and (21:08) Capuskasing, and Sault Ste. Marie, and Thunder Bay. Oh friends, can we see our province through the eyes (21:15) of Jesus? Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, reaching west as we're trying into (21:22) Winnipeg, reaching east yet into Quebec, and Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland, and New Brunswick, (21:29) and Nova Scotia, to the inner cities, to the ethnic groups, to the mission fields that are coming to us (21:36) now in our major population centers. Turn and set your journey.

And I have a dream that one day there (21:44) will be across our land, missionary churches in every community, in every town, and in every city (21:50) proclaiming furiously the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not because we're the only denomination that's able (21:55) to do that, but because we hear the words of Jesus, I must work the works of him who sent me. (22:02) As long as it is day, night is coming when no man can work.

Turn and set your journey. So what can I do? (22:10) Well, first of all, I determine I'm going to move forward. Secondly, I ask Jesus to make me bold in (22:16) my witness.

Thirdly, can we pray that God will lay it upon the hearts of lay people and pastors alike (22:23) to move to some of our immediate target communities, like Thunder Bay, and Ferguson, and Windsor, and Ottawa, (22:31) and Guelph, and Brockville, and the countless other towns in our province where there's a witness needed? (22:37) The direction? Turn and set your journey. The destiny, verse 8, I have placed the land before you. (22:48) Go in and

possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob, (22:54) to them and their descendants after them.

The destiny? Go in and possess the land. The type (23:03) was the land of Canaan. The antitype, or the New Testament event prefigured in the old, is the world.

(23:10) And the church has been called to conquer this world for Christ, even as Israel had been called (23:17) to conquer Canaan for God. Romans 4.13, the promise to Abraham was that he would be heir of the world (23:25) through faith. In the eternities before creation, God the Father said to God the Son, recorded in (23:33) Psalm 2.8, ask of me, Son, and I will surely give the nations as thy inheritance and the very ends of the earth (23:41) as thy possession.

And God yearns that the entire world would be his. Just as he yearned for Israel (23:49) to know his anointing and his enabling in Canaan, he is not willing that any should perish. And he has (23:56) committed this great task of conquering the world to the church, to you and to me under the kingship (24:04) of Jesus.

And in sending us, he too knows our world. He knows the day in which we live. He knows the (24:12) pressures.

He knows the gloom of the economy. He knows the emptiness of lives. He knows homes that (24:19) are racked with division and pain.

And he knows our footsteps. And he is able to plan our goings so that (24:27) we might catch the destiny, go in and possess this land. But the land is not possessed without conflict, (24:35) is it? It's not possessed without warfare.

As with Israel, so with the church. And many of us flee from (24:43) warfare. We recoil.

But we need to be reminded that we're engaged in a spiritual warfare. For (24:49) though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are (24:54) not of the flesh or are not carnal, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

And (25:02) there's a tremendous conflict raging between Satan and his hosts and Jesus and the church of Jesus (25:09) Christ. Many of us are oblivious to it at times. Many of us don't understand the throes of conflict (25:17) through which friends are going.

What a delight to see on the camp yesterday and also this morning (25:25) a dear couple who we met during our days in Toronto and sought to be of assistance and care (25:32) at all hours of the night and day and came to appreciate and love a brother who experienced (25:39) such satanic opposition, such satanic oppression in hearing voices and in seeing things and (25:47) going through the depths of depression and through the means of grace, Acts 2 42, the apostles (25:54) teaching the breaking of bread, prayer and the fellowship of the saints to see as the means of (26:00) grace were ministered. This dear brother began to get his feet spiritually and through the power of (26:07) the name of Jesus and the power of the blood of Christ to be able to stand against all the fiery (26:14) darts of the evil one. One pastor was telling me this week of a particular family in his church (26:21) who moved into a home that

had been lived in before they purchased it by a medium, (26:26) one who is controlled by the evil one.

And they've been there now for eight or nine years, and (26:32) finally they could stand it no longer. And the pastor was preaching from Luke 4 18, the spirit (26:38) of God is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the gospel deliverance to the captives and to those (26:43) who are oppressed.

And he said when I got to that part in the verse, the Lord just seemed to say (26:48) stop the message. And I got home from church that noon and the couple called frantic and they said, (26:55) why did you stop there? That's our point of need. And he said, what are you talking about? And he (27:00) went to their home and they described how for the last eight or nine years, their house has (27:05) literally been racked by the evil one.

And I hear that and say, can it be? Can it be? (27:14) And it is. And Satan, the one who masquerades as an angel of light, the one who is as a roaring lion, (27:24) the one who is the archangel of the evil one, the one who is the keeper of the gates of hell, (27:31) comes to our families and to our homes with such oppression and opposition, seeking whom he may (27:39) devour. Through the name of Jesus and through the covering of the blood of Christ, there is victory (27:46) over the evil one.

And we are liberated and made free, but mark it well, we are in this conflict (27:54) until the day when Satan is finally destroyed under the kingship of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. (28:01) And Ephesians 6 discusses our weaponry and our warfare. And Paul reminds us that first of all, (28:07) our loins must be girt about with truth, that as we labor together, we must be truthful (28:12) in all matters.

There's no question about being untruthful. There's no conquest without truth. (28:23) There is no sidestepping, no adjustments, no half-truths.

And could it be that some of our (28:29) churches today struggle in an accumulation of half-truths or partial truths and a hesitancy (28:40) to deal fully and completely with the matter of the evil one? One dear brother who's a graduate (28:47) of Emanuel Bible College, pastoring another denomination, is so broken today because he (28:53) found in his church a deacon who was a child abuser. It was known to everybody in the congregation (29:00) and the church would do nothing. And the pastor began to exercise godly discipline (29:07) and he was asked to leave the church.

And he's today a broken man, a destroyed man, (29:13) needs somebody to come along and stand with him and encourage him. And in how many other situations (29:20) has sin been perpetuated from one day to the next? And we've been hesitant to confront, (29:26) we've been hesitant to say anything, but we'll let it go and gloss it over. (29:31) And with that kind of mentality, I tell you today, Satan has a stranglehold on some churches.

(29:39) But when our loins are girded about with truth, and while we may be in fear and trembling and (29:46) truthfully face the matters, it's amazing what God does. And he

transforms chaotic situations, (29:55) brings a sense of order out of confusion, light out of darkness.