

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



H E B R E W S

These transcripts are taken straight from live audio recordings of Adrian Rogers during his tenure as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee. As such some of the transcripts may contain stutters, stammers, transcription errors, and other authentic remarks as would be common in a live setting.

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Our Superlative Savior

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 14, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 1:1–4

“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

HEBREWS 1:4

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Introduction

Now let’s read together the first four verses of the Book of Hebrews. And it says, *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who”—that is, God’s Son—“being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”*—now notice especially verse 4—*“being made so much better than the angels”* (Hebrews 1:1–4)—and I’m going to stop there. *“So much better”*: I’m going to be talking today about “Our Superlative Savior,” our Savior who is so much better. And you’re going to find this phrase “better” or “much

better” used over and over and over again in the Book of Hebrews, because it speaks of the superiority of our superlative Savior, our wonderful salvation.

You see, the Book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians, people who had received Christ and yet they had a tendency to go back to the old way, to cling to the old customs, the old traditions, the old ceremonies. And what the Book of Hebrews was written to show us is that those things were shadows of the substance that is to come, and that they need to leave the shadows and come to the substance, because the substance, Jesus, is so much better.

Now if there is a mean dog, and that dog has a bone in its mouth—or even a nice dog, for that matter—and you try to take the bone from him, he might bite you. But here’s the way to get a bone from a dog. It’s perhaps a little expensive, but I believe it would work. You just take a nice t-bone steak and put it down there on the ground in front of him and see if he doesn’t drop the bone in order to get the steak—and then you pick up the bone.

Now I believe that in a sense what the writer of Hebrews, who I think was Paul, is doing right here, he’s just showing us that we don’t need these dry bones of Old Testament ceremony anymore. We have something so much better in the Lord Jesus Christ, our superlative Savior. There’s no one and nothing that can be compared with Jesus, amen? No one and nothing can be compared with Jesus.

Now dear friends, you may learn to love Jesus better, but you can never love anything better than Jesus. He is our superlative Savior. H. G. Wells, the noted and famous historian, wrote in his outlines of history the 10 greatest men of all history. And number one on his list was Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ does not belong on anybody’s list. He’s not Jesus the Great. You can talk about Alexander the Great, you can talk about Peter the Great, you can talk about Charlemagne the Great, but not Jesus the Great. He is Jesus, the One and the only. He is in a class by Himself altogether. So oftentimes we want to say that Jesus was the first among men. Oh no, He is God’s unique, only begotten Son. He is our singular Savior. He is our superior Savior. He is our superlative Savior. And that’s what I want us to think about.

You see, Jesus is unique among all of the so-called religious leaders. Buddha was a religious leader. Mohammed was a religious leader. Confucius was a religious leader. But let me tell you what all of these have in common. You can take them out of their teachings and still have their teachings. You can remove them from their religion and still have their religion. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have Buddhism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam and still have Islam. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism and still have that system of thought. You just follow the deeds, the teachings, the precepts, the creeds of those particular faiths, and you have it. But you can’t take Christ out of Christianity and still have Christianity, because Christianity is not

a code, not a cause, not a creed, not a church, but Christ. It is a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you tried to take Jesus out of Christianity, that would be like taking the notes out of music. That would be like taking the water out of a well. That would be like taking numbers out of mathematics. If you take Jesus out of Christianity, you don't have anything left, because Christ and Christianity are the same.

Christianity *is not just* believing *some* thing; *it is* receiving someone. And this is the difference between Christianity and any other religion: Christianity is a vital relationship with a person, and that person is Jesus Christ. He is alive and well and living in me today. And how we need to understand, therefore, that He is our singular Savior, and therefore He is our superlative Savior.

A man one time bought a house and he wanted to have the house remodeled and so he brought the architect in. And he said, "Now among other things that I want you to do, right here in the center of the house is an odd-looking cupboard, and I want to have that cupboard removed." The architect says, "I can't do it." He said, "Why, Arch, don't I pay you enough money?" He said, "I just can't do it." He said, "Is there some clause in the deed, some restriction, that says I can't do it?" He says, "No, you don't understand." He said, "The house is resting upon that cupboard. The first man who built it built it as a supporting column for the rest of the house, and if I remove that cupboard, the house will come down."

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, if you take the person of Jesus Christ out of Christianity, the entire house of Christianity collapses like a house of cards. Jesus is foundational. Jesus is fundamental to Christianity. He is unique. There is none that can compare with Him among the sons of men. So think with me today and rejoice with me today about our superlative Savior.

Now whether or not you're going to get a blessing out of this message, I am, because it's about Jesus. And I want to tell you, it's going to bless my heart. It has when I studied it. It did when I preached it the first time, and it will this time, and it will bless your heart if you know Him and love Him. And if you don't know Him and love Him, it is my prayer that this message will inculcate in your heart a hunger to know our wonderful, wonderful Savior. And I want to say it again, dear friend: *You can come to learn to love Jesus better, but you can never learn or love anything better than Jesus.* He is the best and there's nothing with Him that can compare.

Now as we think in these verses about the superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ, first of all, I want you to notice the demonstration of His superiority; and then secondly, I want you to notice the declaration of His superiority. A very simple message—just two major points: first of all, the demonstration of His superiority; and then, the declaration of His superiority—"Our Superlative Savior."

I. The Demonstration of His Superiority

Now His superiority is demonstrated in three ways. First of all, the Lord Jesus Christ expounds the mind of God. Secondly, the Lord Jesus Christ executes the will of God. Thirdly, the Lord Jesus Christ expresses the Love of God. Now that's what these verses are telling us.

A. Jesus Expounds the Mind of God

First of all, He expounds the mind of God. Look in verse 1: *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”* God hath spoken by His Son. You see, God is a God of love, and love must express itself. And so from time immemorial God has been speaking to men. He's spoken to men in nature. He's spoken to men in history. He has spoken to men in the law. He has spoken to men in the prophets. But God has now in these last days spoken unto us by His dear Son. God has spoken in Jesus.

You see, Jesus expounds the mind of God. If you want to know what God is thinking, if you want to know what God is saying, look at the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's message so much that He's called the Word of God. What a demonstration, or what an expression, of God!

I heard about an Indian who was carrying on a courtship with his squaw, or with his squaw-to-be, across the ravine, across the valley, and he was sending up out of the west little puffs of smoke. And then this was back in the days when they were testing atomic bombs. And they tested one out there somewhere and a great mushroom cloud descended thousands of feet in the air. He looked over and said, “Man, I wish I'd said that.”

Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, that Jesus is God's revelation, the comparison of which would make an atomic bomb and the message that it might send pale in significance. Oh, thank God for Jesus!

1. Jesus Is God's Word in Finality

You see, look. Jesus is God's final revelation. He's not going to say more. I mean, when he said, “Jesus,” He said it all. You see, *“God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”* We don't need anything new. Friend, if it's new, it's not true. You're not going to go beyond the Lord Jesus Christ. We're to *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 1:3). He *“hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”*

2. Jesus Is God's Word in Fullness

But not only is Jesus God's Word in finality; Jesus is God's Word in fullness. Look in verse 3, if you will: *“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.”* Now this word *brightness of his glory* means the “fullness of His glory.” That is,

all you ever need to know about God you'll find in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God's final Word. He is God's full Word.

3. Jesus Is God's Word in Focus

And then the Bible says He's the express image of God. You want to know what God's like? Study Jesus. He is God's Word in finality. He is God's Word in fullness. He's God's Word in focus. He is God's Word. All you need to know about Jesus, about God, you'll learn in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you worshiped any other God except through the Lord Jesus, you're worshiping an unknown God. For Jesus says, "No man knows the Father, but the Son, and He to whom the Son reveals Him" (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22). The only way that you can know God is through the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: and no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6).

Jesus—Jesus expresses the mind of God. He is God's Word in finality. He is God's Word in fullness. He is God's Word in focus. And I just feel like saying one more time, Hallelujah for the cross!

B. Jesus Executes the Will of God

But now let me say something else. Not only does Jesus expound the mind of God, but Jesus also executes the will of God. Look in verse 2: "*Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,*"—now watch this—"whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,"—now watch this—"and upholding all things by the word of his power." He made all things. He controls all things. Jesus runs and regulates the universe. Jesus created it all and Jesus controls it all.

4. Jesus Is the Power of Creation

I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is the power of creation. Think of the mighty power that brought it all in. But the Bible says it is through Jesus that He made all things. All things were made by the Lord Jesus Christ, and everything that you see bears this stamp: "made by Jesus." It was created by Him, and "*without him was not any thing made that was made*" (John 1:3). It all was made by Him.

Think of the power that it took to bring that into fruition. I used to pastor down there at Cape Kennedy. I had the privilege of seeing those giant Saturn V missiles as they launched a man to the moon. You talk about something awesome to see. That missile, 365 feet tall, taller than a giant skyscraper, just over 36 stories tall. Imagine a skyscraper 36 stories tall filled with vehicle fuel, and on top in that spaceship are those men sitting there, those three men getting ready to go to the moon, and then they pushed that button, and that thing starts to rumble, and that smoke and fire begins to belch out of the bottom, and there is that staccato-like thunder that sounds like it's

shaking the very earth. And ponderously and slowly it starts to move, and the people start to cheer, and it gathers speed, and it goes up and up and up. And you think, “Oh, the power that it takes, 7 ½ million pounds of thrust.” Do you know how much that is? Well, they say, so we can understand it, if you can imagine a string of diesel locomotives stretched from New York to Chicago, all of them revving their engines up at the same time—that’s how much power is in that one missile as it’s trying to launch a man into orbit.

But you think of the God that put universes into orbit. I mean, you think of the God that flung stars into orbit and holds them there by the word of His power. Our nearest star, Proxima Centauri is 4 ½ light years away. A light year is what? Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. That means, it will go around the world in one second seven times—seven times around the world in one second. That’s how fast light travels. So traveling at that speed, it would take it 4 ½ years to get to the nearest star. But now they’re talking to us about universes that are 5 billion light years away. Jesus made all that. Jesus made it all. Our great God made it all.

We talk about power. We talk about, for example, the power of a missile. We talk about the power of an H-bomb. One bubble on the sun, one solar flare, has more power, the scientists tell us, than 100 million hydrogen bombs—just one bubble on the sun. And there are more than 12 octillion suns like our sun, they tell us. Who made all of that? Who did all of that? I want to tell you that the little babe in Matthew 1 was the mighty God of Genesis 1, who did it all. Jesus—that’s what our verse says.

Look at it here—the end of verse 2: *“By whom also he made the worlds.” “Without him was not any thing made that was made.”* Jesus is the power of creation.

5. Jesus Is the Possessor of Creation

And Jesus is the possessor of creation. I want you to look, if you will, in verse 2. The Bible says He is *“appointed heir of all things.”* It all belongs to Jesus. *People say, “What’s the world coming to?” It’s coming to Jesus.* He’s the heir of all things. Listen. All things were made by Him, and for Him, and they’re all coming to Jesus. It’s all coming to Him, and so dear friends, you’d better be careful whom you follow. Why follow a loser? Jesus is inheriting the earth. It belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. It will all come to Him, and He will rule as King of kings, as Lord of Lords, and this mighty universe and this planet earth upon which we live belongs to the Lord.

6. Jesus Is the Preserver of Creation

He’s the power of creation. He is the possessor of creation. He is the preserver of creation. Look again, if you will, in verse 3. The Bible says in the middle of that verse that He upholds *“all things by the word of his power.”* What keeps it from disintegrating? What holds those mighty stars in orbit in mathematical precision? Jesus. The Bible says, *“By him all things consist”* (Colossians 1:17). He’s the glue of the galaxies. He’s

the one that holds it all together.

Now sometimes the scientists are saying, “Oh, we’re going to have an atomic chain reaction. We’re going to turn this world into a glob of molten steel.” Not unless Jesus says *okay*. And if He says *okay*, it’s okay with me. It’s all right with me. He is the One that upholds “*all things by the word of his power.*”

C. Jesus Expresses the Love of God

What I’m trying to say is this: that Jesus—Jesus—expounds the mind of God. But not only does He expound the mind of God; He executes the will of God. He is the one that is in control. But furthermore, He expresses—He expresses—the love of God. Look, if you will again, in verse 3: “*Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*”

7. Jesus Is Our Solitary Savior

Now he’s talking about the love of God. “*When he had by himself purged our sins*”: He did it by Himself. He is our solitary Savior, and therefore He is our superlative Savior. There is no other Savior, and dear friend, there’s no other way to be saved but by Jesus. Jesus *is not a* good way *to* heaven. *Jesus in not the* best *way to* heaven. *Jesus is the* only *way to* heaven. And if Jesus is not the only way, Jesus is none of the ways, because He’s a liar, a fake, a fraud, and an impostor. For He said He was the only way. He said, “I’m the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” He is our solitary Savior. He did it by Himself. He didn’t need anybody’s help; by Himself on the cross He purged our sins.

Do you want me to tell you where my purgatory is? Calvary—Calvary: there He purged my sins.

*There is a fountain filled with blood
drawn from Emmanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
lose all their guilty stains. (William Cowper)*

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. (Robert Lowry)*

He by Himself purged my sin.

And when He did, He sat down, because it is finished. That’s what verse 3 says. Look at it—look at it. It says He “*sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*” Why did He sit down? Because His work is over.

In the Old Testament, when those priests would go into the sanctuary to minister,

they would minister and they would burn incense and they would offer prayers and give their sacrifices, but there was one piece of furniture that was not in the tabernacle, not in the temple, and that was a chair for the priest to sit upon when he was in the holy place in the Holy of Holies ministering. Why? Because His work was ever unfinished. But when Jesus bowed His head upon that cross, He cried, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). He did it, and He sat down. Amen? It’s done; it’s finished. Nothing that you can add to it. He is resting in His finished work. Hallelujah!

Do you remember the first spoken words of the Lord Jesus recorded in the Bible? *“I must be about my Father’s business”* (Luke 2:49). His last recorded words: *“It is finished.”* He was about His Father’s business. He commenced His Father’s business and He stayed with His Father’s business until He could bow His head upon that cross and say, *“It is finished.”* And Jesus expresses the love of God.

You know, the world wants to know what are we going to do about the problems. Everybody wants to know how are we going to handle the world’s problems. What are we going to do about the over crowded prisons? What are we going to do about the poverty? What are we going to do about the rape? What are we going to do about the murder? What are we going to do? What are we going to do? You know the reason we never solve the problem is we never see the problem. You see, the sociologist says it’s a cultural lag. Now the psychologist calls it an emotional disturbance. The philosopher calls it irrational behavior. The communist calls it human class struggle. The humanist calls it human weakness. The criminologist calls it anti-social conduct. The Bible calls it sin—sin. And there’s only one answer for sin—and that’s Jesus; that’s Jesus, who by Himself, our solitary Savior, purged our sins. And you will never handle the sin problem until you settle the Son question, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God’s dear Son, that God has spoken to us in these last days through.

Now that, dear friend, is the demonstration of His superiority. The demonstration of our superlative Savior is that He expounds the mind of God. He is God’s final Word. He, dear friend, executes the will of God. He controls this mighty universe. He, dear friend, expresses the love of God. He left heaven above and came to this earth and died upon that cross that you might be saved, that I might be saved. And again, I want to say hallelujah for the cross!

II. The Declaration of His Superiority

But now secondly—secondly—not only do I want you to see the demonstration of His superiority; but I want you to see, therefore, the declaration of His superiority. Let’s begin to read again now in verse 4. It speaks of Jesus *“being made so much better...”*—and that’s our key phrase: *“so much better”—“being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”*

A. His Excellent Name

I want to pause right now and I want to say that the first declaration of His superiority is His excellent name—His excellent name. Don't you love the name Jesus? I do. I love the name Jesus. It's sweet to me. It fits just right on my tongue.

“Jesus,” O how sweet the Name!

“Jesus,” every day the same;

“Jesus,” let all saints proclaim

...

The precious Name of Jesus! (William C. Martin)

There's no name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved other than the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). There's power in that name.

Now the angels have names. John Phillips, in his book on Hebrews, points out the fact that the angels have names. And we don't know the names of all the angels, because there are millions and millions and millions and millions and millions of angels. The Bible calls them an innumerable host; that means, countless angels. I don't know how many angels. You don't know, nobody does, because the Bible says they're innumerable. But we do know the names of some of the angels, and I want to share with you some of the angels. For example, Michael—we know his name. He is a mighty angel, and his name means, “who is like God.” Gabriel is an angel whose name means “man of God.” Lucifer, before he became Satan, was a good angel, whose name means light-bearer, son of the morning.

Those are the names of the angels, but the Bible says Jesus has a more excellent name. Why? Because if Gabriel's name is mighty, Jesus name means Almighty. And Gabriel means the messenger of God; Jesus is the Word of God. And if Lucifer is the light bearer, Jesus is the Sun of the morning with righteousness and healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2).

Oh, what a wonderful name is Jesus! There's no sweeter name that you can breathe than the name of Jesus. There's power in the name of Jesus. It is at the name of Jesus that the dead will rise, at the name of Jesus that blind eyes open, at the name of Jesus that death ears are unstopped. There is no greater name than the name of Jesus. Let all saints proclaim the precious name of Jesus—His excellent name.

B. His Earthly Fame

Oh, yes, a name more excellent than the angels. That's what verse 4 says: *“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”* But watch. Not only His excellent name, but also His earthly fame. As we continue to read, look, if we might, in verse 5: *“For unto which of the*

angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the [firstborn] into the world...—now we're talking about His earthly fame— *“when he bringeth the [firstborn] into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom”* (Hebrews 1:5–8).

You see, in order to attest His earthly fame, these angels were there. The angels were there to announce to the shepherds that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem, that He was in Bethlehem. The angels were there to announce to Mary that she would bear in her womb the Lord Jesus. The angels were there when Jesus was raised from the dead, because when they came to that tomb they saw those angels there and the stone rolled away. The angels were there when Jesus was taken up into glory, and those disciples were there, and they saw Him take Him up, and there *“two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing thus into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go”* (Acts 1:10–11).

The angels were there to give Him praise. The angels were there to give Him glory. And this verse says that the angels worshiped Him. Look at it now. Pay close attention. Underline it and underscore it and never miss it. Look again in verse 6. It is fundamentally imperative that you see this: *“And again, when he bringeth in the [firstborn] into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God”*—do what? What's that next word?—*“worship him.”*

Now what did Jesus say? Jesus said, *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him”*—what's the next word?—*“only”* (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8). God alone is to be worshiped. Did you hear it? God alone is to be worshiped. Did you hear it? God alone is to be worshiped. To worship anything, anybody, other than Almighty God, is the worst, the grossest, of all sins, which is idolatry on the Lord thy God. *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exodus 20:3). But when God brought His darling Son into the world, He said to these angels, *“Worship Him! Worship Him! Worship Him!”* I want to tell you, dear friend, if Jesus Christ is not God, those angels were guilty of idolatry—if they worshiped anyone, anything, other than Almighty God. What a great proof for the deity of our Lord, amen? What a great verse to give to these today who go from door to door and house to house peddling their damnable poison, telling us that Jesus Christ is less than very God of very God.

I want to tell you, Christ is God in human flesh. And *“great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3:16). And this one, this gentle Babe of Bethlehem, was Mighty God, not just a mighty god, and when God brought Him

into the world, He said, “Let all the angels worship Him—worship Him.” I’ll tell you what they’re doing now in the glory. The mighty glorious angels, the shining angels, the intelligent angels, the powerful angels, are bowing down and worshiping Him, and covering their faces, and saying, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). And how we ought to worship Him! How we ought to worship Him! And when Jesus was here on earth, His earthly fame was enhanced by those angels that worshiped the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. His Eternal Claim

Oh, thank God for His earthly fame! But I want you to see not only His excellent name, not only His earthly fame; but I want you to see His eternal claim. What is His eternal claim? Look again, if you will, in verse 8: *“But unto the Son he saith,”*—who says? God says. Unto whom? Jesus, the Son. Unto Jesus the Father says—now watch it—*“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.”* God the Father calls God the Son, God. *“Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”*

Now His eternal claim is that He is God. Jesus is forevermore God. A billion, billion years from now, He’ll still be God. Look at this verse: *“Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever and ever and ever.”* Things change. This universe is going to wear itself out. This universe is going to run down.

Now the evolutionists like to tell us it’s on its way up, but the second law of thermodynamics tells us that it’s on its way down. It is burning out. And that’s the one thing of irrefutable proof against evolution: that this world is wearing out; it is burning down. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning”*—you, Jesus—*“hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands:”*—Jesus made it all. But now notice verse 11—*“they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail”* (Hebrews 1:10–11). I’m talking about His eternal claim.

I want to tell you, dear friend, that anything that moves makes friction. That’s true in the church, isn’t it? When a church grows, we have growing pains. Anything that moves makes friction, and anything that makes friction wears, and anything that wears disintegrates. And that’s the reason that this universe that is moving and wearing and pulsating is wearing down, is wearing down like a garment that wears out. Its going to wear out. But Jesus is from everlasting to everlasting. A billion years from now Jesus is the same from age to age; the same as Martin Luther said in that song, “A Mighty Fortress is our God”: “From age to age the same.”

I was reading that the sun is burning energy at the rate of 4,200,000 tons of heat per

second. Listen to that statistic: 4,200,000 tons of heat per second. That means, in a few billion years, it'll burn out. That ought to have you concerned. A college student was sitting in class and he heard a lecture like that. He was kind of dozing, and he said, "Pardon me, professor, what did you say?" He said, "In a few billion years the sun will burn out." "Oh," he said, "you scared me. I thought you said a few million."

Well, friend, whether its a few billion, or a few million, it's all going to wear out; it's all burning out, it's all disintegrating. But Jesus Christ, our dear Savior, will go on deathless, ageless, changeless, from age to age the same. Look at His eternal claim; look at it again: *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."* Oh, friend, you'd better get linked up with that. You'd better get linked up with that. Things are changing, things come and go, but Christ is on the throne. He lives, He rules, He reigns. This, dear friend, is the declaration—the declaration—of His superiority.

Oh, see His superior name. See, dear friend, His eternal claim—that Jesus is God. There is no other way. Dr. Robert G. Lee loved the Lord Jesus. He was a great pastor of this church. Dr. Lee said that Jesus is literature's loftiest ideal. He said that Jesus is philosophy's highest personality, theology's fundamental doctrine, spirituality's greatest and most supreme problem, religion's cardinal necessity.

Jesus—do you know Him? Has He ever come into your heart? Have you ever received Him as your Lord and Savior? Have you ever said, "Yes, I know that I know that He lives in me"? I want to tell you, friend, that Jesus Christ is a bright, living reality in my heart. Jesus Christ is as real to me as these clothes that I'm wearing. When I awakened this morning, I said "Jesus." And Joyce, who was there beside me in the bed, said, "What did you say? I said, "Jesus." She said, "That's what I thought you said." I just awaken with His name in my mind: Jesus, who is real to me. Is He real? I don't want to know, Do you know about Him? I want to know, Do you know Him? Is Jesus Christ real to you? Do you know what this message is today? This message is the Holy Spirit bringing to you the message of Jesus.

Conclusion

Years ago, there was an explorer who went to the Arctic. His name was Nansen—Fridtjof Nansen. He went from Christiania, which is now called Oslo, Norway, and as he went, he stayed there. They had no radios to communicate with, they had no televisions to communicate with, certainly no telephones to communicate with, and his wife stayed there in Oslo, Norway, waiting. One month passed, two months; a year passed, two years; more than two years. Thirty long months she waited to hear from her husband. Had he perished? Had he frozen? Had he starved? Was he devoured by some beast? She did not know. She waited. Some of the world said, "Give up hope." But she would

not give up hope there in her home in Oslo.

And then one day as she sat by her windowsill, she saw a little dove as it arrowed out of the sky and fluttered down and lighted on that one windowsill—a pigeon. Of all of the windowsills on the face of the earth, that dove lighted upon that one windowsill, because it had been trained to do so. It was a homing pigeon. It had been released by her husband, and that little living arrow had started to fly with some God-given instinct in its breast to know where to come, and it flew across miles and miles of frozen Arctic waste, and then it flew out over miles and miles of ocean wilderness and uncharted ocean. It flew and it flew. That little fluttering thing came down, circled down out of the heavens, and landed on that one windowsill. And when Mrs. Nansen saw it, she flew open the window, and took that little fluttering thing in her hands, and she kissed it and kissed it and kissed it. And then she looked upon its leg, and there on the leg was a little quill, and in that quill was a little piece of tissue paper, and on that piece of tissue paper were written these words, “All is well—all is well.”

Can you imagine Mrs. Nansen sitting there when that little dove came out of the heavens and landed upon that windowsill? Can you imagine her going on reading her book without opening the window? Can you imagine her going on with her knitting or housecleaning without opening the window? Can you imagine her frightening that little bird away? Can you imagine that?

Friend, I want to tell you today that the Holy Spirit is God’s dove to bring a message from heaven to tell you that God loves you and that Jesus wants to save you. And He’s a gentle dove that has come all the way from heaven to bear to you this message, that Jesus is the superlative Savior. He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and if you will receive Him, *“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow”* (Isaiah 1:18). And even now God’s dear Spirit is at the windowsill of your heart. Open it up. Open it up. Receive Him. Trust Him. He’ll save you. He will. He’s real. 🕊

A Name Above All Names

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 20, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 1:1–8

“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than thee.”

HEBREWS 1:4

Outline

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- III. Jesus Deserves the Worship as God
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Introduction

Amen. Praise the Lord, and praise the Lord. Take your Bibles and find Hebrews chapter one, and we're going to take a break in our series through the Sermon on the Mount, because it is the Sunday before Christmas and I want to share with you today a Christmas message. The passage that we have before us, Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 to 8, is a pivotal passage, it is a key passage, and I want you to have it there in your hand and before you, as we study it together. The title of the message today is this, "A Name Above All Names." As a matter of fact, we have sung that already today. God has given Him a name, the Lord Jesus, which is above all names. Isaiah said in chapter 9, His name shall be called Wonderful. The angels said, Thou shalt call His name Jesus. Now what's in a name? Well, if it's the name of Jesus, salvation is in that name, hope is in that name, victory is in that name. It is by that name that the dead were raised, by that name that the lame can walk, by that name that the deaf can hear, by that name above all names that we are saved. Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name in heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved than the name of Jesus.

Read with me in Hebrews chapter 1: "God, who at sundry..."—that means different—"...times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he that by inheritance obtained..."—and here's our verse—"...a more excellent name than they." There's the title for our message: A Name Above All Names. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? "And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world..."—that is, Christmas morning—"...he saith, let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." Who is Jesus Christ? Why does Jesus Christ have a name above all names? There is no one on this earth, who has ever been on this earth, or whoever will be upon this terrestrial ball, who can be compared to the Lord Jesus Christ. We sing these words: no mortal can with Him compare among the sons of men. I have reminded you on several occasions that H. G. Wells, the famous historian, made a list of the greatest men of history—the ten greatest—and number one on that list was Jesus Christ. But He doesn't belong on that list. He doesn't belong on any list. You can talk about Peter the Great, Charlemagne the Great, Alexander the Great; but you should not speak of Jesus the Great. You must speak of Jesus the one and only. He has a name above all names.

Napoleon Bonaparte, who was that archangel of war, the little general, the man who lived a wicked and a hard life, a man who was an egotist for most of his life, finally was exiled to that lonely, barren island, the island of St. Helena. And there, Napoleon Bonaparte began to do something. He began to study the Scripture. He began to read the Bible. He studied the life of Jesus Christ. And here's what Napoleon wrote after he had studied the life of Jesus Christ. Here's the conclusion that he came to—and I quote—Napoleon said: "I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man." Now, what he meant by that is, not a mere man. "Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and every other religion the distance of infinite. We can say to the authors of every other religion, you are neither gods, nor the agents of deity. You are but missionaries of falsehood, molded from the same clay with the rest of mortals." That's what Napoleon said. He said, You take Jesus Christ and put Him here and put the founders of other empires and religions there and

the distance between the two is the distance of infinite. And indeed he is correct. His name is a name above other names. You can take the religious leaders out of other religions and you still have the religion. You still have their teachings. You still have their ways. You don't have to know them personally in order to follow them. But you cannot take Christ out of Christianity and still have Christianity. Christianity is not a code, not a creed, not a cause; it is Christ Himself. It is a vital relationship with Christ. To take Jesus Christ out of Christianity is like taking the water out of the well, the blue out of the sky, the notes out of music, numbers out of mathematics. You don't have Christianity if you take Christ out. Jesus is different from all the other religious leaders. Some of them claim to point to the way, to be a sign pointing to the way; Jesus Christ says He is the way. The other religious leaders say, I have come to teach truth; Jesus Christ says, I am the Truth. He's not merely a teacher of the truth; He is the truth. He is not merely a philosopher speaking about life; Jesus is life. His name is a name above all other names.

I. Jesus Declares the Wisdom of God

Now there are three basic things that I want you to see in this passage that is before us—Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 to 8, that tell us of the wonderful name, the name above all names, the name of Jesus. Why is His name above all other names? Because Jesus Christ, number one, my dear friend, declares to us the words and the wisdom of God. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us..."—underscore that—"...he has spoken unto us by his Son." Now, the book of Hebrews does not begin with an argument; it begins with an announcement. God has spoken through Jesus Christ. This is the earth-shaking declaration—please listen—that God has sent His last word to this world, His last word to humanity, and that last word is Jesus Christ. What is God saying? God has spoken to us through His Son. Now up until that time, God had been speaking gradually. Do you see it in verse 1? God, who at sundry times..."—that is, at past times—"...in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets." In the past, God has been speaking. God speaks through nature. The rocks, the trees, the birds, the bees—they all speak to us of God. The heavens declare the glory of God. And there's a sense in which God has spoken through nature. God speaks in conscience. The Bible says, Christ is that light that lighteth every man, and the law of God is revealed in every human heart. And every one of us have in our innate conscience that light which the Bible calls conscience. And then, God has spoken through history. As you study history, you can see why some say that history is His-story. You can see the hand of God moving in history. And God has spoken through the law—the Old Testament law and the Old Testament prophets.

That's the Old Testament. God spoke through all of these, and God has been speaking gradually and gradually. But there came a day that Christmas morning, when God brought His Word into the world, and Jesus Christ is called the Word of God. God has spoken unto us through His Son. The Lord Jesus was standing in the wings of history and His shadow is being cast, and all of the Old Testament prophets, and all of the books of the Old Testament, like tributaries, are coming to form one mighty river as they all merge together. And the shadows become substance, and all of the voices become one voice, to say that Jesus Christ is God's Son and God's Word. My dear friend, please listen to me. Jesus—Jesus is God's Word to you today. What is God saying to this world? God is saying to this world: Jesus.

Look at it. Jesus is God's final word. Look in verse 2. "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." When you've said Jesus, you've said it all. God doesn't have any more to say to us than Jesus. God has spoken to us by His Son. Jesus is God's final word, and Jesus is God's full word. Look in verse 3. "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." The word "express image" is the word exact icon. That's what it means. When you look at Jesus Christ, you see God. You want to know what Jesus Christ is like? He is like God. You want to know what God is like? God is like the Lord Jesus. He is the express image of God. Jesus declares the wisdom of God. He is God's final Word. He is God's full Word. When you've said, Jesus, you've said it all. You don't need to read any more. You don't need to study any more. You don't need to look any place else if you want to know about God. God has spoken in Jesus. Jesus is called in the Bible, the Alpha and the Omega. The Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet; the Omega is the last letter. If the Bible were written in English today, and in our day we wouldn't say that Jesus is alpha and omega; we would say that Jesus is A and Z. That is, we have 26 letters in our alphabet, and Jesus is all of them. I have in my library hundreds, I suppose, thousands, of books. I don't know how many I have. I have a lot. But all of them are made up of 26 letters. And no matter what the wisdom of this world is, Jesus is the alpha and the omega. I mean, it's all Jesus. Jesus is God in fullness, and Jesus is God in focus. You need to understand that. And that's the reason that His name is a name above every name.

II. Jesus Demonstrates the Works of God

Now secondly, secondly, not there's not only does Jesus declare the wisdom of God; but Jesus demonstrates the works of God. Look if you will now in verse 2. The Bible says, "God hath in these days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

A. He Is the Reason of Creation

Jesus is the reason of creation. That little baby in Matthew 1 is the great God of Genesis 1. I have been to Cape Kennedy. I used to pastor there and watch them launch those great Saturn missiles into the sky, the Apollo spaceships over 365 feet tall, longer than a football field standing on end, like a gigantic skyscraper—7 and 1/2 million pounds of thrust when that thing leaves the earth to make its voyage into space, as we were trying to put a man on the moon, and indeed did succeed in doing that. Such awesome power. The staccato thunder of those engines, to feel the heat on your face, to see that ponderous thing as that force lifts that spaceship off the earth. It is an amazing thing. And yet, you think, the little babe at Bethlehem was the one who launched universes into space.

I was thinking earlier this morning and going over some facts that our nearest star Proxima Centaurae, is about 4 and 1/2 light years away. That is, if you could hijack a light beam and go to the nearest star, our closest star, traveling at 186,000 miles a second—that's around the world 7 times a second—traveling at that speed, 186,000 miles per second, it would take you 4 and 1/2 years to reach the nearest star. And yet, my dear friend, the astronomers talk of stars and universes that are 5 billion light years away. Who made all of that? Who put all of that in space? The Lord Jesus Christ. Look at it again in verse 2: "God hath spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by who also he made the worlds." It was all made by Him. It was all made for Him. It is all coming to Him.

Now, you might have a little plot of ground that you call your own. You say, we're buying us a house. This is our lot; it's not yours. It belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. You're just a caretaker; you're just a camper on that little plot of ground. It is very clear, my dear friend, that He made the worlds.

B. He Is the Ruler of Creation

But not only is He the reason of creation; He is the ruler of creation. Verse 3 speaks of Jesus, "Who being the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person..."—now notice this—"...and upholding all things by the word of His power." Do you see the word uphold? The word there means to bear a load. The Lord has the government upon His shoulder. It was all created by Him, and for Him, and the Bible says, by Him all things consist. The word consist means they hang together. Jesus is the glue of the galaxies. Without the Lord Jesus Christ, this cosmos would become a chaos. He brought it into being, and He keeps it in being. He is the one who holds all of the worlds together with mathematical precision.

People ask, what's going to happen? Are we going to have a chain reaction, a nuclear explosion, that will blow the world up? What is going to happen? Are we going to become an ecological disaster? Have things gotten out of control? No. Look in

chapter 1, verse 10 and following: "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish..."—that is, all that you see is going to turn to rust and dust and mold and corruption—"...but thou remainest; and they shall all wax old as a garment." That is, our universe is winding down. That's the law of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics, that tells us that that everything just simply wears out. It runs down. And, therefore, evolution is a farce. Things are not building in complexity; they are degenerating. And the Bible so aptly says this. It says, "...they shall was old as a garment..." Like a suit of clothes, they just wear out. And then God says, "And as a vesture..."—an old, used, suit of clothes—"...thou shalt fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Everything changes, but our dear Lord. He is the ruler of creation. And He's the one who's going to rule over it until He has finished with it.

C. He Is the Redeemer of Creation

But not only is Jesus the reason of creation, verse 2; not only is He the ruler of creation, verse 3; but He is the redeemer of creation, verse 3. Look at it again: "Who being the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His person, upholding all things by the word of His power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." The redeemer of creation—He purged our sins. Now look at the word sin here and see the contrast here. It's an interesting thing in verse 3. In verse 3, we speak of God's glory. We speak of God's person. We speak of God's power. And then, we speak of our sins—our sins. What's the answer to the sin problem? Oh, we have plenty experts today who are trying to tell us the answer. The sociologist calls sin a cultural lag. The psychologist calls it an emotional behavior. The philosopher calls sin irrational thinking. The humanist calls sin human weakness. The Marxist calls sin a class struggle. The criminologist calls sin anti-social behavior. But, the Bible calls sin rebellion against God.

Now, the Bible says that Jesus Christ, Bethlehem's babe, the one who has a name above all other names, came to save us from our sins. He is the redeemer of creation. And, how did He do it? Well, this verse says He did it by Himself. Underscore that—by Himself—verse 3. He's the solitary Savior. No one helped Him in redemption. He did it by Himself. You can't help Him. You'll be saved by Him alone, or you will not be saved. There is no other Savior. And then, look at the word purged. He purged our sins. Not only did He forgive them; the word purged means to cleanse. He took our sins away. People speak of purgatory. You don't read anything about purgatory in the Bible. The thing that purges our sins is the blood of Jesus Christ. I hear people sometimes talk about being a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist. Friend, you'd better be a washed-in-the-blood Baptist. The Bible says here that Jesus purged our sins. How did He do it? With His

own blood. And then, the Bible says, He sat down. Do you see it? In verse 3, "He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Why did He sit down? Because He finished His work. It is done.

In the Old Testament the priests ministering never sat down. There was one piece there was no chair in the Holy of Holies in the temple, or in the tabernacle. When the priests would go in there to offer a blood sacrifice, He never sat down because His work was never finished. He had to keep coming back year after year after year after year. Because those sacrifices of animals only rolled the sins of the people forward another year until Jesus would come and die. But Jesus came to do something. Remember reading in the Bible about the boy Jesus who came to the temple when He was 12 years of age and His parents went off and left Him, and then they finally came back and found Him in the temple reasoning with the doctors, the lawyers there in the temple. And He said to them, don't you know that I must be about my Father's business? Those were the first recorded words of Jesus in the Bible. Did you know that? I must be about my Father's business. He came to do His Father's business. And what was His Father's business? Redemption. And Jesus, who began that work, said, I must work the works of Him who sent me, and then Jesus Christ, on the cross, bowed His head, and said, it is finished. Those were the last recorded words of Jesus in His flesh here upon the body. The first, I must do my Father's business. The last, it is finished. I have done it. And that's the reason, friend, He sat down. It is over. It is finished. And so, look. Jesus declares the wisdom of God. God has spoken unto us by His Son Jesus. Jesus demonstrates the works of God. He is the reason of creation. He is the ruler of creation. He is the redeemer of creation. That's why He has a name above every name.

III. Jesus Deserves the Worship as God

Now here's the third and final thing and see how the focus tightens. This is where it really gets good. Jesus, who is the declarer of the wisdom of God; Jesus, who is the doer of the works of God, is the one who fully deserves worship as God. Jesus is the one who deserves the worship as God. Now look in verse 4. Jesus, "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Why should Jesus be worshiped as God? By the way, friend, this is the whole crux of Christianity—the deity of Christ. The little baby that was born that Christmas morning was God. Now don't forget that. And you say, I don't understand it.

A. His Superior Name

Well now, let's just look at the Word of God, and put your understanding in brackets, and put it aside, and let's just look in the Word of God. He has a superior name. Verse 4: "A more excellent name than the angels." Now, we know the names of angels. For example, there is an angel named Michael. That means, who is like God. There's an

angel named Gabriel. The name Gabriel's means, Man of God. An angel named Lucifer, and Lucifer, who became later the devil, a fallen angel, his name is light bearer. And these angels were incredibly mighty, and incredibly glorious, and still are. Michael, glorious in might, because, as you study the Bible, you find out that Michael is the Commander-in-Chief of heaven's armies. Now, what a mighty angel is Michael. Gabriel is glorious in ministry, because he's the bearer of messages from God. And he brings God's messages to earth in a very wonderful way. Lucifer was glorious in Majesty. The name Lucifer, I tell you, means light bearer. He was the anointed cherub; he's called the son of the morning. He was a star of the first magnitude in the panoply of angels. And so, you have these angels—Michael who like God; Gabriel, man of God; Lucifer, light bearer—Michael, glorious in might; Gabriel, glorious in ministry; Lucifer, glorious in majesty.

But now, notice what the Bible says: He has a much better name than the angels—more excellent than they. Jesus is not mighty like Michael. Jesus is almighty. Jesus is not a messenger like Gabriel. Jesus is the Word Himself. Jesus is not a star like Lucifer, the light bearer. Jesus is the light. He has a name that is above every name.

A. **His Sacred Nature**

Now, why should He be worshiped? Number one, because of His superior name. Number two, because of His sacred nature. Look in verse 5—what is the nature of this Jesus? "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son." God is not the father of angels; he is the creator of angels, but he's not the father of angels. You see, there's a difference between creator and that which is created. But Father and Son must, by necessity, be of the same substance. "Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But not the Son; he saith..."—now, God the Father is speaking to God the Son—"...Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom." Now verse 8, God the Father calls God the Son, God. God the Father called God the Son, God. Have you got it? Don't miss it. The next time a Jehovah's Witness knocks at your door, you need to remind him that Jesus is God, according to God the Father, who calls His Son God. Now, they might say to you, Does that make sense? It doesn't make any difference whether it makes sense to you or not. Don't parade the Word of God past the judgment bar of your mind, and say, Can I understand it? Do you understand the Trinity? No, I don't understand the Trinity. You don't understand the Trinity. Nobody understands the Trinity, and furthermore, I wouldn't have any confidence in a God I could understand. We're not called upon to understand. We're called upon to believe

and take what God has said is true. The finite can never understand the infinite. The word Immanuel means that God is with us. The Bible says the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Angels, the Bible says, are ministering spirits. Now, there are some who want to make Jesus just a superior angel. And angels are ministering spirits, according to this verse. The angels ministered to the Lord Jesus. They ministered to Him. They came, announced, and attended His birth. They attended His resurrection. They were there when Jesus ascended into heaven. And angels will attend Him when He comes at His Second Coming. But they are His servants. And they cannot be compared to Him. Have you ever wondered about that passage of Scripture over there in 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16, where it says, Great is the mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh? Then the Bible says, He was seen of angels. Have you ever wondered about that? Did you know that that's the first time angels ever saw Him, was at Bethlehem? They'd never seen Him before. They'd known Him, but they'd never seen Him. Because, before then, He was invisible. He was, He is, God the Father, God the Son, invisible. The first time angels had ever seen Jesus—that's why they marveled. There He was—God manifest in the flesh, seen of angels—seen of angels. They saw Him. The angels said, there He is. We can see God for the first time.

First Timothy 3, verse 16. Friend, His sacred nature. How do I know that Jesus is God? Oh friend, let me tell you how I know that Jesus is God. Look in verse 6. And the Bible says, "Let all the angels of God worship him." Worship Him. Well, who do you worship? God, and Him only. Friend, if anybody, any place, anywhere, ever worships anything other than God, he has committed the grand sin of the universe, which is idolatry. I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him, what? Only. Do you remember that passage of Scripture over there in Revelation chapter 19 and verse 10, where John the apostle gets a message from an angel? He sees a mighty angel. John is overcome. He falls at his feet to worship the angel, and the angel says, Get up. Get up. I too am your fellow servant. Worship God. Worship God. Friend, somebody comes knocking on your door, you ask him, Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? He'll say, yes. Do you believe He is God the Son? He'll say no. Ask him this question? Do you worship him? If he says, yes, then you say, You, sir, are an idolater, if you don't believe He is God. If he says, no, then say, dear friend, you don't do what God commanded the angels to do, and what the apostles did. That is, to worship God. He is God. Why? Because the Bible says, unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever.

B. His Sovereign Nobility

My dear friend, He has a superior name, He has a sacred nature, and He has a sovereign nobility. Look in verse 8: "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God..."—

Thy throne, O God. This little baby was born a king. He has a throne. He is a regent. He is a sovereign God. He has a sovereign nobility. The government is upon His shoulder. Every now and then I hear people say, Have you made Jesus Lord? Have you made Jesus Lord? Friend, you're an eternity too late to do that. He's always been Lord. You can't make Him Lord. He is Lord. The question is, Are you going to acknowledge His lordship? Are you going to bow before His lordship? A billion, billion, billion years from now, He will still be Lord upon the throne. For the Bible says here in verse 8, Thy throne is for ever and ever. You can't vote Him in, and you can't vote Him out. His sovereign nobility is deathless and age ageless and changeless.

Conclusion

Former pastor of this church, the late great Robert G. Lee, said that Jesus is the outstanding miracle of the ages. He is literature's loftiest ideal. He is philosophy's highest personality. He is criticism's supremest problem. He is theology's fundamental doctrine. He is spiritual religion's cardinal necessity. Jesus Christ has no rival. He has no equal. Heed today. The Christ of Christmas calls for your heart, your love, your loyalty. He has a name that above every name. And I want to say with all of my heart on the threshold of Christmas all Hail the power of Jesus' name. Let angels prostrate fall. Let's bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.

And I want to say this: God in these last days has spoken unto us by His Son. Listen to me. If you refuse Him, God doesn't have anything else to say to you. You refuse Jesus—God has nothing else to say to you. He is God's Word in fullness, God's Word in focus, and He is God's Word in finality. God has given Him a name above every name—Jesus.

Father, we love the name Jesus. Thank you, Lord, for His name, better than the angels. And Lord, we can know nothing better than Jesus, so our hearts desire to know Jesus better. Help us to love Him more, to serve Him more faithfully. In His dear name we pray. Amen.

A Name Above All Names

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 20, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 1:1–8

“Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

HEBREWS 1:4

Outline

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- I. His Superior Name
 - A. Wisdom in the Name
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Introduction

Be finding in God's Word, please, Hebrews, chapter one, and we're going to put a parentheses in our study through the Sermon on the Mount, because this Sunday is the Sunday before Christmas. I want us to have together a Christmas message. The title of the message is this: Name Above All Names. Now we've already sung that, and we've already said His name is Wonderful. And indeed it is. We asked the question, "What is in a name?" When it comes to Jesus, everything is in that name. Healing is in that name, comfort is in that name, it's the name by which the dead were raised, the blind were given sight, the deaf are made to hear, the dumb can speak, the lame can leap—there's salvation in that name—Acts chapter 4, verse 12: "Neither is there salvation in any other. For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. And no wonder the prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah chapter nine and verse six. His name shall be called wonderful. And that's the wonderful name that we are going to be talking about today.

Hebrews chapter one, verse one: God, who in sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and

upholding all things by the word of his power. For he had by himself, purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, that he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. And again, I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a Son. And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten unto the world, he said, let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he said, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.

And then the middle verse—look at it—verse four, the last part: A more excellent name—a more excellent name. How I love the name of Jesus! The Bible says, they that know thy name shall put there trust in thee. There's no other name just like the name Jesus. No mortal can compare with Him, among the sons of men. Jesus Christ is one of a kind.

I have reminded you that the greatest story in... H. G. Wells made a list of the ten greatest men of history. And he put Jesus Christ as number one on that list. And while I appreciate, in some sense, the fact that he placed Jesus Christ at the head, he really doesn't belong on anybody's list. You could speak of Napoleon the Great, Caesar the Great, Charlemagne the Great, Catherine the Great, but you cannot speak of Jesus the Great. He is in a category, a class, all by Himself.

Napoleon Bonaparte, that archangel of war, the little general, the leader of France, was exiled finally in his latter days, on the St. Helena Island, a barren little rocky crag. But he had with him a Bible. And he did something that he had not done very much. He began to study the Bible. And Napoleon was fascinated with the character of Jesus Christ. And then this is what Napoleon wrote after his exile. He said, I know men. And I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Now, what he meant by that obviously is not a mere man, because he knew that Jesus Christ walked the earth. Not a mere man.

Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the God's of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and every other religion, the distance of infinity. We can say to the authors of every other religion, you are neither gods nor the agents of deity. You are but missionaries of falsehood. Molded from the same clay with the rest of mortals. Whoever you are, you're like the rest of us, he said.

But Jesus Christ stands alone. And it is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ that sets aside Christianity from all of the religions of the world. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism, and still have Buddhism. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism, and still have Confucianism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam, and still have Islam. But you cannot take Christ out of Christianity and still have Christianity. Because Christianity

is not just a system of beliefs, or a way of life; it is a vital, living, connectedness and relationship with a person whose name is Jesus.

If you were to take Christianity and Christ and separate them, you have no longer Christianity. That's like taking the water out of a well. It's like taking the blue out of the sky. It's like taking notes out of music. It's like taking numbers out of Mathematics. You do not have Christianity without the Lord Jesus Christ. Christianity is not merely a creed nor code, nor cost, nor church. It is Jesus Christ Himself—a vital union with Jesus.

You see all of the other religious leaders were different from Jesus Christ. Jesus is unique. Some of the other religious leaders said they were assigned pointing to the way. But Jesus said, I am the way. Some of the other religious leaders said I am here to tell you the truth. Jesus said, I am the truth. Others were philosophies, and philosophers who say I am here to teach you a better life. Jesus Christ said, I am the life. I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes unto the Father, but by me. What an incredible person is this person Jesus Christ.

John Blanchard has well pointed out that no one knows the exact date of His birth, but we do know that He split the centuries and the whole history of the world is divided into two great categories labeled BC and AD—before Christ and Anno Domini, the year of our Lord. He is the central fact of history. He never wrote a book, yet more books have been written about Him than anyone else in all history. So far as we know, the Lord Jesus Christ never painted a picture, He never composed any poetry or any music, so far as we know. And yet, nobody's life and teaching has been the subject of a greater output of songs and plays and poetry and pictures and films and videos and other art forms like the Living Christmas Tree, and all of these other things. Jesus Christ never raised an army and yet millions of people have laid down their lives for Jesus Christ.

As you study the Bible, you find out that His travels while He was here on earth were extremely limited and yet the Lord Jesus has an influence that is worldwide. He never really spoke to more than a few thousand people at one time. And yet, today, according to estimations, there are 1,620,000,000 believers in the Lord Jesus Christ—over thirty percent of the world's population. Christians are the largest religious grouping the world has ever known.

Jesus Christ had no formal education. But think of the thousands of universities and colleges and seminaries and schools founded in His name. Jesus Christ never owned any property. Why, to teach, He had to borrow a boat. When He wanted to come into Jerusalem, He had to borrow a donkey. When He wanted to pay His taxes, He had to borrow a coin and even to be buried, He was buried in a borrowed tomb and yet this building belongs to Jesus Christ and other buildings belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the owner of the universes. In His lifetime, the Lord Jesus was relatively unknown, except in a small country by a few people. And yet, you can look in the

Encyclopedia Britannica and the article on Jesus runs to nearly 30,000 words. Now, the key phrase in this book of Hebrews is found in verse four. Look at it, being made so much better than the angels. The key word is better. Jesus is made so much better than the angels. As He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Now, this word better is used thirteen times in the book of Hebrews. And, the book of Hebrews is written to show that Jesus is superlative. It was written to Jews who were having difficulties giving up the old way. And, the writer Hebrew said, you don't need to have any difficulty giving up the old way. You have something far better. There is a superlative Savior. And, if I can say something today that I pray will stick in your heart and in your soul is this, friend. You can come to know Jesus better, but you will never know anything better than Jesus.

You don't remember anything else I've said: there's nothing better than knowing Jesus. That's what the book of Hebrews is written to tell you all about.

I. His Superior Name

Now, He has a superlative name. Jesus has a name, a wonderful name. And, the Bible says, it is a more excellent name, in verse four. Do you see it?

A. Wisdom in the Name

Now, let me tell you three reasons why it is a more excellent name. Number one, because there is wisdom in that name. There is wisdom in that name. Read verses one and two. God, who at sundry times—that means, various times and in diverse manners, different ways—spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.

Now, the book of Hebrews does not begin with an argument. It begins with an announcement. And, that announcement is that God has made an earth-shaking declaration to humanity and God has said His last word to humanity. You want to know what His last word is? It is Jesus. God has spoken unto us by His Son. Now, this verse says that God had been speaking gradually. He had spoken in different times and in different ways.

God speaks through nature. The heavens declare the glory of God. God speaks through history and someone has well said that history is His story. God speaks through conscience because Christ is that light that lights every man that comes into the world and there there's that still small voice that tells us, that voice called conscience. God has spoken in all of these ways. And God spoke in the Old Testament by the prophets, by the law and the prophets, but Jesus Christ is standing in the winds of history and He's casting His shadow forward. And all of these various ways of speaking are but like tributaries that finally come and converge in one main stream and in Jesus Christ, what the prophets and the law spoke about, those shadows become substance and Jesus

Christ now steps out of the wings onto center stage on Christmas morning, when God became flesh and dwelt among us and God said this is my final word I have spoken in these last days and what I have to say is Jesus Christ. He is it.

Now, listen, Jesus is God's final word. The Bible says here that God has spoken in these last days by Jesus. That is He has nothing else to say. He is God's final word. There's we're not waiting for something better to come along. We're not saying, well, now we've had Jesus. What is next? Nothing is next. Friend, when you've said Jesus, you've said it all. Not only is Jesus God's final word. Jesus is God's full word. Look in verse two. He hath spoken unto us by His Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. That means the exact icon. The word image is the Greek word icon. Jesus is the absolute replica, duplicate, likeness, image, icon of God. When you see Jesus, you see God. He is God in focus. He is God in fullness. He is God in finality. This is the reason that He has the name above every name. Because there is wisdom in that name. You see, God has spoken. You want to know the mystery of history. You want to know the secret of the universe. You want to know what it is all about. You want to know the sum and the substance, the center and the circumference of everything. Jesus—Jesus.

God hath spoken unto us in these last days in His Son. His name is above every name. There is wisdom in that name. He declares the glory of God.

B. Wonder in the Name

But secondly, not only is there wisdom in that name. My dear friend, there is wonder in that name. Have you ever thought of the things that Jesus does and the things that Jesus is. Begin in verse two and you're going to find out that Jesus is the reason of creation. Look in verse two. God in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. Did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ was the agent of creation? That God created everything through His Son. And that the little baby that you read about in Matthew on that was laid in a manger in swaddling clothes is the great, eternal, forever-existent God of Genesis one. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. This verse tells us that it was Jesus who did that. Why, this is an incredible Universe in which we live. I was thinking earlier this morning that our nearest star, our nearest star, is four and one half light years away. That is, if you could travel at the speed of light, a little more than a hundred and eighty six thousand miles per second, that's seven times around the world in one second. If you could travel at the speed of light, a hundred and eighty six thousand miles a second, it would take you four-and-a-half years to get to the nearest star, Proxima Centaurae. But, friend, the astronomers, talk about universes that are five billion light years away—five billion light years. That doesn't mean that that's the end.

That means that's just as far as they can reckon. What's beyond that, only God knows. We're talking about infinity and who did it all? Jesus. Universes drip from His fingers. The Lord Jesus. He spoke and it was so. All things were made by the Lord Jesus.

Why, our sun, we think of our sun as being so magnificent and wonderful. One bubble on our sun, we call it a solar flare, just one little blimp, one little bubble, releases more power and energy than one hundred million H bombs, hydrogen bombs. I was reading a journal some time ago that said in our known universe, there are more than twelve octillion suns like our sun. Now we see a little bubble, a little solar flare on our sun, who did all of this? Jesus did. It was all made by Him. It was all made for Him and it's all coming to Him. He's the heir of all things. That's what it says. That little piece of dirt that you put your house on, you say, this is my property. I put a fence around it; I bought this; I've got the title to it. You don't own it, my friend. You're just a camper. You're just a squatter. That's all you are. You'll have it for a little while and you'll leave it. He made it. It was made by Him. It made for Him and the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Every blade of grass belongs to our Lord. He is the reason for creation. He is the ruler of creation. Look if you will in verse three. The Bible says in the middle of that, He upholds all things by the word of His power. The word uphold here simply means to carry a load. You see, He made it; He created it; and He not only is the reason for it; He is the ruler of it. He is the one who holds it all together. The book of Colossians says, by Him all things consist. The word consist means, it holds together. If He were to take His hand off of it, it would all fly apart. You say, well, it's held together by gravity. Well, what is gravity? You say, well it's what holds things together. You say, well what holds thing together? You say, that's gravity. Everybody can explain it; nobody knows what it is. My dear friend, Jesus is the glue of the galaxies. He's the one who holds every star in orbit. He's the one who hold this mighty universe with mathematical precision. His name is Jesus.

You say, well one of these days, there's some mad scientist going to push a button, or somebody going to concoct something, some person set off a chain reaction that's going to destroy this known world and this universe. Or, perhaps, is some ecological disaster going to destroy us? Listen, friend. It's all under His control. Look if you will in chapter one verse ten, and thou Lord in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth. And the heavens are the works of thine hands, talking about Jesus now. They shall perish. That is this earth is going to turn to rust and dust and mold and corruption, be purged with fire, finally, but thou remainest. They shall wax old and stuff a garment, like that old suit that you have in your closet you don't wear anymore and as a vest, you vow shall pull them up and they shall be changed. But thou art the same and thy years shall not fail. You say, is it all going to be destroyed? Only in His time; only when He says so. Nothing is out of control and the Holy Trinity never meets in emergency

session.

Friend, Jesus is the reason for creation. Jesus is the ruler and the regulator of creation and Jesus is the redeemer of creation. Look if you will in verse three. The Bible says at the end of verse three: When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. He is the redeemer of creation. Look at the contrast in that verse, it speaks of His glory, His person, His power, and then our sins—our sins. And, the Bible says that Jesus is the one who redeemed us. He purged our sins. And the Bible says, He did it all by Himself. You didn't help Him then and you can't help Him now. He, by Himself, by Himself, He is the solitary, singular, redeemer of the world. There is no other Savior, other than Jesus. No one else can do it and no one can help Him do it. Friend, He did it all by Himself. He wrought my salvation and He wrought your salvation and that tells me you're going to be saved by Him or you won't be saved and you're going to be saved by Him or you won't be saved. And, you're going to be saved by Him only or you won't be saved. And, you'll be saved by Him, as He does it all for you, and you don't do anything for yourself. It is what Jesus does by Himself. And then the Bible says, He, by Himself, purged our sins. Now, what does that mean? It means that not only did He take away the penalty; He took away the pollution. Do you know what a purgative is? That's something that cleans you out. Jesus cleans you out. Jesus purged you. We hear talk about some folks who are not quiet ready for heaven and they won't go to hell, so they die and go to a place call purgatory. You don't read anything about purgatory in the Word of God. That's a concoction out of the minds of men. The Bible never teaches anything about purgatory. You won't to know where you're purgatory was and is... Calvary.

Jesus purged your sins there. I hear people throw back their soldiers and they say, well, I am a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist. Friend, you better be a washed-in-the-blood Baptist. He's the one, Jesus, who purged your sins. He's the one, our solitary Savior. He's our saving Savior.

And, then it says, He sat down—He sat down. Do you see that there? The Redeemer sat down. He's at the right hand of the Father now. He's seated. He is resting. Why? Well, you go to the Old Testament. You find those Old Testament priests, where they went into the Holy of Holies to offer a blood sacrifice, they never sat down. I'll tell you why they never sat down. There was no chair there. And, why was there no chair there in that Holy of Hollies? There was no chair there because the work was never finished. It's impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin. All those Old Testament sacrifices did was to roll the sins of the people forward for another year and another year and another year. All that was God's promise to pay, and God's promise to pay, and God's promise to pay. And, when the Lord Jesus came, He paid in full, and it is finished, and, therefore, He said, Now, He's seated right now. The first

recorded words of the Lord Jesus Christ are those.

When Jesus was in the temple, confounding the rulers and the lawyers, Jesus said, don't you know, and He said to His parents, don't you know that I must be about my Father's business? He came to do His Father's business. And, He said, I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, for the night comes when no man can work. But then, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He had finished His Father's business, bowed His head on the cross, and said, it is finished. It's done. I've done my Father's business and now, finally, He has sat down there upon that throne, never be offered in sacrifice again. There're those people who talk about the Lord's Supper as another sacrifice for sins. Friend, that's blasphemy. It only recognized the sacrifice that has already been paid. It is done. It is finished. He has sat down forever. Hallelujah. His last words from the cross are these. It is finished. And, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.

Now, I said I said that Jesus name is a name above every name. Why? Well, because, there is wisdom in that name. He is God's final word, because there is wonder in that name. The Lord Jesus is the reason for creation, the regulator of creation, the redeemer of creation.

C. **Worship in the Name**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see today as you rejoice. Not, only is there wisdom and wonder. But there is worship in that name. There is worship in that name. Begin to read now in verse five. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, thou art my Son. This day have I begotten thee. And again, I will be to Him a Father and He shall be to me a Son. And, again, when he bringeth the first begotten into the Son, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him, and of the angels he saith, who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire, but unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.

Now, is it right or wrong to worship Jesus? It's only right to worship Jesus if Jesus is God, for the Bible strictly forbids worshiping anybody or anything that is not God.

Now, He deserves worship because of His superior name. Look in verse four. The Bible says He has a more excellent name than the angels. Do you see that? He has a superior, more excellent name. Now, we know the names of some of the angels, for example, Michael, the archangel—Michael, his name means, one who is like God. The name Gabriel, another angel, means man of God. Lucifer, who later became Satan, his name means light bearer—Lucifer, a bearer of light. Marvelous names that the angels have. Gabriel was an angel that was glorious in might, because we find Gabriel as commander and chief of heaven's armies. He's the leader of the host of heaven. Gabriel is glorious in ministry because we see Gabriel bringing messages from heaven to earth. He's sort of the courier angel that makes great announcements to earth. And then we see Lucifer, glorious the light bearer, but He's glorious in majesty. He's called the

anointed cherub. He was the one who acted there before the throne of God to receive the praise of the created universes and lifted to God the Father.

So, you see these angels, these angels, glorious in majesty, glorious in ministry, glorious in might, wonderful names of the angels. Bible says, Jesus, Jesus has a name, a more excellent. Jesus is not mighty like Michael. Jesus is Almighty. Jesus is not a messenger like Gabriel. Jesus is the Truth, the message that Gabriel brought. Jesus is not glorious like Lucifer, not a star like Lucifer. Jesus Christ Himself is the light. He is the sun of righteousness with healing in His wings. Not just a glorious being, but all glories. In Him, all the fullness of the godhead dwells bodily. Jesus has a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

II. His Sacred Nature

Why worship Jesus? Because of His superior name. Number two, because of His sacred nature. Look in verse five: For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son. Now, if I had a Son, would you expect my Son to be an angel? No, you expect my Son to be a human, because I am human. You see the Son bears the nature of the Father. And so the angels do not have the nature of God. They are created beings, but they are not God's Son, and so here's the logic here. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day hath I begotten thee. And, again I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son.

Now, the angels do not have therefore, the nature of God and again when He bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him. Of the angels, he saith, who maketh his angels spirits. An angel is a spirit, and his ministers a flame a fire. Angels are ministers. But unto the Son—that is, to Jesus—he saith, thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. Jesus is God. Everything the Father is, Jesus is. Everything the Father has, Jesus has. Everything the Father does, Jesus does. Jesus said, I and my Father are one.

Well, you say, I don't understand that, Pastor Rogers. How could he be separate from the Father and be the Father? I don't understand the mystery of the Trinity. Well, I'm glad you don't understand it. I'll tell you why I'm glad you don't understand it: it makes me feel better, cause I don't understand it. And, furthermore, you've never met a person who'll understand it. You don't have to understand it. And, furthermore, I wouldn't have any confidence in a God we could understand.

I was just reading today in the Bible, God says, And to what will you liken me? What will you compare me like? Don't take truth and parade it past the judgment bar of your mind, and say, well, if I can't understand it, it doesn't exist. My dear friend, there'd be a lot of things that don't exist if that's the thing, because there are a lot of things you don't

understand, and I don't understand, and we all know that exist.

You see, how do we know that Jesus Christ is God? We know it by divine revelation. The Bible says it very clearly and very plainly. The Bible says that Jesus is Immanuel, that is, God with us. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.

Now, Jesus is not an angel. There's some who would tell you that Jesus is like the highest of the angels. You have some cultists who are going from door to door, who are teaching just that—that Jesus is the highest of the angels; He is a messenger from God, but He is not coequal and coeternal with God.

But, the Bible says, oh no, the angels are ministering spirits. The angels were there to minister to the Lord Jesus. The angels ministered to Him there at His birth. The angels attended His birth. The angels were there at His death. They attended His death. The angels were there at His resurrection. They attended His resurrection. The angels were there at His ascension when He ascended back into glory. They stood there. Men said, why gaze ye thus up into heaven. This same Jesus is coming again. And when He comes again, He's coming with a glorious angel who will attend Him when He comes again. But they are His servants. He is the master and they are His servants. And therefore, they cannot be compared to Him.

Now, here's the key thing and I want you to see it. I'm saying there's worship in that name. Listen at it. Look at it very carefully. Look at it. Don't miss it. Don't miss it. The last of verse six. God says, and let all the angels of God worship Him.

Some Jehovah's Witness will knock on your door and say, I want to talk to you about religion. You say, Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? And they'll say, oh yes, we believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now, I want to ask you another question. Do you believe that Jesus is God, the Son. Oh, no, we don't believe that Jesus is God, the Son. Then just show them this verse; say, well, evidently, you don't believe as God the Father believes, because God the Father said to God the Son, thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. And God the Father says to God the Son, Thy throne, O God—speaking to the Son—is for ever and ever. Jesus is God upon the throne. And God the Father says of God the Son, let all the angels of God worship Him.

Now, if Jesus is not God, you're not to worship Him. You just ask these people who come to your door, Do you worship Jesus? And if they say, yes, I worship Jesus, and yet you don't believe He's God. Well, no, I don't. Well, how can you worship someone who's not God when the Bible says, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only? If He's not God and you worship Him, you're guilty of the most gross, flagrant abuse in the Bible, which is open idolatry. Well, then, they say, well, I don't worship Him. You say, well, if you don't worship Him, you don't even do what God told the angels to do. Let the angels of God worship Him. You don't do what the wise men did when they

bowed down and worshiped Him. Worship Him.

My friend, if He's only an angel preacher, and only a mortal man, you can't worship Him. Remember there in Revelation chapter nineteen, verse ten, John the apostle on the lonely island of Patmos had a revelation. There was a mighty angel that came and spoke, and when John saw Him, he fell to his feet to worship that angel, and that angel said, John, get up. I'm just your fellow servant. Worship God. Worship God. The angel said, John, if you don't get up, we're both in trouble. You, for what you're doing, and me, for what I'm letting you do. There is one who is to be worshiped. His name is what? Jesus—Jesus. Let all the angels of God worship Him. That little baby that was born that Christmas morning, His name is Jesus, and He is worthy of worship.

III. His Sovereign Nobility

And, I'll tell you why He is worthy of worship: His superior name; His sacred nature; and His sovereign nobility. Look in verse eight. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, Thy throne, is forever and ever. He's born a king. He has a throne. He has a sovereign nobility. You didn't vote Him in and you won't vote Him out. We hear people talking about today, well, have you made Jesus Lord? You're an eternity too late to make Him Lord. Friend, He is Lord. Always has been Lord. Always will be Lord. You can't make Him Lord. The only question today is, Are you going to recognize Him as Lord. Are you going to bow to the fact that He is Lord? Thy throne is forever and ever. A billion, billion, billion, billion eternities from now, He will still be Lord forever and ever and ever and ever. Jesus is Lord.

History's going to come to that time when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He has a name that is above every name. There's wisdom in that name. There's wonder in that name. There is worship in the name of Jesus. He has no rival. He has no equal. And it is Jesus, today, the Son of God and God the Son, who is calling you to Himself. A name above every name. I don't know how you feel this morning, but this scripture has stirred my heart, and I just feel like saying today, All hail the power of Jesus name. Let angels prostrate fall. Let's all bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.

Conclusion

Listen now. Listen. Listen to me. You can come to know Jesus better, but you'll never know anything better than Jesus. I'm going to tell you something else. God has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. Do you understand that? By His Son, the Lord Jesus. And when you have said, Jesus, you've said it all. I'm going to tell you something else. Listen to me. If you say no to Jesus, He has nothing else to say to you.

Now, listen to me. In just a moment I'm going to give many of you an opportunity to

do something, something very wonderful. And here's what it is. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward in this auditorium. Why do I want you to do that? What am I asking of you? Well, I'm asking you to acknowledge Christ. Not to be a secret. Not to be ashamed of Him. Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me and of my Word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the Holy angels. But Jesus said, If you will confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father which is in heaven.

So today, if you're not absolutely totally 100 percent certain if you died now, you'd go to heaven, if you want to be saved, you want to know that you're saved, know how that every sin is forgiven, I'm going to ask you when we stand and sing, just to leave your seat, and make your way down here to the front.

Who Is Jesus Christ?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 9, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 1:1–8

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:”

HEBREWS 1:3

Outline

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Introduction

Just who is Jesus Christ? And, if I ever preached a message that is a pertinent message, today's is. I could not preach on a greater subject. Take God's Word and turn to the book of Hebrews relatively near the end of the New Testament. Chapter one, and in a moment, I'm going to begin reading in verse one and right on through verse eight. And, as we read, we're going to be answering this question: Who is Jesus Christ? Answer it right and live by what you answer and all else will be right. Answer it wrong and all else will be wrong. Listen to what God's Word says, *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou*

art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Hebrews 1:1–8).

Say, just who is Jesus Christ, this sweet little Jesus boy? May I tell you dear friend, there is none other like Jesus Christ. You cannot compare Jesus Christ to anyone else. No mortal man can with Him compare among the sons of men. The noted historian, H. G. Wells, made a list of the ten greatest men of history and number one on that list is Jesus Christ. But, my friend, he doesn't belong on that list. He doesn't belong on anybody's list. He's not Jesus Christ the Great. You may speak of Charlemagne the Great or Peter the Great or Alexander the Great, but not Jesus the Great. He is Jesus the one and only, never another like the Lord Jesus Christ. Napoleon Bonaparte lived a wicked life. He was a warrior most of his life. A man greedy, filled with ambition, and at the end of his life he was exiled on the island of St. Helena. There he got the Word of God and he began to read the Bible and to pour over the Holy Scriptures. He read and he read and he read and then this is what Napoleon wrote about Jesus Christ. He said, "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man.

Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and every other religion the distance of infinity. We can say to the alters of every other religion, 'you are neither gods nor the agents of deity. You are but missionaries of falsehood molded from the same clay with the rest of mortals.'" When Napoleon said Jesus Christ is not a man, what he meant by that is He is more than man, He is not merely man. You see it is the uniqueness of Jesus Christ that makes our faith different; that makes Christianity different. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have Buddhism. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism and still have Confucianism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam and still have Islam. But, you cannot take Jesus Christ out of Christianity. With these others, you can just salvage their teachings and try to live by the teachings and the founder's not necessary.

But, my dear friend, Christianity's not a creed, not a cod, not a cause, not a church. It is Christ. You can't take Christ out of Christianity and still have Christianity. To take Christ out of Christianity would be like the notes out of music or numbers out of mathematics. You don't have anything left if you take Jesus Christ out. Others say, "Here's a sign to the way." But, Jesus said, "*I am the way...*" Others say, "Here is a philosophy that points to the truth." But, Jesus says, "I am '*the truth*'..." Others are teachers who say, "Here's the way to find life." But, Jesus says, "I am '*the life*'..." (John

14:6). That's who the Lord Jesus is, and friend, we need to understand this. Never has there ever been another like the Lord Jesus Christ.

We don't know the exact date of his birth. But, we know that his birth divided history into B.C. and A.D. And, every coin in your pocket bears testimony to the importance of this babe that was born in Bethlehem. He never so far as we know ever wrote a book. And yet, more books have been written about him than any other person who ever lived. He never painted a picture or composed any poetry or music that we know of, and yet He has been the inspiration of the greatest music, the greatest art, and the greatest poetry that the world has ever known. He never raised an army, and yet many have died for him. If I know my poor heart, I would be willing to die for Him because I love the Lord Jesus Christ. He never traveled extensively, and yet Jesus Christ and his influences are known worldwide. He never spoke to more than a few thousand at one time, and yet today there are one billion, three hundred million people who owe their allegiance to Jesus Christ, the greatest religious grouping that the world has ever known. He never had any formal education. Yet more schools, grammar schools, high schools, colleges, universities, and seminaries have been founded in his name than any other person who ever lived. He never owned any property to speak of. A seamless road, when he wanted to take a ride, He had to ride on a borrowed donkey. *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"* (Luke 9:58). When He wanted to make an illustration, He had to borrow coin. He was buried in a borrowed grave. In his own life, He was relatively unknown outside of his own friends and countrymen. But, today, in the modern age in which we live, the encyclopedia gives over thirty-thousand words to a life of this one named Jesus Christ.

I. Jesus Declares the Word of God

Who was this baby? Sweet little Jesus Boy. We didn't know who you were. Who is Jesus? Well, our Scripture tells us, and I want you to look at it. There are three things about Jesus that I want you to see today. Verses 1 and 2, we see that Jesus declares the Word of God. Now, look at it. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Now, Jesus, therefore, is God's Word. Jesus declares God's Word. The book of Hebrews does not begin with an argument. It begins with an announcement, and here is the announcement. Here is the incredible announcement that Jesus Christ, the babe of Bethlehem, is God's last word to humanity. You see, up until this time God had been speaking to human beings gradually. God had spoken through nature. God had spoken through conscience. God had spoken through history. God had spoken through the law. God had spoken through the prophets, but now in these last days he has spoken in his Son. You see, Jesus was standing in the wings of history and His

shadow was cast before He came, and all of the books, the law and the prophets, all of the books of the Old Testament seem to gather like tributaries to a mighty river and they all merge into the last Word of God to man which is Jesus Christ. And, all of the shadows of the Old Testament find their substance in one man, Jesus. And, all of the voices of all the prophets blend together to say this, "Glory to the Son of God." God spoke in other ways, but now God comes to the climax and God says, "All that I have to say to this world is Jesus Christ." My dear friend, God's final word is Jesus Christ. When you've said "Jesus," you've said it all. He is God's final word and He is God's full Word.

Look, if you will, the Bible tells us in verse three that He is the brightness of God's glory. He is the express image of God's person. He is God's Word in fullness, God's Word in focus, and God's Word in finality. You want to know God, know Jesus. Jesus is the express image of God that has the idea of the something that is made with a dye or a mold. And, you take the mold away and you look at the thing that was stamped and the thing that stamped it and they are identical. That's the word here. Jesus says, "*he that hath seen me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:9). You see Jesus is called the Word of God. In John one, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John 1:1). Why is Jesus called the Word, the "logos?" Because the very word "logos"; a word is an expression of an idea. Jesus is the expression of the idea of God. I mean He is the Word of God. When you hear Jesus, you hear God. You see Jesus said in the book of the Revelation, "*I am Alpha and Omega*" (Revelation 1:8). What is Alpha and Omega? Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, Omega, the last letter. If He was speaking to an English audience, He wouldn't say, "I'm Alpha and Omega." He would say what? "I'm A and Z." That is, you see, if you want to say anything in print, what do you do? You have to take the alphabet, twenty-six letters. Did you know, my dear friend, that everything in this Bible that I hold in my hand is made up of just twenty-six letters? Just twenty-six. Why Jesus is saying the same thing that is true about the written word is true about the living Word. "I am the Alpha and the Omega." I am the Word of God; I am God's final Word, God's Word in fullness, God's Word in focus, and God's Word in finality. I am the Word of God. And, God in these last days hath spoken unto us by his Son.

II. Jesus Demonstrates the Works of God

Second thing I want you to see. Not only does Jesus declare the Word of God, but Jesus demonstrates the works of God. Now, I want you to see that everything that God does, Jesus does. For example, Jesus is the reason of creation. Look in verse two. The Bible says, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things and by whom also he made the world." Who made planet earth? Who made Shelby County? Who made the ground that this building occupies?

Jesus did. That baby of Matthew 1 was the great God of Genesis 1 where the Bible says, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). For the Bible says, *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”* (John 1:3). And, Colossians tells us, *“And he is before all things, and by him all things consist”* (Colossians 1:17). Jim Whitmire and I used to pastor down at Cape Kennedy where they sent a man to the moon, and we could go out and see them send up those great mighty Apollo missiles into the sky. That's an incredible thing. One of those missiles, three hundred and sixty five feet tall, that's longer than a football field. Like a thirty-six story skyscraper sitting on end, and most of it filled with volatile fuel and then when they fire that rocket, I cannot tell you the experience of seeing that flame just billow out. And, that staccato thunder of that noise of those great engines that generate seven and a half million pounds of thrust and that great spaceship like a skyscraper, ponderously quivers and lifts into the sky and then off it goes up making its journey all the way to the moon. I tell you my dear friend; the Lord Jesus Christ flung universes into space. Universes came from His fingertips. He spoke and it was so.

The nearest star, Proximus Sintari, is four and a half light years away. Well, how far away is that? Well, light travels at a hundred and eighty six thousand miles a second. That is, it'd go around the world seven times and a half in one second in one second. That's pretty fast, isn't it? Well, light travels a hundred and eighty six thousand miles per second, and a light year is how far light would travel, traveling that fast in a year. Now, the closest star is four and a half light years away, but astronomers are speaking of universes that are five billion light years away. Who made all of that? That little baby. Jesus made all of that.

A. He Is the Reason for Creation

My dear friend, He is the reason for creation. The Bible says, *“...he inherits all things...”* That means it was made by Him and it is made for Him and that little piece of dirt you live on, you say that's my property? Oh no, you're a tenant. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof and people say, *“What's the world coming to?”* I'll tell you what it's coming to; it's coming to Jesus. My Lord is going to reign and to rule and the Kingdoms of this world will become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. He, my dear friend, is the reason for creation.

B. He Is the Regent of Creation

And, He is the ruler and the regent of creation. Look, if you will, as we continue to read. The Bible says in the middle of verse 3 that he upholds all things with the word of his power. The word *“uphold”* means to carry a load. Who keeps this universe running? Who regulates the sun, the moon, and the stars? Who keeps this thing like a timepiece? Who holds the stars in their orbits? What keeps this cosmos from becoming a chaos?

He upholds all things by the word of his power. I used to laugh about a decade ago when they were saying, “God is dead.” Friend, if God dies, you'll know it. You'll know it. You see, the Bible says in the book of Colossians, “By Him all things consist.” That means they hang together. Jesus is the glue of the galaxies. He is the reason; He is the regulator, the ruler, the regent of creation.

C. **He is the Redeemer of Creation**

But, wait a moment; He is also the redeemer of creation. Look, if you will, in verse three. Oh, how I love this. “Who Jesus, being the brightness of God's glory, the express image of God's person, the one who upholds all things by the word of his power...”—now, watch this—“...when He had by Himself purged our sin, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” Jesus is the redeemer of creation. Not only the reason and the ruler, but the redeemer of all creation is the Lord Jesus. Do you see that phrase? “...Purged our sins...” Oh, my dear friend, what is wrong with the world today? Glance this morning at the newspaper as I did before I preached. Read any newspaper. Read of the war. Read of the hatred. Read of the rape, the murder, the pillage, the greed, the disagreement, the filth, the slime, the muck. What is wrong with this world? Well, the sociologist says it's a cultural lag. The psychologist, he calls it emotional behavior. The philosopher, he calls it irrational thinking. The humanist, he calls it human weakness. The Marxist, he calls it class struggle. The criminologist, he calls it antisocial behavior. The Bible calls it sin. Sin. You know the reason we can't find the cure? We never make the right prescription.

My dear friend, until we understand what the problem is, the Bible says that Jesus purged our sins and the Bible says in this verse that He did it by Himself. He is our solitary Savior. Nobody helped him do it and no one else can do it and neither is their salvation in any other for there's no other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Jesus alone saves and you will be saved by Jesus alone or you won't be saved. He by Himself purged our sins. Look at the word “purged.” Perhaps some people think they're going to die and go to purgatory. My dear friend, my purgatory is the blood of Jesus Christ. People talk about being dead in the wood Baptist, you better be a washed in the blood Baptist. The Bible says He with his own blood, He purged our sins. That means this little baby was born to die by Himself purged our sins.

And, then it says that He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high. Do you see that? In the Old Testament, those priests who prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ would go into make their sacrifices, and they would go into the temple or go into the holy of holies. There was furniture in there, but there were no chairs. The priests never sat down because those Old Testament priests work was never done. All they did with those animal sacrifices was just to roll the sins of the people forward until the Lamb of

God would come. And, John the Baptist pointed to Jesus before he baptized him and he said, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). And, God, the perfect, spotless Lamb that was born that Christmas morning, His name was Jesus. He took our sins, carried them to the cross, suffered, bled, and died, and then said *“tetalesti”* which means, “it is finished.” Which means 'paid in full,' and then He sat down with God. “It is finished.”

Do you know His first recorded words in the Bible? *“I must work the works of him that sent me”* (John 9:4). I must be about my father's business. His last recorded words of his earthly ministry are these, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). He did what He came to do. You see He, by Himself purged our sins. Now, my dear friend, let me tell you that the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrates the works of God. He is the reason for creation. He is the regent of creation. He is the redeemer of creation. That's who this baby boy is and was.

III. Jesus Deserves the Worship of God

Number three, and here's the important thing now. Because he declares the Word of God, God speaks to us through His Son and because He demonstrates the works of God, now my dear friend, He deserves the worship of God. He is to be worshipped as God. Who is this baby? Who is Jesus Christ? He is God in human flesh.

Why should we worship him? I give you three reasons and I am finished.

A. His Superior Name

First of all, because of His superior name. Look, if you will, in verse 4. “Being made so much better than the angels...” Now, if an angel were to come in here, you and I would have a bright and glorious angel. We would fall down at his feet if we did not know God. But, being so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Now, you see, the Bible says here in verse 4 that He is better than the angels. The word “better” is the key to understanding the book of Hebrews. It's used thirteen times and the book of Hebrews is written to Jews who had the Old Testament sacrifices and the Old Testament worship and what the writer is saying is that there is something better in Jesus. And, my dear friend, there's nothing better than knowing Jesus, though you can always know Jesus better. And so, what he is saying is that He has a superior name.

Now, did you know that the angels have names? We know the names of some of the angels. For example, Michael, the angel who has a name that means, “who is like God.” Gabriel means “man of God.” Lucifer means, “light bearer.” Those are three chief angels in the Bible. Now, Michael was a glorious angel. He was glorious in might because it was Michael who led the armies of Heaven. Gabriel was glorious in ministry because Gabriel is the one who brings messages to earth. Lucifer was glorious in majesty. He

was the cherub that anoints and he was the anointed cherub, the son of the morning. But, you see what the writer of Hebrews is saying is that Jesus has a more excellent name. He's not mighty like Michael. He's Almighty. He's not a messenger like Gabriel. He Himself is the Word. He is not a star like Lucifer; He Himself is the Son of righteousness with healing in his wings.

Oh, friend there's none other name like the name Jesus. Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? Shall I fail to own his cross or blush to speak his name? I am glad; I am glad that to worship the one who has the most excellent, the name Jesus, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

B. His Sacred Nature

Why worship him? Number one: because of His superior name. Number two: because of His sacred nature. Begin in verse 5. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, 'Thou art my Son this day have I begotten thee.'" My dear friend, He made the angels, but He begot the Son. Oh, what do you have more fellowship with, your automobile or your child? Oh, listen, "Unto which of the angels said he at any time." "And thou art my Son this day hath I begotten thee." He's talking now about the physical birth of the Lord Jesus and his conception in the womb of Mary. And, again, "I will be to him a father and he shall be to me a Son and again, when he bringeth the first begotten into the world." He saith, "Let all of the angels of God worship him. And of the angels, he saith who maketh his angel's spirits and his ministers a flame of fire." Angels are ministers. The angels ministered to Jesus at His birth. They announced His birth. The angels ministered to Jesus at His death. The angels ministered to the Lord Jesus at His resurrection. When He comes again, He'll come with angels, but they are servants. They are ministers. You see, listen to what He's saying here. "And of the angels he saith who maketh his angels spirits and his ministers and his ministers a flame of fire, but unto the Son he saith, 'Thy throne oh God is forever and ever.'"

Who is this baby? He is God in human flesh. We call His name Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The angels worship Him because His worship is right and just. He is worshipped as God is worshiped. And, my dear friend, if Jesus Christ is not God, Heaven is full of idolatrist angels. Remember that. If Jesus Christ is not God, He can't be worshiped. Don't worship him if he's not God, that's idolatry. The Bible says, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (Exodus 20:3). But, you say, "Wait a moment. Is the Father God or is the Son God? God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Do you worship three Gods Adrian?" No, I worship one God who has revealed Himself in three persons. You say, "I don't understand that." Well, neither do I. I wouldn't have any confidence in a God I could understand. Explain the Trinity; you'll lose your mind the

night you lose your soul. My dear friend, I was talking to one of Jehovah's False Witnesses the other day and I was talking about this. And, she said, "That doesn't make sense to me." I said, "What's that got to do with anything?" What's that go to do with it, whether it makes sense to you or not? My dear friend, you can't explain God. God says, "With what will you compare me?" I can that speaker to another speaker. I can compare this pulpit to another pulpit. There is but one God and the only way you'll know Him is what He says about Himself in this word dear friend. The finite will never understand the infinite unless the infinite reveals Himself to the finite and God has revealed this baby as the Might God of Mighty God. Why do I worship Jesus? Because, my dear friend, of his superior name and because of his sacred nature.

C. His Sovereign Nobility

And, last of all, because of his sovereign nobility. Look in verse eight again. "But unto the Son he saith, 'thy throne O God is forever and ever a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy Kingdom.'" Who is this baby? My dear friend, He is a king. He was born a king. We didn't vote Him in and we're not going to vote Him out. Every now and then, I hear somebody say, "Why don't you make Jesus Lord?" Friend, you're too late. He already is. He already is Lord. The idea is, what are you going to do about His Lordship? Are you going to crown Him Lord of your life? Are you going to acknowledge His Lordship? The Bible says His Kingdom is forever and ever, a billion billion billion years from now. The dear Savior, Bethlehem's babe, will go on deathless, ageless, and changeless. Hallelujah, what a Savior. That's why I worship him, because of his superior name, because of his sacred nature, because of his sovereign nobility. That's the baby of Christmas. He has no rival. And, He has no equal. And, today He lays claim to your life. Don't tip your hat to Jesus. Bow the knee.

Conclusion

Why don't you say in your heart today, "All hail the power of Jesus' name. Let angels prostrate fall. I will bring a royal diadem. And, I will crown him Lord of all."

One of my associates told me down that aisle this morning a young man came at 9:30 and he said, "I want to receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord and I want to crown him Lord of all."

I believe there are many here today who may want to do that same thing. I want to tell you something. The Bible says that, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." If you refuse God's Son, God doesn't have anything else to say to you. Jesus is God's final word. When you've said Jesus, you've said it all. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, I pray today that many in this place will by faith receive Jesus. My dear friend, if you would just call out to Him and say Lord Jesus, I love you, I need you, I want you. I promise you that He'll save you. To be saved means that every sin is

forgiven. To be saved means that Jesus Christ now inhabits your humanity and begins to live his life through you, and to be saved means that one day when He comes or when we die He'll take us home to Heaven to be with Him. If you prayed Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner, I need you. I trust you, I accept you as my personal Savior and Lord, He would save you today. Father, I pray that many will do that. Open hearts and draw people or yourself Lord Jesus in your name we pray. Amen.

Setting Sail in a New Year

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 2, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 2:1

Outline

Introduction

I. You Need to Decide a Fixed Direction

II. You Need to Determine a Focused Discipline

III. You Need to Develop a Firm Devotion

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and find Hebrews chapter two—Hebrews chapter two—and when you've found it, I want to talk to you about a new year. We have already begun this New Year. We're on the threshold of something, we don't know what, but something is going to happen this year. Jesus may come this year, or we may go this year, but we know—we know—that we must face this New Year with power, and with faith, and with joy, and we must live in victory this New Year.

Now, life is like an ocean, like a trackless ocean, and there are winds and currents and waves, and we'll meet ships that we never knew were on that ocean, and we'll have all kinds of opportunities, heartaches, tears, and fears, as we sail into a New Year on an uncharted sea. So, we're going to study tonight on this subject: Setting Sail for a New Year.

Look, if you will, in chapter two, verse one: Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

Now, what I just read to you, whether you realize it or not, is a scene from the sea. The writer of Hebrews is using a nautical term. He must have been a mariner, because what he is talking about here in this passage of Scripture is bringing a ship into the harbor. Notice the word there "giving more earnest heed"—do you see it? We ought to give more earnest heed—do you see that in verse one? Actually, scholars tell us that he's talking about bringing a ship into a harbor, which is a very difficult and sometimes a

very dangerous thing. A ship never just drifts into the harbor. The most skillful part of being a sea pilot is bringing the ship into the harbor. And then, look, if you will, the last part of verse one: lest at any time we should let them slip. The word "let them slip" literally means, drift away, that is, you have to be careful that you enter in the harbor, that you don't end up on the rocks, and you have to be very, very careful as a good sailor that you don't just drift on past the harbor.

I. You Need to Decide a Fixed Direction

Now, what he's talking about here is the danger of drifting, the danger of an aimless life. The worst thing that could happen to us this coming year is that we just drift through it, that we let this year happen to us, rather than finding a course, and charting a course, and getting into God's appointed harbor.

Young people behind me, I want to say to you very clearly as your pastor, you need some goals in life. So, the very first thing I want to say to you is you need to determine a fixed direction. Do you have it? Write it down. Say, I will determine a fixed direction. Now, it's very important that you do that, because drifting is one of the easiest things in the world to do.

Now, what causes drifting? Well, winds cause drifting, and current causes drifting, and tides cause you to drift. And there are the winds of worldliness, there are the tides of circumstance, and there are the currents of the old nature, and you put these within, and you're going to find out that there is a very determined thing in you that causes you to drift. You don't have to decide to drift. You will drift, unless you decide not to drift, unless you have an anchor.

There is in my life and in your life a constant pull away from God. Isn't that true? A constant pull. What's that song we sing, Brother Jim. Prone to wonder, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love. And, just like the pull of gravity is on you right now, causing every muscle in your body to sag, there is the pull of the old nature. There are the winds of circumstance, the currents of carnality, that will cause you to drift. Drifting is a determined fact, and drifting is a deceptive fact.

If you've ever been in a boat drifting, you'll find out that you can be deceived by drifting, very easily. In my home state of Florida, West Palm Beach is three and a half miles from the Gulf Stream. The Gulf Stream is a river that runs through the ocean, and I fished many a day in the Gulf Stream. You can go out by boat and get in the Gulf Stream and catch dolphin and mackerel, bonita, and, if you're fortunate, a sailfish, but many times we have gone out, and the fish were biting, and no longer were we off the coast of Palm Beach—we were off the coast of Stuart, forty miles north, because we were drifting. No alarms would go off. No bells would sound; no warning is given.

Drifting is so slow, so silent, and so sure. And I believe that I am speaking today, if this congregation is like most congregations, to a congregation of drifters. And many are drifting, and the drift in your life is so subtle you don't even know it's happening, but you're getting in perceptibly further and further from God's appointed harbor to you. That's the reason the writer of Hebrews said, we ought to give earnest heed lest we simply drift on by God's appointed harbor.

William Perry was an explorer; he explored the Arctic. He made his way to the North Pole. Now, he took his measurements by the stars to see what progress he was making. Day after day after day, they journeyed and measured. They were heading north—when they took their measurements, they were further south than the day before.

They were moving north and yet they were further south, and what was happening was this: they were on an ice floe going north, but the ice floe was drifting south, and it was drifting south further or quicker than they were traveling north.

You may be in a society that's traveling south so fast, you think you're traveling north, and you're just going with it. We don't realize what is happening to us. The things that we allow in our lives, the entertainment that we may watch, the society that we're in, has a pull away, and drifting—drifting—is a very determined thing, drifting is a very deceptive thing, and drifting is always a dangerous thing. You let us drift, it's just a matter of time, it's going to end up in trouble. I mean, in a matter of time, you're going to be on the rocks, or on the reefs, or on the shoals; or you're going to be lost at sea, or you're going to find yourself in a storm, or at the very best you're going to fail to reach God's appointed harbor for you. Your soul never drifts toward God. Your soul always drifts away from God. And, the longer the delay before you correct it, the further the drift.

So, the very first thing I want to say to you is this: that you need to determine a direction for your life at the threshold of a New Year. Decide on a fixed direction and don't be a spiritual drifter. Do you have any goals? On New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, I reviewed the goals for my life. These are things I've written out years ago. I have them, I took them out, I looked at them. I have goals for this church. I have goals for my own life. I have goals for myself physically. I have goals for my self intellectually. I have goals for myself spiritually. I have goals for every member of our family. I have financial goals. I have physical goals. I have spiritual goals. I have them written out. I don't want to be a drifter through life. I look at these. These things help guide me, and in my prayer life, to help.

Have you ever taken time to write down some spiritual goals, some God-given goals, to keep you from being a drifter? Now, folks, you need to be a meaningful specific, not a

wandering, drifting generality. Without goals, you're like a ship without a rudder, a ship without a compass, a ship without a sail, and a ship without an anchor.

Most people do not plan to fail. They simply do not plan anything. You say, well, yes, you ought to have some goals, because you're a pastor. Mothers ought to have goals. Students ought to have goals. Doctors ought to have goals. Teachers ought to have goals. Athletes ought to have goals.

How can you tell whether or not your goal is a God-given goal, a worthy goal? May I give you several tests? What I'm trying to say is this: that you must determine a fixed direction.

Number one: is your goal God-given and God-approved? One of the best ways I can tell you that you can find out whether it is God-given and God-approved is this: can you pray over it? Can you ask God to bless it? And, is there joy in your heart, as you ask God to bless it?

Number two: does it create in you enough spiritual enthusiasm and excitement necessary to see it fulfilled? Number three: does it demand the very best in you? If it doesn't, it is not a God-given goal. God demands and deserves the very best.

Next, does it touch every area of your life? There is no area of your life that is out of bounds, that God is not concerned with.

And so, you just have to have goals. People who have studied, sociologists, have found that ninety-five percent of people never have any written goals, but of the five percent that do have written goals, ninety-five percent of that five percent have reached their goals. I think, if there's been any blessing on my life, and there has been a blessing on my life, it was very early in my life, in high school, that God gave me a direction, that I felt that God had called me into His service; and though there have been winds and circumstances that have blown me this way or that way, there has been a determining factor that has overshadowed the rest of it. I don't hold myself up as a paragon of excellence; but I do say this: that I have determined the power of a goal that has kept me from being a drifter.

As a matter of fact, in 1953, in Yale University, they found out that 3% of the students at Yale University had written specific goals down. That was in 1953. In 1975, they determined that that 3% had achieved more than the other 97% of the students at Yale put together. They were not drifters. They had goals in their life. Do you have a goal? Do you have a vision?

Helen Keller was born blind. They asked Helen Keller, is there anything worse than being born blind? She said, yes, it is to have sight and no vision. Now, the Bible says that you must be careful that you don't become a drifter, that you simply drift through life. I don't want to drift through '94.

II. You Need to Determine a Focused Discipline

Decide a fixed direction. That's the first thing. The second thing: determine a focused discipline. Look in verse three: How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? Now, direction without discipline is a joke. No ship is going to get into the harbor unless it is brought into the harbor. You are going to have to get into the harbor, not by neglect, but by discipline. The antithesis of discipline is neglect.

I read something the other day that said, you don't have to floss all your teeth—just the ones you want to keep. I mean what is it that ruins us? Not overt dissipation, simply neglect. Now, he speaks of our great salvation. He says, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? That's a question that the angels in heaven cannot answer. The great PhD's and psychologists and the learned scientists of this world cannot answer that question, because there is no escape if you simply neglect this salvation.

Now, what makes this salvation so great? Well, it's great in its conception. Look, if you will. How shall we neglect so great a salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord? Friend, this business that we're in was not conceived of by Congress. It was not instituted by Parliament, but in the throne room of God Himself. No other religion in the world, Buddhism and Shinto and Hinduism and Islam, none of these can say what we have said, that this salvation was conceived in God. It's great in its conception.

It's great in its confirmation. Look. And, the Bible says it was confirmed to us by them that heard it. What's he saying? He's saying, what we believe has lasted for 2,000 years. There were people who heard Jesus, and said, it is real, who told others, who told others, who told others. Friend, our faith stands on solid evidence. It's great in its conception, great in its confirmation, great in its cost.

Skip on down to verse nine. Look at it. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. Why did Jesus die? That you might have this great salvation—that's why.

The other day I was listening to a real estate man talk. He was talking about property. He was a man who assesses the value of property. I said, what is the key to the worth of a piece of property? What determines the value? You already know, don't you? He said, what a person is willing to pay for it. Doesn't matter how much you paid for it yourself. It makes no difference how much you have developed it, what you think of it. The key, the value, is what somebody else is willing to pay. That's the value—nothing else. And that's what he does. He just assesses it. He says, I think it'll bring this much. Is that right, Mr. Mills? You know, real estate, sitting here on the front row. He says, it's right. It's got to be right. He knows. All right now, listen. Listen, friend. That

makes me want to shout. I must be worth something, if Jesus would pay that much.

I mean that is the proof of how much we're worth. That's the proof. It's great in its conception. It's great in its confirmation. It's great in its cost. He tasted death for every man. But the Bible asks this question: How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? He's not talking about neglecting being saved. He's talking to saved people. He's talking about just simply neglecting your salvation. Some of you who used to be faithful members of this church, faithful in Sunday School, wouldn't think of missing; faithful in your tithing, faithful in your witness, faithful in your attendance, faithful in your prayer meeting—you have become spiritual drifters. And, I'm going to tell you you're going to end up on the rocks. You don't even know you're drifting. You will not escape. You will not escape. There is no way you can escape; if you drift, you're headed for danger. You're headed for the rocks. You're headed for the reef. You're headed for backsliding. We cannot do it. This salvation, friend, is great. It's great in its content. Look, if you will, in verses eleven and twelve: For he that sanctifieth and they which are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he's not ashamed to call them brethren. Do you know what that means? Jesus calls you His brother. Does that do something for you? He calls you His brother. You're next of kin to the Holy Trinity. My goodness, what a salvation! We're blood brothers to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look, if you will, in verse eleven—the Bible says, for both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. What does that mean? That means that we are partakers of the divine nature. Have you become ho hum about your salvation. You're a member of this wonderful church. We hear music like we've heard today. We've had teaching and fellowship and prayer. We've been so blessed. What used to make people shout in the aisles now puts them to sleep. We yawn in the face of God. You begin to neglect your salvation this year, and you're going to end on the rocks. I'm telling you, there's no escape. There is no escape. You must determine your direction, or you're going to drift. And then, you must firm up your discipline, or you're going to drift. You cannot simply neglect so great a salvation. Many in this building are a long way from what you could be or ought to be. They have done studies, sociologists, those who study who study human potential and the factors, the average person develops about 10% of his potentiality—10%. If a person develops 25% of his potentiality, he's thought of as a genius. But there's no reason that the 10-percenter could not develop 20%. So, if you are a 10-percenter and you develop to be a 20-percenter, you have doubled your potential, and still have 80% to work on. You see, there's so much that we could do, and we ought to do.

I'm not talking about doing better by grit and determination. I'm talking about the Holy Ghost salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ to be what God Almighty

wants us to be. But it does not happen without discipline. Does that word bother you? Does the word disciple bother you? Those words are first cousins. They belong together.

A man went to a little village one time. He was a tourist. He said to an old man there, Any great men born in this village? He said, no, just babies—babies. Friend, great men are not born great men. They become great men by having a goal. There's a direction. They don't just drift on past the harbor, and there is a discipline they do not neglect. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

III. You Need to Develop a Firm Devotion

There's a third thing I want to say. Not only do you need to have that direction, and that discipline, but there's a third thing that will help you and bring you into the harbor: you need to develop a firm devotion. Here's what I've said. You decide a fixed direction. You determine a focused discipline. And then, you develop a firm devotion, because the direction and the discipline without the devotion will come to a splendid nothing.

Now, you're in Hebrews chapter two; turn to Hebrews chapter six. The writer of Hebrews picks up exactly the same thought again. He speaks of our hope that we have. And remember that in the Bible hope does not mean, maybe, perhaps. It's not a strong wish. It is rock-ribbed assurance based on the Word of God. Now look in verse nineteen: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast which entereth into that within the veil wherewith the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus made a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Now what does that mean? Well, let me say he's still talking about the sea. He's still talking as a mariner. He's still talking about getting into God's appointed harbor. And he says we have an anchor. Now, the anchor is a symbol of our Christian faith. There are three symbols that have come to us from antiquity. One is the cross. We're very familiar with that. Another is the fish. Many of you know that the fish is an emblem of Christianity. The third is the anchor. I have been in the catacombs of Rome, and there I have seen those early Christians as they would put an anchor on the wall, draw an anchor with a hook. It's because of this verse right here. As a matter of fact, if you ever come and go with us to the Holy Land sometime, and we enter into that tomb that is thought by many to be the empty tomb where the body of our Lord lay, if you look on the back wall of that tomb, etched on that back wall in dark reddish ochre paint, if you'll look discerningly, you can see a cross, but at the bottom the cross has become an anchor. Some ancient Christian put that symbol on the back of that tomb. Why? Because of this verse. Look at it again: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul. Now, what he is saying is that in order to keep from drifting, we need an anchor of hope that grips the

solid rock of truth connected with the cable of faith. The anchor of hope; the rock of truth; the cable of faith.

The word for hope here is the word elpis. I didn't say Elvis, elpis. It means an anchor rope. It's very interesting. The writer here is making a play on words: Which anchor rope we have, which hope we have, is an anchor for our souls. Now, what he's talking about is this: they didn't have great engines to run the ships in those days as we have today. They were much more dependent upon the elements—the tides the winds, the happenstances of what would happen. The harbors were not dredged as our harbors are dredged. To bring those ships into a harbor was a very difficult thing sometime. But those men were not ignorant. In many ways, I think, they had more wit and ingenuity than we have, because they did so much with so little. But when they wanted to bring a ship into a dangerous harbor, those ships would have great anchors as ships have today. And they would put that anchor in a small boat. The ship would lie off shore, and that small boat would carry the anchor into the harbor, and there in the harbor there would be great huge rocks embedded in the shore. And they would put one of the tongs of that anchor, one of the tines of that anchor, in one of those great rocks. And now they have already put the anchor in the harbor, but the ship is already out there, still out there.

Now, who puts the anchor in the harbor? Well, the one who puts the anchor in the harbor was called the forerunner, and he would just take the anchor in a little boat, and he would put the anchor in the harbor, and at the appointed time when the tide is right, they would pull that mighty ship into the harbor.

Now, listen to this verse again, and see what it says to us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, which enters into that within the veil. Within the veil—he's talking about what? The Holy of Holies in heaven wherein the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus. You know what Jesus has done? Oh, my friend, by His death, burial, and resurrection, Christ, our Forerunner, has taken the anchor of hope, and He has lashed it to the throne of God. He's already there. And we're connected to Him with that anchor tied, the rope of our salvation, to the throne of God, and it's tied firmly.

That's the reason that we're so excited about our salvation. I can't see the anchor, folks, but I can feel the tug, can't you? I can feel the tug. And, in this present age, I need an anchor. Jim, we sing that song, When darkness seems to hide His face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale—what? My anchor holds within the vale. That's what this is talking about.

Conclusion

You see, we're gonna have storms this coming year, folks. I mean, anybody can see the storm clouds on the horizon. We're gonna have some storms. But I want to say to you, let the breakers roll. Let the floods swell. Let the tides lift. And, though our sails be torn to shreds, though our mast be broken, though our tackle is carried away, though our timbers creak, friend, our anchor holds. Our anchor holds within the veil. And every day He's inching us closer into the harbor. You see this is what He's saying. He's saying you've got to have a direction. You've got to be headed toward the harbor. You've got to have a discipline. You cannot neglect. And you've got to have a devotion. You've got to put your heart, your mind, your eyes, upon the Lord Jesus Christ. One day, because our anchor holds, we can sing when we get to heaven I've anchored my soul. I'll sail the wide seas no more. The tempest may sweep o'er the wild stormy deep, but in Jesus I'm safe evermore.

I hope this'll be a great year for you. Oh, I hope it'll be a great year for you. I hope that you'll not be a spiritual drifter. I pray to God that you'll discipline your life this evening. And I pray to God that you'll have a devotion that makes that anchor within the veil so very real to you.

In Times Like These You Need an Anchor

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 10, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 2:1–4; 6:16–20

*“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure
and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”*

HEBREWS 6:19

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Tragedy of an Aimless Life
- II. The Victory of an Abundant Life
 - A. Salvation Is Great in Its Conception
 - B. Salvation Is Great in Its Confirmation
 - C. Salvation Is Great in Its Cost
 - D. Salvation Is Great in Its Content
- III. The Security of an Anchored Life

Conclusion

Introduction

Hebrews chapter 2. A wonderful, wonderful book is the book of Hebrews. It so exalts the Lord Jesus Christ and so helps us to rejoice in the salvation that we have. Today, for the title of our message, I want to borrow a line from a gospel song: “In Times Like These You Need an Anchor.” I want to talk to you about the anchor of the soul. And the scripture that we have today actually is a sermon from the sea. It deals with nautical terms. It deals with ships, and anchors, and harbors, and those kind of things. And I want you to put yourself right into the middle of this message and let God speak to you.

Now, I begin reading in chapter 2:1: *“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”*

(Hebrews 2:1–4)

I. The Tragedy of an Aimless Life

My dear friend, I want to talk to you about a tragedy; it's what I want to call "the tragedy of an aimless life." Now look, if you will, in verse 1. The Bible says, "*We ought to give...more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.*" (Hebrews 2:1) Do you see that phrase "to give more earnest heed"? It was really a phrase that would be used of a mariner that talks about being very, very careful to bring his ship into the harbor. To give more earnest heed means to be very, very careful to get your ship into the harbor. It's a word borrowed from the sea, from the ocean, from the way of the winds and the waves and the tides. It's very difficult to get a ship into a harbor. Almost anybody can sail on the open seas, but getting into the harbor—especially the harbors of those days. They didn't have the jetties and the protection that mariners have today. And, in that day, you had to come into the harbor mostly under sail or, at best, by oar—it wasn't easy; it was very difficult. And again, you can wreck a ship bringing it into the harbor, I suppose, quicker than almost any other thing. And so, what the writer is saying here: "*Give...earnest heed*" (Hebrews 2:1)—"be very careful."

Now, listen as we continue to read, for he says, "*Lest at any time we should let them slip.*" (Hebrews 2:1) Now, if you have the King James Version of the Scriptures, as I do, that's what it says—"*let them slip.*" (Hebrews 2:1) I read this this morning in about six different translations, most of them have something about "drifting" in it rather than "slipping," or "letting it drift by." What he is saying is this: "When you bring the ship into the harbor, be very careful of the wind and the tides and the waves. Watch that you not be negligent, because if you're not careful, you're going to drift right on past the harbor of safety." Now, that's the figure of speech there. He's talking here about the danger of drifting. And, by the way, that's a danger that both saved and lost have alike, and that is, the danger of just gradually getting away from God's harbor of safety. It doesn't take a rebellious sailor to drift—just a negligent one.

He speaks of the harbor as salvation—great salvation. And so, he asks in verse 3 this question: "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.*" (Hebrews 2:3) That's the question. That's a question, dear friend, that no lawyer can answer. That's a question that no scientist with his slide rule, and cyclotron, and atom smasher can answer. That's a question that no philosopher with his thick volumes can answer. That is a question that no soothsayer can answer. That is a question that God Almighty cannot answer because there is no answer. "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.*" (Hebrews 2:3) There is no escape. All you have to do is neglect and you'll drift right on past the harbor. That's what he's saying. He said, "*Give...heed.*" (Hebrews 2:1) Be careful. You want to bring your ship into the gospel harbor, but there

are tides, there are forces, there are winds of circumstances, there's the pull of the old nature, there's the tide of sin and worldliness that pulls you away from the harbor.

Now, all you have to do to miss the harbor—all you have to do—is just simply neglect. You don't have to be a rebellious sailor, just a neglective sailor. You see, friend, there's a constant pull on my life. The tide of this world is constantly pulling me away. Do you feel it? It's in your life, too, even if you're saved.

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love.*

—ROBERT ROBINSON

Always there's that pull; there's that drift.

You know, drifting is so easy. I mean, you don't have to work to drift. If you've been out in the ocean, as I have so many times, especially down in Florida, where you'd be out deep-sea fishing and get in the Gulf Stream, that river in the ocean that flows north, you could go out the Palm Beach Harbor and fish for several hours and look up and you'd be out there east of Stuart, Florida, forty miles north, not aware that anything has happened except you're just simply drifting. You see, drifting is so slow, and the further you are from the shore, the harder it is to tell you're drifting. And, it is so silent. No bells ring. No whistles sound. No alarm goes off. Drifting is so silent and so sure—sometimes so slow that you don't even realize what is happening as you are drifting further and further away. That's happening to some of you. Some of you are getting further and further and further away from God, but you're not aware of it. It's just a gradualism. You don't realize how far you've come. Some are deeper into sin than they ever thought they would be. Somebody wrote these words:

*[Sin] is a monster of [such horrible] mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
[But] seen too oft, familiar with [its] face,
We first endure, then pity, [and] then embrace.*

—ALEXANDER POPE

You're doing things now that you would never have dreamt of doing, but you just drifted and drifted further and further and further away.

Now, what he is talking about here is the tragedy of an aimless life. Your life is like a ship without a mast, without a sail, without a rudder, without a compass. And, there's the harbor of safety, and he's saying, "Take earnest heed to the things that you've heard, lest you just go right on past the harbor and you miss so great salvation." (Hebrews 2:1–3) There is a determined pull. There is a deceptive pull. There is a dangerous pull in your life. You never drift closer to God. You never get closer to God by drifting; you only drift further and further away from God. And, how dangerous it is to drift! A ship without an anchor, drifting, sooner or later will come to no good. Sooner or

later, it will end up on the sandbar. Sooner or later, it will end up on the rocks. Sooner or later, it will end up on the shoals. Sooner or later, it will find itself in the storm. Or, sooner or later, it will find itself a derelict at sea. You never drift into the harbor. That's what he's saying. And, you're never going to just simply go through life and drift into a right relationship with God. And so, there's the danger of drifting—what I want to call “the tragedy of an aimless life.” That's where some are today.

II. The Victory of an Abundant Life

But now, I want you to think just a moment not only about the tragedy of an aimless life spoken of here in verses 1 and 2, but I want you to think of the victory of an abundant life. Look at it in verse 3. Now, he speaks of the harbor: “*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.*” (Hebrews 2:3) Do you see that phrase “so great salvation”? Now, we use the word *great* in a light sense. “How'd you like the ballgame?” “Oh, it was great.” “How was the meal?” “Oh, it was great.” “How was the music this morning?” “Oh, it was great.” And, by the way, it was great. But, we use the word *great* quite lightly, but God doesn't just toss the word *great* around. When God says something is great—and not only “great,” but “so great”—He really means it. Let me give you about three or four ways that this salvation is really great. And, if you're saved, this ought to help you just to relax and enjoy what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Salvation Is Great in Its Conception

Notice: “*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord.*” (Hebrews 2:3) Who thought up this idea of salvation? Not you, not me. It didn't come from Parliament. It didn't come from the halls of Congress. It didn't come out of some philosophy class. It doesn't come from Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism. Where did it come from? It originated in the bosom of Almighty God, in the glory-circled throne, in the council hall of the Almighty, as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit took counsel together. Before God ever swung this world into space, before God ever scooped out the seas and heaped up the mountains and flung out the sun, moon, and the stars, salvation was in the heart and mind of God. The Bible says, “[*Christ was*] *slain [before] the foundation of the world.*” (Revelation 13:8) God thought it. It came out of the heart of God. It was first spoken by God. And, my dear friend, if you refuse to be saved, it is an insult to God who has spoken of this salvation. It came out of the heart, the mind, of God, and that's why it's so great.

B. Salvation Is Great in Its Confirmation

It's great in its conception, and, my dear friend, it's great in its confirmation. Look again, if you will, in verse 3: “*which [was] first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with*

signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" (Hebrews 2:3–4) Now, what's he saying? Not only did God conceive it in His own heart and mind, but those who have received what God has conceived have been so radically and dramatically changed that they just share that gospel with other people—that this gospel that we preach today, dear friend, is not a hope-so, maybe-so salvation; it is a salvation that has been confirmed by those who have heard it. I am a confirmation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I'm here—living, breathing testimony that the gospel of Jesus Christ has saved me and changed me. I'm not what I ought to be, and I'm not perfect. But you're looking at a man who has Jesus in his heart.

I picked this out of our newspaper last Friday. Did you read about John Bramlett in Friday's sport page? Bobby Hull, staff reporter, wrote an article about our own John Bramlett, who is a member of this church. It's called "Bramlett Relishes Revival": "Reformed bully John Bramlett will be inducted into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame tonight in Knoxville. If asked, he'd be honored to say the invocation, or the benediction, or both for the awards banquet"—of course, they don't know it, but if asked, he'd also preach—"Amazing story, this Memphian known as 'Bull.' Once he roamed and raged; now he preaches and praise. He's progressed from demon to disciple all by the grace of God and the love of Jesus"—he says—"It should come as no shock that Bramlett, forty-nine, is among the nine inductees, including the late Johnny Antonelli, former Memphis Blues manager, for this twenty-sixth year of the Hall of Fame. Bramlett starred in football and baseball at Memphis State and in the pros. As a leather-tough, barroom-brawling linebacker for the Denver Broncos, he was runner-up to New York Jets quarterback Joe Namath for AFL Rookie of the Year in 1965. Twice he was a pro-bowler"—now ladies, that doesn't mean he was bowling; it means he played twice in the Pro Bowl. That's a football game—"The surprise—no, call it a miracle—is that he isn't being honored posthumously"—kids, that means that he isn't honored after he's dead—"If he'd continued the bawdy lifestyle that was a spinoff of his athletic prowess, he probably would be among the deceased. 'No doubt, I would be dead and in hell,' Bramlett said"—then this article goes on to tell what people who knew him before and after he got saved had to say—"People who followed Bramlett's career knew that he was one bad, mean dude—and that's when he was sober. Put a few beers under his belt and... 'The older I got, the more I drank. And, the more I fought, the more problems I had,' he said. 'As a player, I had an outlet for contact and hitting people, but I never left it there. I carried it into the streets and bars.' Once, while in a drunk and devilish mood, Bramlett held a pro baseball teammate by the heels out a window of an eleventh floor hotel room. Imagine the surprise of the teammate, Charlie Haygood, of Macon, Georgia, when Bramlett called years later to say he'd become a Christian. 'No one could ever have convinced me that you could be turned around. You were too far gone,' Haygood

said”—and then, he said this—“If everyone who knew you then could see you now, they wouldn’t doubt the power of God.”

That’s what he’s talking about right there. You see, it’s conceived by God the Father. It is confirmed by those who have heard it and those who have witnessed the miracle-working power of the gospel.

C. **Salvation Is Great in Its Cost**

Great in its conception, great in its confirmation, great in its cost. Look, if you will, here, in verse 9: *“But we see Jesus”—the great Lord of glory—“made a little lower than the angels”—why?—“for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”* (Hebrews 2:9) Jesus, with His rich, red, royal blood tasted death for every man. Listen: Jesus died instead of you. His death had your name on it. Only the damned in hell can begin to know what Jesus suffered on that cross, and, my dear friend, He did it for you. If you refuse this salvation, if you just drift on past the harbor, if you walk out of this church building or any church building without Jesus, you trample underneath your feet the precious blood of Jesus, pour contempt upon His death.

D. **Salvation Is Great in Its Content**

How great is this salvation? It’s great in its conception: It came out of the heart of God. It’s great in its confirmation: God confirms it with miracles. My dear friend, it is great in its cost: Jesus tasted death for every man. I want to tell you it is great in its content. Look in verse 11: he says, *“For both he that sanctifieth and they [that] are sanctified are all of one.”* (Hebrews 2:11) Now, what does that mean? “He that sanctifieth”—that’s the One who saves us. “Those who are sanctified”—that’s us. He says, “The Lord and His people are all of one.” All of one what? All of one nature. I am in Him; He is in me. I am made a partaker of the divine nature.

Now, here’s the sweet part; listen to this. This is almost too good to be true, and it says, *“For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”* (Hebrews 2:11) Do you know, if Jesus Christ were to come and stand here literally on this platform this morning, I’d want to be like that prodigal son? I’d want to fall at His feet. But, you know what He just might do? Slip His arm around me and say, “Hello, Brother Adrian”—“Brother Adrian.” He’s not ashamed to call me brother. Have you ever thought about that? Friend, let me tell you just how great this salvation is: When you get saved, you become next of kin to the Holy Trinity. I mean, Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brother. And, every time the Church meets, the Bible says Jesus is out there singing praise in the midst of His brothers. (Hebrews 2:11) That’s wonderful. In the midst of His brethren, He is there. *“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20) That’s the reason I say I’d rather be a saved

sinner than an innocent angel. Angels never knew the joy that my salvation brings. It's great. That's the harbor that we come into. It's the harbor entitled "Great Salvation." It is the haven of rest.

III. The Security of an Anchored Life

Now there is, my dear friend, the tragedy of an aimless life: just drifting on by. There is the victory of an abundant life: *"so great [a] salvation."* (Hebrews 2:3) Now, here's the third thing and the final thing: There is the security of an anchored life. Turn with me now to Hebrews chapter 6. Here's the security we have in the Lord Jesus. Notice, beginning in verse 16: *"For men verily swear by the greater"*—that is, when a man goes into a courtroom, he may put his hand on a Bible and take an oath. He swears by the greater—*"and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife"*—that is, that settles it when a man says, "I so swear"—*"Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs [the] promise [of] immutability of his counsel"*—that is, "I'll never change my mind. You can count on me. You heirs, you are in my will, and it will never change"—*"God, willing...to shew...the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it [with] an oath"*—well, if a man always swears by something greater than himself, what would God swear by? Well—*"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie"*—the Bible says God swore by Himself because He could swear by no higher—*"[that] we might have...strong consolation, who have fled for refuge"*—now, that's the harbor—*"to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made [a] high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."* (Hebrews 6:16–20)

You say, "Adrian, what does all of that mean?" Well, he says here that *"[our] hope [is] an anchor of the soul."* (Hebrews 6:19) The Greek word for hope is *elpis*, and it means "an anchor rope." You see, *"[our] hope [is] an anchor of the soul."* (Hebrews 6:19) What does that mean?

Well, dear friend, back in Bible times, when a ship wanted to come into the harbor, it may not, because of the wind and the tide, be able to get into the harbor yet. But it would know one day that it would come into the harbor. And in those harbors, there were great rocks along the shore. And in those rocks, there were fastening places where an anchor might be placed. And what they would do in this time is this, that if the ship could not get into the harbor just yet, it would let down an anchor where it was, out there off the coast. And then it would take the main anchor and put it in a small boat. They would put a sailor in that boat. And with oars, he would take the main anchor, fastened by a line to the ship, and row into the harbor. He could go against the wind, and he could go over the shoals and, maybe, the sandbar. They didn't have dredges

like we have today, and so they had to wait for full tide. He could take that little boat and go into the harbor. And he would take the mighty anchor and go into the harbor and fasten it to one of those great, huge stones on the shore. The man who went into the harbor was called the forerunner. And he would take the anchor of that ship and he would just bring it into the harbor and, there, fasten it safe and secure to a great, mammoth rock that could not be moved. Now, when the tide was high and the time was ripe for the ship to come into the harbor, all they had to do was to begin to winch that chain, that cable, and slowly but surely that ship would be pulled right into the harbor.

Our hope is an anchor of the soul. (Hebrews 6:19) Now the Bible says, “Jesus is the forerunner.” (Hebrews 6:20) Jesus has taken the soul’s anchor, and He’s brought it right into the throne room of God behind the veil.

What is the veil? In the temple there was a veil, a great curtain, a huge curtain. That curtain went from floor to ceiling, from wall to wall, and only the high priest could go in there once a year with blood because behind the veil was the mercy seat. It was the throne of God where God’s Shekinah glory was. And only the high priest could go in there.

Now the writer of Hebrews says, “Jesus has taken the anchor of hope, and He’s gone right into the throne room of God. He has fastened the anchor of hope to the very throne of God, behind the veil.” (Hebrews 6:19–20) A man in yesteryear would let his anchor down. Friend, we let ours up. It’s right up there in the glory. Jesus, the forerunner, has already taken the anchor there! You talk about security! You see, we are anchored; we have an anchor of hope. There is no way—there is no way—that we can ever be lost or miss the harbor. That’s what he is saying. I can’t see that anchor rope, but my dear friend, even right now while I’m talking to you, I can feel the tug. And those of you who are saved, you know exactly what I’m talking about. We sing about this. Folks, have you ever thought about some of the songs that we sing?

*When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace.
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.*

—EDWARD MOTE

That’s what he’s talking about.

Friend, there are a lot of winds. The title of this message is “In Times Like These You Need an Anchor.” Friend, we are getting blown and battered from every side. And the tides of worldliness, and the winds of circumstance, and the storms of life are coming. But I want to say—you let the winds blow and let the sails be tattered, let the tackle go overboard, and let the old ship creak and moan, and let the swelling tide rise and fall—my anchor holds within the veil. That’s what he’s talking about. “We have a

hope,” he says, “steadfast and sure.” Listen to it. Verse 19: *“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”* (Hebrews 6:19) Can you say it and mean it?

*I've anchored my soul in the “Haven of Rest,”
I'll sail the wide seas no more;
The tempest may sweep o'er the wild, stormy deep,
In Jesus I'm safe evermore.*
—HENRY L. GILMOUR

Conclusion

You see, that's the message here. There's the tragedy of an aimless life: just drifting. There's the victory of an abundant life: so great a salvation. There is the security of an anchored life: That's what it means to know Jesus.

Now what do you have to do to miss Jesus? Burn down a church? Tear up a Bible? Blaspheme God? Spit on the cross? Do you know what you have to do to be lost? Nothing. Nothing! *“How shall we escape if we”*—what?—*“neglect”*—just neglect—*“so great salvation.”* (Hebrews 2:3)

On May 31, 1889, a tragedy struck in northern Pennsylvania, a little town. That little town, nestled in the valley of the Conemaugh Mountains, was beneath a dam of a lake that was built for some commercial reason and then abandoned and became sort of a fishermen's paradise. That lake up there in the mountains held millions of tons of water. And it had an earthen dam. The Corps of Engineers went up and examined that lake above Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and they said, “This dam is not safe.” They went back down to the people who lived in the valley and said, “You better get out of here. That dam is not safe!”

Do you know what the people did? Some of them scoffed. Others of them said, “Well, not today, I mean, it's been there so long, and everything seems to be safe.” They just simply neglected to do anything. The last warning was fifteen days before the dam broke. Somebody came riding into the city at breakneck speed to say, “The dam has burst! Flee for your life!” It was too late then. A wall of water—125 feet high, traveling at the rate of fifty miles an hour—came through that valley. Conservative estimates say that 2,700 died. Others say, “No, it was more like 7,000 died,” and were swept out to meet God.

Now, what was necessary to drown in that flood? Did you have to go up there and dig holes in the dam? Did you have to curse the messengers who came and said that the dam was unsafe? All those people had to do to perish was to do nothing—to do nothing—to do nothing! That's the reason Hebrews chapter 2, verse 3, asks this question: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3) May I

tell you, my friend, that even as I am speaking to you today, the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously beating against the dam of His mercy. God brought you here today to be saved. God brought you here today and had Jim Whitmire and this choir to sing these songs about salvation. And God gave me this message today to show to you the tragedy of an aimless life, to show to you the victory of an abundant life, and the security of an anchored life. Hope is the anchor of the soul. That anchor is fixed to Jesus, the Rock of ages. Do you know Him? Are you saved? You can be. The God that saved Adrian Rogers, the God that saved John Bramlett, is the God who will save you today.

Why Christmas?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 8, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 2:5–18

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

HEBREWS 2:9

Outline

Introduction

- I. Man Is Crowned with Glory
 - A. Man’s Design
 - B. Man’s Dignity
 - C. Man’s Dominion
- II. Man Is Charged with Guilt
- III. Man Is Changed by Grace
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 - C. Sympathize with the Saints

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to Hebrews chapter two—Hebrews chapter two—and we are going to be discussing tonight from the Word of God, “Why Christmas?” Now, I think we all know why, but I think we’ll be blessed all the more as we study why from the Word of God and learn some things tonight that will help us to share with our neighbors and to rejoice in our heart that God sent His Son into this world. And I want to begin reading here in Hebrews chapter two, with verse five, and I am going to break in to the reading with a preposition, and I want to read all the way to the end of the chapter, verse eighteen. The part of it is convoluted and hard to understand, but if you’ll pay attention, and stay with me, I think you’ll be incredibly blessed as I was, as I studied this particular passage of Scripture that answers the question, why Christmas?

Verse five, “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak.” Now the writer had been talking about the world to come. He said the angels are not going to rule in that world. But then notice, “but one in a certain place testified saying, what is man? That thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou

visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Thou crownest him with glory and honor. Thou didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put in subjection under him, he left nothing that in that he put all in subjection under him. He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet, all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. Crowned with glory and honor. That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him. For whom are all things and by whom are all things. In bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctified and they that are sanctified are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them reverend, saying I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him, and again, behold, I and the children which God hath given me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood. He also himself likewise took part in the same. That through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death." That is the devil. "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage. For verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren. That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest and things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to suffer them that are tempted."

That's a long passage of Scripture, and obviously, we're not going to be able to deal with all of it. But I want you to notice that the writer of Hebrews is quoting David. Look if you will in verse six. "But one and certain place testified saying, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

Now what the writer of Hebrews is doing is quoting Psalm eight that was written by David, and I believe written by David when he was a shepherd boy out on a lonely, starlight night, perhaps a pale moon up there. And David is on his back looking to the nether reaches of space. And he sees those stars like diamonds, like a candle arbor in the sky. He see's that moon like a yellow jungle there. And he just wonders how far away are those heavenly bodies? How vast is this space? How insignificant David must have felt as he saw the sun the moon and the stars.

As a matter of fact, I believe that David would have been overwhelmed if he knew that one day these very words would be planted on the moon. Did you know that the Apollo astronauts left a time capsule with David's words on the moon—that moon that David was looking up at? The sun, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained? He had no idea that there would ever be astronauts who would go to the moon. But he was thinking about himself. And as he looked up there and saw all of that, he thought

first of all about the smallness of himself. How small man is.

And as we have told you before, the astronomers today tell us that there are more stars in our universe than there are grains of sand on all of the seashores of all of the earth. And then not only must David have thought of the smallness of himself. He must have thought of the brevity of his life.

Do you know we're here for just a little while, and then we're gone, and the stars just shine on and on and on? The Bible speaks of our lives as a tale that is told, as a flower that fades as grass that withers, as smoke that vanishes, as a shadow that declines, as a vapor that passes away. And he says our life is like that. We're here and then we're gone. Were here such a brief time, and were so small and so insignificant. What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visited him?

Now, you know, that's a big question, what is man? People answer that question, wrongly most of the time. Of course there is the understatement. There is the humanist. He just tells us that we're an accident. That we're a blob. We just happened somehow. We're the product of flying chance, and therefore, we're just another animal.

By the way, I don't understand why the humanists call themselves humanists. They ought to call themselves animalists. Really. They ought to call themselves animalists. Because they believe that man is an animal. And all of these animal rights people and all of this, that's all a part of that whole smear that whole thing that does not make a distinction between man and the animals.

The great historian H. G. Wells, I think, summed it up. He said man is an inhabitant on a thin rind, on a negligible detached blob of matter belonging to one of the millions of stars in one of among millions of island universes. That is, we're just a happenstance; we don't matter to anything. And then, of course, that's the understatement; and then, there is the overstatement. The New Agers, they say, well, what is man? Well, man is God, and God is man, and the universe is God. And man is a part of the universe, and all of this hodgepodge of Eastern Mysticism and Hinduism and all of that. And so, there is a veritable self-deification.

So David asks, what is man? The biblical view of man is something that you need to understand. And, my dear friend, you will never know God until you understand Jesus, and you will never know man, until you understand Jesus. You have to see Jesus to know both God and man, because Jesus was God in human flesh, and Jesus is a perfect man.

Now, look around at the men in this congregation tonight. Do you see any perfect men? No. Because what you see are men not in the image of God. Man was made in the image of God, but the men that you see tonight are not in the image of God. The men you see tonight are in the image of Adam. Adam brought forth a son after his likeness and his image. And that image in Adam is ruined and marred.

If you'd never seen a Rolls Royce, and I took you to the junkyard and showed you a Rolls Royce that was wrecked, I don't know whether you'd have seen a Rolls Royce or whether you haven't seen a Rolls Royce. What you've seen is not a Rolls Royce, but a wreck.

Now, take Brother Sonny over here. That's not a man; that's a wreck. You have not really seen a man when you look at him. What is man? In order to understand what man is and in order to understand who God is, you have to see the Lord Jesus Christ who truly reveals both God and man.

I. Man Is Crowned with Glory

Now, this passage tells us three basic things about man. And in these three basic things, your going to understand, why Christmas? Why Christmas?

A. Man's Design

The very first thing it tells us about man is that man is crowned with glory when God made him. Look if you will verses six and following. But one in a certain place testified saying, what is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Thou crownest him with glory and honor and did set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. When God made man, God made man as the crowning work of his creation, and man was designed by God. Verse seven says, thou madest him.

And how did God make him? Well, Genesis Chapter one and verses twenty-six and twenty-seven, God said let us make man after our image and in our likeness. Now man is not God. But he does have God-given powers and man was designed by God and he was designed to have dominion and to rule when God made Adam, God made Adam to be king of the earth—to rule. God gave him dominion. And so, God made him to rule over the works of his hands. And so, you see God's design.

B. Man's Dignity

But you see man's dignity. Look, if you will, in verse six. What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that thou visitest him? Suppose that you found a letter in your mailbox tomorrow morning and it was from George Bush? George Bush says I am coming to Memphis and I want to spend some time with you. And your first question is why me? Why would the President of the United States say that he is coming to Memphis, and he's going to spend some time with me? Why would he want to visit me?

Now, you see, God has been visiting men down through the ages. David says, why does God visit men? God visited Adam. He visited Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua,

Gideon. God has been visiting this planet. And, of course, His chief visitation was when He sent His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the very God of heaven desires fellowship with us. You see our design—we're to have dominion. Our dignity is that God wants to have fellowship with us. He doesn't love us because we're valuable; we're valuable because He loves us.

C. Man's Dominion

Not only do you see man's design, and man's dignity, but, my dear friend, you see man's dominion. Verses seven and eight: "Thou hast put all things under his feet." Man was given a crown. He was meant to rule. And there's nothing that God did not put under man's feet. Now, even the angels, man is made a little lower than the angels, but the Bible teaches that one day we will judge angels.

Did you know that, one day, we're going to participate in the trial of Satan? Have you ever thought about that? We as saints are going to judge angels. There is nothing that God did not put under man's feet. No thing that is created even the angels. And so, man is crowned with glory. Made in the image of God.

II. Man Is Charged with Guilt

But here's the second thing I want you to see. And you're going to learn the reason for Christmas. Man who is crowned with glory is charged with guilt. Man is also charged with guilt. Now, look, if you will, in the last part of verse eight. But now, we see not yet all things put under him. What happened? Something went wrong. Man was supposed to have dominion and now he no longer has dominion. Why? Because man that was designed in the image of God, has that design that is marred by sin. God gave man the ability to choose and man chose wrongly.

Oh, why did God give man the ability to choose? Why didn't God just make man where he couldn't choose? Well, then God couldn't have fellowship with him any more than I could have fellowship with this microphone. You cannot have fellowship with a machine. You can only have fellowship with someone who can respond to you. No one can choose to love you unless they choose not to love you. No one can choose to be loyal to you unless they have the ability to choose not to love you. No one can choose to be loyal to you unless they have the ability to not be loyal to you. And so God gave man the opportunity to choose. And man chose wrongly. And so man that was made a little lower than the angels has now become a little lower than the animals.

Did you know that man will do things that animals will not do? Man, as two monkeys were heard talking, man descended the sorry cuss. But, brother, he didn't descend from us. The monkeys are ashamed of what men will do. I heard of a hog that got drunk one time and the other hogs wouldn't let him back in the hog pen. Finally he promised, if you'll let me back in this one more time, I'll never act like a human being again.

Now, animals will not do what men will do. Man is a strange creature. He has the ability to create airplanes and yet he turns them into bombers. He has the ability to discover the fire in the atom but he makes an atomic bomb. He has the ability to create television and send signals through the airwaves, but yet he fills it with pornography and debauchery. You see, man made in the image of God now has descended below the level of animals in many respects. Because man's moral rakes are not as strong as his mental horsepower. And so he has that image has been debased.

And then not only has man lost his design been marred by sin, but his dignity. He is no longer fit for fellowship with God. God wants to visit with man, but sin has separated man from God. And man's dominion is gone. Man is supposed to have dominion. But men today don't have dominion. They don't rule today. Men don't have dominion over the works of God's hands.

Remember what David said in Psalm eight and verses seven and eight? "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beast of the field, the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea?" Did Jesus have dominion over these things? Of course He did. That's the reason I said that you'd have to see Jesus to know what a man was like.

When Jesus walked the earth, Jesus did not do what He did as God. Don't get that idea. You'll have a distorted idea of Jesus if you have the idea that what Jesus did on this earth He did as God. He did not do what He did as God; He did what He did as man filled with the Holy Spirit. He was God. He was God, but He was very man. And He showed us how man ought to live. And all of the creatures were subject to the Lord Jesus.

Jesus, when He came into Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday, He rode a wild Syrian Donkey where no man ever sat. You try that. Jesus rode that the Bible said, no one had ever sat upon that donkey. Jesus was the first one. And He rode him right into Jerusalem. Jesus, when He wanted to pay His taxes, He told Peter you go cast a hook into the sea, and you'll catch a fish, and in that fishes mouth will be a coin. Now, you see if you can guide a fish to a coin under the water and then guide a fish to a hook.

Jesus told Simon Peter, before the cock crow, you'll trice deny that you knew me. See if you can keep a rooster from crowing in the morning. See if you can make one crow just at the right time. You see, Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the fields. Jesus had dominion over the fowls of the air. Jesus had dominion over the fish of the sea.

But man lost his dominion. We think we have dominion. We can fly a 747 across the ocean, but you let the pilot of that 747 get out and on the tarmac and start to walk to the hangar and a bumble bee can chase him all the way to the hangar. That same pilot who thinks he has dominion. No. You see, friend, man does not have dominion today.

And look around. The world is filled with death. The world is filled with disease. The world is filled with deserts. The world is filled with depravity. Man has lost his dominion.

III. Man Is Changed by Grace

All right now, here's the third and final thing. We get now to the reason for Christmas. Man was crowned with glory; man is charged with guilt; but man can be changed by grace.

A. Suffered for Sin

Look in verse nine. But we see Jesus. Oh, I have that underlined in my Bible—just that phrase. But, we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. That's Christmas morning. When Jesus, who made all of the angels, is now made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. Now here it is: that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. Man who was, my dear friend, charged with guilt, can be changed by grace.

Now, why was it necessary for Jesus to become a man? He had to become a man in order to redeem us. Actually, there are just two men who ever lived—one was Adam, and the other is Jesus. And all of the rest of the people who lived are in Adam or in Christ. The Bible teaches in Adam all died and in Christ all are made alive.

Turn to first Corinthians chapter fifteen, and just keep your Bible there in Hebrews; just keep your finger in Hebrews chapter nine. But turn to first Corinthians chapter fifteen and look with me in verse twenty-one. "For since by man came death." Who is that man? Adam. "By man came death. In Adam all die. By man came also the resurrection of the dead." Who is that man? Jesus. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall every man be made alive." Now, if you say I don't want to have any part in Adam's death, well, dear friend, you can't have any part in Jesus' resurrection.

Friend, in Adam all die, and in Christ, all are made alive. You see, Adam lost his dominion. And how did Adam lose his dominion? He delivered it over to Satan. Remember what Satan said to Jesus? He said I'll give you all the kingdoms of this world, if you'll bow down and worship me for all that has been delivered to me. Jesus didn't dispute him. Jesus didn't say that's not been delivered to you. It was delivered to Satan.

Dominion was given to Adam and Adam sold it to Satan. Adam delivered it to Satan. Adam, by sin, transgressed and fell, and Satan has a legal right. The dominion that Adam had was legally lost, and it will be legally regained. It was lost by a man, and it must be regained by a man. It was legally lost and it must be righteously recovered. God cannot redeem man without becoming a man.

Now, notice how God does this. Your still in Hebrew chapter two, look if you will and see what Jesus did as a man. And now, you'll understand, why Christmas; why God

became a man. As a man, Jesus suffered for sin. Look in verses nine and ten. But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death.

Why was Jesus a man? Because only as a man could He die. Only as a man could He suffer. He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. Crowned with glory and honor, that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

But don't you let anybody tell you that Jesus just died for the elect. He died for every man, my dear friend. He died for all, for it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory to make the captain of there salvation perfect through suffering. The infinite became an infant. And the Lord of glory became lower than the angels. He became a man for the express purpose to suffer, bleed and die. And He came from the throne of the universe to a stable, because Adam as a man forfeited his dominion and God became man that He might legally righteously bring it back.

Now let me say this about the Lord Jesus Christ: He suffered as a man. Don't get the idea that He was just God masquerading as a man, and therefore didn't really hurt. It hurt. Jesus suffered more than you can suffer, but He suffered as a man. His pain was real this was not some farce. This was not some charade.

I think I told you before one night in Miami, Florida, I was studying late at night in a motel room lonely. I had a book by John Lenten. I took it out of the Pastor's library. I wish I could get a copy of that book; I don't have it. If any of you have a copy of it, I'd love to have it. I returned it to the Pastor. The title of that sermon was, What Happened in Dark Gethsemane. I read it, and I reread it, and I began to weep. And it moves me now, as I think of it. And I think for the first time in my life, I realized the price that Jesus paid. It was about two in the morning, but I shouted so loud, it's a wonder the building didn't fall. Then I said, I'm in a lot of trouble. I believe the police will be here any moment wondering what happened in that motel room.

But it was just a Baptist preacher, a child of God, understanding what Jesus did for me. And I had to lift my hands and my heart and praise Him. He became a man that He might suffer, but no man has ever suffered as the Lord Jesus suffered. As a man, He suffered for sin. As a man, He suffered for sin. As a man, He subdued Satan. Look, if you will, in verse fourteen of this same chapter. "For as much then as the children"—that's us, "are partakers of flesh and blood. He also likewise took part of the same tht through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death." That is the devil.

You see, Jesus, took the sword of death out of Satan's hand; but He had to do it as a man. It was legally lost; it must be righteously regained.

B. Subdued Satan

And as a man He suffered for sin. As a man, He subdued Satan. He disarmed and

defeated Satan, took the sword of death from him. And now, my dear friend, I want to tell you that, because of Christmas, because Jesus suffered, bled and died, you and I no longer have to fear death.

Look, if you will, in verse fifteen: To deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. What does that mean? It means, dear friend, that you're never ready to live until you're no longer afraid to die. When for the first time, you're no longer afraid to die, then you're ready to live. Satan will hold the threat of death over you; but death holds no terror to the child of God, because that Christmas morning, a baby was born to suffer for sin and to subdue Satan. That's the reason for Christmas. Death is only a shadow, if you know the Lord, and there's no reason to be afraid. A shadow may frighten you, but it cannot hurt you.

C. Sympathize with the Saints

Third reason for Christmas. Not only to suffer for sin, not only to subdue Satan, but that He might sympathize with the saints. Look, if you will now, in verse sixteen of this same chapter. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. " That is, He is a descendant of Abraham, a man, not an angel. "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren. That he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. To make reconciliation for the sins of the people for in that he himself hath suffered; being tempted, he is able to succor." That is, to sympathize with them that are tempted.

He suffered for sin; He subdued Satan; and He sympathizes with the saints. He knows; He cares. He is no academic Savior. He is no transcendent God way out beyond the clouds, somewhere out there. As a man, He knows what I feel. As a man, He understands. As God, being God, there is a sense in which He knows all things. He didn't really have to suffer that He might have to know how I feel. But He suffered that I might know that He knows. I mean, I know that He was here. I know that He felt it. I know there is nothing that I feel—no sorrow, no heartache, no tears, no fears—but what Jesus is touched with the feeling of my infirmity. Thank God for such a Savior!

So many times, I go into the funeral home, as I did yesterday. Week after week, as some of our ministers do. Go into the hospital rooms and people are hurting, and sometimes a little baby has died, or sometimes a son has died in an automobile accident. Sometimes, there is indescribable woe. One thing I never ever do—at least, I try never to do it—is to walk up and look at some suffering mother's face, and say, I know how you feel. Don't ever do that, folks. You don't know how they feel. You may just think you know how they feel. But you don't know how they feel.

But, thank God, there is one who does know how they feel. There is one who can sympathize. There is one who understands—that was the one that was born on Christmas morning, that little baby who was tempted in all points like as we are. And

verse eighteen says, for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor, or to sympathize with, them that are tempted.

Now, my dear friend, let me say that you can sing it, and say it, pray it and mean it. He cares, He cares, I know He cares. His heart is touched with my grief.

Conclusion

In conclusion—in conclusion, why Christmas? Well, my dear friend, why Christmas is summed up in verse eleven. Look at it. "For both he that sanctifieth"—that means to be to save and set apart from self—"and they who are sanctified are all of one"—I'm a human being; my Savior is a human being—"For the which cause, he's not ashamed to call them brethren."

Don't get the idea that Jesus laid aside His humanity when He went to heaven. Friend, there's a man up there. There's a man up there. Forever. A man. When He comes again, He'll come with nail prints in His hands. A man. And He's my brother—my brother. He's not ashamed to call me His brother. Do you know what that means? That means I'm next of kin to the Holy Trinity. So are you. So are you. God stepped out of glory, and God became a man on Christmas Day. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Let's pray. Father, we thank you that one day, because of Jesus, all things will be put under our feet, because we'll put our feet where you put yours, and Satan himself will be bruised under our feet. Because, as a man, you suffered, bled and died. We believe, Jesus, that you are very God—very God. But, O Lord, we thank you for your incarnation, and your humiliation, your crucifixion, your resurrection, your ascension, and your great grace. Thank you, Lord Jesus.

What Is Man?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 26, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 2:6–8

Outline

Introduction

I. Man Is Crowned with Glory

II. Man Is Charged with Guilt

III. Man May Be Changed by Grace

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 2, and we're going to look in verses 6, 7, and 8. And we're going to think tonight about, "What is man?"

Now, most of us are trying to figure out who is God. Well, Jesus Christ came to earth—listen carefully—not only to reveal God and what God is like, but Jesus came to reveal man and to show what man should be like. Most of us have never, ever, really seen man as man is intended to be. If you'd never seen a railroad train and I showed you an awful train wreck, have you seen a train? Well, what you've really seen is a train wreck. Now, look at Bobby over there. Are you seeing a man? No, what you see is a wreck. That is not man as God intended man to be. So, what I'm trying to say is that if you want to see God, you're going to have to see Jesus; and, if you want to see man, you're really going to have to see the Lord Jesus.

Let's look in the Scripture here in Hebrews chapter 2 and beginning in verse 6: "But one in a certain place hath testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, thou didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man."

I'm going to stop reading there for a moment. But the Bible says that, one in a certain place said, "What is man?" Who was that one that said that in a certain place that the writer of Hebrews is talking about? It was David. David, a shepherd boy, out on

the hillsides of beautiful Israel, was there keeping his flock, and he looked up, and he saw that candelabra in the sky. And we read about it, and I'm going to read it for you. Don't turn to it. In Psalm 8 now—this is what Hebrews is quoting in Psalm 8, verses 3 and 4: “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

Have you ever done that? Have you ever just looked up into the heavens and thought how small you were? I mean, dear God, when I see the vastness of this universe, and we are but a speck of protoplasm on a speck of dust—cosmic dust called earth—in this great, vast, stellar universe with galaxy piled upon galaxy, what is man?

I read in a secular magazine one time that there are more stars in our known universe than there are grains of sands on all the seashores of all the earth. Now, if you want to know how many that is, friend, just go to Palm Beach, and get a city block, and start counting.

You know, a little boy was quoting the model prayer, and he quoted it this way: Our Father, which art in heaven, how does He know my name?” You think about that. How does He know us? What is man?

We think of the smallness of man, and then we consider the sun, the moon, and the stars. We think of the temporary nature of man. Our days are but a few. The stars have been there for the ages, and they will exist for ages. You know, we are here just for such a short time. Let me tell you some of the ways the Bible describes your life.

The Bible speaks of our life as a tale that is told. The Bible speaks of our life as a flower that fades, as grass that withers, as a shadow that declines, as smoke that dissipates, and as a vapor that vanishes. We're just here—we're gone. A few lives—80, 90, 100, 105, 110—still, you're gone just like that. Somebody has put our lifespan like this: We start out, the passing years, first of all, as a tender child. And then, the teachable teens. And then, the tempestuous twenties, the tireless thirties, the fiery forties, the forceful fifties, the serious sixties, the sacred seventies, the aching eighties, the nagging nineties, shortening breath, death, the sod, God. We're here just for a little time.

What is man? Well, there are three major views concerning man.

First of all, there is the understatement. We have a lot of the understatement of man. There are those today who want to make man just another animal, only more complex. These are the evolutionists. They want to make us an orphan of the apes. And none less than H. G. Wells, the noted historian, said this: “Man is an inhabitant on a thin rind, on a negligible, detached blob of matter, belonging to one of the millions of stars in one among millions of island universes.” Now, we're just an incident, just an accident. Now,

those who believe this call themselves humanists, but they're not really humanists; they're animalists. I mean, they are making just animals just like the rest. Now, physically, we have to agree that we are insignificant, but there's the understatement of what man is.

And then, there is the overstatement, and these are the New Agers that try to make us all gods, and that we have this divine spark within us, this veritable self-deification, and so, we end up strutting here on this earth, overestimating ourselves. And we would say, "Our brothers, who are on the earth, hallowed be our name. Our kingdom come, our will be done on earth, because there is no heaven." Or, if there is a heaven, this is heaven now, or we're going to make it up somehow. That's the overstatement.

Then, there's the biblical view. To know what man is, we're going to have to find out from the Bible. And, again, I want to tell you that you're going to have to see Jesus to see both God and man. You're never going to understand God, and you're not going to understand man, until you understand Jesus.

Now, three things I lay upon your heart.

I. Man Is Crowned with Glory

First of all, as we look at what man is—what is man—I want you to see that man was crowned with glory. Again, look in verses 6 through 8, and notice what God says in verse 7 concerning man: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet..." That's the way God made Adam. God made this man, Adam, an incredible individual, and then God just crowned him with glory. Man is made in the image of God. You read that in Genesis 1, verses 26 through 27. Now, man is not God, but he is made in the image of God, and God gave to Adam God-like powers and God-like abilities. And we still bear in us that residual image that God put into us. Now, the evolutionist, again, doesn't believe this. One evolutionist that I read said this: "Was it not in stagnant and muddy water, amid the heavy humidity of moist land, under the heat of the sun, that the first germ of life pulsed and expanded to the day?" Give me a break. I mean, if you can believe that, that out of nothing everything came, and out of inanimate, inorganic matter, life came, friend, you would be a good candidate to buy a bridge in Brooklyn. I'm telling you, this is mythology. No. To the contrary, we were made created by Almighty God in the image of God.

Now, think of man's design—verse 7: "Thou madest him..." Then, think of man's dignity, in verse 6—look: "...thou art mindful of him? Thou visitest him." Here, God made Adam, and He loved Adam, with specificity and intimacy. God would come and walk with Adam in the Garden of Eden, and talk with him, and fellowship with him. Now,

you talk about having dignity. Suppose the king of some great country came to this United States, and made a special trip to your house, and said, “I want to visit with you.” The King of heaven wanted to visit with Adam, and walk with Adam. I’ve told you before, He doesn’t love us because we’re valuable; we’re valuable because He loves us. He loves us by sheer grace.

Man’s design—He made man. Man’s dignity—He visits with man. Man’s dominion. Man is to rule over all of God’s creation. Again, verses 7 and 8: “Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, thou didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet...” God gave man a crown, and God meant for man to rule. And nothing was not put under Adam’s feet. Now, one day, when God puts things back right again, everything again will be under our feet, but we see not yet all things put under our feet, because something happened—as we’re going to see in just a moment. But one of these days, man, made a little lower than the angels, will actually judge angels.

So here’s the first thing. We’re talking about what man is. Man was crowned with glory. That’s what it says: crowned with glory. The wonderful creature that God made: Adam and his bride, Eve.

II. Man Is Charged with Guilt

Number two: Not only is man crowned with glory, but man is charged with guilt. Look now in verse 8: “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet, for in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.” Oh? What happened?

Well, man was designed by God, but that design was marred by sin. Romans chapter 5, verse 12, says, “For by one man sin entered into the world...” And, while Adam was created in the image of God, I’m not in the image of God. I’m in the image of Adam. You see, the Bible says, “Adam brought forth a son after his likeness and in his image.” You know, do you think we’re in the image of God right now? Well, look around. You think God’s in this shape? No. The image of God was marred, and in Adam all die. And now Adam brought forth a son after his likeness, and in his image. And so, man, made a little lower than the angels, has become a little lower than the animals.

Two monkeys were heard talking, and one of them said, “Man descended, the ornery cuss, but, brother, he didn’t descend from us.” The monkeys would not want to take credit for what mankind can do.

Think of man with his wit and wisdom and his depraved heart. We can invent airplanes, but we use them to drop bombs on people. We have discovered the atomic energy, but we use it to destroy people with. We have now developed the Internet, but it

is a way for the distribution of sex; and television violence, because our moral brakes don't work, but our mental horsepower is still at work. And so, the design was marred by sin. And when the design was marred by sin, the dignity that God had planned for man was also lost. Now, man is no longer fit for fellowship with God, because sin separates us from a holy God. And when the design was marred, the dignity was lost. Then, the dominion also has been forfeited. The dominion that I'm supposed to have I don't have right now. I don't have dominion over mosquitoes—I wish I did—and mudslides and microbes and meteorites, or anything else; I don't have dominion over those things. Adam did. And when Jesus, the perfect man, was here on earth, Jesus had dominion.

Have you ever thought about the dominion that Jesus had? You know, in Psalm 8, verses 7 and 8, it speaks not only of Adam, but it also speaks of Jesus, and here's what it says of Him: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet—now watch this—all sheep and oxen—that's the animal world—and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea." The fish, the fowl, and the beasts. Did Jesus have dominion over those things? He surely did.

When Jesus was going into the City of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He said to His disciples, He said, "Go to a certain place and you'll find a young donkey—a colt, the Bible calls it—whereupon never a man sat." Jesus rode that donkey into Jerusalem. I want you to try that. I want you to get a donkey that no one has ever ridden before, and I want you to turn that donkey into a docile beast and ride him anywhere. You're not going to be able to do it. Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the field.

Jesus had dominion over the fowls of the air. Jesus said to Peter, "Peter, you're going to deny me. Before the rooster crows, you're going to deny me three times." Let me ask you a question. Now, you know what a rooster is. It's just an alarm clock with feathers. That's all he is. The rooster thinks the sun comes up in the morning because he crows. Question: How many roosters would there have been in Jerusalem that morning? Who was it that kept every one of them quiet until the exact moment? Who was it that caused that rooster to crow at the exact, precise moment? You can't make one crow, and you can't keep one from crowing—is that not true? But who was it that had dominion over the fowls of the air? The Lord Jesus.

Who was it that had dominion over the fish of the sea? The Lord Jesus. Peter had toiled all night and taken in nothing. I've been on those fishing trips before. And Jesus said, "Cast your net on the other side of the boat, " and so many fish that they couldn't get them in. The nets broke—153, I believe, fish. You know how we know that? Some Baptist educational director counted them—153 fish in that net. When it was time for Jesus to pay His taxes, He said to Peter, "Go cast a hook in the sea. You'll pull up a

fish, and that fish will have a coin in its mouth.” Now, who was it that directed that fish to that one hook? Who was it that had that fish to swim across the bottom of the sea and pick up that coin, perhaps, that some hapless fisherman had dropped out of his pocket? Who was it that had control over these things?

We talk about what we have control of. A man will get in his phantom jet, and fly, land at the airport, start strutting across the tarmac, and a yellow jacket will chase him all the way; a wasp will chase him all the way to the hanger. No, we don't have dominion over anything. We think we have dominion, but we don't. But Jesus did! In order to see man, you would have to see the Lord Jesus. Today, we don't have dominion. We have disease, deserts, depravity, all over the globe.

III. Man May Be Changed by Grace

Now, here's the third and final thing—look: Man was crowned with glory. Man is charged with guilt. And here's the glorious thing: man may be changed by grace—man may be changed by grace. Look now, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter here, and what a wonderful promise this is: “But we see Jesus...”—that's the second but, and thank God for it—“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death...”—that's what we're going to celebrate here at the Lord's Supper—“...crowned with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste for”—how many people?—“...every man.” There are some who believe in a particular, limited atonement. That's not what the Bible teaches—“...that he should taste death for every man, for it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons into glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Man may be changed by grace.

Adam, the first man, who had been crowned with glory, lost it all for us, but Jesus, the second man, redeemed it all for us. But I'm going to tell you something sweet and wonderful. We have gained more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam.

I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. Adam was only innocent. We now, through the redemption, are positively righteous. And, how does this happen? Man is trying to regain his dominion by his wit and his wisdom, his fire, and electricity. But instead, rather than putting all things under his feet, we, all over the world right now, are afraid of terrorism; we're afraid that some madman's going to push a button, and we'll all be buried in an avalanche of molted steel and rubble. We're afraid of what we've created. Things are not under our feet. But here's what Jesus did, and here's what we're celebrating. Now, notice this: As a man—as a man—Jesus suffered. Look again in verses 9 and 10: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death—you see, God and the Spirit could not suffer death—crowned

with glory and honor, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Jesus, as a man, suffered. That’s what the Christmas we just celebrated is all about, as the infinite became an infant, and He came to this earth to die as a man. Why did He do that? Well, it was lost by man; it has to be regained by a man. It was legally lost; it must be righteously regained. And so, as a man, Jesus, as a man, suffered for sin.

Secondly, as a man, Jesus subdued Satan. Begin now in verse 14, and look at this: “Forasmuch, then, as the children—that’s us—are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same—Jesus took flesh and blood—that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” When you come to Jesus, death has no more fear. I’m not at all afraid of death. Now, I don’t particularly want to die. You know everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die. But you’ve got to go through something to get to something. And what Jesus has done here is taken away the fear of death. And how did He do it? By subduing and disarming him that had the power of death; that is, the devil. And the power of death has been torn from Satan’s grasp. And death would still like to frighten us, but death is only a shadow, if you know the Lord. And a shadow may frighten you, but it cannot really hurt you.

And so, as a man, Jesus suffered for sin. As a man, Jesus subdued Satan. And, as a man, Jesus sympathizes with saints. Now, look, beginning in verse 16, and read through verse 18: “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham—that is, he was made a descendant of Abraham—wherefore, in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour—that means to give strength and nourishment to—them that are tempted.” As a man, He was sacrificed for sin. As a man, He subdued Satan. As a man, He sympathizes with saints. He was tempted like I’m tempted.

Now, you may say to a person who’s in deep sorrow, “I know how you feel,” but you probably will be lying. And, as a matter of fact, you may insult a person who says, “Oh, I understand how you feel.” It’s better not to say that when a person is going through deep suffering. But you can say, “There is one who understands. There is one who knows. He cares, He cares; I know He cares. His heart is touched with my grief.

Now, I’ve finished this little thought here, as we’re talking about what is man. We have to see Jesus to see what man really ought to be, and what man is going to be. Man was crowned with glory. Man was charged with guilt. Man can be changed by

grace. And when we receive Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, we gain more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam.

Go down to verse 11 and look at verse 11: “For both he that sanctifieth and them that are sanctified are all of one—don’t blow past that; underscore it—for the which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren”—brethren!

Somebody was asking me the other day, did Jesus have any brothers? He’s got one I know of. It’s the man who’s preaching. He’s not ashamed to call me His brother. Now, He’s my Lord. He’s my Savior. He’s my God. But you talk about being elevated. Adam could not call himself the brother of Jesus, but the Bible says, “...we are all of one...” I am in Christ, and Christ is in me. I am next of kin to the Holy Trinity. You say, “You’re an egomaniac.” No, I’m a Bible-believing Christian. He is not ashamed to call me His brother. “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?”

Crowned with glory. Charged with guilt. Changed by grace. But, folks, the best is still yet to be. Look, if you will, in verse 8—look at it: “Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he hath put all in subjection unto him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But we see not yet all things put in subjection.” Do you know what “not yet” means? It means it’s going to be. One of these days, we’re going to rule universes. If we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him. He’s made us a kingdom of priests. Everything will be under our feet. We will judge angels. There’s nothing that is in the will of God that will be impossible for us.

Conclusion

Now, as we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, we don’t know what’s ahead, but, friend, we know who is ahead. He is the first, and He is the last. And He was here before there was anything to fear, and He’ll be here after everything we feared has passed away. And I thank God for that, as we stand here before the Lord’s Table, and at the threshold of a new year.

Jim, lead us in a chorus, as we prepare for our Lord’s Table. Let’s stand together as we sing.

Our Sympathizing Savior

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 21, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 2:6–18

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

HEBREWS 2:9

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Hebrews chapter 2—would you turn to it?—as we think today about “Our Sympathizing Savior.” Now, if you’re in the need for sympathy, pay attention, for we all are. Verse 6: *“But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all [things] in subjection [to] him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”* (Hebrews 2:6–9).

Now, the writer of the Book of Hebrews is quoting the Psalms right here; he’s quoting the 8th Psalm. The 8th Psalm was written by David, who was a shepherd boy. And, in my imagination, I can see David out there on that lonely hill, under that brilliant Judean sky. And, as he looks up at the skies like candelabras clustered there in the

heavens, as he sees the glowing shining moon, then he looks down at himself, and he starts to ponder. He says, *“When I consider all of these things, when I look at the vastness, the glory, the grandeur, the beauty of the heavens, then I look at myself. I just wonder, What is man, that You are mindful of him? The Son of man that Thou visitest Him?”* (Psalm 8:3–4). David, doubtless, thought about his smallness as he sat there under the canopy of the stars, and that’s something that’ll make you feel pretty small. You may feel like that little boy who was quoting what is called “the Lord’s Prayer,” but he quoted it this way—misquoted it: “Our Father, which art in Heaven—how does He know my name?” And, I think we all just might feel that way. Who am I? *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? [or] the son of man, that thou visitest him?”* (Psalm 8:4).

Not only made David thought of his smallness, but he probably thought of the brevity—the little time—that is here on earth. You know, our days pass just like that, and as you think of the figures that the Bible uses for our days... The Bible calls, for example, our lives *“as a tale that is told”* (Psalm 90:9). Or, the Bible speaks of our lives as flowers that fade, as the grass that withers, as the smoke that ascends, as the vapor that dissipates, as a shadow that declines. It’s over so quick. I can hardly believe I am already 29 years old—just like that. Here for a little while, and then so quickly, so quickly, the days come. And, as we think about the insignificance of our size—we think about the shortness of our lives—we have to ask ourselves, “What is man, anyway?”

And, of course, there’s the understatement of what man is. There are some people who’d just have us believe that all man is is just a clever animal—one more of the animals—and he lives like an animal, he dies like an animal, he rots like an animal, he decays like an animal, then he’s gone. That’s the understatement of what man is.

And then, there’s the overstatement of what man is. There are those who believe man is sort of a god in himself, that he has that divinity within him and all he needs to do is just fan that spark. And, we’ve almost deified ourselves. And, one time you expect someone to stand up and pray something like this: “Our brothers, which are on earth, hallowed be our name. Our kingdom come, our will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.” Now, that’s the other side.

But then, there’s the biblical view of man. And, of course, the only way we can understand what man is is to understand the Bible. Now, Darwin wrote a book on the origin of the species. Dear friend, *more important than the origin is the destiny of the species*. But, you have to know the origin to know the destiny, and you know both not from Darwin, but from the Word of God. *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou [didst visit] him?”* (Psalm 8:4).

Now, there are three basic things in the scripture that we have to look at today that I want you to see about man: number one, man was crowned with glory; number two, man was charged with guilt; number three, man can be changed by grace. Okay? I think

this is what this verse is telling us about.

I. Man Was Crowned with Glory

First of all, man was crowned with glory. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“Thou madest him”—man—“a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and [thou] didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet”* (Hebrews 2:7–8). Now, three things I want you to notice as we think about man crowned with glory: first of all, I want you to think of man’s design; and then, I want you to think of man’s dignity; and then, I want you to think of man’s dominion.

A. Man’s Design

Now, what is man’s design? This verse says, *“Thou madest him”* (Hebrews 2:7). We’re not some happenstance. We didn’t come out of some primordial ooze, out of some slime; we have not ascended up the evolutionary scale. We were made by God; God created us. And, as Ethel Waters said, “God don’t make no junk.” Listen, we’ve been made by God: *“Thou madest him”* (Hebrews 2:7).

But, it is not primarily our physical form that gives us such great value. When God made man, God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. And, it is your soul that makes you of infinite worth, and that’s the reason that Jesus said in Matthew chapter 16: *“For what does a man profiteth if he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what should a man give in exchange for his own soul?”* (Mark 8:36–37). Your soul is worth more than all the stocks, the bonds, the rubies, the railroads, the emeralds, the schools, the diamonds, the bank accounts, the philosophy—all of it put together. Your soul is of infinite worth. Your soul will be in existence when the sun, and the moon, and the stars have turned to cinders. Your soul will go endless, timeless, dateless, measureless, for God breathed into you the breath of life. And, you are made in the image of God, and you could no more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist—man’s design.

B. Man’s Dignity

And, I want you to see man’s dignity. David said, *“What is man...that thou visitest him?”* (Psalm 8:4)—that God would visit man.

† Suppose that you were to get a call from the White House, and it said that President Regan was coming to Memphis, Tennessee, and he wants to visit you. Your first thought would be, “Why me? Why would the President of the United States want to visit me?” †

How much more astounding that Almighty God wants to visit with man! He visited with Adam there in the Garden of Eden, but I want to tell you, when Jesus Christ came

to this earth, that was God visiting with man. And, the thing that dignifies man is that God loves man—that the great God of Glory desires your company. Get that in your heart and in your mind: God loves you so much today. I wish I had the elegance, I wish I had the words, I wish I had the emphasis and the emotion to tell you that God loves you and that He desires your company. *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him?”* (Psalm 8:4). Why should President Reagan be mindful of an ant floating around on a piece of cheesecake on the Atlantic Ocean? *“Why should God be mindful of us?”* is a bigger question. But, He is mindful of you. He sees you now—He’s looking at you right now. He desires you; He loves you. I told my Discovery Class this morning that *God doesn’t love us because we are valuable; we are valuable because He loves us*. The dignity of man is that God is mindful of man—that God desires man.

C. Man’s Dominion

But look—not only His design, not only His dignity, but His dominion. Look again at verse 8: *“Thou hast put all things under subjection under his feet”*—why? Verse 8—*“[thou] didst set him over the works of thy hand”* (Hebrews 2:8). Do you know that when God created man and woman—Adam and Eve—God said, *“Let them have dominion”* (Genesis 1:26), and man is to have dominion? Did you know that man was to be a king upon this earth? He was meant to rule and to reign. David described man’s dominion in Psalm 8 and said it this way: *“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas”* (Psalm 8:6–8).

Now, what did David say was to be under man? First of all, the beast was to be under man, the fowls were to be under man, and the fish were to be under man. Well, they’re not today. They were under Jesus. Hey, let me tell you something right now: Did you know that if you want to know what man is, don’t look at another man? Look to Jesus. You see, all of us know that, in order to know what God is like, that we have to look at Jesus. But, I wonder how many of us know that in order to know what man is like we have to look at Jesus. You see, not only was Jesus perfect God—Jesus was perfect man. As I’ve told you before, He’s as much man as He were not God at all. He was very man of very God—very man of very man, as well as being very God of very God. Now, you know, sometimes we’re so anxious to prove the deity of Christ that we fail to see the humanity of Christ. And, if we fail to understand the humanity of Christ, believe me, we are missing half the blessings. You have to understand the humanity of Christ to understand what our whole thing is about right now. And, if you want to know what a man is like, don’t look at me.

† Suppose you’d never seen a Ford automobile, and I said, “Well, I’m going to show

you a Ford automobile.” And, I take you out here to one of these junkyards and show you a Ford. I was driving down the road the other day, and they had a stack of automobiles on a truck. I say, “stack,” because they had been flattened—they were all about that flat because they had been flattened by some monstrous machine that squeezed them down. And, they were stacked up like that, and one of them was a very modern Ford automobile. But, it was so...is *squashed* a good word? It was so squashed, so flattened, that all you could see was the back bumper, and it hadn't even been dented. And, I got a big bang out of it, because there was still a bumper sticker on it; and it said, “Ford drivers are the best lovers.” And, I thought, “He should have been driving.” It was squashed flat. Now, if you'd never seen a Ford automobile and I showed you that, would you have seen a Ford automobile? Not really. What you'd have seen was a wreck. If you want to just look around, you don't see men; you see wrecks. That's all you see. I mean, this is not what God intended. Everybody says, “Well, we're made in the image of God.” Do you think God is in this shape? Listen, it was Adam that was made in the image of God, but that image of God was marred and defaced in Adam. And, the Bible says Adam brought forth “*a son in his likeness, and after his image*” (Genesis 5:3). We are made in the image of Adam, not in the image of God. And, that image has been marred and defaced, as we're going to see in a moment, but not in the Lord Jesus Christ. ¶

And, what did David say man was made to do? To have dominion over what? The beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. Did Jesus when He was here? Remember when Jesus was going to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem, He told His disciples, “You go get me a donkey whereon never a man sat,” and Jesus got on that wild Syrian colt and rode him into Jerusalem (Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30). You try that someday and see what happens. You'll have your personal rodeo right there. Then again, the Lord Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, before the cock crows you'll deny Me three times” (Matthew 26:34; Matthew 26:75; Mark 14:30; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:34; Luke 22:61). One time he denied Christ, two times he denied Christ, three times, and then the rooster crowed—just like that. Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. One time it was time for Jesus to pay His taxes. He told Simon Peter, “Go cast a hook into the sea and you will catch a fish—and in that mouth will be a coin” (Matthew 17:27). And so, Jesus arranged for that fish, like he was guided by radar and all the rest of it, to swim along the bottom of that sea of Galilee 'till he picked up that coin that perhaps a fisherman had dropped overboard and then swam right to that hook. That would be the kind of dominion to have when you went fishing, wouldn't it? And, he took that hook, and, of course, the coin was in its mouth.

Jesus had dominion. You see, if you want to see what man is like, don't look at what we are today; look at the Lord Jesus. It takes Jesus not only to see what God is like; it

takes Jesus to see what man is like—man as God intended. What we see today is simply a wreck. We don't really see what man is like. Man doesn't have dominion today. He lost his dominion, as we shall see. Now, the first thing that we want you to see is this—that man was crowned with glory.

II. Man Has Been Charged with Guilt

But now, I want you to see that man has been charged with guilt. Look in the last part of verse 8. We are going along good—I mean, it sounds like man is doing fine; I mean, all things are in subjection under his feet. “[*Wherein He has*] put all things in subjection [unto him]...he left nothing that is not put under him”—well, it sounds like we ought to be doing pretty good. Notice that conjunction there, *but*—“*But now we see not*”—“*now we see not*”—“*yet all things put under him*” (Hebrews 2:8). For further information, just look at today's newspaper. Man crowned with glory has missed God's original intention, and man has been charged with guilt. Because he has been charged with guilt, he has been corrupted by guilt. And, that design was marred by sin.

Remember God made us, but sin has marred us. And so, man still has traces of that dominion. He can build an airplane, but now he makes a bomber out of it. He can discover the power of the atom, but he turns it into a bomb. He can create television, but he puts moral filth, and violence, and sex on it, because his mental manpower has outrun his moral brakes. And so, the design has been marred by sin. The dignity has been marred by sin. It is no longer fit for fellowship with God. The dominion has been marred by sin, and man knows that he has lost this dominion. And, he is trying with fire, and electricity, and wisdom to get it back, and he's just being buried behind the avalanche of his own inventions. And, he has created a Frankenstein that is about to devour him, because man that was crowned with glory was charged with guilt. And, because of all of that, everything is not under him right now. You look around and you will see disease. Look around and you see desert. Look around and you will see depravity. Man is in bad shape.

III. Man May Be Changed by Grace

Well, let's go on to the third and final point, where the major teaching is: man may be changed by grace. Look, if you will, in verse 9. Here is a sweet verse—oh how I thank God for verse 9—look at it: “*But we see Jesus*”—now that's what the theme of this entire series is about, seeing Jesus. If you come and hear a sermon and don't see Jesus, it was a bad sermon. I don't care who's preaching it. If you come to church to worship and you don't see Jesus, you didn't worship. If you read the Bible and you don't see Jesus when you read the Bible, you'd better go back and read it again. You missed the message. Friend, it's about Jesus; it's all about Jesus, and that's the reason we're

talking about looking unto Jesus. And, I'm so grateful for verse 9 that says—"we see Jesus"—and listen to what it says—"who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he"—now, underscore this—"by the grace of God should taste death of every man" (Hebrews 2:9). And, there's our word *grace*. Man crowned with glory—man charged with guilt—can now be changed by grace. That Jesus became a man—the reason that He became a man—so that He could die as a man.

I heard about a lady who was taught, for the first time, the doctrine of the total depravity of man. And, she had always been thinking we were pretty good, and she finally came to understand what the Bible teaches about the nature of mankind that the humanist doesn't understand, what the liberal doesn't understand. But, when her eyes were opened, she said, "Well, land's sakes, if we are that bad, God help us." That's exactly what He's done: God help us. There are times when we see just exactly what... We say, "O God, O God, help us." And so, this is what God did in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's very important that you understand that what Jesus did in order to redeem us He did as a man—He did as a man—not as God, but as a man. He was God, but He did it as man. And, you're going to understand why in just a moment.

A. Jesus Suffered as a Man

First of all, I want you to notice that Jesus suffered as a man. Look again at verse 9: "*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels*"—why?—"for the suffering of death" (Hebrews 2:9). Now, just underscore that word *suffering*, and I pray God that the Holy Spirit will take it off the page and into your heart. The sufferings of Jesus were not imitation sufferings; they were real sufferings. Jesus was not just God masquerading as a man. Jesus God—Jesus was man. Now, He was God, but He was man. And, when they put those nails in His quivering palms, they hurt. When they laid that lash upon His back, it hurt. When they stripped Him of His clothing, He was ashamed. When they plucked His beard from His face, He suffered—Jesus suffered. Don't get the idea He was some sort of a phantom, that He couldn't feel pain. We say, "Yes, He died on the cross"—laugh—"my goodness, He was God! He ought to have been able to take it." Friend, I want to tell you that Jesus suffered like you would suffer, but Jesus suffered more than you would suffer because Jesus took not only your suffering, He took mine, and his, and hers, and theirs. And, I want to tell you that the sins of the world were compressed and instilled upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, the eternities were compressed and distilled upon the Lord Jesus Christ—and the agonies of this world. Over there in Isaiah chapter 53, where it speaks of the death of Christ, it speaks of His death. And, the Hebrew people who (or Hebrew scholars) say there is an intensive plural there that literally means "He died a thousand deaths." Do

you know what that means? Listen, Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what you, being finite, would suffer in an infinite amount of time. Jesus suffered an eternity of Hell for every one of us on that cross. Jesus suffered.

I was in a hotel room a few years ago down in Miami, Florida. It was late at night. I had gotten a hold of a book of sermons by a man named John Lenton. I took it out of the pastor's library and borrowed it, and I was reading and John Lenton was talking about Gethsemane. And, you know, up until that time, I had thought that Jesus was afraid He was going to die in the Garden of Gethsemane and that Jesus was praying, "Father, let this cup pass from Me. I don't want to die right now. My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto death. I don't want to die right now. I want to die on the cross." And, that's what I used to believe. But, John Lenton straightened me out. He showed me something. You see, we kind of want to make Jesus look like a hero. We kind of want to make Jesus look like, well, the suffering wasn't something that He really minded; it was something He was really looking forward to—kind of anticipating the cross. Don't you get that in your minds. God straightened me out. You don't have to make Jesus look like a hero. Listen, Jesus shrank back from that cross. Jesus did not want to die upon that cross. It was no charade when Jesus sweat like blood, and Jesus said, "God, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. I don't want to do it, God, if there's some other way" (Matthew 26:39). And, the silence from Heaven said there is no other way. And, Jesus said, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done" (Matthew 26:39). And, the destiny of the world hung on that word *nevertheless*: "nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done" (Matthew 26:39).

And, God showed me in a moment the utter desolation—the agonies—of darkness, the horrors of Hell, the tortures that Jesus suffered on that cross. And, when God showed me that, I shouted—a shout of praise that was so loud that I imagine it waked everybody in the hotel. I said, "Uh-oh, here comes the police. I know they're going to arrest me for shouting in a hotel room so late at night." I waited. They didn't come. I was glad. I wouldn't have known what to say. I just got happy and shouted, and I'm not given to shouting. But, God showed me, dear friends, that our Savior suffered. And, I thought, "O Lord, if You would do that for me, love so amazing, so divine demands my life, my soul, my all." And, I'm so ashamed of myself that I do such a poor job as a Christian. Listen, God was made a man, that He might suffer. God can't suffer, but man can suffer. And, He suffered as a man. Look at it: "*But we see Jesus, who [is] made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death*" (Hebrews 2:9). He suffered in dark Gethsemane. He suffered on cruel Golgotha. Jesus, as a man, suffered.

B. Jesus Subdued the Devil as a Man

And then, I want you to see that Jesus, as a man, subdued. Look, if you will, at verse

14: *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood”*—we’re called *children* in this verse, *“the children of God”*—*“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he”*—Jesus—*“also himself likewise took part of the same”*—now, watch it—*“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14). Now, how did the devil get the power of death? Who in the world ever gave the devil any authority? Who in the world ever gave the devil any dominion? Adam turned it over to him. You see, when God created Adam, God created Adam to rule, to have dominion. Adam was not a puppet; Adam had real, true dominion. God gave it to him, and it was a gift; and it was legally Adam’s. Adam turned it over to the devil—by default, Adam gave it to the devil. It was legally the devil’s. The dominion that belonged to Adam over this world was turned over to the devil; and now, in the Bible, the devil is called *“the god of this world.”*

And, when Jesus Christ—that perfect man—was here upon this earth, the devil tried to get Jesus Christ to sin. And, the devil tempted Jesus to sin by worshipping the devil, and the devil said to Jesus, *“You see all of these kingdoms? You see all of this world? You see all of this power? You see all of this glory?”* He had Jesus on an exceeding high mountain. He said, *“I will give it all to You, if You will only bow down and worship me.”* You see, the devil has always wanted to be worshipped. Now, Jesus did not say, *“Devil, it is not yours to give.”* Jesus never disputed his right, because the dominion of this world was legally lost by Adam and turned over to the devil and the devil had it. Jesus knew that it must be regained, but Jesus knew it would never be regained by worshipping the devil. Jesus knew if it was legally lost, it must be righteously regained. It was lost by man, and, therefore, by man it must be regained. And, that’s the reason that Jesus became flesh and blood. That’s the reason that Jesus became a man as much man as He were not God at all. And, when Jesus got it back, He did it as a man. He subdued Satan as a man. I imagine when Jesus Christ went there into the wilderness to do battle with Satan, and the devil was trying to get Him to use His prerogatives as deity to jump down off the temple or to turn stones into bread, Jesus refused to do that. He refused to act as God, though He was God. And, I believe in His mind He thought to Himself, *“Satan, I want you to know, as God, I could destroy you just like that, but I’m not going to destroy you as God. I’m going to do it as man.”* Listen, It was legally lost, and it had to be righteously regained. And, Jesus became a man.

Let me give you some verses here that you need to jot down. First Corinthians 15:21: *“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection [from] the dead”* (1 Corinthians 15:21). Galatians 4:3: *“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage [to] the elements of the world: But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, [redeemed] them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”* (Galatians 4:3–5). And,

again, what our scripture says here in Hebrews 2:14: *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also...likewise took part of the same; that [by] death he might destroy him that [hath] the power of death, [which] is, the devil.”* How did Jesus destroy the devil? Listen, Jesus paid *“the wages of sin[, which] is death”* (Romans 6:23). He rendered Satan’s hold upon mankind inoperable by going to the cross and dying upon the cross. And, I believe that Satan made the blunder of the ages pushing Jesus to the cross, and pushing Jesus to the cross, and pushing Jesus to the cross, thinking that Jesus would rebel, that Jesus would say, “No,” that, “I will not die that way for anyone.” Satan could not believe the love that Jesus had. But, the very thing that Satan tried to do to Jesus blew up in his face. And, *“through death [Jesus destroyed] him that [hath] the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14). And, Satan was rendered helpless; he was made powerless. The dominion was taken back. When Jesus Christ hung upon that cross, He bowed His head and He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30). And, that word *finished* means “paid in full.” Listen, you see, Adam became a slave of Satan. As a slave, he lost his legal rights. And, because he had no legal rights, there was no way that he could get his lost inheritance back. And, all the children of Adam lost their rights, because...do the children of slaves have rights? No, they are slaves, too, because they are the children of slaves. And so, we had to have someone who came—another man with a fresh start—who was not the son of Adam, who was the Son of God and yet man born of a virgin without Adam’s sinful nature, to die upon that cross. And, I want you to see that Jesus suffered as a man, but I also want you to see that Jesus subdued Satan as a man.

C. Jesus Sympathizes as a Man

And now, here is the reason that I called this message “Our Sympathizing Savior”: because He suffered as a man and because He subdued as a man, He sympathizes as a man. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“Wherefore”—praise His Holy Name—“in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren”—now, just underscore that, “in all things”—“that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted”* (Hebrews 2:17–18). Isn’t that precious?

Have you ever been in the funeral home and somebody’s heart is broken? Sometimes we’re tempted to put our hand on their shoulder and remember when our mother died, or remember when our daddy died, or our brother, sister, died, and say, “I know how you feel.” But friend, we don’t know how they feel. Only Jesus knows, but He knows—He knows. He understands. He cares. His heart can be touched with our grief. *“We have not [a] high priest [that] cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities;*

but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He suffered as a man. He subdued as a man. He sympathizes as a man.

Conclusion

What a friend we have in Jesus!

*The great Physician now is near,
The sympathizing Jesus;
He [stoops] the drooping heart to [hear]*

—WILLIAM HUNTER

The sympathizing Jesus—oh dear friend, do you know Him? The One who loves you? Oh, He loves you. *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and...crowned him with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:4–5).* Friend, you’ll only know the glory that’s meant to be yours—you’ll only know the honor that God has prepared for you—when you know Jesus as your personal Savior. Man was crowned with honor and glory. Man was charged with guilt. But, man can be changed by grace.

Now, let me just say this, and I’ll be finished. Here’s something very, very exciting: when we are saved, God doesn’t just put us back like we were before we got lost. I’m talking about mankind. We have gained far more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. Did you know that? Adam was only innocent. I am positively righteous. Adam could lose his relationship. I can never lose my relationship with God. What a wonderful, wonderful salvation we have! Angels never knew the joy that our salvation brings. *I’d rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel.*

I want to tell you something else: the best is yet to be. I want you to look at a little word that you may miss. Look in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 8: *“But now we see not”—* what’s that next little word?—*“yet”—*oh, just put a star by that little word—*“But now we see not yet all things put under Him” (Hebrews 2:8).* There’s coming a time, dear friend, when all things are going to be put under you. Those of you that know the Lord Jesus Christ—our sorrows will be under our feet, our sicknesses will be under our feet. One day Satan himself will be under our feet. The Bible says we’re going to judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). We’re going to have that dominion that God made for us. *“The meek [will] inherit the earth” (Psalm 37:11).* *“What a day that will be when [our] dear Savior [we] see.”*

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. 🙏

The Word of God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 17, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

HEBREWS 4:12

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take the Word of God and turn tonight with me please to Hebrews 4 and in a moment we're going to look at verse 12, one of the great, great, great verses of the Word of God. From the great God that Betty just sang about.

Oh, Lord, our God how great thou art. Hebrews 4:12 says, *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12).

We want to pitch our mental thoughts around this wonderful, wonderful verse. The title of our message tonight is taken right from the verse, and the title of the message is, “The Word of God.”

May I tell you, dear friend, that there are many words for this Word? Sometimes, we call it the Bible. Sometimes, we call it the Holy Scripture. Sometimes, we may call it God's revelation. And, we would be correct in calling it all of these things, but do you

know what God's favorite name for the Bible is? It is simply this, the Word of God.

Now, don't endeavor to turn to the following verses, because I'm going to read a number of verses very quickly to you and these would be only some of hundreds of verses in the Bible that speaks of the Bible as the Word of God. But, just listen to these; they'll bless you.

Mark 7 verse 13: *"Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye"* (Mark 7:13). Luke 5 verse one: *"And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret"* (Luke 5:1). Acts 4 verse 31: *"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness"* (Acts 4:31). Acts chapter 12 and verse 24: *"But the word of God grew and multiplied"* (Acts 12:24). Romans chapter 10 verse 17: *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 17: *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17). Colossians 1 verse 25, Paul says, *"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God"* (Colossians 1:25). 1 Timothy 4 verse 5, our Lord is speaking of our food and He says, *"For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer"* (1 Timothy 4:5). And, then, 1 Peter 1 verse 23: *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever"* (1 Peter 1:23). 2 Peter 3 and verse 5: *"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water"* (2 Peter 3:5). Revelation chapter 20 and verse 4: *"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God"* (Revelation 20:4).

Now, whether these words were in the mouths of the Apostles, whether these words were in the mouth of Jesus, or whether these words were spoken by the Old Testament prophets and were recorded on parchment and scroll, no matter what, over and over God calls these inspired utterances, the Word of God. Now, you say, "Adrian, that's self-evident. Who cares what you call it? I mean, what difference does it make? Why would you read all of those Scriptures just to make one little insignificant point that God likes to call the Bible, the Word of God?" Well, I'll tell you why, because the more liberal a man gets in his theology, the less he likes to call the Bible the Word of God.

Now, if you had studied theology, you would find that would be true. Men who take a liberal view of the Bible, they call it, "the biblical records," or "the biblical materials," or "the record of God's revelation." It all sounds so good, but, my dear friend, that fuzzes the issue just a little bit and it takes it one-half step from what it really is. Get it in your

mind, big and plain and straight. It is the Word of God.

I. Absolute Perfection

Now, when you say it is the Word of God, as Hebrews 4:12 says, then that means some things. There are some things we must follow. For number one, if it is the Word of God, that means it must have absolute perfection. Now, you think, here's the logic. If it's the word of man, there may be some error. But, a God of truth cannot speak error.

2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 16 says, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God"* (2 Timothy 3:16). Now, that means that all Scripture is God-breathed. It is given by inspiration of God and the God of truth cannot inspire error.

Well, you say, "Adrian, if it is the Word of God, was it not written down by human beings?" Of course it was! But, that makes it, nonetheless, the Word of God. Listen to 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 21: *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Peter 1:21). And, as we've told you before, this word *moved* means "borne along," as a ship would be borne along with wind in its sails. These writers of the Old Testament prophecies had their sails up, and even though God used human instrumentality, God used the Holy Spirit to keep these men from error. The Bible calls itself the Word of God. Written by human instruments and human pendant, but every jot, every tittle, every point, every thought, there by the Word of God; every word.

Now, again, the more liberal a man gets, the more he will tell you the Bible is inspired in its thoughts but not inspired in its details. The more liberal a man gets, he does not believe in verbal inspiration. I personally believe in verbal inspiration. The word *verba*, the Latin word, means, "word," that is word-by-word inspiration. Every word as God gave it is inspired by the Holy Ghost. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 4 and verse 4: *"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4).

Listen, Proverbs chapter 30 and verse 5 says, *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him"* (Proverbs 30:5). Now, somebody says, "The thoughts are inspired, not the words." Friends, you can't have thoughts without words, anymore than you could have mathematics without numbers. So, when we call the Bible the Word of God, it speaks of its absolute perfection.

II. Absolute Character

I'll tell you something else; it speaks of its wonderful character. Have you noticed that God has the same name for His Son as he does for His book? Have you ever noticed that God calls the Lord Jesus, the Word of God? And, God calls His Bible, the Word of God. For example, Jesus is called the Word of God in John chapter 1 verses 1 through

3, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”* (John 1:1–3).

Revelation chapter 19 and verse 13 says of Jesus, “his name is called...”—who knows the rest of it?—“...The Word of God” (Revelation 19:13). His name is called the Word of God. Now, God’s name for the Bible is what? The Word of God. God’s name for Jesus is The Word of God.

Now, what I’m trying to tell you is that the character of Jesus and the character of the Bible are linked together. If one is fallible, so is the other. If one is a fraud, so is the other. You see, the same name is used for the Word of the Lord and the Lord of that Word. And, as you study that Bible, you will find out that Jesus, the living Word, honored the Bible, the spoken word and said the Scripture cannot be broken. But, as you study the Bible, the written Word, you will find out that the written Word presents Jesus, the Living Word, and the written Word makes Jesus its hero. Now, you cannot separate the two. I don’t believe that the Bible is Jesus or Jesus is the Bible. They are not identical, but they are inseparable and God has linked the character of the two. For example, I want you to see the character and the co-relation between Christ, the living Word, and the Bible, the written Word. For example, both the Lord Jesus Christ, in His humanity, and the Bible, has come from God. Listen to these Scriptures, 2 Peter chapter 1 and verse 21: *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Peter 1:21). How did we get the Bible? It was the supernatural work of the Holy Ghost. How did we get the Living Word? Galatians 4, verse 4: *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”* (Galatians 4:4). Both the living Word and the written Word have come from God.

Both the living Word and the written Word live forever in eternity. I believe in eternity when we worship, we will use the Word of God set to music. 1 Peter chapter 1, verse 25: *“But the Word of the Lord endureth...”*—what’s the next word? —“...forever” (1 Peter 1:25). There’ll never be a time when the Word of the Lord will not endure. “The Word of the Lord endureth forever.” Now, notice what the Living Word says of Himself, in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 18: *“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death”* (Revelation 1:18). Forever, there will be the written Word, and forever, there will be the living Word. Both have come from God, both live forever, and both are absolutely unchanging. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 18 says the written Word cannot be changed. Jesus said, *“For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Matthew 5:18). Hebrews 13 verse 8 says, *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”* (Hebrews 13:8).

Both the written Word and the living Word are light for dark places. For example, the written Word, Psalm 119 verse 105 says, *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”* (Psalm 119:105). The Lord Jesus who is the living Word says, *“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness”* (John 8:12). The written Word is light, and the living Word is light. Both of course, include the human element. The written Word was written by men. The Lord Jesus was birthed by Mary. But, the fact that Mary gave Jesus birth did not make Jesus imperfect, and the fact that men have written this book does not make this book imperfect. The same Holy Spirit that protected the Lord Jesus Christ from sin kept the human writers of the Scripture from including error in what they wrote.

III. Absolute Authority

If you call the Bible what God calls it, the Word of God, it has something to do, my dear friend, with its absolute perfection. It has something to do with its wonderful character. But, the third thing and the thing that I want to really tighten the focus on tonight is that it has something to do with its authority. It is the Word of God. When the Bible speaks, God speaks, and so look at our text again.

Go back to Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12: *“For the Word of God”—absolutely perfect, linked to the Lord Jesus Christ in character—“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword”* (Hebrews 4:12). Now, I want you to notice with me, therefore, in conclusion, three wonderful things about the Word of God.

A. It Is Quick

First of all, it is quick. If you have some translations, it may say that it is alive. The word *quick* means, “It is alive, it is zoai.” That’s the word we get “zoology” from or “zoo” from—that is that the Bible pulsates with life. This book is not like any other book; this book breathes, this book sings, this book weeps. It is alive in the power that it possesses. There is life in the Bible.

You say, “Adrian, you’re stretching that a little bit, that is only print on paper.” Yes, but, my dear friend, the truth that is there, I hope you believe this, if you don’t believe it you need to believe it. The truth that is here, actually have life-imparting power. Listen to what Jesus Christ said, and put this down, and get it big and plain and straight, in John chapter 6 and verse 63, and I want you to listen to it, and I want you preacher boys to listen to it, Jesus says, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth...”*—that is it is the spirit that gives life—*“...the flesh profits nothing...”* And, then Jesus said, *“...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life”* (John 6:63). The words that I speak unto you; what He is saying here is that the Bible pulsates with life. Friend, I’ve been preaching the Bible long enough now to see the power of the Word of God. It is alive, it quickens. It’s alive because it presents a living person. You see, the Bible cradles Jesus and the Bible

presents Jesus. The Bible, properly prayed over, properly interpreted, and properly preached, causes Jesus Christ to step out of its pages. And, Jesus is alive.

Other books that are written about characters may be about fictitious characters, or characters that have died, or characters who will die. But, the Bible presents the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the essential personality of the entire Bible, and the Bible is quick. It is alive. It pulsates with power.

B. It Is Powerful

But, not only is the Bible quick, the Bible also says of itself, in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12, look at it, “the Word of God is quick,” and notice the next word, “and powerful,” powerful. Now, that word is “energes,” it is a combination of two words, like our word energy. The Bible, not only does it have life, but because it has life, it has energy. That means it’s a busy book; that it works. You read other books, my dear friend, the Bible reads you. I mean, the Bible has incredible power; it is at work! God’s Word works, it’s not like any other book.

C. It Is Like a Sword

Now, it’s like a sword. You see, the Bible says, “The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword.” It does its work like a sword. For example, you think of the saints and think of the work that it does on you and the work that it does on me. It does exploratory surgery on us. Has God ever done exploratory surgery on you? Has God ever taken the two-edged sword of the Word and just split you open?

D. It Divides

Listen it does, you see the Word of God divides. Look at it, the Word of God is quick and power, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. Now, what does that mean—dividing asunder between soul and spirit and the joints and the marrow? Well, He’s making an application here today, and you were to come up to me, you could take that sword and slice me up. You could, first of all, open me up and find my joints, and dismember my joints, then if your knife was strong enough, and sharp enough, you could split my bones and find my marrow. God says, “That’s what my Word is like.” Now, what does the marrow represent? Well, the marrow is the heart of the bone, and the joints are the hinges. Now, what’s he saying? He’s saying that God gets down to your attitudes and your actions. The heart and the hinges; the joints and the marrow. Now, why does He mention that? Well, because of the same thing that He mentions. He says, “It divides asunder between soul and spirit, the joints and the marrow.”

Now, the marrow is like the spirit the joints are like the soul. You say, “What does that mean?” Well, you see, dear friend, when God made you, God gave you a body and inside that body is a soul and a spirit. Did you know that? 1 Thessalonians chapter 5

verse 23 says, *“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Now, the joints and the marrow, that’s the body. The soul is the soul and the spirit is the spirit. It’s all right there in Hebrews 4:12.

Now, the Word of God is such a sharp instrument that if it were a literal sword, it could divide the joints and the marrow. Since it’s a spiritual sword, it divides the soul and the spirit. Do you know the difference between the soul and the spirit? Well, I was preaching for a long time and I didn’t know the difference between the soul and the spirit. I just thought that was the invisible part of a human being. You could call it his soul; you could call it his spirit, six of one, half a dozen of another. But, the more I studied, the more I found out that the spirit is that which makes man absolutely unique and in the image of God. Plants have a body, but they don’t have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul, but they don’t have a spirit. Only man has a spirit, because man is made in the image of God and God has a spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. How important it is therefore that we have an instrument that can divide between soul and spirit?

So much of the trouble that we get into in the spiritual world is because we are not able to divide between soul and spirit. And, the reason we do not divide between soul and spirit is because we do not know the Word of God as we ought to know the Word of God.

The difference between soul and spirit is the difference between that which is natural and that which is supernatural. Did you know the problem in many churches is, we just have too much soul, and we don’t have enough spirit? There’s nothing wrong with soul, nothing wrong with that. But, if that soul overpowers the spirit and the spirit doesn’t come through, nobody’s blessed. They may be entertained, they may be amazed, but they won’t be blessed. But oh my dear friend, if the spirit comes through, then they will be blessed. So many people don’t know the difference. You see the difference between soul and spirit is the difference between carnal emotions and spiritual experiences. Did you know that you may shout and you may sing in the flesh? Or, you may shout and sing in the spirit. You may be soulish or you may be spiritual.

So, many people have knowledge of the Bible, but it’s a soulish knowledge of the Bible. It is a carnal knowledge rather than a spiritual knowledge. And, you can get into the flesh and study the Bible. I’ve met people who were in the flesh and were Bible students. I mean, they could split a theological hair into sixteen equal divisions, but they were in the flesh. They use the Bible more like a club, than a sword. They read the Bible more like a math book than a love story. They have a soulish approach to the Word of God. Did you know, dear friend, that you can live a good life with soul power? The Bible calls it will worship. Rather than living in spiritual strength, you can live and walk the

straight and narrow, at least outwardly with soulish power. That's what the Pharisees did.

So, the Word of God, one of the things it does when you really get into it, it divides between soul and spirit. Oh, what a sharp instrument it is. But, not only does it divide, oh, my friend, it discerns.

E. It Discerns

Look, once God gets in there and once God takes this sword, and God begins to slice you open; why does God slice you open? Why does God separate soul from spirit? Why does God get into you and show who you really are? We'll continue to read here. It says, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart"* (Hebrews 4:12). Now, the word "discerner" here is the word that we get our word "critic" from.

1. Cuts the Saved

The Word of God criticizes you. That's the reason some of us don't like to read the Bible, because when we're reading the Bible, the Bible reads us. My dear friend, when you come to the Bible, first of all, it'll just lay you open. It'll divide between soul and spirit. And, once it lays you open, it'll tell you what you are. It is a discerner of what makes you tick. You see, the Bible divides us and then it discerns us. The Bible is your critic. We're not here to criticize the Bible; the Bible is here to criticize us. The Bible does exploratory surgery on the saints, to search the saints, and then it does corrective surgery to sanctify the saints.

Has the Bible ever cut anything out of your life? Oh, dear friend, that blessed blade will cut and remove and do radical corrective surgery on you. Do you remember what the Lord Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 18 and verse 8: *"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire"* (Matthew 18:8). Cut off your hand, He says. Cut off your foot. Do you think He was speaking literally? Do you think if you cut off your hand it would make you any more spiritual? No, what our Lord is saying here is this: You let the Word of God cut out of your life those things that offend. What He is saying is that if there is something cancerous in you, some work of your hand, some place that you attend, let the Holy Spirit of God remove it, so that healing and health may begin. Thank God for the sharpness, the sharpness of His Word.

2. Cuts the Sinners

But, not only, dear friend, does it work with the saints, it works with the sinners. Let me show you how the Word of God is used as a sword with sinners. And, this thrills me.

You could not be a preacher of the Word and preach as many times as I've preached without being thrilled at the power of the Word of God as it deals with sinners.

Now, I have seen this book stab people. The Word of God literally, as a sword, just stabs people. For example, reading in the Bible you find where Simon Peter was taken before a counsel of prosecutors. He is on the defense, but he becomes the prosecuting attorney and he begins to preach to them. And, he's been on the defense, but now he gets on the offense. And, the Bible says this of Simon Peter, in Acts chapter 5 and verse 33: "*When they heard that, they were cut to the heart...*" (Acts 5:33). I mean, Simon Peter sliced them. They were cut to the heart. What cut them? Peter's wit? Wisdom? No, my dear friend, it was that blessed blade.

Another illustration, sweet Stephen, that Bible preaching, Bible toting, Bible quoting deacon, stood up in front of them all, and preached one of the most glorious sermons that was ever preached. And, the Bible says that when Stephen preached, this is what caused them to stone him. Listen to Acts chapter 7 and verse 54: "*When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth*" (Acts 7:54). That's the Word of God, friend, I've seen it happen so many times.

Do you know when a man is preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit, there are a lot of folks going to get cut? You know, don't get the idea that preaching is bad because people don't like it. That may be the best thing about it. I mean, the Bible says, "They were cut to the heart and they took counsel to slay Stephen." I believe when folks come to church something ought to happen to them. When the Word of God is preached in power, one of three things is going to happen to you: you're going to get mad, you're going to get sad, or you're going to get glad. I mean, well, it's going to cut you one way or the other. It's going to hurt you or heal you, but you're going to be mad or sad or glad, when you go out you ought to be one way tonight. If you just go out and nothing happens, then nothing has happened up here.

What if you're witnessing to somebody and they say, "I don't believe the Word of God." Well, let's suppose you have a sword and you're in a fight and they say, "I don't believe it'll cut." What do you do? Just stick 'em. The man says, "I don't believe the Bible's the Word of God," doesn't really have a lot to do with it. My friend, you can take this book and cut people with it anyway. I am telling you that the Bible works with sinners in convicting power and it is used in converting power. Remember what happened on the day of Pentecost when Simon Peter was preaching? There had been a time when Simon Peter used another sword and cut off the ear of the high priest servant and got everybody in trouble. What a mess he made. But, on the day of Pentecost, Simon Peter took what the Bible calls "the sword of the Spirit" and he used that blessed blade, and rather than stabbing people to death, three thousand people were stabbed alive by the Word of God. And, why? Acts chapter 2 and verse 37 says,

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37). Again, the Word of God. They were stabbed by the Word of God.

A young man stumbled through a snowstorm. He wanted to get out of the snow. He was just a boy, barely in his teens. Went and sat in the back of a little church, there were so few people there that the minister didn't show up and a laymen came up to the pulpit and he hardly knew what to say. And, that laymen in that snowstorm just simply quoted a verse of Scripture that said, *“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else”* (Isaiah 45:22). And, that young boy named Charles Hadden Spurgeon, looked and lived and became the greatest Baptist preacher who ever lived. Just by a layman taking that sword in his mouth and quoting the Word of God.

Charles Colson is a personal friend of mine, the Watergate hatchet man. He was in that difficulty there after Watergate and Charles Colson went to call on a friend of his named Tom Phillips. And, Tom Phillips took this hardened, White House insider and gave him the Word of God. And, Charles Colson, who had been cynical and bitter and hard-bitten and conniving, gave his testimony later on as Tom Phillips had shared the Word of God. He said, “When I got back in my car, the Spirit of God was so on me and the Word of God was so dealing, my eyes were so full of tears.” He said, “It was like I was swimming under water.”

What was it that touched Charles Hadden Spurgeon? What was it that touched Charles Colson? What was it that touched a teenage boy named Adrian Rogers? What was it that touched you? What was it that touched those three thousand on the day of Pentecost? Was it somebody's power of persuasion? No, it is the Word of God.

And, I'll tell you something else, dear friend, not only does the Word of God have a convicting power and a converting power, it has a condemning power. Notice Jesus says, “It is a two-edged sword.” The gospel is a saver of life unto life or death unto death. And, if the Bible does not cut you to heal you, the Bible will cut you to kill you.

My dear friend, you're going to come to the judgment, and you're going to be judged by the Word of God. And, if you go out of this building tonight, for example, suppose you came here and you're not saved, and you hear me preach the Word of God tonight, and you leave without the Lord Jesus Christ, does that mean that you are done with the Word of God? Oh no, oh no. Jesus says, “The very words they are going to judge you, in the last day.” As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus said, *“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet”* (Matthew 10:14). Why? Jesus said, “That dust will be used against them in the Day of Judgment.” What does that mean? It means that one of these days you'll come to the judgment, and you'll say, “Oh, God, have mercy upon me. Lord I didn't have a chance.” And, God will say, “Bring out exhibit 'A'.” And, there will be a little

speck of dust. You'll say, 'What is that?' And, He'll say, 'That's the dust off the shoes of my servant Adrian Rogers, who spoke to you.' God says, 'Even that dust will be used as a testimony against you.'

One other thing I want you to notice. Not only does the Word of God cut the saved, not only does it cut the sinner, I want you to see how it works against Satan himself. You see, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 12: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12). The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 17: *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God"* (Ephesians 6:17).

Friend, when you go to do battle with Satan, don't forget your sword. The Word of God is quick and powerful, it works with the saint, it works with the sinner, it works with Satan.

Three times Jesus ran Satan through with this Word of God. Three times, Satan came to Jesus to tempt Jesus and three times, Jesus said to Satan, "It is written, it is written, it is written." And, three times, Satan is defeated by the Word of God.

May I tell you some good advice tonight? Listen to me. Never argue with the devil. It's not worth it, first of all. And, number two, you'll lose the argument. Never argue with the devil. Point him to the Word of God and then step out of the argument. I mean just use the Word of God, and from then on his argument is with God Himself. And, guess who the loser will be. Listen, the Word of God is your chief weapon against Satan. It is the sword of the Spirit. And, you can go forth against Satan and some of your battles are going to be fierce and you better be able to say when Satan gets on your case, "It is written. It is written."

Martin Luther was given to nightmares. One night he awakened and he said he felt the presence of Satan in his room, so much that he thought he was talking to the devil literally. He said, the devil was at the foot of his bed. And, he had a scroll and that scroll was unrolled and on there were all the sins that Martin Luther had committed. And, the devil, who was accusing Martin Luther, was reading them each one, and pointing a finger of condemnation. Luther said, he felt his soul slipping into Hell, and then he remembered, he remembered the Word of God that says the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. And, he quoted the Scripture to Satan himself, and quoted that verse, and Satan, or the presence or whatever was in Luther's mind, left him that night, as he was alone in that room.

Friend, you'd better have, you'd better have the Word of God at work with Satan. One of these days, one of these days, there's going to be the battle of Armageddon and some of us feel it may be very far away. And, do you know the weapon that's going to be used at the Battle of Armageddon? Well, 'ol antichrist may come with his jets and

lasers and napalm and F-14's and 15's and 16's and whatever else he may have. Our side will have one weapon: Revelation chapter 19 verse 15. It speaks of our Lord, and it says, *"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"* (Revelation 19:15).

Conclusion

Listen to me; listen to your pastor. In these days, are you listening? You're going to go down if you don't know the Word of the Lord. It is your sword, it is quick, it is powerful, and it is sharper than any two-edged sword. Let's bow in prayer.

May I help you tonight, first of all as a child of God? If you have been lacking in your Bible study, and lacking in your Bible obedience, would you tell the Lord tonight, "Lord, I have sinned against you. For, Lord, I have hardened my heart against you by not hearing your word. And, Lord, I repent of that. And, Lord, without getting legalistic about it, Lord I just want to promise you, that I'm going to get into your word to know it, to love it, and to obey it in a way that I have not been doing. Help me to do it Lord Jesus." Would you tell him that? "Lord, I need to know your Word. I need to know the Jesus that it presents. I need the power of the Word in my life."

And, now, those of you who may not yet have received the Lord Jesus, may I tell you that all of the Bible is written to get you to believe in Jesus and obey Jesus. Jesus says, *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me"* (John 5:39). If you hear the Bible, read the Bible, and don't know Jesus, you've misheard or misread the Bible. Would you pray and ask Jesus Christ, tonight, to save you? Would you say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me Lord Jesus. Help me to Lord Jesus, not to be ashamed of you. Help me to obey you. Help me to make a public confession of my faith in you, to follow you wherever you lead me Lord Jesus. In your name I pray, Amen."

The Word of God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 25, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 4:12

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

HEBREWS 4:12

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Introduction

Open Your Bibles to the Book of Hebrews chapter 4. In a moment, we're going to look at verse 12. This morning, we, we're talking to you about being a growing Christian. We said one of the things that is necessary to be a growing Christian is that you have a proper diet. Now 1 Peter 2:2 says: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." There is no way – listen to me – there is no way possible that you are going to be a growing Christian if you neglect the one book that God has given to give you energy, power, sustenance, and strength, wisdom, knowledge, and faith; and that is, the Word of God.

There was a man who lived in England. His name was George Mueller. He lived in Bristol, England. And if you want to get an exciting book, just get the book, "The Bibliography of Mueller of Bristol." Mueller was a man who believed God, trusted God, had extraordinary, unbelievable faith in God. And as you read the life of Mueller, you say, "O, would to God that I had the faith that Mueller had." Well, let me tell you the secret of his faith in his own words, and I'm going to read from you, ah, these words of

Mueller. And, by the way, he was a man who fed literally thousands and thousands and thousands of orphans and raised millions of dollars and without even telling anyone about his need. He said, talking about his, his personal life, his devotional life, he said, talking about his prayer life, “The first thing I did after having asked in a few words the Lord’s blessings upon His precious Word, was to begin to meditate upon the Word of God, searching into every verse to get a blessing out of it. Not for the sake of public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated on, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. Now what is food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God. And, here again, not the simple reading of the Word so that it only passes through our minds, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts.” Now he illustrates what the Bible says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Now look, if you will, here in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.” What a great, great verse on the Word of God.

Now, God’s favorite characterization of His Book is the Word of God. God’s favorite title for the Bible is the Word of God. Over and over and over again you can find where the Bible calls itself the Word of God. Now that’s very important because, you see, I have observed in my theological studies through the years, the more liberal a professor is or a preacher when he’s talking about the Bible, the more liberal he is, the less he calls it the Word of God. He calls it the biblical materials, or the Pauline epistles, or the record of God’s revelation. He just cannot bear to call it what the Bible itself calls itself, and that is the Word of God. Now that’s very important because when it is the Word of God; I mean, then it is what? God speaking. Now if it is God speaking, then we have to pay attention to it. You see, God gave the same name to His own dear Son. Jesus Christ Himself is called the same thing that the Bible is called here in Hebrews 4:12. Jesus is called the Word of God.

For example, in Revelation 19, verse 13, speaking of Jesus when he comes again: “And he is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.” Now that’s very important because the character of both are linked together. The Bible is called the Word of God; Jesus Christ is called the Word of God. One is the written word; the other is the living word. Ah, you see, the Bible is the Word of the Lord, and Jesus is the Lord of the Word. And so, ah, the living word, Jesus, honors the written word. The written word, the Bible, presents the living word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, I want us to look at this wonderful text tonight, Hebrews 4:12, and learn three things about the Bible tonight that’ll be a great blessing to you. It’s been a blessing

to me.

I. The Bible Is the Book That Lives

The very first is this: The Bible is the book that lives. The Bible is the book that lives. Now notice, notice what it says. “The word of God is quick....” Do you see that? I’m using the King James. “The word of God is quick....” Now the word *quick* literally means alive. It is the Greek word *zao, zao*. It’s the word we get, ah, zoology from or zoo from. It means that which is alive. And so the Bible is not like any other book. The Bible literally has life. It sings. It weeps. It breathes. It speaks. The Bible is alive and has power. Now if you don’t believe that, let me tell you what Jesus Christ said, along with the writer of Hebrews.

Put in your margin John chapter 6 and verse 63. Jesus says, “It is the spirit that quickeneth [that is, that gives life]; the flesh profiteth nothing....” Then Jesus said, “...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life....the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” I am telling you; now, you listen to me. The Bible is alive. The Bible says it is quick. It is *zao*. It has, it has power. And because it is alive, it presents a living person. Jesus said, “Search the Scriptures; for these are they which testify of me.” And when Jesus said that, He was talking about the Old Testament. Don’t get the idea that the Old Testament is about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Old Testament is about Jesus. Now you’ll find Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob there in the Old Testament, but the central personality of all of the Bible is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ said Himself, “You search the Scriptures; these are they which do testify of me.” Now you can read other books and they may present a fictitious character who never lived. Or they may present an historical character who has died or will die. But, folks, I am telling you when you open this Book, Jesus steps out. I mean, it is a living book. It presents a living person. Jesus Christ is alive and well, and He says, “...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” The Bible is alive! That’s the first thing I want you to understand. Not only do you read the Bible; it reads you, friend. It is a living book.

II. The Bible Is the Book That Labors

Now the Bible is the book that lives. That’s the first thing I want you to see. The second thing I want you to see is the Bible is the book that labors. Now the Bible says, “The word of God is quick and powerful....” Now the word *powerful* there is the Greek word *energes*, and it’s the word we get our word *energy*. It means it works! This book that pulsates with life is a book that is not a dead book. It is very much alive. It labors. It, it works with the saints, it works with sinners, and it works on Satan. Let me just show you that.

A. **It Works on the Saint**

Let me show you how the Bible works on saints. For example, the Bible will do exploratory work on the saints. Now remember, the Bible is called a sword here in this passage of Scripture. It has the idea of that which cuts. And the Bible will cut you, and it will cut you deeply. Look again in this verse. “For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Now what he is saying is the Word of God is sharp as a scalpel that goes deeper than any sword could go into the human body.

Now he speaks of the joints and the marrow. The joints in your body, those, that’s the hinges; the marrow is the heart. And what he is saying is this: that the Word of God gets down into our actions and our attitudes. It goes down deep, deep into the joints and the marrow. Now he’s taking a physical sword and a physical body and he’s making a spiritual application and a spiritual truth. Now he’s saying, “Just as a, a physical sword might cut into the joints and the marrow,” he’s saying, “the Word of God goes even deeper than that. The Word of God divides between soul and spirit. Look at that, if you will. It’s very interesting. “...wh, dividing asunder between soul and spirit...” Now what is the difference between soul and spirit? I was saved a long time before I knew there was a difference. I used to think that’s just two synonymous words for the invisible part of an individual. You say his soul, you say his spirit – six of one, half a dozen of another. But that is not true. The soul of man is that, ah, that psychological part of man. The Greek word for soul is psuche or psyche. It’s the word we get psychiatry, psychology, psychic from. Your soul is basically your mind, your emotion, and your will. Madison Avenue works on your soul. The spirit is that part of you that is made in the image of God. God is spirit. And man is made in the image of God, and so the Bible says that we worship God how? In spirit and in truth.

Now, folks, it may surprise you to know that animals have a soul. You read in, in Genesis where the Bible speaks of the living creatures, the, the Hebrew word is naphesh. It’s the word that’s translated soul in other places. That is, animals have conscious life.

Ah, we were looking at some home movies of our dog, Tawny, last night. And Tawny, you know, Tawny had mind, emotion, and will. She was almost like part of the family. And she had a personality as a dog. Animals have a soul. That doesn’t necessarily mean animals are going to heaven. That’s not what that means. But I’m saying they have conscious life.

The word *soul* means that which has conscious life. But, but, you see, man is a spirit. The Bible says, “I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And with your spirit you have spiritual knowledge. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit

and in truth. And God's spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're the children of God.

Now animals have instincts; human beings don't have instincts. Human beings have the Holy Spirit in the human spirit to guide them because we're in the image of God. Plants have a body; they don't have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul. They don't have a spirit. Only man has a spirit.

Now the Bible says that the Word of God is so sharp that it can divide between soul and spirit. That's a very difficult thing to do, to divide between soul and spirit, because there's much that goes on in church services, and there's much that goes on in preaching and singing and ministry that is soulish rather than spiritual. Now you say, "Well, I know, I know what is spiritual. If you sing an anthem, that is spiritual." But now, if you sing, "I'm feeling mighty fine," that is soulish. Not necessarily. Not necessarily. You can sing an anthem in the flesh, and you can sing Stamp Baxter in the spirit. Now you can sing Stamp Baxter in the flesh, and a lot of them do, Jim, I'll guarantee you. But, but who is going to divide between soul and spirit? A preacher can preach with soul, mind, emotion, and will. He can be a spellbinder. He can have you on the edge of your seat, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the anointing of God is upon what he's doing. But it may be. Thank God for the spellbinders who are anointed. But what I'm saying is this, friend, that a lot of what we look at is not necessarily of God, although it may seem like it's of God. It may be all soulish. It may be mind, emotion, and will.

Folks, listen. I have been preaching long enough, and I have to preach often enough, that, I mean, you could almost, you could almost drop a handkerchief and say, "Preach," and I'd start preaching. As a matter of fact, that happened one time.

I hadn't planned to use this for an illustration, but I used to have a program down in Fort Pierce, Florida called "Daybreak." 6:45 – I did it live most of the time on the radio. We'd go to the station and preach. Sometimes you could call in and, you know, preach on the, on the, ah, phone and get a phone patch and, but I'd have to wake up in time to get down there and get my mind ready, ready to preach, "Daybreak." Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's time for "Daybreak." The psalmist said, "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee and will look up." And, ah, I would, ah, and, and we would sing, "Some Golden Daybreak Jesus Will Come." We ought to do that again. It was a good program. But I would do that every morning, as a younger preacher [you notice I said younger] down in Florida. And one morning...and it came on at 6:45. One morning Joyce said, "Adrian, wake up. It is 6:45." I mean, I'm in the bed. I said, "Oh, no." I said, "Joyce, call the radio station. Call the station." She called them. I said, "Joyce, get me a Bible." I jumped out of bed in my skivvies and I'm down there on one knee with the phone, opening the Bible. And I say, "Good morning, folks. It's time for "Daybreak." And, and I just opened it. I remember now what I opened it to. Matthew 5. I said, "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain. And when He was set, His disciples came

unto him. And He opened His mouth and taught them, saying....” And I just began to preach. I don’t know what I said, but Joyce was over in the corner in convulsions. There I am, you know preaching. You never know what you’re going to get when you’re listening on the radio, you know, ah, what’s going on there. But what I’m trying to say is this: that I have preached long enough, I have preached long enough, really, I can preach. You know, you just say, “Preach,” I can preach. That doesn’t necessarily mean I’m going to be in the Spirit, because when you do something long enough, you learn how to do it. You know, that’s one of the great dangers.

You know, the devil’s not going to get me to go out and drink liquor. I don’t believe he’s going to get me to do that. He’s not going to get me to commit adultery. He’s not going to get me to rob a bank. I mean, I don’t want to be braggadocios about it, but, folks, he’s just not going to do that. All right? You just understand. I’m not saying, ah, that, that, that I’m so strong or all that. I’ve just, I’m just not going to do it. I ain’t a going to do it. I’m just not going to do that. I’m just not. Each day I’m not, because the devil could not get me to do that. But I’ll tell you what the devil could, if he, the devil couldn’t get me to do bad in the flesh, you know what the devil might get me to do? Good in the flesh. Good in the flesh. I mean, to preach in the flesh, to lead music in the flesh, to administrate in the flesh, to play the piano in the flesh, to sing in the choir in the flesh. Oh, you’re singing the right words, but you’re in the flesh maybe. You’re not in the Spirit. Now, who knows? I don’t know. You don’t know. But the Word of God knows. I’m telling you, friend, the Word of God will get down there so deep it will divide asunder between soul and spirit. Now, listen to me carefully. The devil’s very clever. If the devil can’t get you to do bad in the flesh, the devil will try to do good in the flesh. He doesn’t care, just so long as you’re in the flesh. And once he gets you to doing good in the flesh, then he can get you to do bad in the flesh. You understand?

Sometimes you see some preacher. Sometime he will fall and go into immorality and adultery, and somebody will say, “Oh, what happened to him? Look how far he fell.” No, you don’t know how low he was living. He may have had outwardly a very wonderful ministry, but he’s doing what he’s doing now, no longer depending upon the Holy Spirit of God, because now he knows how to do it.

A singer can know how to do it. Sometimes I wonder, Jim, about, ah, singers who go from place to place. They know how to do it. They know what songs are going to move the hearts and minds of people. And that’s the reason that I pray, “O God, I never want to become a professional. I do not want to preach without the anointing. I don’t want to preach without the touch of heaven upon my heart and upon my life.” And it’s a dangerous thing. You see, the Word of God is so sharp that the Word of God, friend, when you get to reading the Bible, not only do you read the Bible; the Bible will read you, and God will put that sword in there and God will divide between soul and Spirit.

There's no physiologist, there's no psychiatrist, there's no theologian that can do that. But the Word of God can do that.

You know, there's a difference. Some people come to the Bible with carnal emotions rather than a spiritual experience, sometimes carnal knowledge versus theological and spiritual understanding. I mean, you can go to the Bible with carnal knowledge and know the names of all the kings of Egypt, the kings of Israel, the kings of Babylon. You can read the Bible like a math book rather than a love story, and you can use it as a club rather than a sword. You can be in the soul rather than in the Spirit.

So the Word of God is a divider, and the Word of God is a discerner. Look at this. Look at it. "For the word of God is alive, quick, and powerful (energes) and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and Spirit." Now the word here, ah, *discerner*, do you see that? "...and is a discerner..." That's the word, that word *discerner* there is, is the word we get our English word critic from. You see, we have some of these so-called theologians who believe it's their job to criticize the Bible. It's not your job to criticize the Bible; the Bible criticizes you. The Bible is the critic to criticize us. And once the Lord takes this book, and it begins to work on us, it does exploratory surgery on us.

And then it may do corrective surgery on us. You know, Jesus said, "If your right hand offend you, cut it off. If your right eye offend you, pluck it out." Matthew 18, verse 8: "Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; for it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." What does that mean? Well, he's not talking literally there. What he's saying is it's better to limp into heaven than it is to strut into hell. That's what he's saying. There's something in your life that cancerous. Let the Word of God cut it out so that healing and health may come. So it's like a sword, the Bible, the Word of God. It works on the saints. It does exploratory surgery. It does corrective surgery.

B. It Works on the Sinner

I'll tell you what else it does. It works on the sinner. You'd have to be a pastor, you'd have to be a preacher to know the power of the Word of God as it works on sinners.

1. The Bible Has Convicting Power

It cuts like a sword, convicting people. You know, Simon Peter was before the council; that is, the religious high muckety-mucks. They were the prosecutors. And, ah, they have him, they think, on the defense. But Peter takes out the sword and he wades into them. And let me tell you what. After Peter preached to them, notice what the Bible says in Acts chapter 5 and verse 33: "And when they heard that, they were cut in the heart..." I mean, these people that had Peter on the dock, and they're, they're being worked with

Peter, Peter just takes out the sword, and wickety-whack-whack, they're cut to the heart with the Word of God.

Stephen. My son Stephen is here tonight and his lovely wife Cindi. And they're visiting with us for a while. And he's named after this Stephen, this Stephen, the preaching deacon in the Bible. Stephen was preaching a powerful sermon; I mean, a powerful sermon again before, you know, the religious leaders of that day. And he preached with such power, the Bible says in Acts chapter 7, verse 54: "And when they heard these things, they were cut to the heart..." No wonder the Bible calls itself a sword. "...they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." Don't get the idea that good preaching makes everybody happy. You know, when you go away from church, you ought to go away mad, sad, or glad. Some people just go away. I mean, it ought to have an effect. When they heard it, they were cut to the heart. And, you know, we should have said to Stephen, "Now, Stephen, you need to use a little usher-friendly evangelism here." No, he didn't do it. He stuck them with the Word of God.

You know, I found out sometimes people say, "I don't believe the Bible's the Word of God." Well, so what? I mean, if somebody is coming after you and you've got a gun, and they say, "I don't believe that's a gun," you, you could still shoot them, couldn't you? Somebody said, "I don't believe that's a sword." Well, cut them with it and then they'll believe it's a sword.

Now, what I'm trying to say is this: that when these unbelievers gnashed on Stephen with the Word of God, he cut them. When they came to Simon Peter, he cut them.

2. The Bible Has Converting Power

And not only does the Bible have convicting power; it has converting power. You remember Peter on the Day of Pentecost preached a sermon and 3,000 souls got saved because he used the sword. Before that, when Jesus, not many days before that, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and they came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. And Peter's a fisherman. He took out a sword. You know, what's a fisherman doing with a sword, anyway? And he goes out here to defend Jesus with this sword in the flesh. He's not in the Spirit; He's in the flesh, and he cuts the ear off of the high priest's servant whose name. The high priest's servant's name was Malchus. And Simon Peter lunged on him and took a whack at him now and cut off his ear. Now Peter didn't mean to do that. He meant to cut off his head, but he and, I mean, he made a mess of everything. Had Jesus not put the ear back on that man, can you imagine what would have happened? I mean, what kind of a testimony would he have had? "What happened to your ear, Malchus?" "Oh, some Christian cut it off." No. When, when, when we get in, when we get in the flesh, we mess things up. Later, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter took the sword of the Spirit and he didn't, he didn't kill with it. He made 3,000

souls alive with it. You see, there's the convicting power. There's the converting power. A literal, a literal sword will stab the living to kill them; the spiritual sword stabs the dead to bring them to life again.

I was, ah, thinking recently about the conversion of Charles Colson. We were watching some home movies last night, and Charles Colson was in our home, and we were watching Charles Colson. He had not been a Christian that long. You remember he was the Watergate man who went to prison because he was sort of a hatchet man in Nixon's regime, erstwhile President Richard Nixon. Charles Colson. He was having all kinds of problems. He is a brilliant, brilliant man, a lawyer, extremely powerful position in the Nixon White House. But he got into all of this embroilment, and he went to see a friend named Tom Philips. Tom Philips was a believer in Jesus Christ, and he shared the Word of God with that brilliant Watergate, I mean, that brilliant attorney, White House attorney, Charles Colson. And Charles Colson gave his testimony. He said, "I went back to my car." He said, "I could hardly drive because the tears were just flooding." He said, "It was like trying to swim underwater." He said, "I just looked up to God and I said, 'Take me, take me.'" Thank God for that. What was that, that, that brought that brilliant man, that man with so much power, what was it that brought him down, and yet lifted him up at the same time? It is the Word of God.

3. The Bible Has Condemning Power

The Word of God has convicting power, it has converting power, it has condemning power. Let me tell you this, folks. Do you know how you're going to be judged? You're going to be judged by the Word of God. Jesus said that. He said, "The words, they will judge you in that day." If the Bible does not convict and convert, it will condemn. That's the reason Jesus said, "Look. When you go to somebody's house, and you bring the testimony of Jesus, "He said, "If they receive you, go into the house and share with them." But Jesus said, "If they don't receive you, shake the dust off your feet, just shake it off right there," because Jesus said, "that dust will be used as a testimony against them in the day of judgment." Now how will that work?

Well, let's suppose, Bobby. Let's suppose I'm witnessing to Bobby, and Bobby, let's suppose he's lost. And I knock on Bobby's door and I say, "Bobby, I'm Adrian Rogers. I'd just like to come in and talk with you about Jesus." He says, "Look. I don't have any time for that. I have no interest in religion. I don't want your church. I don't want your God. I don't want your faith. I don't want your Bible. Leave me alone." And he shuts the door. So I say, "All right." I shake the dust off my feet. An angel, after he shuts the door, comes down there to his doorstep, sweeps up that dust, puts it in an envelope, seals it, and puts it up. Later on, Bobby dies and he stands at the Great Judgment, and he says, "Oh, God, have mercy, have mercy." "Well, speak more. Why should I have mercy?" "I didn't have an opportunity to be saved. I didn't know how to be saved." "Angel, bring

Exhibit A. Open that. See that, Bobby? That's the dust that was on Adrian Rogers' feet when he knocked on your door." Listen. The very dust will be used as a testimony against them in the Day of Judgment. You see, God not only holds us responsible for what we hear, but He holds us responsible for what we would have heard if we had listened. And that blessed blade is two-edged. The Bible says that the gospel is a saber of life unto life or death unto death. And if the Bible does not heal you, the Bible will hurt. If the Bible does not save you, the Bible will slay you. I am telling you, friend, that the Bible is alive. It is a sword of God. It is quick. It is powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword.

C. **It Works on Satan**

And not only does it work with the saint, and not only does it work with the sinner, but, friend, it works with Satan himself.

We mentioned this morning Jesus Christ fasting forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. By the way, I told you the Bible would come alive. You remember that wilderness? You remember that I told you all this stuff. Listen, these folks just been with me to Israel. As you hear these things, it's an amazing thing. There Jesus was out in the wilderness. And He's been fasting. He's fasting for forty days and forty nights. And then that dirty devil, ah, comes to work with Him. Well, what does Jesus do? Jesus does exactly what the Apostle Paul told us to do. Remember, the Apostle Paul said in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and power and spiritual wickedness in high places...."

Now since we're in this battle, what is our weapon? Well, he tells us in that same chapter, chapter 6, verse 17: "...and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." That's the way. He tells you to put on the whole armor of God. But then you take your one offensive weapon, which is the sword of the Spirit. And so the devil comes to Jesus, and he says, "If you're the Son of God, command these stones that they be made bread." And Jesus takes the Word of God, the sword, from its sheath and Jesus says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Take that!

Satan goes back and he comes back again with a second try, and he says, he takes Jesus up to the pinnacle of the temple, and he says, "Well, cast yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple." That is, "Make a dramatic entrance. Come there with a great display of pomp and glory. And don't worry about it. The Bible says He'll give His angels charge over thee to bear thee up, lest you cast your foot upon a stone." Did you know the devil can quote Scripture and twist it? And Jesus unsheathed the Word of God again and He says, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt, test the Lord thy God." Take that!

Satan backs up again. A third time he comes with the most sinister temptation of all. He takes Him up to an exceeding high mountain and shows Him all the kingdoms of this

world. Now you may not understand this, but, you see, listen, the Bible prophesies that the kingdoms of this world shall be become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. And what he was saying is, "You just bow down and worship me. I'll give you all these kingdoms." What it was a temptation to have the kingdom without the cross. "Don't go the cross. Don't do that. I'll give you all this if you'll bow down and worship me." And Jesus, with a final thrust of the blessed blade, takes it out and says, "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Oh, if we could only learn to use the Word of God when we deal with Satan. Don't argue with the devil. He's not worth it. You know, the devil will tell you you're no good. Don't argue with him because he's right. Listen, friend. It's not our worth; it is Jesus' worth that matters. What you do, what you do when the devil comes against you. You take the Word of God. Declare the Word of God; I mean, with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, because it is the sword of the Spirit, not your sword. But you take the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, and you give Satan the Word of God, and then you step out of the argument. And from now on his argument is with God, not with you. And, friend, you know who's going to win that argument. It's already won. When, when our Lord comes again, when He comes again in power and great glory; and, friend, I can tell you it's getting close. I mean, you know, a little boy said, "Daddy, what you said this morning. His daddy was a preacher. He said, "Did, did you really mean that or were you just preaching?" Folks, I want you to know I really mean it, I really mean it, Jim. I believe we are living in the last days. I believe that. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Bless His name.

But when He comes again, old Satan and all of the host of hell are going to be gathered at the Valley of Megiddo. And they, it looks like it's going to be the last time for Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies. And our Lord shall come from heaven. And He'll be riding upon that white charger. And He'll have written on His thigh, "The Word of God." And the Bible says He will destroy them with what? A sword that goes out of His mouth! It's that same sharp, two-edged sword. You know, He spoke them all into existence; He's going to speak them all into oblivion.

I mean, here's the antichrist. He's got his tanks. He's got his bazookas. He has his A bombs. He has his, ah, his airplanes, his jets. He has his, all of this. And he's marshalling all of his forces there to finally decimate God's chosen people. And here comes our Lord and the armies from heaven following Him. And here's how the battle goes. "Boo," and it's over! He said, "Boo." I mean, with His Word He'll win that war. The Bible says He destroys them with the sword that goes out of His mouth. Listen to me, folks. The Bible is the living Word of God. The Bible is the laboring Word of God. It is energeis.

III. The Bible Is the Book That Lasts

And it is the lasting Word of God. That's the third thing I want you to see about the Bible. Now look at this passage again here. And it says that it is quick. Now that word quick, I've already told you, means alive, but, and I'll know this'll bless you, it is a present active participle. You've been waiting all night to hear that, haven't you? Well, what that means is this: it is something that continues to go on. It will never die. This book will live through the ages. It cannot die. It is alive, and it is deathless. It is the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.

The former pastor of this church, Robert G. Lee, said, "Enemy noise has not silenced one of its warnings. The enemies black smoke has not dimmed one bright hope. The enemies stabs have not torn one blemish in the Bible's snow-white vesture. Infidel ink has not diluted one drop of its honey. The enemy has not plucked one petal from the Rose of Sharon, or polluted one breath from the fragrance of its perfume. Omnipotence has felt no strain. Eternity lost not one moment. And God is still on His throne. The Word of God endureth forever." Don't you like that? And Dr. Lee could preach like no one else.

Conclusion

Well, there it is, folks, there it is! The Word of God is quick, it is powerful, it is sharper than any two-edged sword, it divided asunder between the joints and the marrow, and, and, ah, and the thoughts and intents of the heart, between soul and spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. It is the Word that lives. It is the Word that labors. It is the Word that lasts. It's the Word this church is built on. It is the Word this church is built on. And in this day, when everything that's no nailed down is coming loose, and the devil is pulling nails as fast as he can, you had better build your life on the Word of God. Amen? Hallelujah.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Oh, our God, I thank You that the Bible tells us from cover to cover that Jesus saves. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many here tonight can say, "Pastor Rogers, I am absolutely certain, because of the Word of God and its promise to me, that I have appropriated in my heart by faith, I am certain that if I died tonight, by God's grace, I would go straight to heaven? Let me see your hand. Hold it up. Thank you. Now take it down. Now if you could not lift your hand tonight, I have wonderful news for you. You can be certain. If you will receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, if you will receive Him, He will save you tonight. If you would pray a prayer like this, and pray it right now. I want you to pray it. "Dear God." Forget anyone else is here. Just pray this: "Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would only trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. I believe that You're

the Son of God. I believe that You paid my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, by faith, by faith this moment, right now, like a little child, I receive You into my heart as my Lord, as my Savior, as my God and King. Come into my life.” Just invite Him in. “Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be, and help me never, ever to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Your Great High Priest

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 15, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 5:5–6

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

HEBREWS 5:6

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take your Bible and turn to Hebrews chapter 5. And tonight for our study we're going to go down deep and we're going to stay a little while, and I hope we don't come up dry. I want to talk to you about your great high priest. Now sometimes people say, "Baptists don't believe in priests." Oh, yes, we do! We have a priest, and a great high priest, and His name is Jesus. And I want you to learn about your high priest tonight because it is very, very important that you understand.

Now, God wants us to learn, and so God gives us in the Bible many illustrations. The Bible is a great book, many ways, many figures, pictures, and illustrations. One illustration that God has given of our high priest, whose name is Jesus, is a man named Melchisedec. How many of you have ever heard of Melchisedec? Let me see your hand. Well, that's good. Wonderful. Ah, well, if you haven't heard of Melchisedec, you're going to hear of Melchisedec tonight. And he has a lot to do with you, so I hope that you'll pay attention.

Look, if you would, for example, in Hebrews chapter 5, verses 7 through 6. The Bible says, “So Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.” That is, the Lord Jesus Christ did not assume high priesthood, but the Almighty, the Father said to the Son, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” And, “As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest [talking to Jesus], thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Now turn, if you will, to Hebrews chapter 6 and look in verse 20. Talking about that place within or behind the veil of the tabernacle in heaven, “Wither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

So we’re going to learn about an incredible individual tonight. His name is Melchisedec. And he is a shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament that pictured and prophesied our Savior in the New Testament and for ever and ever. I say, he pictures Jesus; he may, indeed, have been Jesus. Some expositors believe that Melchisedec was just another name for a pre-incarnate appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ when Jesus came to earth and appeared for a little while and then went back to heaven before His birth at Bethlehem. Whether or not Melchisedec was a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus or whether he was just an incredible, wonderful illustration and picture of the Lord Jesus, the truth is there that when we learn about Melchisedec, we’re going to learn about our high priest.

Now you may feel that you don’t need a high priest, but you do. A high priest is a mediator. You see, a priest is someone who can bring God to you and someone who can go to God for you. Now isn’t that what you need? Don’t you need somebody who will bring God and make Him real to you and mediate Him to you? And don’t you need somebody who can plead your cause for you? Well, that is a priest. That is our great high priest, the Lord Jesus.

If you studied the book of Job, you know there are two themes in the book of Job. One is why the righteous suffer; another is how can a man be just with God? And Job knew that he was a sinner, and he knew that God was holy. And it’s like Job is in a war with God or in a controversy with God, or in a contest with God, or in a court with God. And put this verse in your margin, Job chapter 9, verses 32 and 33. Job said in his lament, “For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him and we should come together in judgment.” He says, “I can’t talk to Him face to face as a man would talk to a man.” And then he says, “Neither is there any daysman between us or betwixt us, that he might lay his hand upon us both.” Now here’s Job’s dilemma. Job says, “God is Almighty. I am human and finite. He is holy, and I am sinful. How are we going to get together? Why, I can’t, I can’t lift myself to His level, and He’s not going to come down to my level. O, that there were a daysman, a mediator, somebody who could lay his hand upon holy God and sinful man and bring us together.” You know who Job wanted,

don't you? You know who, who he anticipated, don't you? The same one that the Apostle Paul told Timothy about when He said, "There's one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Jesus, as much God as if He were not man at all; as much man as if He were not God at all. Not half man and half God; not all God and no man; not all man and no God, but the God man, the one who could lay His hand upon Almighty God and sinful man and bring them together. That is what a priest does. And so we find out that we do have a priest.

Now we're going to go back and get a few verses and get a running start to Hebrews chapter 7, because it's in Hebrews chapter 7 that we're going to learn about our great high priest. Now notice that we do have a priest. Look, if you will, for example, in Hebrews chapter 2, verse 17. It speaks of Jesus who became a man. And here's why the incarnation. Here's why the Christmas season that we're about to celebrate. "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren [that's to be made like us], that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people? You see, Adam, as a man, sinned, and, therefore, it took a man to redeem us, legally to redeem us. And so He's made like us, that He might be a merciful high priest.

Now fast-forward over to Hebrews chapter 4, verses 14 through 16. After he talks about the fact that Jesus is the great, great, great high priest, he says this in verse 14: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities..." That is, we don't have some stolid, ah, ah, priest up there in heaven who doesn't know, who doesn't care, who doesn't feel, who doesn't understand. Oh, no! "...but was in all points tempted, tested, like as we are, yet without sin." That is, He knows, He understands, He feels, He cares, He has been here. He has walked in sandaled feet beside the shores of Galilee. He has wept. He has suffered. He's bled and died. He understands. And so, notice at verse 16: "Let us therefore come boldly [hallelujah!] to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Do you want mercy? Do you want grace? Do you want help in time of need? Then pay attention to this sermon because it is telling you, therefore, we have a priest, someone who can bring God to us, and someone who can bring us to God.

Now remember the book Hebrews was written to people – who do you think they were? Hebrews. Okay. Written to Hebrews. Now when the writer of the book of Hebrews talks about Jesus Christ being the great high priest, do you know what they would have said? "How could he be the great high priest?" The priests have come of the tribe of Levi. You see, Aaron and the Levites had the priesthood, and it was handed down to the Levites. Well, what tribe did Jesus come from? Tribe of Judah. So how

could Jesus be a priest? He wasn't qualified to be a priest in their minds because He did not come of the tribe of Levi; He came of the tribe of Judah. Melchisedec answers that question.

You see, Jesus is made a high priest not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of another priest, Melchisedec. And we're going to find out that Jesus, as a high priest, is superior to Aaron and all the Levites, and that Jesus is a high priest not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles also. Now that's what it's all about. And then we can rejoice in our high priest.

Three things I want you to learn tonight.

I. The Sacred Mystery of Our High Priest

First of all, I want you to see the sacred mystery of our high priest. Now go to chapter 7 and read the first three verses here. "For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."

Now in the Bible we find that Melchisedec just suddenly appears. Now Abraham has been to a battle. We're talking about Father Abraham. We're talking about the progenitor of the Jewish race. Abraham had been to a battle against a man named Chedorlaomer, and he had won a notable victory over Chedorlaomer and his cohorts. And as Abraham is coming back from the battle, there appears to him a man. And he appears for the first time in the Bible. His name is Melchisedec. And this strange, wonderful, mysterious person blessed Abraham. And I want you to see what this Melchisedec was.

First of all, he was a priest of God. You read that in verse 1. And not only was he a priest, but he was a king. And the very name Melchisedec translated means King of Righteousness. And verse 1 tells us that he was a priest and he was a king, King of Righteousness, and also in verse 2 we learn that he is the King of Peace. The word Salem means peace. Jeru-salem means City of Peace. So here is a priest, here's a king. He is a king of righteousness; he is a prince of peace. And he meets Abraham. And he just appears suddenly. There's no genealogy. He doesn't have any father listed. He doesn't have any mother listed. Look, if you will, "...without father, without mother, without descent, having neither the beginning of days, nor end of life..." There's nothing said about his beginning; nothing said about his ending. He just steps in and there he is – a priest! Well, who does he picture? Who does he represent? He represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 3 says, "...like unto the Son of God..." Because, you know, the Lord

Jesus Christ is not with the beginning of days nor the end of days. There never was a time when Jesus was not; never will be a time when He will not be. You say, 'Well, He was born at Bethlehem.' Friend, He created His mother. He created His mother. Don't get the idea that He had a beginning at Bethlehem. No! Jesus always has been, always will be. He is the great I AM. And now this man Melchisedec is made a priest like unto the Son of God. Jesus was not like Melchisedec; Melchisedec like Jesus. Now you have to understand that. Now notice this, we're talking about the sacred mystery of our high priest. Ah, what was Melchisedec? He was the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace.

Now put down Psalm 85 and verse 10 in your margin and listen to this: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." In the Bible, God makes righteousness and peace to cohabitate together. Righteousness loves peace. Peace loves righteousness. Our high priest is the King of Righteousness and He is the King of Peace.

Now, friend, when sin comes, righteousness leaves, and when righteousness leaves, peace leaves. I mean, you cannot have peace without righteousness. Righteousness and peace cohabit together. And righteousness and peace have kissed one another. Sin came into the world, and when sin came, righteousness went that way and peace went that way. And people are wondering why can't I have peace in my home? Because you don't have righteousness there! Why can't we have peace in our city? Because we don't have righteousness! Why can we not have peace in our world? Because we don't have righteousness! There, you know, all the world wants peace, but the world doesn't want righteousness. Ha. We're trying everything we can do to have peace. How can we have peace without righteousness? Righteousness and peace have kissed one another. Jesus is the King of Righteousness, and Jesus is the King of Peace, and so we'll never have peace until sin is dealt with. And, thank God, at Calvary, let me tell you what happened at Calvary. One more time, righteousness and peace kissed one another at Calvary. You see, at Calvary righteousness and peace are reunited.

And when Abraham came back from this victory, the King of Salem, the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace blessed old Abraham and said, "Let's celebrate." Do you know what he did? You can read it in Genesis 14 and verse 18. I'll share it with you. "And Melchizedek king of Salem [that is, King of Peace] brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." Now the most high God was the one that got the victory, and so the most high God was the one who was going to be celebrated. And so he brought bread and wine. That's what we do when we come to the Lord's Table. We take the bread and the wine and we celebrate the victory that our priest, our Melchizedek, has given to us because the victory is a God-given victory at

Calvary and we celebrate.

And, oh, you'll love this, some of you. Listen to this. Not all of you will love this, but let, some of you will love this. Do you know what happened when, when Abraham celebrated a victory? He gave a tithe. Notice in verse 2: "To whom Abraham gave a tenth part of all..." Abraham gave to Melchisedec the tithe. Now this was way before the Mosaic Law. Abraham's heart was so full of the victory as they celebrated with bread and wine. He met this incredible individual who blessed him, someone who had no beginning and no ending, so far as the record is concerned. No father, no mother, a great high priest of the most high God. And Abraham said, "To the victor goes the spoils."

The most high God means the one who owns it all. And, so what you see is pictured here is the mystery, the mystery of our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, forever and ever and ever and ever, without beginning, without end, the one who gives the victory, the one to whom all praise and honor and giving is due. Got that point? All right.

II. The Sovereign Majesty of Our High Priest

Now here's the second point. Not only do I want you to see the sacred mystery, but I want you to see the sovereign majesty of our high priest. I want you to see how the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured by Melchisedec. For example, let's, let's begin in verse 4 now. We're in chapter 7. We've finished three verses. And notice what he says in verse 4: "Now consider how great this man was..." Are you willing to do that tonight? If you are, you're going to get a blessing. Now, if you let your mind wander, if you don't do what the Bible tells you to do right now, you're not going to get a blessing. But if you will consider how great Melchisedec was, then you're going to get a great blessing to know how even greater Jesus was if this was not Melchisedec. I mean, if Melchisedec was not Jesus in a pre-incarnate form, or if he pictured Jesus. Either way, you're going to get a great blessing.

"Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham the patriarch [that means father ruler], to whom the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils."

A. His Pre-eminence

The first thing I want you to notice. Write it down. His pre-eminence, his pre-eminence. And we'll find that now as we continue to read verse 5: "And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they came out of the loins of Abraham." But now notice this. "But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham..." Now Melchisedec was not related to the Levites. The Levites collected tithes of the people, but Abraham wasn't paying tithes to the Levites. The Levites had not even come on the scene. I mean, first, there's

Abraham. Then there's Isaac. And there's Jacob. And then there are the twelve sons of Jacob. One of them is Levi. And out of Levi comes Aaron and the priests. But way back over here, ha, ha, Levi is way down there. Way back over here is Abraham, and he is giving tithes to this Melchisedec.

Now under the Law, the Levitical priests received the tithe, but Abraham gave the tithe to Melchisedec before the Levitical, Mosaic Law. Now what does that teach us? Well, continue to read here and you're going to find out what that teaches us. Look in verse 7: "And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better." Now what does that mean? Well, when Melchisedec blessed Abraham, that means that Melchisedec was better than Abraham, okay? Now what he's saying is to these Jews who looked to father Abraham, "There's somebody better. There's somebody better than Abraham. There's somebody better than, than Levi." The less is blessed by the better. It wasn't Abraham blessing Melchisedec; it was Melchisedec who was blessing Abraham, who is the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. So put down, concerning Jesus, His pre-eminence. He's better. He is better. All right.

B. His Permanence

Number two: His permanence. Put that down. Look now, if you will, in verse 8: "And here men that die receive tithes..." All those Levites are dead. How many of you know a Levitical priest? "Here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." Now there never was a time when Melchisedec began, when Melchisedec ended. There's no record of that. Without father, mother, without beginning of life, length of days that is on and on and on. You see, our Melchisedec, the Lord Jesus, is not a dead Savior. We don't have a dead high priest. We don't have a priest who can die. We have a priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. That's good! Friend, we have a living high priest. And let me tell you something. You know what that means? People say, "Oh, I don't believe in tithing in the New Testament." Do you know what this teaches? That when you tithe, you're giving your tithes to Jesus. You're giving you....that's what this teaches. We have a high priest who today is receiving tithes. He just goes on and on and on. Now he's talking to Christians.

C. His Primacy

Here's a third thing I want you to see. Not only the pre-eminence of our high priest, and not only the permanence of our high priest, but the primacy of our high priest, the primacy. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10 now of this same chapter. Do you see it? "And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham." Now what on earth does that mean? Well, it says that Abraham just represented the whole Jewish nation. So out of Abraham the entire Hebrew people came. So when Abraham was giving tithes, he represented everybody who would come out of him, everybody

who was his offspring.

I read such a sad thing in the paper today. All you Vol fans. And, you know, I was rude, and I'm really a Tennessee fan, but not as much as I'm a Florida fan. But, anyway, I read about that poor boy, that quarterback. I saw the game. Did you see that game where that boy dropped that football, and you read in the paper. It's the saddest thing. He said, "I lost the game for everybody." He said, "My team had won the game, but I lost the game for the whole team." Well, he really didn't. I mean, that's one play in the whole game, but don't let me get off on football right now. I'm just simply saying, friend, that Abraham was playing the game for the whole team. You see, just as Adam represents the whole human race, just as Jesus represents the whole new race, Abraham represented the whole Jewish nation. That's what he's saying. He's saying, "All the Jews were in Abraham when Abraham was giving tithe to Melchisedec."

Now notice, continue to read here. We're in verse 9. Look, if you will, in verse 10: "For he [that is, Levi] was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him." This old Levi had not even been born. He, Isaac had not even been born. "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, for unto it the people received the Law, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" Now I hope that you can get what he's trying to say. He's just simply saying that our Melchisedec, Jesus, was on the scene before Levi was ever heard of. And Levi did not come first. Jesus has the primacy. Not the Old Testament Law, not the Levitical priesthood. And Levi paid tithes to Jesus through Abraham. Old Levi didn't know he was giving tithes to Jesus, did he? You say, "How could, how could, how could Levi, how could the Levitical priests give tithes to Jesus?" Well, when Abraham gave tithes to Jesus, Melchisedec, they were all in Abraham.

D. His Perfection

What's, what's he saying? You see, he's talking about the pre-eminence of Jesus. He is talking about the permanence of Jesus. He's talking here about the primacy of Jesus. And he's also talking about the perfection of Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 11: "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need was there of another priest should come rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?" Now what he's trying to say is that Old Testament priesthood was only a shadow, and all of the offerings that the Old Testament priests made, thousands and thousands of lambs and rams and pigeons and turtle doves and goats – all of that could never take away sin. It was all imperfect. Someone wrote these words: "Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away one stain." All those offerings did was just to prefigure the one offering, the perfect offering that was going to come.

And so look again in verse 11: “If perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, then why will we need another priest.” But we know that that did not bring perfection. All that was is a shadow of that which is going to come. There needs to be a new covenant. Now fast forward to verse 22 in this same chapter and look at it: “By so much was Jesus made a surety [that is a guarantee] of a better covenant.” Now what that means is the guarantee of a more wonderful agreement with God, a better covenant.

Now God, God is so proud of His Son. God’s heart is so set on our great high priest that God swears by Himself concerning the Lord Jesus. Look in verse 21: “For these priests were made without an oath...” That is, when a high priest in the Old Testament became a high priest, God did not take an oath concerning that high priest. But this, our Jesus, Melchisedec, “...with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent; Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” Do you understand what the Almighty Father said? Now, folks, when God swears by Himself, you’d better pay attention. God takes an oath on Himself, and He says to His Son, “My Son, You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” What a guarantee we have.

III. The Saving Ministry of Our High Priest

Now I’ve talked about the sacred mystery of our high priest. I’ve talked about the sovereign majesty of our high priest, how much greater He is than the Aaronic Levitical high priest. Now here’s the third and final thing. Is this boring you? Okay. Too bad if it is. I’m going to finish. I want you to see the saving ministry of our high priest now. Once you’ve got the, once, once you’ve got it set and you see what kind of a picture that God gives us in the Old Testament.

A. The Permanence of the Saving Ministry

Think, first of all, about the permanence of that saving ministry. Begin now in verse 23 and read through 24: “And truly there were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.” That is, a man’s a priest. He lives and he dies. Therefore, they had to have a bunch of them. “But this man, because he continueth forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.” That’s the permanence of His saving ministry.

Sometimes you have to get a new doctor. Sometimes you have to get a new lawyer. Ha, ha, sometimes you have to get a new pastor. There was a pastor one time who was leaving a church. He’d been there for a while. And there was a lady crying. And he said, “What’s the matter?” She said, “I don’t want to see you go.” “Oh,” he said, “don’t worry. You’ll get a better pastor next time.” She said, “Oh, no, that’s what they said last time.”

Sometime we have to get a new. But, friend, I want to tell you, we will never have to get a new Savior. Never! Never! Never! Old Testament priests would come and go. He in His saving ministry, abideth forever. So you think of the permanence of that saving

ministry.

B. The Power of the Saving Ministry

And then think of the power of that saving ministry. Look in verse 25: “Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Now I used to preach this when I was a younger preacher and didn’t understand as much as I understand now, and I’m still a learner. I used to, I used to use this verse, 7:25, to teach that He could save anybody, “..save unto the uttermost...” and that is true, but that’s not what this verse teaches. You know, it sounds good. You can say to the guttermost to the uttermost, and that is true, but that’s not what this verse means. You know what this verse means? We have a priest, a high priest. He can never die. God has sworn He’ll always be a high priest. And He is able to save unto the uttermost. That means, friend, He’s able to save you to the end. He’ll never let you go. He is able to save you all the way to the uttermost. He will never, no never, no never, no never, no never, no never let you go. You say, “What if I sin?” Did I hear you correctly? Oh, no! Friend, when we sin, we have a high priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. Remember what a priest does? He brings God to us, and He brings us to God, and he says, “Father, there’s Adrian. He’s failed again. Ah, O Father, he doesn’t deserve it, but, Father, for his sin I died. With my blood I redeemed him. Lord, You cannot condemn him without condemning me because I am in him and he is in me.” And I have a Savior, a dear, loving Savior, who is praying for me tonight. Friend, do you realize that Jesus is still praying? We talk about the finished work of Jesus. That’s Calvary. But the unfinished work of Jesus is here in verse 25. He ever lives to make intercession for us.

C. The Purity of the Saving Ministry

And so there is the permanence of that saving ministry. He’ll never die. There is the saving power of that there is the power of that saving ministry. And there is the saving purity of that ministry.

Look in verses 26 and 27: “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the peoples: for this he did once when he offered up himself.” Oh, friend, He died one time. “For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated forevermore.” Do you know what that means? Our high priest will never need to be forgiven of sin. Our high priest is not like any other sin, or not, not like any other priest who has to be forgiven. That’s the reason why I don’t believe that I have to confess my sin to some man.

One sweet, little lady was dying in a hospital. They didn’t know who she was. And

the priest in that hospital came by. And the nurses said, "She's dying." And the priest came to her bedside, and said, "They tell me that you're in critical condition. Would you like for me to absolve you of your sin?" She said, "May I see your hands?" He said, "What?" She said, "May I see your hands?" He said, "Yes, there they are." "Oh," she said, "I don't need you." She said, "The one who forgives my sins has the print of the nails in his hand." Thank God for that.

Thank God this, this one never, no never, no never sinned, but He became sin for me. And He took my sin, your sin, our sin, their sin, all the sin upon Himself and became a sacrifice for sin. That's the purity of His saving ministry.

D. The Place of the Saving Ministry

Here's the last thing I want you to see, and we'll be finished tonight, and that's the place of His saving ministry. Now go to chapter 8 and look, if you will, in the first five verses: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum." All preachers, you now, they come to a conclusion. Here it comes now. This is it. I've wrapped, racked, wrapping it up. "...We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man." Here's the bottom line. There is a man in the glory. That's the reason why I know heaven's a real place. I mean, Jesus is there in a resurrected body. Heaven's not just a thought. This is the place of His ministry. He is there at the right hand of the Father, co-equal, co-eternal with God the Father, and the place of His ministry is the place of His majesty, at the right hand of God forevermore.

Conclusion

Now that's the summation of the writer of Hebrews. Here's the summation of Adrian. Hallelujah! What a Savior! Hallelujah, What a Savior! He is King. He is priest. He is the King of Righteousness. He is the Prince of Peace. And I'll tell you, if you'll make Him your King, you'll know righteousness and you will know peace. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God. And you will have a high priest, someone who will bring God to you, and someone who will intercede for you before the Father.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you've never received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, tonight would be a wonderful, wonderful time for you to receive Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Salvation is a gift. The Lord Jesus is the mediator, the high priest, between God and man. You cannot come to the Father apart from your high priest. There's no way. There's no way. There is one God and one mediator between God and man; the man Christ Jesus. Jesus said, "I'm the way, the truth, and the life; and no man comes unto the Father but by me." He's the mediator. So would you pray a prayer like this if you want to be saved. If you're not certain if you died right now, you'd go to heaven, here's the way to get it settled. Pray

like this: “Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me. You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. You died in my place. Thank You for doing that. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. I’m lost and I want to be saved. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me of every sin, every one. Take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray that prayer, pray it. Pray it from your heart sincerely, fervently. Silently, but fervently, “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Did you ask Him? Then pray like this: “Thank You for doing it. I don’t look for a sign. I don’t ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You cannot lie. Now, Lord Jesus, because You’re my Savior, I will follow You all the days of my life. I turn from everything I know that is wrong. I’m weak, so You’ll have to help me. But I will follow You all the days of my life and I will never be ashamed of You. Because You died for me, I will live for You, not in order to be saved – Lord, that’s a gift – but because I’m saved, Lord, I will live for You all of my life, and I’ll never be ashamed of You, my Lord and Savior. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Going on to Perfection

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 7, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 5:11–16:1

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.”

HEBREWS 6:1

Outline

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- I. The “Must” of Maturity
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s precious Word, and turn with me to Hebrews chapter 6. And, I want us to look at a command that’s found in Hebrew 6:1. The title of our message tonight is “Going on to Perfection.” Chapter 6:1: *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.”* (Hebrews 6:1) What I really want to talk to you about tonight is being a full-grown Christian. I want to talk to you about maturity—growing toward maturity, going on toward perfection. The word *perfection* here has nothing to do with sinlessness. We’ll never be sinless until we get to heaven, and the only way you could live above sin would be to have a room over a pool hall. We’re not talking about sinless perfection. But, the word here, *perfection*, means “maturity”—“going on to maturity.”

I want to put a thought in your mind, and I pray that it will bother you. Do you like things that bother you? I want you to write this maybe in the flyleaf of your Bible: *“When I cease to be better, I cease to be good.”* Why don’t you write that down in your Bible? *“When I cease to be better, I cease to be good.”* Now, my dear friend, if you have stopped growing, you have begun decaying. Decay always begins when growth ends. Now, the Bible says we are to go on to maturity. (Hebrews 6:1) There is more to life than being born. A Christian is a tree planted, not a post stuck in the ground. *“Go on [to] perfection.”* (Hebrews 6:1) *“Grow in [the] grace, and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 3:18)

I. The “Must” of Maturity

Now, first of all, I want you to see the imperative of growth—the necessity of growth. We are commanded to grow. There is a “must” about it. Look again in chapter 6:1: the Bible says, *“Let us go on unto perfection.”* (Hebrews 6:1) This is really, in the Greek language, in the imperative mood. In the Williams translation, it gives it this way: “continue progressing toward maturity.” I like that: “continue progressing toward maturity.” It is a command. Now, this word *perfection*, if you look in verse 14, it’s the same word: *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age.”* (Hebrews 5:14) Do you see it in verse 14? The word “full age” and the word *perfection* are the same word. And so, what we’re talking about is growing up. We have a church—many of them are grey-headed babies spiritually.

Now, what are the marks of this immaturity? Why did the writer of Hebrews, whomever he was, command that we “go on toward maturity” (*Hebrews 6:1*)—that we “continue progressing toward maturity,” as Williams says? What are the marks of immaturity? I want you to check yourself off here. Look in chapter 5. And, of course, obviously, that precedes chapter 6 so it’s all a part of the same. The chapter divisions are only put there by men after the Bible, inspired, was given to us. The chapter divisions are not inspired. That’s just what people who print the Bible... They just divided it up in the chapter divisions. I think the real reason is to keep preachers from preaching too long.

And, just back up before chapter 6:1, and look at how he describes these baby Christians that he told to go on toward maturity. I begin reading in chapter 5:11: he says, *“Of whom we have many things to say”*—that is, he’s talking about the Lord: “many wonderful things to tell you about Jesus”—*“and hard to be uttered”*—that is, they’re not easily explained—*“seeing [that] ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time you ought to be teachers, [you] have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God”*—what he’s saying is, “When you ought to be a college professor, somebody has to tell you the ABCs and the multiplication table”—*“and are*

become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat—when you ought to be wrapping yourself around a steak, it’s time for your bottle. For he says—*“For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a [baby]. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”* (Hebrews 5:11–14) And, in that passage, he gives us the marks of immaturity—certain tests that you can put to your life and see if you’re a baby. You want to find out whether you’re an overgrown baby tonight?

A. **The Dullness Test**

First of all, there’s the dullness test—the dullness test. Look in verse 11: *“seeing ye are dull of hearing”* (Hebrews 2:11) Do you see that? The word *dull* may be translated “lazy.” That is, it’s hard for you to pay attention. As a matter of fact, the truth of the matter is, I’ve been preaching long enough to know that right now, some of you are not listening to me. Oh, you’re out there nodding your head, but your mind is off somewhere else. You’re not listening to me. You are dull of hearing. That’s the reason the writer of Hebrews says, “It’s so hard to share”—not that there’s anything wrong with the message, just people are dull of hearing. It’s lazy.

So many people—spiritual babies—have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward the Word of God, whether it’s a Sunday school class, preaching, personal Bible study, or prayer. It’s all just a dullness to you. You know, one of the problems with children is they have a short attention span. Isn’t that right? Anybody ever taught kids? They’ve just got a short attention span. And, that’s what happens to a lot of folks: they come to church, and they’re clock watching, you know, and they get itchy and fidgety. They’re wanting to get out. They don’t want to spend time in the Word of God. They don’t have time. Their problem is they—just dullness. Verse 11—dullness. That’s one test—the dullness test.

Kids, you can take them... Our Jonathan, when we were over in Spain, we took our Jonathan, who is—how old is he, Joyce? How many months?—twenty months old. We took him to a museum. Now folks, I want to tell you, never take a twenty-month-old to a museum. They don’t care about museums. I mean, the most incredible art in the world! Do you ever take your kids on a vacation—spectacular scenery—and they’re reading a comic book? I mean, that’s the mind of a child. They have such a short attention span. I couldn’t understand why Jonathan didn’t want to see those El Greco paintings, but he didn’t. All right now, dullness.

B. **The Dependency Test**

Here’s another mark of a child: not only dullness, but dependency. Look, if you will, in verse 12: *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, [you] have need that one teach you again.”* (Hebrews 5:12) In other words, “you can’t teach; you need someone

to teach you.” Little children, of course, don’t know how to share with other people. When the church is full of immature people, the pastor becomes a spiritual nursemaid, and he has to help people because they are immature.

Let me ask you a question: Is there somebody that you’re discipling? Some of you have been saved twenty years. Some of you have been saved thirty and forty years, and you don’t help anybody. When you ought to be one of the finest Bible teachers in this church, you don’t even know the spiritual ABCs. What a shame—what a shame. Every mature Christian ought to be discipling somebody else. But, you’re dependent. I mean, you cannot operate apart from the context of the Body. If this church depended upon you to get things done—to teach the Bible, to win souls, to disciple others—folks, it would not happen. It’d be less than zero because you’re a big baby.

C. **The Diet Test**

So, there’s the dullness test. There’s the dependency test. There’s the diet test. Look, if you will, in verse 13—the last part of verse 12: “[you have] become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: he is a [baby].” (Hebrews 5:12–13) Do you know what milk is? Hey, folks, milk is just predigested food. That’s what milk is. Do you know about all the feeding that some people get is what they get when they come to church? Do you know what a sermon is? It’s predigested food. That is, I take the Word of God, chew on it, assimilate it, digest it, and then give it back to you. And so, that’s about all that some folks get. And, no wonder they’re not growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They come to church on Sunday—get five gallons of milk. A baby is not supposed to have five gallons; it’s supposed to get some every day. Well, of course, you can’t swallow five gallons, but you take all you can get. And then, you know, you get burped on the way out by an usher, and that’s it. My dear friend, there is so much more.

Here’s what was frustrating to the writer of the book of Hebrews. He said, “Oh, there is so much that I want to tell you.” Look in verse 11: “we have many things to say.” (Hebrews 5:11) Oh, if you only knew what you are missing—what there is out there to eat while you’re on strained beets, and Pabulum, and formula. But, you don’t get it. Dullness, dependency, a baby’s diet. The Apostle Paul, whom I think may have written the book of Hebrews, said in 1 Corinthians 3:1–2: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. [And] I...fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.” (1 Corinthians 3:1–2)

D. **The Discernment Test**

I’ll tell you one more mark of a baby. There is the dullness test. And, dear friend, there is

the dependency test, and there's the diet test. There's one more, and it is the discernment test—the discernment test. Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age”—that is, “mature”—“those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”* (Hebrews 5:14)

Did you know that children don't have any discernment? They're so simple. Have you ever noticed that a baby will put anything in his mouth? You can't let a little baby crawl around on the floor in a public place. He'd just as soon pick up a cigarette butt or a dead roach and pop it in his mouth. He has no discernment. He does not know the difference between good and evil. And, you know, that's the way immature Christians are. They'll listen to any preacher on radio or television—they don't know whether it's good or whether it's bad. I'm amazed at the gullibility of some of our own people. I have literally seen people bring to church the *Plain Truth Magazine* or Jehovah's Witness literature and say, “Pastor, we've got some good literature here. Maybe we could use it in our Sunday school.” They don't know. They have absolutely no discernment. They don't know whether it's good or bad. It's just religious so they think it's all right. You see, *“their senses [have not been] exercised to discern...good and evil.”* (Hebrews 5:14)

And so, this writer of the book of Hebrews, after he tells this pathetic case of people who have been Christians for years and years and years and years and they're still big babies, he says in chapter 6:1: “Grow up! Go on to maturity. Press on to perfection.” (Hebrews 6:1) So, we're talking, first of all, here, about the “must” of maturity.

II. The Marks of Maturity

Let me talk to you a little bit about the marks of maturity. What is maturity? I mean, what is a full-grown Christian? We've seen what an immature Christian is. Did you know that it is possible to be healthy and not mature? For example, we've got some five-year-olds in our congregation tonight who are perfectly healthy, but they're not mature. You see, you can be a healthy Christian but not a mature Christian because it's not time for you to be mature yet. There's nothing wrong with you in this stage. That's perfect and legitimate if you're what the Bible calls “a babe in Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:1) That's wonderful. As a matter of fact, you can be gifted and not be mature. And, the more gifts you have, the more maturity you need and the more control you need in your life. Indeed, one of the most dangerous things is an immature gifted person. I think of Samson. Samson had the gift of strength, but he did not have maturity. And, what a mess he made of his life!

Now, what is maturity? Well, thank God, we don't have to guess about what a mature Christian is. We don't find it here in the book of Hebrews, but in two other places the Apostle Paul tells us exactly what this maturity is. One is Ephesians 4:13, and this is what the Apostle Paul says: he says, “I'm doing all of this, and we're learning all of this,

and we're believing all of this"—*"till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man"*—now notice, Hebrews says, *"Go on [to] perfection"* (Hebrews 6:1)—*"[until] a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."* (Ephesians 4:13) What is the model for maturity? Jesus.

Did you know the measurement of my ministry is the measurement of your maturity? And, do you know the measure of your maturity is how much more you're becoming like Jesus every day? If you want to measure the ministry of Adrian Rogers, don't say, "Well, look at these buildings, or that budget, or these baptisms"—not nickels nor noses, but are you people becoming more like Jesus? That's it—that's it. You measure any man's ministry by this: Is he, by his preaching and teaching and praying, causing people to be like Jesus? Friend, that's what it is. That's what maturity is—that you are becoming like the Son of God.

That was the goal of the Apostle Paul's ministry. Listen to it in Colossians 1:28. He speaks of Christ; he says, *"Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Jesus Christ."* (Colossians 1:28) And again, the word means "mature." The great goal of the Apostle Paul's ministry was mature believers.

Now, my dear friend, that's the mark of maturity. And, maturity is not something that one day you don't have and the next day you have; maturity is a lifelong process. That's the reason when I said to you, *if you cease to be better, you cease to be good*. Maturity is not a hundred-yard dash and it's over; it is a lifetime marathon. And, I don't care who you are, there's always room for growth.

Now, let's find out where you are on the continuum of growth. There may be a proper immaturity if you haven't been a Christian that long. But, turn with me, please, to 1 John for a moment, and I want you to look at something here in 1 John 2. And, 1 John 2—begin reading with me in verse 12: *"I write unto you, little children"*—now, little children are immature, aren't they?—*"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because [you] have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because [you] have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because [you] have known the Father."* (1 John 2:12–13) Now, in those verses, 12 through 14, you have three categories of persons. Did you see them? Little children, young men, and fathers. Do you see the various stages of growth? Obvious in the natural realm, and it is true in the spiritual and the supernatural realm.

A. **The Childhood Stage**

For example, there's the childhood stage. And, we have some baptized tonight who are children. They've just been born in the family, and that's wonderful. Now, he says, *"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you."* (1 John 2:12) What's

the most important thing to a newborn child of God? If you let him stand up and give his testimony, you know what his testimony will be? “O thank God, He saved me. Thank God, my sins are forgiven. Thank God, my sins are under the blood.” There’s nothing wrong with that. That is so wonderful. There’s a proper place for spiritual childhood, but for a child to fail to grow is a tragedy. That’s the reason I said *when you cease to be better, you cease to be good*. So, maybe tonight you’re a spiritual child. You’ve just been saved. I congratulate you. You’re living primarily in the realm of your emotion, like all children do, and you’re saying, “Hallelujah! I have been saved. My sins are under the blood—gone, gone, gone, gone. Yes, my sins are gone.”

B. The Young Man Stage

But, there’s another stage. The Apostle John not only mentions here little children, but he mentions young men. And look, if you will, in chapter 2:14: *“I have written unto you, young men, because [you] are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and [you] have overcome the wicked one.”* (1 John 2:14) Now, the next stage is the young men. And, you know what the young men are good for? Friend, they’re workers, and they are warriors. They *“overcome the wicked one.”* (1 John 2:14) They’re no longer being served like little children; they’ve become servants. They’re no longer interested in milk bottles, but mighty battles. These are the workers and the warriors. Bellevue Baptist Church could not exist without these. Sunday by Sunday I thank God for our workers and our warriors—spiritual young men, strong and vigorous, who are being used of God. Thank God for them.

C. The Father Stage

But, that’s not the highest stage. The writer of Hebrews says, “Go on toward maturity.” (Hebrews 6:1) And then, he mentions in verse 13 the father stage: *“I write unto you, fathers, because [you] have known him that is from the beginning.”* (1 John 2:13) Now, when you think of a father, you think of someone who is godlike, because how do we pray to God? “Our Father...” When you think of a father, you think of someone who is reproducing himself, because that’s the way you become a father. You see, we go from the childhood stage to the young man stage, workers and warriors. Then, we go to the father stage, maturity, where we reproduce others and provide for others. You see, a father is a provider. If you don’t believe that, have some children and watch them line up day by day for the lunch money.

Now, a father is one who is supposed to have the mature wisdom. He is to know God. He has insights about the things of God. And, the father is the sum total of the others. You see, here’s the important thing. And, please listen to this. I want to slow down here a little bit, and I pray God that you’ve not become dull already. I’m going to give you a little meat here, and I hope it doesn’t choke you. But, I want you to listen.

When you become a father, you do not substitute your fatherhood for your adolescence or childhood, but you simply add your fatherhood to your adolescence and your childhood. The word *grow* means “increase.” When the Bible says in 2 Peter 3:18, “*Grow in [the] grace, and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,*” (2 Peter 3:18) it literally means “increase.”

So, first of all, you have the seed as it begins to grow. You have the trunk of the tree. Well, when the branches come out, you don't do away with the trunk. The branches just come out of the trunk. And then, the leaves come out of the branches. But, when the leaves come, you don't do away with the branches nor the trunk. All these things are just an addition. And so, when you grow in the Lord, you still have a little bit of the child in you and you still have a little bit of the young man in you.

When you're a father, you don't cease being a worker and a warrior, and you don't stop saying, “Thank God. Hallelujah! My sins are forgiven.” You see, the most well-rounded individual that you can think of... Think of the person who's got the sweetest personality. I'm talking about an older person. Think of some older person that you know that has the sweetest, most pleasant, loving disposition—the person who loves to be around other people and other people love to be around that person. I'll tell you something about that person. Now, you get your person in mind, and I'll tell you something about that person: that person has all the stages of life embodied in that one person. I mean, if he's a man, there's a little boy in him. There's a childlikeness about him. He's never lost the wonder. He's still excited. He still giggles, and laughs, and wants to discover new things. If he's a mature, older person, he still has ideals. You can call on him to serve. He's a worker and a warrior; and yet, he has wisdom, and maturity, and that fullness. He's a father—or, a mother—all at the same time. He hasn't jettisoned these other things.

You know, I think it's so sad when people grow up and they lose their childhood. Don't lose your childhood. We're not to be childish, but the Bible teaches we're to be—what?—childlike, childlike. Jesus said we're to “*become [like] little children.*” (Matthew 18:3) Never lose the wonder. Never lose the zest. Do you know who makes our best children workers? Those folks who are mature but they've got a little child in them. And, you'll see them. They'll sit on the floor with our children. They'll play with our children. They know how to think from a child's point of view. I think it's wonderful. That's the way a mature person ought to be. There's a little boy and a young man, idealistic, in every full-grown father, and that's the fullness. You know, it's a shame when you send a boy off to college and he comes back different. He ought to come back better but not changed.

I heard about a little boy and his dad—they were walking down the street in a western town, and he saw some of these cowboys. You know how cowboys walk—like

this. And, he said, “Dad, look at them bowlegged men.” His dad said, “Son, that’s not proper English. That’s not the way to talk—‘Look at them bowlegged men.’ I’m sending you off to school.” And, he sent him off to school. And, after the boy came back from school, they were out on the street. And, some cowboys came along, and he said, “Behold, what manner of men are these who wear their knees in parentheses?” Now, now, there’s something not quite right about that.

Never lose the spontaneity. Never lose the wonder, but “go on to maturity.” (Hebrews 6:1) Now, what is maturity? It’s really like Jesus. You know, Jesus was so wonderful. Little children wanted to come and sit in Jesus’ lap. And, the apostles said, “Get away, kid. Get away, kid.” Jesus said, “[*You let them*] come [*to*] me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:14) Yet the Lord Jesus could take a whip and drive those money changers out of that temple. And yet, the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who is the absolute paragon of maturity and wisdom who has reproduced Himself in my heart and in your heart and in our lives. Maturity is the fullness of Christ. Go on to be like Jesus. You want to know what sin is? Sin is that difference between you and Jesus. “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23) The glory of God is Jesus Christ. Just measure yourselves by the glory of God.

III. The Means of Maturity

Now, I’ve talked to you about the “must” of maturity, and I’ve talked to you about the mark of maturity. Let me just talk to you very quickly, and I’ll be finished, about the means of maturity. How do you grow? I mean, how do you grow up? We’re commanded to grow up. Let me tell you some things it’s going to take.

A. Life

Number one: It takes life. You can’t begin to grow until you have life. That’s the reason the Bible says in 1 Peter 2:2: “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby.*” (1 Peter 2:2) You’ve got to be a baby before you can grow up, and you have to get born in order to grow. Of course, there’s some prenatal growth, but there has to be life there. And, spiritual growth is no exception.

If you were on a desert island, and there was no food on that island, and somebody were to offer you a barrel of wheat or a barrel of diamonds, which would you take? No hope of getting off the island. Well, I hope you’d take the barrel of wheat, because no matter how beautiful and how valuable those diamonds seem to be, there’s no life in them. You see, you can take that wheat, and if you were to keep planting that wheat and harvesting that wheat and not eating all of it, you’d find out, my dear friend, that a barrel of wheat ultimately is worth far more than a barrel of diamonds because there’s the life principle there.

And so, first of all, growth requires life. Have you been born again? Don’t try to grow

up and then get born. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Well, I’ve got some problems in my life, and when I get them all worked out, then I’m going to come down there and get saved”? That’s like saying, “I’m going to grow up and then get born.” No, my dear friend, you’ve got to have life. You’ve got to be born again.

B. Time

Secondly, growth requires time. There is no instant maturity. There are no shortcuts. Now, if you’re a squash, you can be mature in about two months. But, if you’re an oak tree, it’s going to take about fifty to a hundred years to reach maturity. A mouse reaches maturity in three months. Cats and dogs are able to reproduce in twelve to eighteen months. Gorillas and chimpanzees take about ten years. But, the Encyclopedia Britannica says that human beings take longer than any other to grow to maturity. And friend, spiritually, you can get instantly spiritual, but you cannot be instantly mature. That’s the reason it’s dangerous to take a young man who loves God and has a zeal for God and make a pastor out of him. The Bible says he’s *“not [to be] a novice, lest...he fall into the [temptation] of the devil.”* (1 Timothy 3:6) He is to be mature.

David Semmons said this—and I want you to listen to it; I’m going to read it—he said, “Study any one of a hundred biographies of great people whom God has used in the last two hundred and fifty years—Hudson Taylor, Dwight L. Moody, Jonathan Goforth, Wilbur Chapman, George Müller, Charles Trumbull, F. B. Meyer, Andrew Murray, Praying Hyde, Oswald Chambers, Amy Carmichael. There is not a quick, shortcut job in the bunch. If you take the average number of years in their lives, even after they have entered into the Lord’s service until they got into that place where they find the secret of maturity and rest and fullness, when they stop striving and struggling and working, when they really let God start doing His work in them and through them, the average time comes to approximately fifteen years of preparation time.” Now friend, it takes time. Therefore, you need to get started tonight if you’re going on to perfection, on to maturity.

C. Nourishment

But, not only does it take life and time; it takes nourishment. I shared a verse with you just a little bit ago—1 Peter 2:2: the Bible says, *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby.”* (1 Peter 2:2) And, the word *desire* means “to long for” or “to crave.” You know, an average baby, a newborn baby, is not interested in the wonderful way that mother has decorated the nursery and the color of the wallpaper. He wants that milk. And again, this is the imperative form: *“Desire”—*crave, as a newborn—*“the...milk of the word, that [you] may grow thereby.”* (1 Peter 2:2)

Let me tell you what Ethel Barrett had to say about Dwight L. Moody. Now, boys and

girls, Dwight L. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day. And, she said that when Dwight L. Moody became a Christian, he developed such a hunger for God's Word, spent so much time reading it, and was so quick to obey it, that he became a menace to some believers. His rapid spiritual growth was an embarrassment to certain people who, though they had been saved for years, never grew up in Christ. Week after week in the church Moody attended, he would share a new experience that he'd had with the Lord. Finally, some of the older saints, humiliated by his exemplary life, who just couldn't stand feeling this way, went to Moody's uncle and urged him to quiet down his nephew. That is, they were intimidated by the fact that he grew so fast. And then, Ethel Barrett drew this conclusion: she said, "His robust spiritual health and bounding energy disturbed their napping. He was just too much. So, while they were sucking their thumbs, he was growing until he left them far behind. He grew more in a few years than they did in thirty" How? He just consumed the Word of God.

Another man that has been a great, great blessing to the Christian world is a man named George Müller of Bristol, England. He was a man who saw God work miracle after miracle, supplying the need of children in the orphanage that he ran in England. And, when people think of prayer and faith and power, they think of Müller. Let me tell you what Müller said. Now listen, you want to grow? Listen to what he said—and I'm almost finished: "The first thing I did"—he's talking about having his quiet time. He said—"The first thing I did after having asked in a few words the Lord's blessings upon His precious Word was to begin to meditate upon the Word of God, searching into every verse to get a blessing out of it, not for the sake of public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated on, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul. Now, what is food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God. And, here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God so that it only passes through our minds just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts." Do you hear what he was saying? He was saying that if he only had time to pray or to read the Word of God—and, of course, no man has to make such a choice—but he would start with the Word of God. God's Word is what speaks to us and teaches us how to pray. Jeremiah 15:16: "*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me [as] joy and rejoicing of mine heart.*" (Jeremiah 15:16)

D. **Exercise**

It takes life. It takes time. It takes nourishment. And, last of all, it takes exercise to grow, to mature. Hebrews 5:14 says, "*Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised.*" (Hebrews 5:14) And, the word here that's translated "exercise" is the word we get our word *gymnasium* from. You want to mature? Then you've got to stop being a spiritual couch potato. We have too

many flabby members of our church—and I'm not talking about physically; I'm talking about spiritually flabby people who come on Sunday, sit, soak, and sour. You have no place of service. You're not doing anything for Jesus Christ. There's something that you can do and you ought to do.

Conclusion

Now listen, and I am finished. Obey what you know, and God will give you more. Serve where you're able, and you will grow in ability. That's it. Now, my dear friend, the Bible commands us to "go on to maturity." (Hebrews 6:1) I come back to the thought that I started with: if you fail to grow, *if you fail to get better, you cease being good*. I don't care how good you are right now. The moment you cease to grow you begin to decay.

Now, answer this question—not to me, but answer it before God. And, I challenge you as your pastor to answer it. Ask it to yourself: Am I a growing Christian? Ask it.

Let's bow in prayer. Father, I thank you for your Word tonight. It's been a blessing to us. Lord, I thank you for those newborn babes, those little children, whose sins are forgiven. I thank you, Lord, for young men spiritually who are workers and warriors. And, I pray, God, that you'll make spiritual fathers and mothers of all of us as we "*grow in [the] grace, and...knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*" (2 Peter 3:18) In His wonderful name I pray. Amen.

How to Be a Growing Christian

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 9, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 5:11–6:1

*“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,
let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of
repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,”*

HEBREWS 6:1

Outline

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 - A. Mark of Immaturity: Dullness
 - B. Mark of Immaturity: Dependency
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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find the Book of Hebrews chapter 5—Hebrews chapter 5. In a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 11. I want to talk to you tonight about Christian growth, and How to be a Growing Christian.

I was interested, as I was reading a little zoology and biology, that a wasp, when it is hatched out of the nest, is bigger than when it’s full-grown. I’ve known some Christians that way. It seems like the biggest they are is when they first get saved, then they kind of shrink up a little bit rather than growing.

Look in God’s Word here—Hebrews chapter 5, verse 11. Paul says, there are many things I want to tell you, but now notice this, beginning in verse 11: “Of whom we have

many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Then right on into the next chapter. "Therefore—and, of course, you see the therefore refers to the past chapter—leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection..."

Now, the word perfection here literally means maturity. Let us go on. Don't stop with getting saved. Go on. Quit being a baby. Now, some people think that stability is good, but stability, if it means inhibited growth, is not good. One man stood up in a testimony meeting, and he said, "Twenty years ago, God filled my cup to the brim, and not a drop has come in, and not a drop has gone out, in twenty years." A little boy said, "His cup must have wiggly tails in it." I think sometimes what we call stability is stagnation. You're supposed to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I want to ask you a pointed question—and I've asked myself this question, and I've thought about it a lot today: Are you a growing Christian? Now, don't let that just go past. Are you a growing Christian? Are you a better Christian this year than last year? Are you? You see, when you cease to be better, you cease to be good. Think about it.

I. The Mandate of Maturity

The Bible has commanded us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the Christian life, when growth stops, decay begins. Tonight, I want you to notice what I call the mandate—the mandate—of maturity.

Look again in chapter 6, verse 1: "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection..." Now, we are commanded to grow. This is actually, in the Greek language, the imperative. That means, it's not a suggestion; it is a command.

Now, another translation gives this—Williams translation gives it this way: "Let us continue progressing onto maturity..." And it's the same word; perfection is the same word that's used in chapter 5, verse 14, for "full age." It's the same word. So what he's saying is we need to go on.

A. Mark of Immaturity: Dullness

One of the biggest problems in churches across America, and—I hate to say it, but it is true—in Bellevue Baptist Church, is the problem of immaturity. Now, I want you to look at God's Word, and I want you to see some signs of immaturity, and ask yourself, is the Bible describing me? All right, are you reading? Go back to chapter 5 and verse 11.

Paul said, I want to tell you many things—talking about Christ—but he says, “Of whom—verse 11—we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” One of the marks of immaturity is dullness—dullness.

Now, the writer of Hebrews, I personally believe, was the apostle Paul, but I won’t go to the mat with you about that, because I can’t prove it, and you can’t prove I’m wrong, so let’s forget it. But whoever it was that wrote this said, “I have got some wonderful things to say to you, but they’re a little deep, and it’s hard for me to preach it to you and to share it with you, because you’re hard of hearing. The difficulty is not that I could not do it, that I could not share it; the problem is not in my mouth; the problem is in your ear.” The word dull may literally be translated lazy.

We have many people, some in this building tonight, that have a don’t-care attitude toward the Word of God. You have a don’t-care attitude towards your Sunday School class. You have a don’t-care attitude toward the preaching of the Bible, and prayer to you is dullness. You don’t do what we heard tonight—have perpetual praise—because, if you’re a child, immature, you have what? Attention Deficit Syndrome. You cannot pay attention. You have a short attention span. And I have preached long enough to watch people glaze over, and I’ve seen people come in here, and they hang a sign around their neck on a Sunday morning. You can’t see it, but I can see it. It says, “Please do not disturb.” They are dull. They have a short attention span. Now, the writer of Hebrews says, “I have a lot of things to say, but you are dull of hearing. So, the first one—and let me give you some D’s—the first one is dullness.

B. Mark of Immaturity: Dependency

Here’s the second sign of immaturity: It is dependency. Look now in verse 12: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God...” When you ought to be teaching calculus, somebody needs to be teaching you addition and subtraction. When you ought to be teaching English lit, you have need that somebody teach you the ABC’s and how to read. That’s what he’s saying spiritually. “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles, the basic principles of the oracles of God...”

And so, not only do you see this in dullness, but you see it in dependency. Children, immature people, they don’t know how to share. They can’t help others; they have to be helped. The church staff, the pastor, become spiritual nursemaids. And, are you teaching somebody else? Is there somebody you’re discipling? Is there anybody you personally are leading to a deeper knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? If not, it’s a sign that you are an immature, a baby, Christian. You ought to be discipling somebody else.

C. Mark of Immaturity: Diet

How do you tell an immature person? Number one: in the matter of dullness, you're spiritually hard of hearing. You have a short attention span. Number two: in the realm of dependency, you have need that somebody teach you, when you ought to be teaching. Number three: in the realm of diet—look, if you will, in verse 12, the last part: "...and are become such as have need of milk, and not strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word, in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe."

Now, what is milk? Milk is pre-digested food. When a mother is nursing a baby, the mother digests the food, and then the baby gets that ho-mama-nized milk. And that is pre-digested food. Now, many times, that's what we get on Sundays. About the only Bible that some people get is the sermon.

You know what a sermon is? It's pre-digested food. I mean, I sit at my desk, I study, I pray, I think, I weep, I write, I consider, I organize, I analyze, I illustrate, I apply, and I give it to you. Now, what you're getting, however, is not necessarily meat; it is milk, and it's about all you get. Some. You don't feed yourself during the week, come to Sunday, and get three gallons, and then want someone to burp you on the way out. How can you tell an immature Christian? In the matter of dullness, in the matter of dependency, in the matter of diet—and then, I'll tell you another way that people are immature: in the matter of discernment.

Look, if you will, in verse 14, now, of this same chapter: "But strong meat—that is, steak—belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Little children don't have much discernment. Have you notice a baby will put anything in its mouth—a roach, a cigarette butt, or anything else—if you let a baby down on the floor of a restaurant or somewhere? They have no discernment.

And I've seen people who are members of Bible-believing churches, they have no discernment. They'll bring Jehovah's Witnesses' literature to the Sunday School class, and say, "Here's something good we could teach." They'll be in the airport and pick up a cultic magazine called the Plain Truth, or something like that, and begin to pass that around in the Sunday School class. They have no discernment. They don't know what is right, what is wrong. And they just simply are immature.

II. The Mark of Maturity

Now, let's move from the mandate to maturity, when he says, "let us go on to maturity," and let's think of some of the marks of maturity. What is a mature person? If you wanted to say, "Am I a mature Christian," you'd have to have something to measure by. Now, God gives us that measurement. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 1: "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying

again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,” and so forth.

A. **Christ-likeness**

Now, he’s not saying go away from Christ. What he is saying is, go in to Christ. What he’s talking about is Christ-likeness, more about Jesus. Not leaving Christ, but going deeper into Christ, getting away from the ABC’s of Christ. Maturity is Christ-likeness. Now, I want to give you some ancillary verses here that show you clearly what maturity is.

Colossians 1, verse 28—Paul says, “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” The word perfect there does not mean sinless; it means mature. If you look at a rose in full bloom, you say that’s a perfect rose. You don’t mean it’s a sinless rose. You mean it is completely mature. Christ-likeness was the center and the goal of Paul’s prayer for his people.

Ephesians 4, verse 13—Paul was praying, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man—that is, a mature man—unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Again, the test of my ministry is not the size of these buildings, the size of our budget, or the size of our Sunday School.

The test of my ministry really is, are you becoming more like Jesus?—are you becoming more like Jesus? The measure of your maturity is, are you becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ? Paul said, “That I may present every man mature in Christ.” He’s not saying go on, away from Christ. He’s saying, go on, deeper into Christ. You can go deeper and deeper into Christ; you’ll never go beyond Christ.

Sometimes people say to me, “Have you got the second blessing?” I say, “Yes, I do.” They say, “Oh, tell me about it.” I say, “The second blessing is discovering what I got in the first blessing.” And the first blessing is Jesus. And I’ve gotten a third blessing. The third blessing is discovering I didn’t discover it all in the second blessing. More about Jesus would I know. And you become more and more like Jesus. You become more and more mature. And this takes time. Maturity is not something that you attain overnight. Maturity is not a 100-yard dash; it is a marathon.

Now, I want you to be mature. Now, remember, you can be spiritual and not be mature. You can be spiritually healthy and not be mature. If you look at a five-year-old boy and you say, “Isn’t he a fine specimen of a boy?” he may be perfectly healthy, he may be perfectly happy, and he’s fine for his stage, but he is not a mature man. And a lot of you are young Christians, and that’s your stage right now. That’s fine, but you need to go on to maturity.

B. Growth

Now, I want you to put a bookmark in Hebrews chapter 5, and we're going to leave it for a moment, and we're going to go over to 1 John chapter 2. So just take your Bibles and turn over to 1 John chapter 2, and I'm going to find there an illustration, and then we're going to come right back to Hebrews chapter 5. But I want us to go to 1 John chapter 2 for a moment, because there John describes the three stages of growth.

Look, if you will, in 1 John chapter 2, verse 12: "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."

1. Little Child

Now, he mentions there in this passage the three stages of life. There is the little child stage, there's the young man stage, and there is the father stage. In verse 12, he mentions the little child stage. That's the new Christian. What's the most wonderful thing to a new Christian? His sins have been forgiven. That's what it says in verse 12—"your sins have been forgiven."

A new Christian, like some we had this morning, gave their hearts to Jesus Christ, if they really got saved, they're rejoicing all day long that my sin is forgiven. And you ask them to tell you their testimony, and they'll tell you, "I remember the day that I gave my heart to Jesus Christ and He saved me." And that's wonderful—that's wonderful for a baby Christian. But your testimony ought to go beyond that, after a while. We have children and grandchildren. I've watched our children grow up. I've watched our grandchildren grow up.

Do you know one of the great days is when they begin to talk, when your little boy recognizes you as daddy, and begins to say, "da-da." That's so great. He looks at you, and he says, "da-da." I remember when my son said to me, "da-da." That's wonderful. But now, if my 40-something-year-old son were to say to me today, "da-da," I'd swat him. I mean, that's fine for a newborn child. That's fine that the little child stage. And, if you're a little child in the Lord, that's fine, but you need to grow up.

2. Young Man

Now, the next stage is the young man stage—the last part of verse 14. He mentions the young man, and what does he say about the young man—the last part of verse 14? "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." They are workers, and they're warriors, and we have a lot of workers in this church, and a lot of warriors in this church. You're living in victory, you not falling into sin, you're overcoming Satan, and you have a

job in the church. Perhaps you're singing in the choir, perhaps you're ushering, perhaps you're teaching a lesson, you're working in the nursery, you're in the Finance Office, you're in the kitchen, you're doing these things. You're workers, and you're warriors, and you're no longer just talking about your sins being forgiven. You have a job. You're serving the Lord. And that's a wonderful stage. You're no longer being served, but you become servants, and it's not milk bottles but battles that you're in. And I thank God for that, but you need to move on.

3. Father

Not only from the little child stage, the young man stage, but you need to move on to fatherhood, the father stage. He mentions in verse 13—look at it: "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning..." A father has wisdom, maturity. He has knowledge. He has an understanding of the heart of God. Why is a man called a father? Because he is a reproducer—he is a reproducer. When you come to real maturity, you're going to become a spiritual father, and you're going to be able to reproduce your life. You're going to be able to teach others, and you're going to have a lot of spiritual children all around. Of course, everything I'm saying is in the masculine sense, but we can apply it to the feminine side as well. You become, first of all, the child, then the young man or women, then the father, the mother, spiritually.

Now, John, who wrote this, was a church father. I mean, when you think of the apostle John, what do you think of? The one who wrote the Book of the Revelation, the one who wrote the Gospel of John, the one who wrote 1, 2, and 3 John. When you think of John in the Bible, what do you think about? You say, dear, sweet, old John. Don't you have a picture of a godly man, when you think of John the apostle, the beloved apostle? I do. I just think he'd be just a neat guy to be around. I want to tell you something. He wasn't always that way. John was a pretty bad guy. Don't turn to these verses, but I want to show you what John was like before he grew up.

Number one, he had a violent disposition. He had a hair trigger. He is called, in Mark chapter 3, verse 17, the "son of thunder." That means he was a guy that could just go off in a moment, and we're going to see later on in our study tonight how he did just that. He also had a very selfish spirit. You wouldn't think this about the dear, old, beloved apostle John, but in Mark chapter 10 and verse 37, he was one who said unto Jesus, "Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand and the other on thy left, in thy glory." What John wanted was a top seat in the kingdom. He was an egotist, stuffed full of himself.

Not only that, but he was full of racial prejudice. Luke chapter 9, verses 54 and 55—he was with Jesus and they were in Samaria, and the Jews hated the Samaritans: "And when his disciples, James and John, saw that this—that is, the way the Samaritans treated Jesus—they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from

heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did." They said, "Lord, let's nuke 'em; a little heavenly napalm, Lord, for these Samaritans." "But he turned and rebuked them, and said, You know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

He was prejudiced. And he was intolerant. He was one, in Luke chapter 9, who said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in your name, and he was not with us; rebuke him. He's not of our denomination. He doesn't belong to our congregation. Do something to him, Jesus." He's like so many Christians who spend so much time shooting down their own soldiers. I'm telling you, all in all, John was a pretty nasty guy. He was not the dear, old, sweet apostle John. But he had to grow, just like some of you.

And you find John, in the Bible, after he has grown in the Lord, he's no longer violent. As a matter of fact, when he got the Book of the Revelation, the Bible says, "He was in the spirit on the Lord's Day." He was worshiping. He's no longer selfish. When he writes of himself, he calls himself "that disciple, whom Jesus loved." He wouldn't even call himself by his own name. He's no longer prejudiced. Acts chapter 8, verses 14 and 15: "Now, when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost." Before this, John had wanted to call down consuming fire, and now he calls down heavenly fire, Holy Spirit power, Holy Ghost fire. But John is no longer intolerant. He is full of love. First John 1:7—he says, "we have fellowship one with another."

What changed John? The same thing that changed Adrian. Had you known me as a teen, before I got saved, you would not have thought there was much promise in me. I'm telling you, I was foul-mouthed; I was a street fighter; I cheated in school; I was a bully. The principal made a trip over to my wife's house to see my wife's mother. She wasn't my wife at that time, but said, "Your daughter is keeping company with the meanest boy in school." The principal did that. That was the guy named Adrian. But Jesus saved me—praise His name. He saved me.

I'm grateful that He saved me when I was a teen. I don't know what it is to use drugs. I don't know what it is to drink alcohol. I don't know what it is to smoke tobacco. I've been with one woman—that's my wife, the only one. I thank God for that, because He saved me at that age, as a teen, but I know what my spirit was. And I know that, after Jesus saved me, He'd been working on me for a long time. But I can tell you something. For more than a half century, I have been growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I want to tell you something else. I'm still growing—I'm still growing. I can tell in my own life that I am growing in the Lord Jesus Christ. For that, I give Him praise, and I give Him glory. I thank God for this.

You see, John did not begin as the sweet, dear, old apostle John, but he grew in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some of you are in the little

child stage. I'm glad that you are, if you're little children, but you need to grow up to the young man stage, to be warriors and workers. And some of you who are in the young man stage, you're warriors and workers, but you need to go on to be spiritual fathers, to have a deep knowledge of the things of God, and to reproduce your life. And that's the reason the writer of the Book of Hebrews says, "let us go on to maturity."

III. The Means of Maturity

Now, let's come to the third and final thing. We've talked about the mandate of maturity. We have talked about the motive of maturity. Let's talk a little bit about the means—the means—of maturity.

A. Life

Well, maturity—maturity—takes, basically, three things: number one, it requires life. You cannot grow until you are born. Now, the problem with a lot of people is they try to grow up and then get born. The problem with other people is they get born and never grow. Now, you cannot really begin to mature until you are born. So, it takes life.

Some years ago, I'd say probably 25 years ago—Brother Elmer, you were part of it—here at Bellevue Baptist Church, we had something with our Sunday School classes, and we thought we'd teach the children something about spiritual growth. So we got all the Sunday School departments and our children's department. We gave each department a plant. All the plants were identical. We got them at the nursery—plants about that big. We said to one department, "You take this plant, give it sunlight and water and fertilizer on a regular basis." We gave another department a plant, and we said, "Give this plant water and fertilizer, but no sunlight." We gave another department, and we said, "Give it water and sunlight, but no fertilizer." And all of these different combinations. It was amazing. We said, "Now, bring your plants in Sunday by Sunday."

The first several Sundays, you couldn't see much difference, but after a while, the plant that was getting the water and the sunlight and the fertilizer was just growing and becoming a very luxurious plant. The one that was getting the water and the fertilizer, but no sunlight, kind of, its leaves were kind of like this, kind of yellow. Some who were getting the fertilizer without much water, the leaves were dark green, but they weren't very big, and it wasn't growing, and so forth. And we began to give all of these different combinations.

But then, we did one thing. We gave one Sunday School department a pot with a dead stick, and we said, "Give that stick water, sunlight, and fertilizer every day." Do you know what? It never grew at all—it never grew at all. And all the other kids would bring in their plants, and the one that was getting the water and the sunlight and fertilizer was growing and growing. The stick was always the same. Now, the reason that some people are not growing, do you know what it is? No life—no life. You've got to have that

life to grow. You've got to be in the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes life.

B. Time

Secondly, growth takes time—growth takes time. You're not going to be instantly mature. You can be instantly spiritual. I mean, tonight, you can repent of all known sin. You can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And, as you receive the Lord Jesus, you can yield yourself to Him, and be filled with the Spirit, and you can be, tonight, a Spirit-filled believer, and still not be mature. There's a difference. Maturity takes time. Now, you can grow faster than others, if you want to. If you get the right ingredients, you can pass others.

Joyce and I walk. We're walkers. Our goal is to walk three miles every morning. Some mornings we miss, but we try to get up in time to go out and walk. That's when we fellowship together. We talk together. We get our exercise together. We walk. But when we're out walking, there are some folks that pass us by. They're joggers. But we're not joggers; we're walkers. And some of these joggers pass us by, and they get there quicker than we do, because they are jogging. And so, it is rate multiplied by time that equals distance. Now, you can go the same distance quicker, if you're running rather than walking.

There are some people who spiritually are joggers. They get there quicker. And you can spiritually get there quicker. You can grow. You can make a better use of your time. Dwight L. Moody—is that name familiar with you? Dwight L. Moody was a Christian of yesteryear. Dwight L. Moody was the counterpart of Billy Graham today. He was basically an unlettered, uneducated man. He was a shoe clerk at the age of 19, when he gave his heart to Christ. But God used Dwight L. Moody mightily, and preachers today, like myself, and others, still quote Dwight L. Moody.

Now, I want to read to you a little bit about what his biographer said about him. Ethel Barrett, who wrote about Dwight L. Moody, she said this: "That when Dwight L. Moody became a Christian, he developed such a hunger for God's Word, spent so much time reading it, and was so quick to obey it, that he became a menace to some believers. His rapid spiritual growth was an embarrassment to certain people, who, though they had been saved for years, never grew up in Christ. Week after week, in the church Moody attended, he would share new experiences he had had with the Lord. Finally, some of the older saints, who just couldn't stand feeling humiliated by his exemplary life, went to Moody's uncle, and urged him to quiet down his nephew."

He was growing so fast it was an embarrassment to the rest of them. And Ethel Barrett went on and drew this conclusion about Moody—and I quote. "His robust spiritual health and bounding energy disturbed their napping. He was just too much. So while they were sucking their thumbs, he was growing until he left them far behind. He grew more in a few years than they did in thirty."

And I've seen it in our church. I've seen some people get saved, they're so enthusiastic about the cause of Christ and the things of God, they just take off and they grow incredibly. You can grow at a faster rate, but it still takes time. It takes life. It takes time.

C. **Nourishment**

And to grow takes nourishment—nourishment. Look again in the Word of God. He says, "when you could be eating meat, you have need of milk again." But, whether it's milk or meat, you're not going to grow without nourishment. A corresponding verse is 1 Peter 2:2: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." Milk will help a baby grow.

Another man, not Dwight L. Moody, but George Mueller—if you ever want to read an interesting book, read Mueller of Bristol. George Mueller was a man who raised literally millions and millions of dollars, when back when a million dollars was a million dollars, to feed orphans. He never made his needs known to anybody. He just prayed in supplies, and God worked miracle after miracle after miracle for Mueller. And he ran this orphanage in England. And, when people think of George Mueller, they think of a man, primarily, of prayer, but I want you to listen to what he said. This has been very instructive to me.

This is his secret to his quiet time. He said, "The first thing I did, after having asked a few words and the Lord's blessing upon His Word, was to begin to meditate upon the Word of God, searching into every verse to get a blessing out of it, not for the sake of the public ministry of the Word, not for the sake of preaching on what I had meditated upon, but for the sake of obtaining food for my own soul."

Now, remember, we're talking about nourishment. He said, "I would get the Word of God. I would chew on every verse to get food for my own soul." And then, he goes on to say, "Now, what is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God. And here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God so that it only passes through our mind, just as water runs through a pipe, but considering what we read, pondering over it, and applying it to our hearts." And he said, "When I read the Word of God like that, I began to grow and grow and grow."

I mentioned Moody a little bit ago. And Moody has left his mark on us, that while he has been dead for decades, we're still quoting him and talking about him. Moody said, "I wanted faith. I wanted faith. I kept asking God for faith, and I didn't seem to have the faith I wanted." He said, "And then, one day, I read in the Bible that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." He said, "I got into the Word of God, and stopped asking God for faith, and began to read, study, believe, and obey the Word of God, and faith just exploded in me." Is that not interesting? You see, it takes nourishment to grow.

D. Exercise

Now, there's one other thing it takes to grow. What have we said? It takes life. It takes time. It takes nourishment. The last thing—and I am absolutely finished: it requires exercise. Look in chapter 5 and verse 14—Hebrews chapter 5, verse 14—and there he tells us that we are to exercise ourselves, exercise our senses.

Now, if you don't exercise, your growth is going to be somewhat stunted. Notice again verse 14: "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even to those who by reason of use—reason of use—have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." This word exercise is a Greek word that we get our word for gymnasium from. When we exercise ourself in prayer, and witnessing, and in serving, we grow.

Conclusion

Now, the question is, very simply, brothers and sisters in Christ, deacons, staff, kids in the choir, Brother Jamie, Adrian, simply this: are you a growing Christian? Hebrews 6:1 says, "let us go on to perfection—to maturity."

When I stand up here on Sunday morning and I look out at this crowd of people—and, you know, the building's almost filled twice now on Sunday morning—my heart almost jumps out of my throat, when I think, dear God, what would happen—what would happen—if all these people became mature believers? Can you imagine that? What would happen if we were all mature believers? We could turn this city upside down and inside out for Jesus Christ—could we not? Or, God could through us.

It's time to stop being babies, stop being dependent upon others, stop being spoon-fed, stop being deprived in your diet; start feeding on some steak. Grow up. If you're a little child, just been saved, your sins forgiven, wonderful! If you've become a young man now, you're a worker and a warrior, wonderful! But you need to be a spiritual father. You need to be a mother in Israel.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Would you just kind of internalize the message a little bit tonight, and would you be honest, as you analyze yourself, and be honest before God—just you and God there right now? And would you ask God to reveal to you whether or not you're a growing Christian? Now, remember, when growth stops, decay begins. And, when you cease to be better, you cease to be good. You're to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Are you a growing Christian? Now, if the answer to that is, no, I'm not a growing Christian, would you confess your lack of growth as a sin?—because that's what it is. Don't call it a weakness; it is disobedience, because this verse commands us to grow. It is imperative that we grow. It is a mandate to grow. Would you ask God to forgive you for your lack of growth? I'll wait a moment.

Now, would you say, "Lord, help me to discipline myself, to take time to grow, to fed

myself spiritually, to exercise in the things of God. Lord, I don't want to go to heaven as an immature believer. I want to be like Jesus. I want to be like Jesus"?

Father God, what I've said to these I've said to myself. And, Lord, I don't want to stop growing, because, Lord, there's so much growth that I need to do, and all of us need to do. So help us, Lord. Teach us about that quiet time. Teach us, Lord, about spiritual discipline, of prayer and witness and service, that we might grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

A Clean Conscience

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 26, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 9:11–15

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

HEBREWS 9:14

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Introduction

Hebrews chapter 9 and beginning in verse 11: *“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle”—you might want to underscore that—“by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once [unto] the holy place”—now, you know what the holy place is. That’s the...that’s the Holy of Holies. Jesus took His blood and went into the Holy of Holies, that Holy of Holies in heaven—“having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer”—and I especially want you to notice that phrase, “the ashes of an heifer”—“and [an] ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the*

mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they [who] are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.” (Hebrews 9:11–15)

I want to speak to you tonight on a clean conscience. Now, we mentioned something about that Sunday morning when we talked about how you’re going to face the trials of life, and we said that you could place...face the trials of life if you had a good conscience, if you had a great hope and a gracious companion—and that’s the way you’re to face the trials of life. But, I want to think a little bit more, as we’re studying about the tabernacle, of a good conscience, a clean conscience. Notice in verse 14: *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Hebrews 9:14)—a clean conscience as over against dead works.

Now, having read that, let’s go back in the Old Testament to Numbers chapter 19 for one of the most blessed studies I’ve ever done in my life. And so, I just want you to get your fingers licked so you can go through the Bible. And, get your pens out to jot down some very wonderful truths, because you’re going to learn a real lesson tonight about a clean conscience—about a clean conscience. You know, the worst pollution of all is the pollution of the soul. Now, pollution is bad, but the worst pollution is not the kind we breathe. “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. If cigarettes don’t get you, pollution must.” And, it seems like we’re just being polluted to death. But, may I tell you that the real ecology problem is that of Satan and of sin and the real pollution problem is that of sin?

Now, there is a wonderful object lesson found here in Numbers chapter 19, and it relates to Hebrews chapter 9. Now, Numbers 19 is a long chapter, and I don’t want to just start out and read it, but I want to make some things clear to you. Before I read it, if I can, I want to spot out or point out the word *unclean*. I want you to notice in this chapter that the word *unclean* is used, if my count is correct, at least fifteen times. For example, in chapter 19, verse 7—the last part: *“unclean until the even.”* (Numbers 19:7) Verse 8—the last part: *“unclean until the even.”* (Numbers 19:8) Verse 10—the middle of that verse: *“unclean until the even.”* (Numbers 19:10) Verse 11—the last part of that verse: *“unclean seven days.”* (Numbers 19:11) Verse 13—the last part of that verse: *“his uncleanness”—“uncleanness”—“is yet upon him.”* (Numbers 19:13) Verse 14—the last part: *“unclean seven days.”* (Numbers 19:14) The last part of verse 15: *“it, is unclean.”* (Numbers 19:15) The last part of verse 16: *“shall be unclean seven days.”* (Numbers 19:16) The first part of verse 19: *“And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day.”* (Numbers 19:19) The first part of verse 20: *“But the man [who] shall be unclean.”* (Numbers 19:20) The last part of verse 20: *“he is unclean.”* (Numbers 19:20) The last part of verse 21: *“shall be unclean until [the] even.”* (Numbers 19:21) Verses 20...verse 22: *“the unclean person”—“the unclean...and the soul that*

toucheth it shall be unclean until even.” (Numbers 19:22) Now, this is, I suppose... Well, I...I can't say a dirty chapter; it's not that. All the Word of God is clean. But, it deals with dirt: unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean. This whole chapter is dealing with being unclean. But, He's not talking about microbes; He's not talking about dirt. He's talking about ceremonial uncleanliness.

And then, the other word that is used over and over again in this chapter—and I won't take the trouble to point that out; you do that when you get home—is the word *dead* or *death*: dead, dead, death, death, dead, death, death, death. And, God is linking uncleanness with death. Now, uncleanliness, or uncleanness, stands for a state of mind, and a state of soul, and a state of spirit that is not right with God, and it stands for sin. Sin makes us unclean. What is God saying in Numbers chapter 19? Now, it'll...it'll clear up in a minute, so just hang with me. What is God saying in Numbers chapter 19? He's saying that death and sin, or death and uncleanness, are inseparably linked together—death and sin. You see, sin causes death, and death, therefore, is the visible sign of sin.

Now, we talked about some people tonight. We prayed for some people—the families of some people who died. And, sometimes we talk about people who die of sickness and then we talk about other people who die a natural death. May I tell you there is no such thing as a natural death? All death is unnatural. It's not what God planned for us. All death is the result of sin—not necessarily your personal sin. But, had there been no sin, there'd have been no death. There was no sin in the garden there. There was no death in the Garden of Eden until sin came. *“The wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) *“The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die.”* (Ezekiel 18:20) And, death and sin are inseparably linked together, and, therefore, death is the visible sign and the object lesson of sin. And, God uses death ceremonially in the Old Testament as an object lesson and a symbol of sin.

And, keeping that in mind, I want you to notice what God was saying here in Numbers chapter 19, when God is giving injunctions over and over again about not touching a dead body. When God is saying not to touch a dead body to these primitive people, He was trying to keep them from getting germs, trying to keep them from catching contagious diseases that might have caused the death, but He was doing more than that: He was teaching a theological and a ceremonial lesson. He was teaching that just as a person, for hygiene's sake, would stay away from that which is dead and that which corrupts, He's saying for moral and spiritual hygiene, we need to stay away from sin. And so, when God was saying, “Don't touch a dead body,” He was doing more than giving a lesson in hygiene; He was saying by that object lesson, “Don't pollute your soul with sin.”

And so... I know I'm still not clear. I know you're not with me yet, but you will. In just

a moment, you'll understand. And, there's a great lesson if you'll just watch it. Remember that death symbolizes sin. Death and sin are inseparably linked together. And, if a person touched a dead body, he was unclean—not just physically unclean; he was morally, spiritually unclean, because God was trying to teach these people an object lesson. And so, as we think about soul pollution tonight, I want you to think with me along three lines. First of all, I want you to think with me about the causes of soul pollution, and then the consequences of soul pollution, and then I want you to think about the cleansing of soul pollution. Or, we might put it this way: the causes of an unclean conscience, and the consequences of an unclean conscience, and the purging, or the cleansing, of an unclean conscience.

I. The Causes of an Unclean Conscience

Now, what would cause a person back in this ancient time to become polluted?

A. The Deliberate Acts of Sin

Well, look in verse 11—verse 11: *“He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days.”* (Numbers 19:11) Now, if a...if a man walked into a sick room where someone had just died and reached out and touched that dead body—now, it's back in the Old Testament times, back under the Levitical system, back when the tabernacle was set up and operating—if he just walked in and touched that body, that dead body, he would be unclean for seven days. Now, remember that the death represents sin. Sin and death are inseparably linked together in the Bible. And so, this pictures a man who deliberately sins, a person who just walks in and touches a dead body.

You see, there are those of us who are Christians and we handle the dead things of this world deliberately. We touch them. We touch the unclean thing. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 6, beginning in verse 14—don't turn to it, but the Bible says, *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.”* (2 Corinthians 6:17) Now, to those people who had a background in the Old Testament, they understood what God was talking about. He was talking about this chapter right here and chapters like it. A Christian is not to touch the unclean thing, represented by that dead body. Any time we willfully, deliberately sin, at that moment our soul, our conscience, becomes unclean. We're unclean. We're dirty. We're defiled. We're polluted. And so, there is the deliberate act of sin. A Christian can knowingly, deliberately sin. And, that's the worst kind of sin, for the Bible calls that “presumptuous sin,” and it carries with it the most severe penalty for the child of God. That's the reason the psalmist prayed, *“Keep back thy servant...from presumptuous sin.”* (Psalms 19:13) That's sin with your eyes wide open. A man just walks in—there's a dead body, and he

touches it when God said, “Don’t touch it.” He’ll be unclean seven days.

B. The Defiling Associations of Sin

All right. Now, the next thing I want you to notice is not only the deliberate acts of sin described in verse 11, but the defiling associations of sin. Notice in verses 14 and 15 of this same chapter: *“This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all [who] come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean.”* (Numbers 19:14–15) Now, you medical doctors who are here tonight, you have to give Moses credit. He didn’t have any microscope, and he didn’t have...he didn’t have all of the technology that you have to know about hygiene and all that. Of course, God taught him this by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And, here’s a...here’s a sanitary code that God has given to these to keep them from contagion. But, I want to remind you again that God is doing more than teaching hygiene. There’s a great moral lesson. You see, there are the deliberate acts of sin, where you just walk in and touch the unclean thing, but then there are the defiling associations of sin.

Here’s a man who just simply might walk into the tent. He doesn’t touch the dead body, but he just...he’s just in there. He just walks around. He breathes the air. He’s in the atmosphere, and God also says, “He shall be unclean.” (Numbers 19:14) You see, there can still be defilement without actual contact. Did you know that you and I don’t have to deliberately sin to get defiled by this world? Did you know that as you just watch television and suggestive things come on, or you walk through the newsstand and there’s suggestive things, or people say things or they take the name of God in vain, and problems come and temptations and anxieties... These are not deliberate sins that you practice, but I’ll tell you, this is a pretty dirty old world that we live in, isn’t it? I mean, it’s...it’s hard. It’s hard to live without just...just things just kind of in the air, just in the tent, as it were, where we are. And, we just find ourselves, just by our very associations—newspapers, books, advertisements, humor; all of this—they leave their mark upon us. And, that’s the reason that we need to get away and get with our Lord and say, “Lord, give me a bath. Lord, make me clean, for I’m unclean.” You see, there are the deliberate acts. Then, there are defiling associations.

C. The Deceiving Accidents of Sin

And then, I want you to notice there are the deceiving accidents of sin. Notice in verse 16: *“And whosoever toucheth one [who] is slain [by] a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days.”* (Numbers 19:16) Now, this represents to me sins that we more or less stumble into, not presumptuous sin. Here’s a man walking through a field after a battle, and he stumbles over a dead body. Or, maybe there’s just a small bone there, and he touches that bone.

Or maybe, almost unknown to him, or perhaps unknown to him, he walks over a grass-covered grave. And, he's unclean, too. The Bible calls him unclean. (Numbers 19:16)

Now, what's God speaking about here? He's speaking not about the acts or the associations, but the accidents, where we just...we don't intend to sin. It's not sin with our eyes wide open, but it's just...the first thing you know, we're...we're lusting, or we're filled with pride, or we are using harsh language, or there's some sort of a covetous thought that comes into our mind—concealed sins that dull our spiritual perception. And, this is the reason when we pray, you know, we ought not to...we ought not only to pray, “[Lord,] keep back thy servant...from presumptuous sins,” (Psalms 19:13) but we also ought to pray, “Search me, O God... And see if there be [some] wicked way in me.” (Psalms 139:23–24) I think it would surprise us to know how many times we've touched an unclean thing and not known it. I think it would surprise us to know how many graves we've walked over. I think it would surprise us to know how many bones we've fondled without knowing it. You see, just a person who happened to walk across a grave, and God says he's unclean—unclean.

Now, God here is talking about sin. He's not really talking about hygiene. He's talking about ceremonial uncleanness. He's talking about moral uncleanness. And, He's saying that we need to be very careful, lest this vile world pollute us. God wants us to be clean.

II. The Consequences of an Unclean Conscience

Now, I want you to notice not only the causes of soul pollution—remember, the deliberate acts, defiling associations, and the deceiving accidents of sin—but the second thing I want you to notice: the consequences. What happens—what happens—when we become unclean in the sight of God?

A. The Loss of Fellowship with Man

Well, first of all, there is the loss of fellowship with man. Look in verse 20: “*But the man [who] shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation.*” (Numbers 19:20) Now, what was one of the consequences of being unclean in this day? When a man became unclean and he didn't purify himself, he was cut off from the congregation; that is, there was a loss of fellowship with his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now, we need to understand this: that it's only sin that separates the people of God. The sweetest thing that any church can ever have is its fellowship, amen? Don't you love the fellowship here at Bellevue? You know, one man was telling me a while back—he said, “I don't understand it.” He said, “My wife and I have been a member of Bellevue Church for nine months, and we haven't heard anybody say anything negative about

any thing. We've never been in a church like this." Well, he said, "We...it's just amazing. We just haven't heard anybody just complain about anything. Everybody is so happy." He said, "We've been going to church all our life. It's the biggest blessing of our life." Now, we don't want to take that blessing for granted, friend. And, I believe where the Spirit of the Lord is there is this fellowship. It is sin that divides people. It is sin that cuts people off. And, when two people cannot get along, you mark it down: somebody has sinned. May I say that again? When any two people can't get along together, somebody has sinned. What are the consequences of an unclean conscience? Number one: There is the loss of fellowship with man.

B. The Loss of Freedom with God

But, number two: There is the loss of freedom with God—there's the loss of freedom with God. Look again in verse 20: *"But the man [who] shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean."* (Numbers 19:20) He defiles the sanctuary when he prays. When a man like this comes into the house of God, the sanctuary of God, which in this particular day was that Old Testament tabernacle, and he were to try to come and worship with sin in his heart, it would be an abomination to God. He had no freedom to worship. Not only was he cut off from man; he was separated from God. *"The Lord's [arm] is not shortened, that [He] cannot save; neither [is] his ear heavy, that [He] cannot hear: But your [sins] have separated between you and your God, and your [iniquities] have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."* (Isaiah 59:1–2)

C. The Loss of Fruitfulness in Service

All right, the third consequence: There's the loss of fruitfulness in his service. Look in verse 22: *"And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean."* (Numbers 19:22) Not only is he unclean, but he pollutes everything else he touches. *"Whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean"*—he contaminates what he touches. Notice—*"and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean unto even."* (Numbers 19:22) You see, if a man's not right with God, rather than ministering life when he ministers, he'll minister death. Did you know I'd pay one hundred dollars to have a soloist not sing who's not right with God. I'd pay more than that to have a preacher not preach who's not right with God. I'd rather have no preaching than preaching that comes from unclean lips. I'd rather have no teaching than teaching that comes from unclean lips. The Bible says over and over again, talking about the sanctuary service, talking, in the Old Testament, about the temple service and the tabernacle service, *"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD."* (Isaiah 52:11)

I'm not the smartest man in the world, and I don't even rank among those who are

smarter. But, I've got enough sense never to come to this platform with sin in my heart, and I hope to God I never do. I'd be afraid. I mean, I would be mortally afraid—afraid before God—to ever come up here, and open this book, and stand up here, and try and preach and know that I'd been handling unclean things, touching unclean things, had a defiled conscience, not a clean conscience, not a pure conscience. Boy, I tell you, you can...you can...you can bet it down, before I step out that door, friend—you mark it down—I've been saying, "O God, O God, I want to be right. I want to be clean. I want to be pure. Is there anything wrong, anything not right, between me and you?" because, you see, if I'm not right, I'll minister death, not life. Everything I touch will be unclean because I'm unclean. And oh, how many people take holy things in unholy hands, and rather than ministering life, they minister death. They may preach theologically correct; they may sing perfectly, but there's no blessing. Oh, the people may say, "Bravo! That's good," but God doesn't work. Nobody's blessed. Nobody's saved. It is wood, hay, and stubble rather than gold, and silver, and precious stones. (1 Corinthians 3:12) You see, not only is there the loss of fellowship with man and not only is there the loss of freedom with God; there is the loss of fruitfulness in service. Everything the unclean man touches, he pollutes it—he pollutes it. Your preaching, your teaching, your singing are lifeless and cold, and this is what the Bible calls "dead works."

Go back to Number chapter 9 for a—I mean Hebrews chapter 9—for just a moment, and I just...I want to point this out. I was not intending to go back this soon for that verse, but let's just go back again, because I want you to see it right now at this moment. You see, the Bible says, "*How much more shall the blood of Christ*"—verse 14—"*who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*" (Hebrews 9:14) Do you know why some churches never progress? Do you know why some Sunday School classes never grow and they're not blessed? Do you know why some people never win souls? Do you know why some people's prayers never get any higher than the light bulbs? They work, they work, they work, but it's dead works because they've got a dirty conscience. They're polluted. They don't have a clean conscience with God. Paul told Timothy, "Two things you need in your warfare: unfeigned faith and a pure conscience—unfeigned faith and a pure conscience. Those are the two things you need to fight your warfare." (1 Timothy 1:5) All right, there's the loss of fruitfulness in work. Everything you touch—it has a deadening effect.

III. The Cleansing of an Unclean Conscience

All right. Now, thirdly and finally, go back and look in Numbers chapter 19, as we think about the cleansing—the cleansing—of an unclean conscience, the purging of a conscience.

A. The Cleansing Agent Must Be Acceptable to God

Notice in Number chapter 19, verses 1 through 5: *“And the LORD [spoke] unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer”*—now, remember I said to you over there in Hebrews 9 to underscore that word “the ashes of a heifer.” All right. Now look, a heifer, kids, boys and girls, is a female cow. Isn’t that right, those of you...? Sometimes I get my animals mixed up. That’s right. Okay, I don’t want any of you farmers making fun of me—*“Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: And ye shall give [it] unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring [it] forth [outside] the camp, and one shall slay [it] before his face. And Eleazar the priest shall take of [its] blood with his finger, and sprinkle of [its] blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times. And [he] shall burn the heifer in his sight; [its] skin, and [its] flesh, and [its] blood, with [its] dung, shall he burn.”* (Numbers 19:1–5)

Now, the cleansing agent was this heifer that was sacrificed. Now, this heifer represents the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s a picture of Christ. Verse 2 tells us that the heifer was to be without blemish; it was to be without spot. Verse 2 tells us that it could not be scarred by the yoke of sin. Verse 3 tells us that it would die outside the gate, outside the camp, as Jesus died. Verse 5 that tells how this heifer was to be burned speaks of Jesus Christ, who endured the fires of the wrath of God for us, for you, for me. And, verse 4 speaks of how this perfect sacrifice was offered. Notice: *“Eleazar the priest shall take of [its] blood with his finger, and sprinkle of [its] blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times.”* (Numbers 19:4) That speaks of the blood of Jesus Christ. This heifer—this red heifer in perfection, an animal without spot or blemish—was a picture of the perfect Savior and our sacrifice for sin. So, the first thing I want to say about the cleansing agent: the cleansing agent must be acceptable to God. That’s verses 1 through 5.

B. The Cleansing Agent Must Be Accessible to Man

But, the second thing I want to say about it: it must be accessible to man. Notice in verse 9: *“And a man [who] is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up [outside] the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.”* (Numbers 19:9) Now, God said, “You can be unclean, but you need to be purified.” And so, God says, “You take the ashes of this red heifer that’s been burned, put them in a pot, have a man carry them out to a clean spot, and set them there in that very clean spot. And then, there’ll be a time when those ashes can be mixed with water and brought back and be used to make the unclean clean.”

Now, what does that represent? That represents the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ forever deposited in heaven, a clean place, for you and for me. And, those ashes were an evidence of the finished sacrifice, and they were perpetually preserved for removal of daily sin and its pollution. These ashes were not used for a person who had never been a Jew and never been a part of the congregation to get into the congregation. This is not talking about a person having his sins forgiven so he can be saved, but this is talking about a saved person who, by deliberate acts of sin or by defiling associations with sin or by deceiving accidents of sin, needs to be cleansed. God said, "I'll make a provision." And, this heifer represented the Lord Jesus Christ. Those ashes represented the finished work of Calvary and a perpetual monument to the work of Calvary, because the Bible says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

C. The Cleansing Agent Must Be Applicable by Faith

Now, the third and final thing I want you to see about the cleansing of an unclean conscience: not only must a cleansing agent be acceptable to God (verses 1 through 5), not only must it be accessible to man (verse 9), but it is apply-able, or applicable, by faith. Notice verses 17 and 18 of this chapter; look at it: *"And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons [who] were there, and upon him that [toucheth] a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave."* (Numbers 19:17–18)

Now, they took the ashes. Then, they took running water. They mixed them together. Then, they took the hyssop, which was a plant—just a little shrub. I've seen plenty of them in Israel. Those of us who are going to Israel soon will see some just growing out of the walls, the hyssop plant. They just take a handful of hyssop, and they put that hyssop down in this water of ashes and take it and sprinkle it upon that person—that person who had touched a dead thing, that person who was unclean. And, the Bible says, "And then he be clean." (Numbers 19:19)

Now, what does the running water symbolize? Remember, the ashes symbolized the finished work of Calvary. That heifer is a picture of Christ. The running water symbolizes the Word of God. The Word of God is likened over and over again in the Bible to water—*"the washing of water by the word."* (Ephesians 5:26) All right. And, the hyssop—that's the most common shrub, or one of the most common—represents faith. It is the applying agent. You see, hyssop is a symbol of faith that applies the water and the blood. You just simply...you just simply take faith, hyssop, and with that you take and apply the water and the blood—the ashes representing the blood—to any sin and

you'll be clean.

Conclusion

Now, I don't know whether I've blessed you or not, but friend, when I see such a book and I see such beautiful truths that are, in a sense, are there waiting to be dug out, it blesses my heart. Now, now, now, some person will say, "Now, Brother Rogers, people can read the Bible, and they see all kinds of strange things in it. Are you sure that's what that means?" Yeah, I'm really sure. You say, "Well, why are you so sure?" Well, now, just go right back now to Hebrews, and look again. You know, the Bible is a wonderful book, isn't it? I mean, it really is. And, the more I study it, I don't find hidden flaws; I find hidden beauties. I find little gems of truth that are just written all over.

I can't even find Hebrews. All right, let's see. I think... There it is. Okay, look again now in Hebrews chapter 9, beginning in verse 11, and see if it doesn't...see if this passage in Hebrews doesn't just burst aflame in your hand right now. And, you never would have known it, you never would have gotten the full import, you never would have gotten all of the truth—this tabernacle truth—unless you had gone back and studied in the book of Numbers. But now, read it again: *"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place"*—you see, His blood is a picture of the blood of that heifer that was sprinkled. The holy place is the clean place where those ashes were put—*"having obtained [for] eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer"*—there it is—*"sprinkling the unclean"*—there it is—*"sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ"*—do you see how those ashes represent the blood of Christ?—*"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God"*—remember, that heifer was without spot or blemish—*"offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Hebrews 9:11–14)

You see, you can't serve God if you don't have a clean conscience, but it's the blood of Jesus that makes your conscience clean. And, I thank God out yonder in the glory there is that perpetual sacrifice. I don't have to go around with sin on my soul. I sin every day. I'm...I just have to confess it to you. Man, I have to ask God over and over to forgive me. And sometimes—and oh, how my heart makes me ashamed—I have to ask God to forgive me for the same things over and over again. But, I thank God there's a pot full of ashes. I thank God there's a perpetual sacrifice. I thank God there's the running water, and I thank God there is the hyssop, the faith—so common, so available. *"God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* (Romans 12:3) I don't have to go

around with a load of guilt on me. I don't have to go around saying, "Unclean, unclean, unclean, unclean." I know every day I deliberately stumble into sin, and perhaps, sometimes... I mean, I deliberately sin, and sometimes I get defiled by sin that I'm not aware of. I know sometimes I walk on some graves that I don't even know are there. Sometimes I touch some bones I have no business touching. But, I'm glad the Bible says, *"If we confess our sins, [he's] faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) Now, I'm just glad for a book like this that has such truth in it to bless our hearts.

Nothing but the Blood

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 29, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 9:22

*“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood;
and without shedding of blood is no remission.”*

HEBREWS 9:22

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Prophecy of the Blood
- II. The Provision of the Blood
- III. The Power of the Blood
 - A. It Redeems
 - B. It Brings Us Near
 - C. It Makes Peace
 - D. It Cleanses

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn in your Bibles please to Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22. I want to speak to you on this subject, “Nothing but the Blood”—“Nothing but the Blood.” Someone has said that you can cut the Bible in any place and it will bleed.

Actually, there are three cords that run through the Bible. One is a somber cord, a dark cord of sin and shame and degradation. The Bible teaches us about the sinfulness of man. The other is a bright, scarlet-red cord of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible is a book about blood. And then there’s a golden cord that speaks of the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and tells how He is going to rule and reign forever. The dark cord of sin, the red cord of redemption, and the gold cord of His Second Coming in glory. And how, what a joy it is to read the Bible and find all of those things. And I want us to think about that center cord, that scarlet cord that runs through the Bible, that highway of blood that we find from Genesis to Revelation. The title of the message tonight, “Nothing but the Blood.”

And, by the way, dear friend, the four ingredients of a great church are these: the book, the blood, the birth, and the blessed hope. That is what makes a great church. Those are the things that we just have to keep on preaching over and over again: the

book, God's holy Word; the blood, the sacrificial blood atonement of the Lord Jesus; the birth, the necessity of a new birth, to be a twice-born person; and the blessed hope that Jesus is actually, literally, visibly, bodily coming back to this earth one of these days.

Now I want you to listen to this message tonight on the blood of Christ. Some don't like preaching on the blood. They call it a "gory story." But it's not a gory story; it's a glory story. The apostle Paul said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross, or except in the cross, of Christ my Lord."

Now if you're an unsaved person, you need to listen very carefully tonight, because God put dark Calvary with its blood-drenched slopes there and with its uplifted cross there as a roadblock to keep you out of hell. And if you go to hell, you'll have to climb over the cross of Jesus Christ and trample beneath your feet His precious blood in order to go to hell. And if you're a saved person, you need to listen tonight, because when you understand what Jesus Christ did to redeem you, to buy you, o, how you ought to love Him all of the more.

Now listen to Hebrew 9:22: "And almost all things by the law are purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Without shedding of blood there is no remission. The word remission speaks of the forgiveness and the cleansing of sin. So, my dear friend, without the death of Jesus Christ that Cal sang about, there is no remission of sin. And as I have told you, that the entire Bible speaks of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ for sinners such as we are.

Three things I want you to notice tonight as we think about without shedding of blood there is no remission, as we think about this theme, 'Nothing but the Blood.'

I. The Prophecy of the Blood

First of all, I want you to think with me about the prophecy of the saving blood, the prophecy of the saving blood. Calvary was not an accident, not an incident. God did not come running to the scene of the crime, with a detective nor did God come running to Calvary, somehow with an ambulance. It's not something that happened, as an afterthought. No, the Bible tells us in Revelation chapter 13 and verse 8 that the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world. Before God flung this world into space, before God scooped out the seas and heaped up the mountains and flung out the sun, moon, and stars, before all of that, before anything was that is, God had Calvary in His heart and mind. And Christ was slain in the heart and mind of God from the foundation of the world. You talk about the old-time religion. Folks, that is the old-time religion.

Now just go back to the book of Genesis and let me show you something here. Go to Genesis chapter 3, for example, and look right in the very beginning of the Bible, the threshold of the Bible. In Genesis chapter 3 and verse 21 you find the first prophecy of the blood. The Bible says, "And unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God

make coats of skins, and clothed them.” And, by the way, my dear friend, there’s nothing wrong with wearing coats of skin. There’s nothing wrong with wearing fur. The first furrier was God Himself right here. “And Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” And in order to make those coats of skin, there had to be the shedding of blood. Adam and Eve had sinned in the Garden of Eden, and God is saying, ‘There must be a blood atonement in order for you to have a covering of righteousness.’ And in picture, illustration, and typology, we see the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ pictured there.

Now, you know, Adam and Eve made themselves, a covering of, of leaves. They, they sowed fig leaves together. I believe that, they must have been very creative to do that. And when, Adam came out in his, fig leaf suit, Eve said, “Adam, you look stunning.” And he says to her, “Well, Eve, green is your color.” And they were very proud of themselves as they looked at one another. Adam was dressed for success and Eve, she looked so fine, until God came walking in the midst of the garden, and the works of their hands could not cover the sin of their flesh, and they hid themselves in the trees of the field because that was not sufficient. And God made a blood atonement. God made a covering for them. Why? Hebrews 9, verse 22 tells us, “...without the shedding of blood is no remission.”

And then look in Genesis chapter 4. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. And notice what happened here in, in Genesis chapter 4, verse 3: “And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.” Now Cain was a farmer, and he brought the fruit of the ground, an offering to God. I don’t know what he brought, but in those days vegetables must have grown wondrously because the effects of sin had not taken place, had not totally devastated the earth as it has today and made the world an ecological disaster that it is today. And so it must have looked like a county fair. All of the fruit of the garden, of Cain was there and offered to the Lord. But notice in verse 4: “And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.” Cain was upset because of that which had come out of the ground, and that which was the work of his hands was not accepted. But it was not accepted. Abel’s offering was an innocent lamb, the firstlings of the flock, and God had respect to that blood offering.

What is God saying? What is God saying here in the threshold of the Word of God? It is, my dear friend, without shedding of blood there is no remission. Cain offered vegetables, but you know full well you can’t get blood out of a turnip.

Now turn, if you will, to Genesis chapter 8, and look for just a moment in verse 20. Two thousand years have passed. God sends a flood upon the earth. And Noah comes

out of the ark. And let's see what Noah does in Genesis chapter 8 and verse 20: "And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar." Even though all of this time has passed, there is still, there is still, dear friend, the need of a blood sacrifice. And in the new dispensation, there is still an order that is built upon shed blood.

Just keep on going through Genesis and come to Genesis chapter 22. God chooses a man. That man's name is Abram, who later would become Abraham. And God says, "I'm going to make of you a great nation. And I'm going to give you a son, and that son is going to be the father of many, many, many offspring. And through him I'm going to make you a blessing, Abraham." And then God tells Abraham to do a strange thing. Genesis 22, verse 2: "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." And so here's Abraham, cannot understand it, believing, though, that if God says offer Isaac as a sacrifice, then, "God, I'll do it by faith, but, God, You're going to have to raise him from the dead."

But skip on down to verse 13 and you'll see something wonderful. "And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns..."—that is, a ram crowned with thorns—"...and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead, in the place, as a substitute for his son." Here again you have a picture, a type, a prophecy, an illustration that tells us what we read in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22: "...without the shedding of blood is no remission."

Continue to go on through the Bible and come to the book of Exodus if you will and look with me for just a moment in Exodus chapter 12. The children of Israel are in bondage in the land of Egypt. And God says to the children of Israel through Moses, "I'm going to do something wonderful in the land of Egypt tonight, and I want every, I want every Hebrew to take a lamb. I want them to kill that lamb—every family, a lamb for a family. And I want you to take the blood of the lamb and I want you to sprinkle the blood, of the lamb upon the door posts and upon the lintel of the house." And notice in Exodus chapter 12 and verse 13: "And the blood, the blood shall be for you a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you; the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." They were to put blood upon the lintel, upon the doorposts. Now suppose they put rubies and diamonds—it would have done no good. Suppose they had put silver or gold there—it would have done no good. Suppose they had written beautiful poetry, or made pledges of good intentions, and nailed them to the door—it would have done no good. Even had they put a live, spotless lamb there, it would have done no good. God says, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

And then go on through to Exodus 29 here with me for just a moment. And in Exodus chapter 29 now they're having the ritual of blood sacrifice. The tabernacle has been set up, and notice what God says in Exodus chapter 29 and verse 10: "And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation: and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock." And that symbolized the transferring of the guilt of the people upon that young bull. "And thou shalt kill the bullock before the LORD by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour all the blood beside the bottom of the altar." What is God saying? God is saying, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin." And on and on and on we could go through the Bible just speaking of the prophecy of the blood.

But go back now again to our text if you will in Hebrews, Hebrews 9:22. And turn back to it and we're just going to keep coming back to Hebrews, so just mark it there.

II. The Provision of the Blood

I want you to see not only the prophecy of the blood, but I want you now to see the provision of the blood. Hebrews 9:22—look at it: "And almost all things by the law are purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." But now, go, if you will, to Hebrews 10, verses 4 and 5. Did all of these Old Testament sacrifices—did they suffice? Were they enough? Of course not! The Bible says in chapter 10, verse 1: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." Why all of these Old Testament sacrifices? Why every smoking Jewish altar? Why were thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of lambs and bullocks and turtledoves offered? All of these sacrifices symbolized and pictured and portrayed and prophesied the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And all they were was God's promissory note. All they were was an illustration of Jesus who would come. And all they did was to roll the sins of the people forward one more year until the Lord Jesus Christ would finally come.

Look, if you will, in chapter 10 and verse 4: "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Therefore when he cometh into the world—who is that? Jesus—he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not—that is, that doesn't satisfy Me—but a body thou hast prepared me." Now, the Lord Jesus Christ in glory did not have a body, but God prepared a body in the womb of a virgin. It was a sinless body. And that, my dear friend, was the provision of the saving blood.

Why did God become a man? Why do we have Christmas? Why the incarnation? Because in order for there to be remission there had to be shedding of blood. And in order for there to be shedding of blood, God had to become a man if God were to

become man's substitute and man's sacrifice. And that is why God prepared a body for the Lord Jesus Christ because without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Jesus was the Lamb of God. Remember what God told Abraham back there on Mount Moriah? God told Abraham, "I am Jehovah Jireh." That is, "I am the Lord who provides." And then He said, "The LORD will provide Himself a lamb." That is, "I am going to provide a lamb," one of these days. And the Bible says, "Abraham saw my day and he was glad." God gave Abraham a glimpse of Calvary there on Mount Moriah back in Genesis chapter 22. And, my dear friend, when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, we read there in the Gospel of John chapter 1, verse 29, John the Baptist, dressed there with his leather girdle, John the Baptist with his staff in his hand, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, and the Spirit of God said to him, "That's the One." And John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world."

And so notice, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 12: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." When that Old Testament priest would go into the, Holy of Holies with a basin of blood, he had to go in once a year, the high priest. He would go in behind the veil. He would lift up a corner of the veil. He would go in there. He laid aside all of his royal robes, as we told you before. He laid aside all of his regalia. He just went in with a white, spotless robe and a basin of blood. He would go into that Holy of Holies beneath one corner of the veil that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies, and he would go in there trembling because he knew if there was any sin in his life or unconfessed, unrepented of, if he went in there carelessly, if he went in there, flippantly, he would be stricken dead. As a matter of fact, tradition tells us that they tied a rope around his waist. In case God killed him in there, he'd not have to stay in there an entire year rotting and decaying before the next high priest could go in, and they could drag him out. But no one would go into that holy place without blood. He would go in with a basin of blood. And there was a piece of furniture called the Ark of the Covenant. It was about the size of this pulpit. It was covered with a slab of gold called the Mercy Seat. Underneath that slab of gold was the Law of God, which spoke of the absolute righteousness and holiness of God. Underneath that slab of gold the Ten Commandments were there. And he would take that blood and sprinkle that blood upon the Mercy Seat as an atonement for the sins of the people. And there was no furniture in that place. There was no place to sit down. That high priest would go in there and make an atonement and come out. But in the tabernacle there was no furniture for sitting. But notice in chapter 10, verse 12: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God." Why did He sit down? Because of what He said on the cross when He shed His rich, royal, red blood, "It is finished!" It is paid in full. And my dear friend, when we take the Lord's Supper, that is not the sacrifice of the mass. There is no more

sacrifice. My dear friend, the sacrifice has been made, paid in full by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He offered one sacrifice once and for all. And that is the provision of the saving blood. I don't know about you, but, my dear friend, when I think of Calvary, it moves me deeply. When I try to preach about Calvary, I always feel inadequate. I always feel inadequate when I try to describe the crucifixion. Words always fail me. I want to borrow the words of someone else who wrote this: "Tongue cannot tell, throat cannot sing, hand cannot paint the tragedy that was enacted on that hill called Calvary. Gather the whole of the icy winds that howl through the frozen north. Extract the heart despair of a mother watching wild beasts tear at the throat of her baby. Capture all the hopeless groan and the helpless shrieks of the damned. And, with all of this at your command, you will still be unable to paint the picture that is Calvary. Only the damned in hell can begin to know how much Jesus suffered." My dear friend, Jesus offered one sacrifice for sin. He did not die as a martyr. There we sing that song, There where the blood of the Lamb was split. And I know what we mean by it, but His blood was not spilt; it was poured out. Jesus said, "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself." They pointed a finger at Jesus Christ on the cross and they said, "He saved others; Himself He could not save." But that was a lie. It was Himself He would not save. Jesus said, "Could I not call twelve legions of angels." Think of what 72,000 angels could do if one angel killed 185,000 Assyrians. Listen. Jesus was not a helpless victim there. He could have called, legions of angels to come and deliver Him while He was there on that cross. He chose to die. He laid down His life. He came to die, suffer, bleed, and die. They pointed a finger at Him and they said, "If You're the Son of God, come down from the cross and we'll believe." But that was the wrong challenge. They should have stood before that tomb and said, "If You're the Son of God, come out and we'll believe." And my dear friend, He did; indeed, He did. There is, my friend, the prophecy of the saving blood. There is the provision of the saving blood.

III. The Power of the Blood

Now, finally, I want you to think about the power of the saving blood. I want you to think about why the Lord Jesus shed His blood. Notice again, Hebrews 10, verse 12: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God."

Now there are some people who don't accept what I'm about to preach. They think that it is, uncouth, uncultured, that blood atonement is barbarous. But I want to tell you the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb. What does it do?

A. It Redeems

Number one: It redeems. Turn with me to 1 Peter if you will for a moment. Just keep going. You're in Hebrews. Turn with me to 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 18: "Forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot."

It is redeeming blood. Now when Peter wrote this, there were 50 million slaves in the Roman Empire. The way that a slave could become free if somehow by saving, by work, by inheritance, or by whatever he could get enough silver or enough gold he could redeem himself. He could buy himself out of slavery. But what Peter is saying is, "You're not redeemed with silver and gold. It takes more than that." And he says, "You're not redeemed from your vain conversation." Look at it again in verse 18: "...you are not redeemed from your vain conversation..." What does that mean? It means empty behavior, from that life of vanity and voidness. My dear friend, only the blood of Jesus can redeem. And so, when Jesus died upon that cross, Jesus bowed His head, and Jesus said, "It is finished!" That great Baptist preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, said, "When that blood fell to the ground beneath that cross, it fell on the dust, and the dust said to the grass, "It is finished!" And the grass said to the shrubs, "It is finished!" And the shrubs said to the trees, "It is finished!" And the trees said to the leaves on the trees, "It is finished!" And the leaves said to the birds in those trees, "It is finished!" And those birds flew up to the clouds and said, "It is finished!" And the clouds ascended to the stars and said, "It is finished!" And the stars went into the throne room and said, "It is finished!" It is paid in full. It is done. It is done. And that, my dear friend, is what redeems us is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. It Brings Us Near

Not only does it redeem us, but, my dear friend, it brings us near. In Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 13 the Bible says, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh—or made near—by the blood of Christ." Just as that high priest had no business to go into the presence of God without blood, my dear friend, you cannot come into the presence, the awesome presence of a holy God without a blood sacrifice. What arrogance. You see, my dear friend, it is the blood that makes us near. It is the blood that brings us into the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I must needs go home by the way of the cross, there's no other way but this. I can ne'er catch sight of the gates of light if the way of the cross I miss. It's that blood-sprinkled way that brings me near to the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. It Makes Peace

The third thing it does. Not only does it redeem; not only does it bring us near, make us

acceptable to God; but it makes peace—it makes peace. Colossians chapter 1 and verse 20: “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...” The blood of Jesus makes peace. There is a war between God and man. The Bible says the flesh is enmity against God. The Bible says that we have sinned against Him. Sin is a clenched fist in the face of a holy God. And only the blood of Jesus Christ can make peace and bring us, in a right relationship with God.

D. It Cleanses

Then not only that, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses. First John 1, verse 7: “...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” As I preached to you this morning, you can get clean through the blood of Jesus, and there’s not a sin that the blood of Jesus cannot, will not wash whiter than snow. Hallelujah for the blood that cleanses. It cleanses.

And if there’s some sin your heart and in your life tonight, if you’re an unsaved person, the blood of Jesus will forgive you, cleanse you, and save you. If you’re saved and have slipped back into sin, bring that sin to Jesus. You don’t have to get saved all over again, but you need to be cleansed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. That blood redeems. It brings us nigh. That blood makes peace. That blood cleanses. And, hallelujah, it gives power over Satan. Revelation chapter 12 and verse 11, speaking of the devil, the Bible says, “And they—the saints—overcame him by the blood of the Lamb...” That’s the way to overcome to devil—by the blood of the Lamb!

I mentioned Spurgeon earlier. Spurgeon said that, “One time I used to argue with the accuser.” That is, the devil. He’s the accuser of the brethren. He’ll find some sin in your heart and in your life and he will accuse you to your face and he’ll accuse you before God. Spurgeon said, “I used to argue with the devil, but then I discovered he’s not worth it. You can’t convert him and you can’t convince him, so just turn him over to Jesus. Satan comes and he tells me, ‘You’re not a saint.’ I say, ‘Well, what am I then?’” Spurgeon says. “And he says, ‘Well, you’re a sinner.’ And I say, ‘Well, so are you.’ And he says, ‘But you’ll be lost.’ And Spurgeon said, “No, I shall not be lost. That’s why I’ll be saved because Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and I trust Him to save me.” That’s what Martin Luther calls cutting the devil’s head off with his own sword. My dear friend, thank God for the saving power of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What can wash away my sin? You answer, Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? That’s right. You’ve got it. Oh, my dear friend, what is your relationship to the blood? All of us tonight are related some way to the blood of Jesus. Some people hate the blood. Go back, if you will, now to Hebrews where we began, and I want to show you one of the most fearful passages in all of the Bible—Hebrews, now, chapter 10, and look, if you will, in verse 28—the Bible says, “He that despised Moses’

law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:”—now listen to the rationale; listen to the reasoning—“of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

Some people hate the blood. They despise the blood. The devil despises the blood. There are Christ-rejecting scoffers and mockers who hate the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 28: “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy...of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God...”

Now, my dear friend, when the Passover lamb was killed, the blood was put upon the lintels and the blood was put upon the door posts, the lintel and the door posts, but there was no blood for the threshold. You’re to walk under the blood; you’re not to walk over the blood, not to walk over the blood. I tell you, my dear friend, everybody here tonight, though, will walk out of this building either under the blood or trampling the blood beneath your feet. Either you will accept Christ or you will reject Him. Either you will crown Him or you will crucify Him. Either you will receive Him or you will refuse Him. Either you, my dear friend, will be under the blood or you will trample the blood. Neutral you cannot be. Jesus said, “He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth abroad.” Some do despite unto the Spirit of grace. Trample beneath their feet the Son of God who died for them. I’d rather fall dead on this platform right now than to do such a thing. To some people, their relationship to the blood is one of hatred. To the other, their relationship to the blood is one of folly and foolishness. First Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness...”

You just simply say, “I don’t despise the blood; I just don’t agree with you—I just don’t agree with you. I think all that you’re saying is foolish. I think that I’m fine just like I am, and I think that God is going to accept me, if there be a God, like I am, and I do not need that blood religion.”

Billy Graham, when he first started preaching, had a professor from Cornell University who listened to Billy Graham preach. And that professor came to Graham and said, “Son, you’re a good speaker. You have a good personality. You have a fine mind. And I believe that you could be greatly used, but I want to make a suggestion. You’d better leave that blood stuff out.” Billy Graham said, “I determined there to preach more on the blood of Jesus Christ than ever.” Thank God he did. “The preaching of the cross is to them which perish foolishness...”

Now you can laugh at what I'm going to say, but, my dear friend, you can laugh your way into hell, but you can't laugh your way out once you get there. Hell is a real place.

Now some, some hate the blood. Some mock the blood. Others simply ignore the blood. They just simple let it pass by. I mean, it just goes past. Some who are sitting in the congregation tonight are not listening to what I have to say. Some teenagers, perhaps, are passing notes back and forth. Others are letting their mind gather wool, and you just simply ignore the fact that Jesus Christ died for you, that Jesus Christ called a preacher of the gospel, that Jesus Christ put him in front of you, that that preacher tore his heart out preaching the blood of Jesus Christ, but you simply ignored it. You just simply said, "Oh well, when will this be over?" Oh, may God have mercy upon you. To ignore the blood is a dangerous thing.

Go back to the Passover. Remember that Passover night when God said, "I'm going to pass over the land of Egypt, and I'm going to look for the blood upon the door posts of every house. And if I see the blood, I'll pass over. But if I don't see the blood, the death angel is going to visit that house, and the firstborn in that house will be slain."

Can you imagine Pharaoh's son coming to Pharaoh and saying, "Dad, there's a rumor going around. There's a rumor that God, the God of the Hebrews, is going to come to the land of Egypt, and He's going to smite every house that doesn't have the blood of the lamb upon a door. Dad, the first born in that house is going to die that night. And, dad, I'm your firstborn. Dad, don't you think we'd better get us a lamb? Don't you think we'd better kill the lamb? Don't you think, just in order to be safe, that we ought to put the blood of the lamb on our doorposts? And I can hear Pharaoh, as he laughs, curls his lip in scorn, and says, "Son, don't worry. Son, we live in the palace. We have our palace guards. They have swords. We have soldiers to protect us. Besides that, we have our own priests. We have our own religion." "But, dad, I'm worried. When Moses says something is going to happen, it happens!" But I can hear Pharaoh as he says to his son, "Son, son, don't worry about it. Trust your daddy. Your daddy knows what's best. Don't worry about that blood of the lamb stuff." The son says, "Well, thank you, dad." And he goes to bed that night. But at midnight there's a flash, a gasp of death, and a scream goes up all over the land of Egypt, because the death angel has visited; for God has brought vengeance upon the sins of those Egyptians who did not have an atonement for their blood.

Conclusion

Some—it is hated; others—it is ridiculed; with some—it is ignored. But oh, my dear friend, you're looking at a man to whom the blood is precious. It is precious. You're not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus, as a lamb without spot or without blemish. And, Jesus, I love You tonight for

dying for me. Thank God for the precious blood.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed. If you've not received that precious blood as an atonement for your sins, if you've not repented of your sin and placed your sin at Calvary and let the blood of Jesus cleanse you and forgive you and make you fit for heaven, I want to help you to do so right now. If you're not absolutely certain if you died right now you'd go to heaven, I invite you to pray like this: "Dear God..."—that's right, just speak to Him—"Dear God, I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me." Just tell Him that right now. "I know, God, that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God. I believe that You paid my sin debt with Your precious blood. I believe Your blood is the only hope of heaven that I have. Not Your blood that simply flowed through Your veins, but Your blood that was poured out for me at Calvary. And, Jesus, I believe You would have died for me if I'd been the only sinner in all of history; You would have died for me alone. That's how much You love me. And, Lord Jesus, I want You to come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me with Your blood. Save me by Your power. Save me right now. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus." Ask Him that: "Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. I turn from my sin. I acknowledge You as my Lord and Master and Savior right now. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Nothing But the Blood

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 15, 2002

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 9:22

“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”

HEBREWS 9:22

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Prophecy of the Saving Blood
 - II. The Provision of the Saving Blood
 - III. The Power of the Saving Blood
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 9. The ninth chapter of Hebrews is a great chapter on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are so many great texts in this passage, but let’s look down at Hebrews chapter 9, verse 20. Moses is speaking, “Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission.” Now, when he’s speaking here about remission, he’s talking about the remission of sin—“without shedding of blood is no remission.”

I remember reading about Billy Graham as he started out in his ministry as a young preacher. And I knew Billy Graham when he was very young. I knew Billy Graham when he was in his 30’s, and spent some time with him then. And a young professor from Cornell University said to Billy Graham, “Son, you are a good speaker. You speak with authority and clarity, and you can go places in the ministry, but,” he said, “I want to suggest to you that you leave out that blood stuff.” That’s what he called it—“the blood stuff. Don’t speak about the blood.” He said, “It’s uncultured, uncouth, and you’ll go far, if you will leave out the message of the blood.” Billy Graham said, “I purposed in my heart then to preach on the blood of Jesus more than ever. If there’s anything that Satan hates, it is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I’ve read somewhere where Napoleon was with some of his war angels there in a room looking at a war map on the wall. And on the wall were the British Isles. The

British Isles were in red on this particular map. And Napoleon, who was defeated by the British, pointed to the British Isles, and said, “If it were not for that red spot, I would have conquered the world.” Surely Satan has to say that about Calvary: “Had it not been for that red spot, I would have conquered the world.”

The Bible is a bloody book. You cut the Bible anywhere, it will bleed. Any great church is built on these four things that begin with the letter B: the Book—that is, the inspired, infallible Word of God; the Blood—that is, the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; the Birth—that is, the new birth; and, finally, the Blessed Hope—the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you leave Bellevue and you look for another church somewhere, if you have to go to another city, find out if they take a stand on the Book, the Blood, and the Birth, and the Blessed Hope. If they don’t, you saturate it with your absence, and look for another church.

Now, it’s not a gory story; it is a glory story, and the apostle Paul said, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ my Lord.” God doesn’t want you to go to hell, so God has put a blockage on the road to hell. God has put Calvary with its blood-drenched slopes in your path. And, if you do go to hell—and some of you here may, and some who are listening by radio may, and others who listen by tape later may—but if you do go to hell, you will climb over Calvary to get to hell. God does not want you to die and go to hell.

I. The Prophecy of the Saving Blood

Now, tonight, I want you to see, first of all, what I’m going to call the prophecy of the saving blood. From Genesis to Revelation, you’re going to find out that the Bible speaks of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Calvary, and the shed blood, was in the heart and mind of God before He framed this world. Before He scooped out the seas and heaped up the mountains, God had Calvary on His heart and on His mind. Put in your margin Revelation 13 and verse 8. It speaks of those who are going to worship the Antichrist in the Tribulation, and it says, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him—that is, the Antichrist—whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb—now, listen—slain before the foundation of the world.” Before God framed the worlds, He had already purposed in His heart that Jesus would die. Calvary is not an afterthought. Talk about the old-time religion. Friend, that’s way back before the world was made.

And then, God made Adam and Eve, created Adam and Eve, and put them in the Garden of Eden. And they sinned, and they hid from God, because they could not bear to look God in the face. Before that, Adam had had perfect communion with God and walked with God in the cool of the garden. But now, when God came to the garden, He said, “Adam, where are you?” Adam and Eve had hidden themselves in the foliage.

Now, when God said, “Adam, where are you?” it was not the voice of a detective. It was a voice of a brokenhearted God. Now, what Adam and Eve had done, they saw their shame. They knew now that they were naked. Before this, they were robed with glory, and they were innocent. No guilt, no shame. But now they take fig leaves to try to cover themselves with fig leaves, and I’m sure that they felt they looked pretty good in their own sight until God came. And just like many people in this room today, you may feel that you’re real fine. Adam may have said to Eve, “Now, Eve, you’re stunning in green.” And Eve said, “Adam, you’re just a knockout there also.”

But God did something there in the Garden of Eden. The Bible says that God clothed Adam and Eve with coats of skin. That is, God took an innocent animal, flayed that animal, put it to death, and took the skin of that animal, and clothed Adam and Eve with it. Now, how do you get an animal skin? There has to be the shedding of blood. Why did God do that? Way back in the early history of civilization, God was teaching the lesson we’ve learned in Hebrews 9, verse 22: “without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.”

Later on, because sin was in the world, one of Adam’s sons slew the other. Cain slew Abel. And, why did Cain slay Abel? He was jealous of Abel. Why? Because these two boys, Cain and Abel, had come to worship God. Now, Cain was a tiller of the ground, and he brought of the first fruits of the ground and offered to the Lord. Now, that offering must have been a beautiful offering. Can you imagine the fragrant flowers? Can you imagine the succulent fruit? Can you imagine the things that he brought that he had brought out of the earth, out of the ground, to worship God? It looked like a county fair. But Abel brought a lamb, the firstling of the flock, a bloody sacrifice, and the Bible says God had respect toward Abel’s offering and not to Cain’s offering. Now, why did God have respect to Abel’s offering and not to Cain’s offering? Because you can’t get blood out of a turnip. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” And, by the way, the religion of Cain is not extinct today. Many people, by their own works, are trying to make themselves acceptable to God. It cannot be done. If it could be done, then Jesus never would have died. The Bible says, “If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Now, we go on through the Bible and we find out that the way that men were living now was so wicked that it repented God that He even made man. And God had declared that He was going to destroy the world with a flood, but He put Noah in the ark. The ark is a type, a picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Noah came out of that ark, we read there in Genesis chapter 8 and verse 20: “And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.” After 2,000 years of human history now, 2,000 years of failure, it is still there in the Word of God: “without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

We go further through the Bible and we find a man named Abraham who was the progenitor and the father of the Hebrew race, and the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. And Abram is called upon to offer his son, Isaac, upon an altar upon a mountain, Mount Moriah, which later was the mountain on which the temple was built, and later the very limestone ridge upon which our Lord Jesus was crucified, because it was done with precision, and God said, "Abraham, you offer Isaac, not on any mountain, but a mountain in the place that I will show you." Abraham didn't understand, but the Bible says he knew that, if God had given him this son by miracle, God was able to raise him from the dead. And Isaac here becomes a type, a picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the obedient Word.

The wood is laid upon Isaac's back for the fire, and Isaac and Abraham start up Mount Moriah on one side. When they get to the top of Mount Moriah, Isaac says to Abraham, "Father, here's the wood, here's the fire: where's the sacrifice?" God gave Abraham divine wisdom to answer that question. He said, "My son, God will provide Himself a sacrifice." That's very interesting. It might mean that God Himself will provide the sacrifice, but if you listen to what he said, "God will provide Himself a sacrifice." That is, God will become the sacrifice, for God was in Christ, redeeming the world unto Himself. But a strange thing happened, and now the picture changes. Abraham and Isaac are there. Isaac, as an obedient son, stretches out his hands and allows Abraham to bind them. Now, remember, Abraham now is an aged man. He has his own centennial celebration. He's a hundred-year-old man and older, and Isaac is a strapping teenage boy able to carry a load of timber up a mountain. He could easily have outrun the old man, or easily overcome him, but he submits and lays down upon that altar, picturing the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself."

And at that time, there's a noise. Abraham hears the angel say, "Abraham, Abraham, do the lad no harm—do the lad no harm." And Abraham looks, and over there is a ram caught in the thicket, its horns in the brambles, a ram crowded with thorns, and God says, "Abraham, take that ram and sacrifice him in the stead of your son." No wonder Jesus in the New Testament said, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad." The Bible says the gospel was preached to Abraham. How? When that ram was offered in the place of his son. Why did God do that? Hebrews 9:22: "without shedding of blood is no remission."

On through the Bible we go. There comes along a man named Moses, who is going to lead his people out of the land of Egypt. Egypt represents the world of sin. Pharaoh represents the devil. And God wants to let His people go. He wants them to be redeemed. And God says to Moses, "Moses, tell every household to take a spotless lamb, to kill that lamb, and to put the blood of that lamb upon the door posts of the

house and upon the lintel of the house.” Not on the threshold. They were to walk out under the blood, not over the blood. “Put it on the door posts of house, and put it on the lintel.” And then, God says, “The death angel is going to come through the land.” Exodus chapter 12 and verse 13: “And the blood shall be for you a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt.” “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

Now, suppose the people in Egypt at that time, the children of Israel, suppose they had put rubies and diamonds on the doorposts. The death angel would have come. Suppose they had written beautiful thoughts and poetry and put that on the doorposts. The death angel would have come. Suppose they had said, “We’ve turning over a new leaf, and we’re making a new contract with you, God,” and signed it, and nailed that to the doorposts. The death angel would have come. Suppose they had taken a live lamb, and tied a live lamb to the doorpost. The death angel would have come. You see, salvation doesn’t come by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ. God says, in Hebrews 9:22, “without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.”

As we fast-forward through the Bible, God set up the temple sacrifices. And I read, for example, in Exodus chapter 29, verse 10: “And thou shalt cause a bullock to be brought before the tabernacle of the congregation; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the bullock.” They lay their hands on this young ox and confess the sin of the people. Then that bullock is led away and slain, and his body consumed by fire, and his blood poured out there at the altar. Why? Why did we have thousands and thousands and thousands of sacrificial animals in the old Mosaic system? Because, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. All through the Old Testament, you see the prophecy of the blood. God was teaching His people, “There is no way that you can approach me as sinners without the shedding of blood.” Now, that is the prophecy of the blood, but it was only a prophecy.

II. The Provision of the Saving Blood

I want you to see the provision of the blood—the provision of the blood.

Years ago, there was a Russian physiologist whose name was Pavlov—Pavlov. Pavlov worked on a form of psychological manipulation that he called a conditioned response. And, for example, Pavlov had some dogs. And before he would feed the dogs, he would ring a bell, and then feed the dogs. The next day, ring the bell, feed the dogs. The next day, ring the bell and feed the dogs. The dogs came to believe that when the bell rang, it was time to eat. Then came a time when Pavlov would simply ring the bell. He didn’t have to provide the food. The dogs would begin to drool, to salivate,

because they had a conditioned response. They knew that the bell meant food. That's a conditioned response.

All of these Old Testament sacrifices were a conditioned response. God was showing, by every sacrifice in the Old Testament, that the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth will surely die. God is saying there is no remission of sin apart from the shed blood. All of this was getting the world ready—a conditioned response—getting the world ready for the coming of our dear Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. So we're in Hebrews 9.

Look in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 12. It speaks of Jesus. Well, let's go to that. Turn with me, if you will, to Hebrews 10, and, look, if you will, in verse 11: "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." These Old Testament sacrifices never did satisfy the heart, the mind, of God. All they did was roll the sins of the people forward till Christ would come. "But this man—speaking of Jesus—after he had offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down on the right hand of God." Now, friend, that's one reason I don't believe in the mass. I don't believe that the priest has any right to say that he is sacrificing the Lord Jesus Christ there at any altar in any church. Jesus died once and for all. He offered one sacrifice for sins, and He sat down because He paid the price. This is the provision of the saving blood.

Now, how could one man die for all? Well, one man got us in all in trouble. The first man was Adam. You say, "Well, I didn't vote for Adam. Adam didn't have anything to do with me. I'm not connected to Adam." Well, I want to ask you a question. If it weren't for Adam, where would you be? Don't say that Adam had nothing to do with you. We are in Adam. Adam was given dominion. Adam sold his dominion. He gave it to Satan. And when he did, mankind—Adam and all of his progeny—became slaves. The son of a slave is a slave. And therefore, we inherited from Adam a sinful nature and sinful death. The Bible says, "In Adam all die." If you don't believe that, just jot in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 22: "For as in Adam all die—now, listen to this—even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Thank God that in one man we also have redemption. I'm glad. I'm willing to take Adam's sin, if I can take Jesus' salvation, amen? Because had it not been for Adam, I would have sinned myself. So would you. In Adam, all die, but in Christ, all shall be made alive.

Now, had Jesus not been born of a virgin, had the Lord Jesus Christ been born as you and I were born, as descendency of Adam, we could have died for no one's sin but our own. In Adam, all die, and the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. That's the reason Jesus had to be born of a virgin.

Now, the birth is not incidental. It's not folklore. It's not mythology. Without the virgin birth, the house of Christianity collapses like a house of cards. There's no hope apart

from the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Why was Jesus born of a virgin? He came as He did, virgin-born, to be what He was: not the son of Adam, but the Son of God.

Now, His blood was different from any other blood. The blood of Jesus and the blood of Mary are not the same. Don't get the idea that, when a little baby is there in its mother's womb, the mother's blood circulates through the baby's body. That is not so. That is an error. None of the mother's blood circulates through that baby's body. None of that baby's blood circulates through the mother's body. That baby is a separate individual from the mother. That's the reason a woman says, "Well, I have a right to do what I want with my own body," and so she has an abortion. That is not her own body. That is an individual, completely different individual. The baby may have one blood type; she has another blood type. This baby is an individual there.

And, by the way, that blood is determined by the father, not by the mother. That's the reason sometimes they can pin a paternity suit on a man by giving a blood test. It's the father that determines all of that.

Now, Jesus is born of a virgin. That is, He is the Son of God. And the blood that flowed through the veins of Jesus Christ was not the blood of Mary. It was the blood of God. Well, you say, "Now, wait a minute, Adrian. God doesn't have blood." Well, He did when Jesus was here. You read Acts chapter 20. And Paul says to the Ephesians elders, "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"—"the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." No wonder the Bible calls the blood of Jesus Christ that precious blood. And this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God. For in Adam all die; even so, in Christ shall all be made alive.

How many people died when Adam died? Did Adam just affect some of humankind? All of humankind. Did you know there are some people who want to tell you that Jesus only died for the elect? Now, listen to this verse: "As in Adam all die; even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Now, friend, you can't make all mean one thing over here and not mean something else over here. Jesus died for all. And I'm glad that I can look at any man in the face and say, "Jesus died for you." Jesus died for you. Jesus paid your sin debt. Yes, in Adam all die; in Christ we have redemption, and He died for all. That's the reason way back in the Garden of Eden when Satan crawled his slimy, corroding path into the pages of history and did what he did, and tempted Eve to sin, and then beguiled Adam, God gave a prophecy a long time ago, in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15. God said to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman..."—enmity means warfare; you won't see many women in love with snakes—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed—her, thy descendant—and her seed—the descendency of the serpent and the descendency of the woman—between

thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The serpent will wound Christ, but Christ will crush the head of the serpent. That’s what it says there. But the old rabbis used to scratch their heads when they would look at that Scripture in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, because it says, “the seed of the woman,” and they would say, “Now, wait a minute. The woman doesn’t have seed. That’s the man’s business.” Isn’t it interesting that God takes this unique statement here and speaks not of the seed of the man, but the seed of the woman?

Now, this man, Jesus, offered one sacrifice for sin—Hebrews 10:12. He offered that sacrifice. Jesus did not die as a helpless victim. Jesus did not die as a martyr. Often we sing, “There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt,” and that’s good poetry, but the blood wasn’t spilt; it was poured out. It was poured out. Jesus said, “No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself.” John chapter 10, verse 18—Jesus said, “No man taketh it from me, I lay it down of myself. I have...—speaking of His life—I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” Jesus was the only man who ever chose to die. You say, “Well, a lot of people have chosen to die. What about those people who drove that airplane into that building? Didn’t they choose to die?” No. They were going to die anyway. I’ve told you before, one out of one people die. No. They only chose the time of their death. Jesus was the only man who never needed to die, because there was no sin in Him. There was no seed of death in the Lord Jesus Christ, and no man could take His life from Him. Jesus laid it down. He offered one sacrifice for sin. He did not die as a martyr. He did not die as a victim. He died willingly, voluntarily. Jesus said, “I could call twelve legions of angels to deliver me from this cross.” One angel slew 85,000 men, I read in the Bible. I wonder what 72,000 angels would do? The angels, leaning over the battlements of heaven, saying, “Jesus, just say the word! Just say the word!” But Jesus stayed on that cross. There were searing nails in His palms. But I’ll tell you it was love that held Him to the cross. They said, “Come down from the cross, and we’ll believe.” That was the wrong challenge. What they should have done was stand in front of that tomb and say, “Come out and we’ll believe.” And, friend, He did come out.

Listen to what He says now: “No man taketh it from me; I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down—now, listen to this—and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from my Father.”

There’s the prophecy of the blood. The Old Testament is full of it. As I say, cut it anywhere, it will bleed. There is the provision of the blood. As John the Baptist saw Jesus coming, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”

III. The Power of the Saving Blood

Now, think a little bit with me about the power of that saving blood. Hebrews 10,

verse 12—look at it again: “For this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down on the right hand of God.” Why is He sitting? In the Old Testament, the priests never sat down, because the work was never done. But when Jesus bowed His head and died, He said, “It is finished.” Jesus said, “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” We don’t need to offer any more sacrifices. We don’t need any more blood of bulls and goats. That’s gone. That’s in the old dispensation. We don’t need to do that any more. Hebrews 10:4 says, “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.” Jesus offered one sacrifice forever. And, friend, if you were to ever get lost and then have to be saved again—which is impossible—and if you could be saved and then lost and have to get saved again, Jesus would have to die again. You got a salvation marked, you’ve got a payment marked, “Good for one salvation only.” The Bible says, “For by one sacrifice he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

Now, what does the blood do? Well, I want to mention the power of the blood. There’s power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

First of all, blood redeems. Redemption meant something to the people of this day. There were 50 million slaves in the Roman Empire. And a slave, if he could somehow get his hand on money, he could buy his freedom with silver or with gold. But Peter says, in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 18 and 19: “For inasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot.” You are redeemed by the blood. There’s no way that you can be liberated from the bondage of Satan apart from the precious blood of Jesus.

In yesteryear, there was a preacher whose name was A. J. Gordon. He was a great preacher. Preachers study his preaching. A. J. Gordon preached in Boston. On a Saturday, he went for a walk in the Boston Commons in the park there, and he saw a little boy. The little boy was a member of his church. The little boy had a cage, and in that cage he had some field birds. And Dr. Gordon stopped and talked to the little boy for a moment. He said, “Son, where’d you get those birds?” He said, “Preacher, I trapped them.” He said, “Well, son, what are you going to do with them?” “Oh,” he said, “I’m going to play with them for a while.” He said, “Then, what are you going to do with them, son?” He said, “I’m going to feed them to the cats.” Gordon said, “Son, would you sell those birds to me?” He said, “Mister, you don’t want them. They ain’t no good. They’re not canaries. They’re just field sparrows. You don’t want them.” He said, “Son, I didn’t ask you what they were. Would you sell them to me?” He said, “Preacher, I’m telling you, they ain’t no good. There ain’t nothing you can do with them.” He said, “Son, would you sell them to me?” He said, “Well, preacher, yeah, if you want them.” And he

sold them to the preacher for a pittance. And he said, "I'll give you the cage, too." Gordon paid the boy, took the cage, and walked off, and went down an alley, waited around until no one was looking, opened the cage, and began to tap on the bottom of the cage. Those little birds were all just quivering, huddled down in the bottom of that cage. But he tapped and tapped, and one by one they would come up on the perch and spread their wings and fly away until the cage was empty. The next day, Gordon preached in his church on Sunday and he told what he did. And he said, "Every time one of those little birds came up there and perched for a while and then flew away, he began to chirp and he sang a song, "Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed, redeemed, redeemed. Now," he said, "that's what Jesus did for us. He redeemed us. But the story changes here, folks.

You see, we might say, "Satan, what have you got there?" "A cage full of birds." "What are you going to do with them?" "I'm going to torment them, and then I'm going to drag them down into hell." But Jesus did not buy us from Satan. When Jesus died on the cross, friend, He paid with His only rich, red, royal blood to the justice bar of Almighty God. He paid our sin debt there, and we can sing it, say it, pray it, rejoice in it—we are redeemed.

The first thing the blood does: the blood, friend, redeems. The second thing the blood does: it brings us near. Ephesians 2, verse 13: "But now in Christ Jesus ye, who sometimes were far off, are made near nigh by the blood of Christ." Now, if God seems far away from you, it's because you've not understood the power of the blood, or entered into the privilege of the blood.

I can tell you this. I was thinking today how long I've been saved. I've been saved far more than a half a century. I want to tell you something. God is real to me. He's not someone I preach about. Jesus Christ is near to me. And I've said this before, but He is as real to me, and more real than these men on the platform. He is near. And if God seems far off to you, you're missing the privilege. Let me tell you that we are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

There's an old story that we used to tell about a man and his wife who'd been married for a long time. He was behind the steering wheel of the automobile and she was sitting over there near the door, and she said to him, "You remember how it was when we first were dating, and on the honeymoon how we used to sit close together? Now, look how far apart we are." He said, "I haven't moved."

Friend, it is God who is still where He is. We've been separated from Him by sin, but the blood brings us nigh.

And the blood makes peace. Colossians chapter 1, verse 20—the Bible speaks of Jesus and it says, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself—by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or

things in heaven.” The blood makes peace. Thank God for the wonder-working peace of God that flows like a river, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the blood cleanses. First John 1:7: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” Daily I ask God to search my heart. When I find some sin in my heart, all I have to do is name it, confess it, agree with God about it, and the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin. And don’t you insult the blood by saying, “Well, God, I know that there are some sins that the blood will cleanse, but what I’ve done is too heinous, too horrible.” No. If you’ve committed fornication, the blood will cleanse. Have you committed adultery? The blood will cleanse. Have you committed blasphemy? The blood will cleanse. Have you killed a little baby in your womb? The blood will cleanse. Have you cursed father and mother? The blood will cleanse. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin. That’s a hallelujah, is it not? There’s no sin, not a blot, not a blur, not a blemish, not a stain, that the blood of Jesus cannot cleanse. Now, the devil, of course, doesn’t want you to understand this.

Let me tell what else the blood does. The blood gives power over Satan. How are you going to live the victorious Christian life? Revelation chapter 12, verse 11, speaking of the devil, the dragon: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”—they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.

Spurgeon said one time, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a great preacher of yesteryear, “I used to argue with the devil, but I don’t do it anymore. He’s not worth it. You can’t convince him, and you can’t convert him. The devil comes to me, and the devil says, ‘You’re a sinner,’ and Spurgeon says, ‘Well, so are you.’ And the devil says, ‘Well, then, you’re going to hell,’ and Spurgeon says, ‘No, I’m not going to hell. That’s the reason I’m going to heaven, for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and He has saved me.’” That’s what Martin Luther calls cutting the devil’s head off with his own sword. Friend, there is power in the blood, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to say it, and believe it, and understand it.

Now, what is your response to the blood of Jesus? What is your response to the blood of Jesus? By some people, it is hated. We’re in Hebrews chapter 10. Look, if you will, in verse 28 here of Hebrews chapter 10. Listen to it. This ought to cause you to tremble, if you’re not saved tonight. If you’re a teenager without Christ, if you’re a businessman without Christ, listen to it: “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance is mine, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. Again, the Lord shall

judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” He’s talking about those who despise the blood, who count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified, an unholy thing—who trampled that blood beneath their feet.

Everybody in this building—everybody in this building—tonight will walk out either under the blood or over the blood. Either you will be saved and you will be protected by the blood so the death angel will pass over you, or, when you walk out, if you’re not saved, you will be trampling under your feet the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “I don’t intend to do that.” Well, friend, Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me.”

Some years ago, I told you a story that I can never forget. A businessman was in his office. Everything was fine. The day was a normal day. But his secretary said, “Sir, I believe it is an emergency. You must take this call.” The call was from a police officer. He said, “Are you Mr. So-and-So?” “Yes, I am.” “Do you have a son, thus and such?” “Yes, I do.” “Sir, I hate to tell you this, but your son has been hit by an automobile on thus-and-such a street, and he didn’t make it. He was dead on arrival at the hospital. I hate to tell you this, sir.” The man said, “Which hospital? I’m coming right away. Where was the accident?” And the policeman told him where the accident was. The man realized that he would have to drive past that very spot on his way to the hospital. And when he got there, he saw the place where his son had been hit. And he was hit with such force that his body had lain there on the street and had bled, and they had not come yet to clean up the blood. And the man stopped for a moment and he looked, and it gripped his heart: that was the blood of his own son there, his son now dead, right there on the pavement. And then, he noticed that the cars were coming just driving through that blood, the automobiles just driving through. He couldn’t stand it. He took off his coat and he stood there. And as the cars were coming, he said, “Stop it. Stop it. Move. You can’t drive through the blood of my son like that. You just can’t do it.”

I can understand how that father must have felt. How do you think God the Father feels when you, friend, will sit in a church service and hear a preacher tear out his heart, and preach about the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you walk out not under the blood, but over the blood? God says, “Of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under his feet the precious blood of Jesus Christ.” I’d rather drop dead on this platform tonight than to do such a thing.

Some despise the blood. To others, it is foolish. There are those who would laugh and mock at what I’m preaching tonight, just like that professor at Cornell University said to Billy Graham. First Corinthians 1, verse 18, says, “For the preaching of the cross—that is, the blood—is foolishness to them that perish.” “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God.”

Some will laugh at the message. Friend, you can laugh your way into hell, but you can't laugh your way out. You can mock the blood, or despise the blood. To some, the blood is just simply ignored. You don't despise it, and you don't mock it; you just go your way. You hear a sermon with no more intention of acting on that sermon than you would of acting upon some drama that you might see on television.

Remember when we talked to you about the Passover lamb that you read about in the Book of Exodus, and God said to the people there, "Tell the people to take a lamb without spot, without blemish, the firstlings of the flock, and sacrifice it and put the blood on the door posts? Can you imagine Pharaoh's son coming home and saying, "Father, I heard Moses preaching to the Hebrews. And Moses said that they've got to get a lamb, and sacrifice the lamb, and put the blood on the doorposts of the house. And, if they don't do that, the firstborn son in the family is going to die. And, Daddy, I'm your firstborn son. Daddy, can we get a lamb? Can we get a lamb and put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of our house? I can imagine Pharaoh saying to his son, "Son, we have the best religion that money can buy. We have the fine priests of Egypt. We have a family tradition that has gone back for centuries. And I want you to know that I have my royal guards also. And, Word, you're very safe. Daddy loves you very much. And don't you worry about this blood of the lamb stuff." The little boy goes to bed that night, and there's a gasp, a flash, a scream, and he's hurled out into eternity because, without shedding of blood is no remission of sin.

I want you to notice another little boy in Egypt that night. This little boy is a Hebrew. His father's heard the preaching of the Word. His father gets a lamb, slays the lamb, takes the blood in a basin, and marks the lintel and doorposts of the house. That little boy says, "Daddy, did you put the blood on the door posts?" "Yes, Word, I did." "Daddy, can I go see it?" "Yes, Word, there it is—there it is." "Daddy, did you do it just right?" "Yes." "Daddy, do you think I'm safe?" "Yes, Word, you're safe. We did exactly what God said to do." That little boy stays up all night long. He's worried. But when the sun comes up, he's safe, because the blood has been there.

I want you to notice another little boy, this time also a Hebrew. He says, "Dad, did you put the blood on the door posts?" "Yes, Word, I did." "Did you do it right, Dad?" "Yes, Word, I did it just like Moses said." "That means I'm safe, doesn't it, Dad?" "Son, you're safe. We've applied the blood." That little boy goes to bed and he sleeps all night. One boy stays awake all night. The other boy sleeps all night. Now, which boy was the safest? They're both just as safe. Which boy enjoyed it the most? The one that slept all night.

Conclusion

Now, listen, friend. The blood makes us safe; the Word makes us sure—the Word

makes us sure. I'm so grateful that I have that assurance of my salvation. You know, there are lots of folks just going to worry their way to heaven. They're saved. They've really given their heart to Jesus, but they never really trust in the power of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's power, power, wonder-working power in the blood of Christ.

Friend, some despise the blood. To others, it's foolish. To some, it is ignored. But to those of us who believe, it is precious. Listen to 1 Peter 1, verses 18 and 19, again: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from the fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without spot and without blemish."

Now, Brother Jim is wondering what song is he going to ask us to sing right now. And I want our musicians to get out your hymnal, if you don't have this in your heart. I want us to sing, "Rock of ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in thee. Let the water and the blood from thy wounded side which flowed, be for sin the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure." Can we sing that? Miss Organist, Mr. Pianist, let's stand together as we sing, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me." †

Why Attend Church?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 23, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:19–25

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

HEBREWS 10:25

Outline

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- I. Worship Together and Exalt the Savior
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Conclusion

Introduction

Thank you, young ladies. That was wonderful. And I believe those girls are beautiful within and without, and I'm so grateful for the music tonight, Jamie. It has been wonderful.

Find please in the Book of Hebrews chapter 10, this time, and we're going to begin reading in a few moments, in verse 19.

The church in the 21st century, and Bellevue Baptist Church, has a genuine problem, and the problem is lagging and sagging church attendance. People today have the idea that perhaps they're doing God a favor when they come to church on Sunday morning and on Sunday evening. It is so bad in some churches that pastors are tempted to exaggerate their attendance. One pastor was saying that he had more in Sunday School than he had, and the other pastor challenged him. This pastor said, "Look, If I lie about my statistics, and you know that I am lying, and I know that you know, isn't that like telling the truth?" We get embarrassed sometimes because people stay away from church. In some of our liturgical churches, people go to church really, basically, about three times: When they're born, to be christened; the second time, when they're married; the third time, when they're buried—when they're hatched, when they're matched, and when they're dispatched. The first time they throw water, the second time rice, and the third time dirt. Really, that's true. That's about the only time some people attend services today. Now, I want to tell you something. In the New Testament—listen carefully—if you willingly, deliberately missed the assembly, the

coming together as a church, they assumed that you never had been saved. They assumed that you had gone back into the world and demonstrated that you never had a personal, genuine relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. They wondered if you'd ever been saved at all, if you ceased to attend the worship service. They saw worship not only as a privilege, but they saw worship as a solemn duty.

With that in mind, I want you to listen, beginning in verse 19, if you will, of this chapter: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest—that is, the Holy of Holies—by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Now, there are three times in this passage that he uses the phrase, "let us," and I want you to see this right here. For example, in verse 22, he says, "Let us draw near." Then, look in verse 23: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith." And then, he goes on to say, in verse 24, "Let us consider one another and to provoke unto love and to good works." Three times, he's talking to the congregation, to the assembly. He's not talking to individuals. He's talking corporately. And three times, he says, "let us." The first time, he's talking about, let us worship together. The second time, he's saying, let us witness together. The third time, he is saying, let us work together. Now, we're going to put our thoughts around those three times that he says, "let us," and see what that says to Bellevue Baptist Church, because our church has been mightily blessed of God. We're celebrating 100 years, but, very frankly, we are seriously failing in some matters. And so, I don't want to give you a happiness report, but I want to talk to you out of my heart as a pastor.

I. Worship Together and Exalt the Savior

First of all, let us exalt our Savior by worshiping together. Now, when we worship together, we exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. Go back to chapter 10 now, and look, if you will, in verse 19: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." Now, verse 22 says, "Let us draw near." Now, drawing near to God is worship. Why have we met here tonight? To

draw near to the Lord Jesus Christ.

You do not come to church, primarily, to hear a sermon. You do not come to church, primarily, to hear music. That's a part of it. But the overriding purpose of our coming together is to draw near to Jesus. Well, you say, "I do that alone." Yes, you ought to do that alone, but corporate worship is taught in the Bible, and together, as the body of Christ, we ought to draw near to Him. And he says that we're to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Now, the holiest is, in the Old Testament, the Holy of Holies. It was the innermost part of the temple or the tabernacle. It was the place where the Shekinah glory of God was. And the writer of Hebrews says we are to come through the veil into the Holy of Holies. Now, in the Old Testament, the high priest could only go into the Holy of Holies once a year. He would go in there with a basin of blood and sprinkle the blood upon a piece of furniture called the mercy seat, and he would not dare go in there without the blood. He would not dare go in there without permission of God. And no one else other than the high priest would dare to go in there.

John Phillips, who's a great Bible expositor, and who is a member of Bellevue Baptist Church—and I'm so grateful that he is, though he has an itinerant ministry—has said something very beautiful. He imagines a man from Moab, not an Israelite, out there in the Sinai, and he sees the tabernacle, this tent, and this house of worship covered with badger skins, and he sees it out there with a white fence around it. And he might say to a Jew, "What is that?" And the Jew would say, "That's where we worship God." And he said, "Well, I would like to go in there." And he would say, "You can't go in there. That's not for the people of Moab. That's for the people of Israel." "Well, what would I have to do in order to go in there?" "Well, you would have to be born again an Israelite." "Well, if I were an Israelite, I would go in there, but that next room, could I go in there, the holy place?" "Oh, no," he said, "you couldn't go in there unless not only were you a Jew, but you would have to be a Levite of the house of Aaron." "Well, if I were, and I went in there, then there's another room, that holiest of all, that holy place. Could I go in there?" "Oh, no, you might be a Levite, but you couldn't go in there unless you were the high priest, and you'd have to go in with a basin of blood." "Well, if I were the high priest, I believe I'd go in every day." "Oh, no, you wouldn't. You could only go in once a year." But now notice what the writer of Hebrews says. The writer of Hebrews says, "let us enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Now, notice. Only the high priest could go into the Old Testament tabernacle. All of us can go in. Only the high priest could only go in once a year. We get to go in there day by day, not only individually, but we go corporately, all of us at the same time, into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. And he says, we go in through the veil.

The veil was a great woven curtain that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies, and it was a curtain wall, and it was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Through

the veil,” he says, “which is his body.” He’s talking now of symbolism.

That veil was made of colors. Exodus tells us that it was made of snow white. It was made of sky blue. It was made of blood red, crimson. And it was made of royal purple. Had you seen it, there it is, shimmering in all of those colors. It pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, that veil that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. Now, when the priest went in, he would lift up the corner of the veil and slip under. Tradition tells us that they tied a rope around his leg in case he was stricken dead in there. No one would go in there to get him out. They would pull him out. They would be afraid to go into that Holy of Holies. Now, that veil is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and those colors picture the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are four Gospels, right? Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew speaks of Jesus Christ as the King. The emphasis in the Book of Matthew is that Jesus is heaven’s King, and Matthew speaks of the kingdom of heaven. So Matthew—what color would that represent? Royal purple of Matthew. Mark speaks of Jesus as the suffering servant, as the Son of Man who shed His blood, so what Gospel would that be? Not the purple Gospel, but that’s the blood-red Gospel. And then, Luke speaks of Jesus Christ as the virgin-born Son of God from heaven, so that’s the sky-blue Gospel. And white speaks of Jesus Christ in His absolute deity, His sinlessness. That’s the snow-white Gospel. And so you have all of these together. You have the royal purple, you have the blood red, you have the sky blue, you have the dazzling white pictured in those four Gospels. That is a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, think of purple. How do you get purple? Those of you who are artists know. You take what? Red and blue, and put them together, and you have purple. Now, let’s take the white background of Jesus’ absolute purity, let’s take the red of His humanity, and let’s take the blue of His deity, and mingle them together, and then you have royal purple that speaks of His majesty, because His humanity and His deity make His majesty. He is heaven’s King. Now, if you were to look at that purple, look at it carefully, you could not tell where the blue begins, nor where the red ends. They are mingled together. When you look at Jesus Christ, you see the fact that He is both Son of God and Son of Man at the same time, and when you look at Jesus, you cannot tell where His humanity begins nor where His deity begins; where His humanity ends, which it never does, nor His deity ends, which it never does. That’s a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the Bible says that veil pictures Jesus. And he says, “Let us come in to the Holy of Holies through the veil”—through the veil. How are you going to come through the veil? Well, you know that when Jesus Christ hung on the cross, hung His head and died in agony and blood, the Bible says the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. Not from the bottom to the top, as though man had done it, but from the top to the bottom, and the way into the Holy of Holies is now made clear and open by the

sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He says in verse 19, “we come through the blood.” There’s no other way to go into the Holy of Holies.

Now, some people say, “Well, you know, I just believe that I’m going to be saved by living a life like the Lord Jesus Christ.” If that’s what you’re counting on to get you to heaven, you’re not going. Nobody lived a life like the Lord Jesus Christ. That veil did not say, “Come in”; that veil said, “Stay out.” His absolute royalty, His deity, His sinless humanity, His absolute pure-white purity, does not say, “Come in.” It says, “This is what I demand of you, and you cannot get in here, because this perfection keeps you out.” It was only when Jesus died, and through His death, that a way is made into the Holy of Holies. Now, if you don’t learn anything else tonight, I want you to learn this: Salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ; it is receiving life from the death of Christ. It is when Jesus died that a way was made into the Holy of Holies.

Now, what is the writer of Hebrews talking about? In this entire passage, he’s talking about church attendance. He’s saying the climax of the whole thing, “Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.” And he says, first of all, “Let us draw nigh.” Do you know what we’re doing tonight, if we’re in the Spirit, worshiping God in spirit and in truth? We have just entered in through the veil into the Holy of Holies. That’s what we’re doing. That’s what we’ve come to do today, not as a high priest once a year, but as a congregation. Every time we meet, He is saying, “Let us draw nigh.” Again, we’re not just coming to hear a sermon, we’re not coming to hear music, we’re not just coming to fellowship; we’re coming to draw nigh to God. “And let us, therefore, exalt the Savior by worshiping together. If you love Jesus, you’re going to want to exalt Him by coming together with your brothers and sisters and worshiping corporately.

Now, that brings up a real question. Why does God want us to worship Him? Is God some cosmic egotist who has to be constantly told how good He is, how glorious He is, how great He is? Is that what you think God is like? No, friend. God does not need our worship. That may surprise you, but, friend, our gifts don’t enrich God. He owns it all. Our fellowship does not improve God. He doesn’t learn anything from us. Our praise does not make God any more glorious. God wants us to worship Him, not, primarily, for what worship does for God, but for what worship does for us, because we become like what we worship, individually and corporately. Now, I’m talking about corporate worship now.

You know, when a man worships an idol, he becomes like the idol. That’s what the Bible teaches. First of all, a man molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man. When we worship Jesus Christ, we become like Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 3, verse 18: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We would be

better as a congregation if we worshiped God better. What is worship? Worship is all that I am responding to all that He is. Worship is the adoring contemplation of God in Jesus Christ. Thanksgiving is not primarily worship. Petition is not primarily worship. They may be facets of worship.

But I've told you before a story of a woman who was trapped in a burning building. A brave fireman went up the ladder to rescue her. She's there in the window, pleading for help, "Somebody save me. Help me." This man, at risk of his life, went up the towering ladder, took her in his arms, and brought her down to safety. Later on, realizing that she had been rescued by this man at the peril of his life, she went over to the firehouse to thank him, and to thank him sincerely from her heart. They began a friendship. The friendship was enriched. They fell in love and got married. He became hers, and she became his. Now, when she was up there in the window, saying, "Help me, help me," that's like prayer. That's petition, asking God for something, and that has its place. "What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that you receive them, and ye shall have them"—that's petition. When she went to the firehouse to thank him, that's thanksgiving. But when they got married and came together in the most intimate of relationships, that's like what worship is. Worship goes beyond petition. Worship goes beyond thanksgiving. Worship is the communion of man with God. I said this one time in a sermon, and a woman wrote me a letter to rebuke me. She said, "You put it on too much of an earthly basis, saying that worship is like being married to the Lord." Why do you think, friend, the Church is called the Bride of Christ? Why do you think? I'm telling you, it is the most intimate relationship to know God. Now, the point is that we don't just do this as individuals. The emphasis is, he is saying, "Let us—let us—draw nigh."

When Zig Ziglar was here, he asked a question: "How many of you have ever been in a boring worship service?" A lot of you lifted your hand. He said, "You're wrong. There is no such thing as a boring worship service. You may have been in a boring church service, but you've never been in a boring worship service." Worship is one of the most exhilarating things that there is. And so, first of all, let us—let us—worship together, and exalt the Savior.

II. Witness Together and Evangelize the Sinner

Now, secondly—let's look at the second thing he says; there's a second "let us" here: Let us evangelize the sinner and witness together. Not only do we exalt the Savior when we come to church, but we evangelize the sinner. Look in chapter 10 and verse 23: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." And the wavering that he's talking about is ceasing to go to church. Did you know that, when you come to church on Sunday night, as well as Sunday morning, you're professing your faith? It is your way of saying I still believe in Jesus Christ. In the Bible, when people ceased coming to the

assembly, they assumed that they'd gone back to the world. Forsaking the assembly was an indication to these early Christians that people had forsaken the Lord. If you don't believe that, look in chapter 10 and verses 38 and 39: "Now, the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." That's what God is saying. "You say that you believe in Me, but you draw back, you haven't pleased Me." "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them which believe to the saving of the soul."

When people started—and we have a number of them who join Bellevue Baptist Church—and you see them for a while, and then they disappear. I call them Alka Seltzer Christians. You dip them in water, they fizzle a little bit, and then disappear. They draw back. Why do they draw back? They never were truly saved. That's what they thought in the New Testament. First John chapter 2 and verse 19 says this of them: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Now, listen very carefully to what I'm about to say. If you willingly forsake the assembling of yourself together, you cannot claim to be true to Jesus Christ—if you willingly do that. Jesus Christ and the Church are not identical, but they are inseparable.

In the Bible, the Church is given to us in three figures. The church is a body, a bride, and a building—a body and a bride and a building. As a body, Christ is the head; we're the members. Now, the head and the body are not identical, but, friend, they're inseparable. If you do separate them, you've got big-time trouble, right? All right, Jesus Christ, the Church is His Bride, and so they two become one flesh. Joyce and I are not identical, but in marriage we're inseparable. We are one flesh. The Church is this building. This building rests on a foundation. If you were to take the building and separate it from the foundation, or the foundation from the building, then you have bought for yourself big-time trouble, and you wouldn't want to be in this building right now.

Now, when we come on Sunday nights, and I'm talking primarily now about Sunday night attendance, because on Sunday nights we have probably only a third of what we have on Sunday mornings. I'm talking about Sunday night. Why is it that people come on Sunday morning and don't come on Sunday night? Well, they say, "I'm tired on Sunday night," or, "Once a Sunday is enough for me." Well, friend, it's really not about you. It's really not about you. And I'm going to show you later on, you don't come to church for what you can get. Sometimes you might not get the best preaching. Sometimes you may not get the best music.

Two ladies went away from church. One of them said, "What did you think about the sermon this morning?" She said, "Three things: number one, he read it; number two, he

didn't read it well; number three, it wasn't worth reading." Sometimes the music may sound like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm, but you don't come to be entertained, to be blown away, to be stroked, to be petted. When we come to this place of worship, friend, it is a witness. It is a profession of faith. When you come into this place, you are saying, "I belong to that group." When I backed out of my driveway tonight to go to church, my neighbors are right over there right across the street from me. Now, had they been unsaved neighbors, they'd say, "There goes Adrian again. There goes Joyce again. They're going down to that church again." When you back out of your driveway on Sunday morning, you and your children, you're getting in the car. Your neighbors know where you're going. You are going to church. Now, you drive past churches in Memphis, Tennessee, and they are black and dark. But you come past Bellevue Baptist Church—the lights are dazzling, the cars are out there. People go by. They see those three crosses. They look over here, and they see this building, and they see the cars, and, friend, I want to tell you, it says something about your faith in Jesus Christ that you're here. It says, "We believe!" We are not just Sunday morning morning-glories that bloom in the morning and fold up at night. We believe. And we believe on Sunday morning, and we believe on Sunday night. And it is a profession of our faith in Jesus Christ.

Today we have a consumer mentality. We have people who flit around from church to church to church. I spoke to our singles the other night. I think it was Thursday night. Wonderful group. But I said, "If there's anything that singles need to do, it is to settle down, to get in a church, and settle down." The singles will go over here, they'll go over here, they'll go over here, they'll go over here. They have no loyalty. They have a consumer mentality. Friend, listen to me. This is our church here. That's where you belong. You say, "You're being selfish." No, I'm not. The Bible teaches that we are to be loyal. We're to be faithful. We belong to a church.

A man came to a choir leader, Brother Whitmire. A man came to a minister of music. He said, "I want to sing in your choir." The minister of music said, "Well, what church are you a member of?" "Oh," he said, "I'm a member of the invisible church." The pastor, the minister of music, said, "I suggest you sing in the invisible choir." We need some old-fashioned loyalty. We have today a consumer mentality where people will flit around here, and flit around there, and, whether they come or not, it's up to them. And, if they want to come, they come; but if don't want to, they don't want to. Listen, friend. Your church attendance is not all of your witness, but it is a very real part of your witness. And the fact that the lights are here on Sunday night is a witness for Jesus Christ to this community.

III. Work Together and Encourage the Saints

Now, he says this: Let us worship together and exalt the Savior. Let us witness together and evangelize the sinner. And then, the third time he says, let us—let us—encourage the saints and work together. Now, look, if you will, in verse 25: We're "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." Now, we have responsibility not only as believers, but as brothers.

When we come to church, we come to encourage one another. I'm encouraged by you, when I come. I cannot tell you how many people have encouraged me today as I've seen them going up and down the hallways, and they, "Pastor, we're praying for you. We love you." I need that. That strengthens me. You need it. We need one another. The Bible says we're exhorting one another.

I have picked out some of the "one another" passages in the Bible that talk about what we do, not as individuals, but together, and I'm going to run through these quickly. Don't even try to copy them down.

John 13:14: Wash one another's feet.

Romans 12:10: Prefer one another.

Romans 12:16: Be of the same mind one toward another.

Romans 14:13: Do not judge one another.

James 4:11: Do not speak evil one of another.

Romans 15:7: Receive one another.

Romans 15:14: Admonish one another.

1 Corinthians 12:29: Care for one another.

1 Peter 4:10: Minister gifts one to another.

1 Corinthians 16:20: Greet one another.

Galatians 5:16: Serve one another.

Galatians 6:20: Bear one another's burdens.

Ephesians 4:21: Submit to one another.

1 Thessalonians 4:18: Comfort one another.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: Edify one another.

Hebrews 3:13: Exhort one another.

James 5:16: Confess your faults to one another.

James 5:16: Pray for one another.

1 Peter 4:9: Use hospitality one to another.

1 John 1:7: Fellowship with one another.

You think God's trying to tell us something? Friend, God is saying there's no such thing as a Lone Ranger Christianity. Again, you do not come for what you can get.

I was thinking, as I prepared this message, about those who encouraged me when I

was a child, as a boy. I got saved when I was 14, at Northwood Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, Florida. Now, I hate to confess this, but honesty is good, I suppose. I do not remember one sermon my pastor preached, and I have a pretty good memory. I have a memory like, “What’s the name of that animal...? An elephant.” I don’t remember one sermon my pastor preached, but I tell you what I do remember: I remember a godly businessman named Mr. Holt, and I remember the life he lived, the dignity about that man. I remember a great, big, old Ichabod Crane-type of guy, a house painter, a former alcoholic who got saved, Mr. Holloway, a great soul winner, a great Bible student, who prayed for me. He warned me about ever becoming a liberal or a modernist, as he called it, in those days, Mr. Holloway. I remember Lucille Matheson, whose husband had left her with a boy to raise, Lucille Matheson, who took me. She called me Akie. That was my nickname, Akie. She called me Akie. She said, “Akie, you come over to my house. You’re going to memorize this scripture, you’re going to memorize this scripture, you’re going to memorize that scripture.” Took me under her wing and taught me. Tears come to my eyes right now when I think of it. I remember the Mahaffeys, Mr. and Mrs. Riley Mahaffey, sweet, gentle people who loved me, who loved Joyce. I remember these kinds of people, plain, salt-of-the-earth people. But they took an old boy, a teenager, a boy who would have gone wrong, just as surely as I’m standing here, had it not been for Jesus and the encouragement of the saints. I am so grateful for these saints who invested something in my life. And that’s what we do when we come together in this fellowship.

Now, how can we encourage one another? The Bible says we’re to be exhorting one another, “and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.” Now, I’ll tell you three ways:

Number one: By our presence when we gather together—by our presence when we gather together. When you come to church, you’re saying two things. Listen to me. You’re saying, first of all, that God is important to me. But you’re saying, secondly, you people are important to me. You’re saying, God is important to me, but you are saying you people are important to me. Now, I know your mind is going right now, and you’re saying, “Pastor, you’re getting legalistic now. You’re trying to tell me I have to be at church every time the doors are open.” No, siree. You couldn’t do it, if you wanted to. You’d have to take a physical, and you wouldn’t pass it. There’s too much here at Bellevue for you to do. But there is a core curriculum, and you ought to be here for the major worship services, unless you’re providentially hindered. You ought to be here Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night, unless providentially hindered. Now, not everyone can do that. Some of you cannot do it physically. Some can’t get out at night. I understand that. There are some, because of work schedules and other things, you can’t do it. But you’re a member of this church family. Let me ask

you a question: When your family has a birthday party, or a celebration, or a regular meal, that's your family. I'm talking about not your church family, but your regular family. When it's mealtime, don't you think you ought to come and sit down at the table with the rest of the people? See, this is our church. This is our family. This is when we meet together. And we meet together on Sunday mornings and Sunday nights.

I preached on this subject one time, and a man wrote me a letter. He said, "Well, I don't want to come on Sunday night. And, if that's my family, then I'll just get another family," and moved his membership—because he did not love the church enough to come on Sunday night. If he couldn't have come on Sunday night, that's one thing, but I am concerned. I am concerned that all over this nation the lights are going out on churches on Sunday night. I spoke to a dear family over here just a few minutes ago. I said, "When do you go to work?" "8:00." "What time do you get off?" "5." I said to her, "When do you go to work?" "8:00." "When do you get off?" "At 5." "How many days a week?" "Five days a week." I said, "Weekends are precious to you, are they not?" "Yes, they are." But they're in church on Sunday night. Well, you say, "God wants me to relax." Friend, true worship restores, renews, refreshes, and relaxes. It's not the fact that you need to sleep more. Most of you need to get up and stir around more. The rest that these young people sang about tonight, that's talking about resting in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not indolence.

Now, I'm not scolding you about Sunday night attendance, because you're here. I'm just saying, I am concerned, and I'm asking you for your help. Obviously, if you're sick, you can't come to the family meal. Obviously, if you're out of town, you can't come. Obviously, if you're at work, you cannot come. Everybody cannot be here for every service. But, friend, listen to me. We do not need to carelessly, indolently, and thoughtlessly stay away from the house of God. If you stay away on Sunday nights, you are voting not to have a Sunday night service. And if everybody voted the way you vote, we would not have one.

There was a church that was built in the year 1500 in Europe. In that church building they had no candelabra. They had no lights. The mayor of that town said everybody is to bring his own lantern to church. At the end of the pew, there was a place where the people would hang their lanterns. As people would come one at a time, bringing their lantern to church, they would hang it on the end of the pew. Another would come and hang his. And the more the people came, the brighter the church house was. If no one came, the church house was in darkness. Every time you come, friend, you are bringing the love, the light, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And for you to stay away is a way of saying, "I don't want church at Bellevue on Sunday night." It would be tragic if this place were dark on Sunday night—tragic. The devil doesn't like it. But it's up to us—it's up to us. And what the writer of Hebrews says is we are, "not to forsake the assembling of

ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.” Don’t you have the idea that the day is approaching? The day he’s talking about is the consummation of the age, and he says, as the night gets darker the saints ought to get brighter. We need one another. We owe to one another a fearful loyalty in these days, to exhort and fire up one another. These are wicked days, lascivious days, evil days, and all kinds of mayhem and wickedness are in the world. That’s all the more reason we need to be faithful and loyal to this dear church that’s called Bellevue Baptist Church that God has given to us, and we must keep her lights burning brightly on Sunday nights, as well as Sunday morning. And friend, I want to encourage you when you go to your Sunday School class next Sunday morning—your Bible Fellowship we call it here—I want you to say, “Hey, boy, it’s great at Sunday night. Will you be there tonight? Would you sit with me tonight?” And make yourself a committee of one. And I want all you teenagers, I want you to be Sunday-nighters. And, by the way, get up front so I can see whites of your eyes, and you too, sir. I need to preach to that young man right there. And this girl up there. That’s my granddaughter. I want you there on the front row. She knows I’m teasing her. I love her with all my heart. Her name is Rachel. I tell her it means warthog. It really means little lamb. You guys and gals, you teens, get up here on the front row, and help me to preach. And, Brother Jamie, when you were leading the music tonight, there was almost a magic moment there when we began to sing about I Must Tell Jesus. Did you feel it? Just, God got in it. That’s, we were going in through the torn veil into the Holy of Holies. There’s something special about Sunday nights.

Conclusion

Now, I don’t want you to think I’m putting a legalistic burden on you. Not everybody can come. Not all of us can come all the time, but make it your burden, make it your love. This is our church. God has given us the responsibility, and if we willingly stay away, the Bible calls it sin. Listen to chapter 10, verse 26: “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

There were some who began to be Christians, they thought, but then they wanted to go back to Judaism, to the Old Testament sacrifices. He said, “No, you can’t go back. You can’t go back. The only thing is fiery indignation, if you fall away from Jesus.”

*He wasn’t much for stirring about,
It wasn’t his desire;
No matter what the others did,
he was sitting by the fire.*

*Same old story, day by day,
He never seemed to tire;
While others worked to build their church,
He was sitting by the fire.
At last, he died, as all must do,
Some say he went up higher;
But if he's doing what he used to do,
He's sitting by the fire.*

Now, hell is really not funny, but that makes the point. The point is, friend, if a person doesn't have any desire to fellowship with the saints down here, he has little hope of fellowshiping with the saints up there. If you don't love Jesus enough to love what He loves, and that is the Church, then you have to ask yourself, am I really saved?

So, what is the bottom line of all of this? We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but we're to be exhorting one another. Let us worship together. Come into the Holy of Holies. Let us witness together and hold fast the profession of our faith. Let us work together, and exhort one another, because the days are getting darker, and the coming of Jesus is getting near.

Now, having said that, there maybe some say, "Well, I don't want to join Bellevue then. It's too much expected of me. I'd much rather have a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way. I'd rather have a token Christianity." Everybody has a choice. That may be yours. There are others who might say, "I want to belong to a church that means business. I want to have something I can pour my life and love and influence through." If you feel that way, I want to invite you to come and place your membership here in Bellevue Baptist Church, if you love Jesus. Become a part of this fellowship. Join with us. Help us to make an impact on this community and on this world. Now, I'm not asking you to join the church, if you don't know Jesus. That would be ridiculous. So, if you don't know Jesus, if you'll trust Him, receive Him, give Him your life by faith, He will forgive every sin, He will come into your heart, and give you peace, power, purpose, and joy; and, when you die, He'll take you home to heaven.

We're going to sing an invitational hymn. And, if tonight you would say, Lord Jesus, once and for all, now and forever, I trust you to save me, I want you to leave your seat, make your way down one of these aisles. Standing here at the head will be a minister to receive you. Say to him, if you can say it and mean it, "I'm trusting Jesus." What we'll do is guide you in this decision and seal it in prayer, and you can go home a child of God, twice-born and heaven-bound. If you need a church home, and you want to have a place where you can serve the Lord and fellowship with zeal and faithfulness, I invite you to slip out and come down one of these aisles and say, "I want to place my membership here." If you've not had believer's baptism, as we understand it, we want

the joy and the privilege of baptizing you as a believer in Jesus Christ.
Let's stand together. You step out and come.

Church Attendance

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 3, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:19–27

Outline

Introduction

- I. We Attend Church to Enjoy the Savior
- II. We Attend Church to Express Our Salvation
- III. We Attend Church to Encourage the Saints

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word, and find Hebrews chapter 10, if you would, please, and, when you've found it, look up here, and let me talk to you a little bit about church attendance, and tell you why you should attend the house of God. And, if any of you are listening by radio and cannot attend, I'm grateful that you are listening by radio. But any of you are listening by radio as a substitute for attendance, this message is especially for you. I think one of the tragedies of this age in which we live is that there are so many who claim to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet they do not regularly attend the worship service. Some people claim to be Christians and go to church about three times: when they're born, when they get married, and when they have a funeral—when they're hatched, matched, and dispatched—about the only three times they go to church. The first time, when they're born, they christen them, and they throw water; and the second time they throw rice; the third time they throw dirt. And that's about the three times that some people go to church. But church attendance, in the Bible, is a privilege, but it is more than a privilege. It is a duty.

Now, the passage that I'm going to read to you, in Hebrew chapter 10, beginning in verse 19, actually has in its context the corporate worship service, what we're doing tonight. And I begin reading in verse 19: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh: and having an high priest over the house of God—or we might say the household of God—let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to

provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking...—here's the key—not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

Now, in the passage of Scripture that I read to you there's a phrase that appears three times in a row, and I want you to look at it. In verse 22, it says, “Let us draw near.” Then, in verse 23, “Let us hold fast.” And then, in verse 24, “Let us consider one another.” Let us. Let us. Let us. And, in those three verses, we have capsulated why we need to come to the corporate worship service, where public worship is not incidental, but fundamental; not merely a privilege, but it is a duty. Now, let's look at that, and I want to give you three headings.

I. We Attend Church to Enjoy the Savior

Why should we go to church? Number one: Let us enjoy the Savior. We come to the worship service to enjoy Jesus. There's something about worship where we draw near. Notice in verse 22: “Let us draw near.”

Now, Jesus is everywhere. There's no place where He is not. Because He is God, He is omnipresent. But there is a special sense in which Jesus is here that He's not out there. Do you believe that? Listen to these scriptures. Jesus said, “I will sing praises in the midst of my brothers.” Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” There is a special sense in which Jesus is present in the house of God. Therefore, when you come to church, you do not come to church primarily to hear a sermon, though I hope you will listen. I've come to preach, and you've come to listen. Don't get finished before I do. But you don't come primarily to hear a sermon.

Two ladies were walking away from church, and one said to the other one, “What did you think about the sermon?” She said, “Well, number one, he read it; number two, he didn't read it well; number three, it wasn't worth reading.” Well, that may be true about some messages. But, you know, if there were no preaching at all—and there always should be preaching in a worship service—we come to church to draw near to Jesus Christ.

Now, I want you to see the illustration that he gives. Back up to verse 19, talking about drawing near: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us

draw near.” Now, that’s the illustration.

The Book of Hebrews, obviously, written to Hebrews, written to Jews, they would have been familiar with the tabernacle and the temple. In the tabernacle and the temple there were three basic rooms. There was the outer court, the inner court, and the innermost court, called the Inner Sanctum, or the Holy of Holies. And that Holy of Holies was the place where the Shekinah glory of God dwelt. And that Holy of Holies was separated from another chamber called the Holy Place by a veil. That veil in the Old Testament was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the body of Christ. Our scripture says, “his flesh.”

And, if you were to see that veil, that veil would have been made on white linen. But on that white linen would have been purple and scarlet and blue. And so, you have four colors there on that veil, and those four colors represent the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have four Gospels, and each of the four Gospels speaks of those four colors.

For example, Matthew shows Jesus as the king of the Jews. So Matthew is the Gospel of royal purple. That’s the color of majesty. Mark shows Jesus as the suffering servant. So, if Matthew is the royal-purple Gospel, Mark is the blood-red Gospel, because it shows Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb of God. And then, what about Luke? Well, Luke is the sky-blue Gospel, because Luke tells of the virgin-born Son of God who came from heaven to earth. And what about John? John is the snow-white Gospel, because it speaks of the deity of Christ, His absolute, pristine, purity and holiness. And so, you have in that veil, you have royal-purple, you have blood-red, you have sky-blue, and you have snow-white. All of these colors in that veil typify and picture the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, take the perfect white as a base, and then take two other colors. The red, the blood-red, which speaks of His humanity; the sky-blue, which speaks of His heavenly origin, that shows He is both the Son of God and the Son of man at the same time, the God-man; not half God and half man, but all God and all man all at the same time. Well, how do you understand the person Jesus Christ? Just take the blue and take the red and put them together. And, when you take the blue and the red together, what do you have? Purple. And, when you put the blue and the red together, you have heaven’s royal king, the Lord Jesus, the God-man—as much God as if He were not man at all; as much man as if He were not God at all. And, when you look at the purple, you can’t tell where the red ends and the blue begins, can you? And, when you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, you cannot tell where His humanity begins and where His deity, where it mingles with His deity. He is as much God as if not man, and as much man as if not God. He is the Son of God. This veil is a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, when Jesus was crucified on the cross, that veil was split there by Almighty God. It was torn, not from the bottom to the top, as if man had torn it, but from the top to the bottom. Why was that? Well, up until this time, had you been there in the tabernacle and wanted to worship, you could never have gone into the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest would do that, and he represented the Lord Jesus Christ. And he didn't go in every day. He went only once a year. And he could only go in with a blood sacrifice once a year on the Day of Atonement to go in there and put the blood of a sacrificial, innocent animal on the mercy seat there in the Holy of Holies to make an atonement for sin. And no other Israelite would dare go in there.

John Phillips, in one of his books, gives an interesting story. He imagines a man from Moab who comes to the tabernacle, and sees the tabernacle out there in the wilderness. And this man says to a Jew who is standing there, "What is that tent with the fence around it?" "Oh," he says, "that's where we worship God." "Well," he said, "I would like to go in there." He said, "Well, you can't go in there. That's just for the people of God." "Well, what would I have to do to be able to go in there?" "Well, you'd have to be born again an Israelite." "Well, if I were an Israelite, I would go in there, and what's that second room in there? I would go in there." He said, "Oh, no, you won't go in there, even into that second space, unless you are a priest. You would have to be of the house of Levi to go into that second place, to the Holy Place." "Well, all right. If I could go in that Holy Place, I believe I would also go into that third place. I would go into that third place behind that veil, that veil of white and purple and blue and red." He'd say, "Oh, no, you couldn't go in there, even if you were a priest. You could only go in there if you were a high priest." "Well, if I were a high priest, I'd go in there every day." "Oh, no, you wouldn't. You'd only go in there once a year."

Now, I want you to notice what the writer of Hebrews is saying. He's saying, let the whole house of God go in. Let us all go in. You, every day, have the privilege of doing what the high priest only could do only once a year. Why? Because, when Jesus died on the cross, that veil was split from top to bottom to make a way for the people of God to enter into the Holy Place.

That's where we are tonight. Now, you may not understand this privilege that we have tonight, but when we have come to worship, we have come to draw near, to go behind the veil. Look at it again: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us—not just for the high priest—through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God—the whole household—let us draw near..." Let's do it together. Let's enjoy the Savior together. Let's go into the Holy of Holies together. And that's the reason when we come to church, we don't just simply come to hear a sermon.

We come to worship. We come to meet with the Lord. We come to enter into the Holy of Holies.

Now, had that veil not been split, no one could have gone in there, except under penalty of death. Sometimes people say, “Well, Jesus is my example. I’m saved by His example.” No, no, no, no. His example says that you’ll never get in there unless He dies for you. His example is that He was the pure, sinless Son of God. That veil, before it was torn, was meant to keep people out. Only at His crucifixion and because of His death was the veil torn. Remember salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ. We enter into the Holy of Holies because Jesus suffered, bled, and died for us. And that is why we worship.

Oh, friend, worship is so important. And the longer I’m on the trail, the more I know the Lord, the more I understand the value of worship, both private and public, individual and corporate. And one is not a substitute for the other. Not only do we come to church to worship, but we are to bring our worship with us to the house of God.

Why does God want us to worship Him? Why does God want us to go into the Holy of Holies? Is God an egotist? Is God insecure? Does God have to be being told over and over again how great He is, how glorious He is? Is that why we worship God? No. Your praise doesn’t make Him any more glorious. Your worship doesn’t make Him any more exalted. You cannot add to His perfect holiness and His glory. Not one scintilla of an iota can you ever add anything to His glory. Why do we worship? Not because of what our worship does for God—though He enjoys our worship—but what our worship does for us. We become like what we worship. That’s the reason idolatry is so wrong. What a man does, he takes his worst vices, whether it be lust or greed or whatever, and he makes an idol out of that. And then, he worships his own vices. And the Bible says those that make those idols are like unto them. First of all, the man molds the idol, and then the idol molds the man. But, when we worship the Lord, when we go through the veil, through the torn veil into the Holy of Holies, and when we do it together, we there are dwelling in the place where the Shekinah glory of God is. And who is the Shekinah glory of God? Jesus Christ. And where is Jesus Christ? If I understand the Bible, He’s in here tonight. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Just as the Shekinah glory was in that Holy of Holies, Jesus Christ, the Shekinah glory of God—God’s light, God’s presence; the mercy seat, the ark of God, symbolizes the presence of God—is here tonight. What joy we ought to have. What a privilege is ours to worship the Lord with all of our hearts and all of our souls. So why do we attend church? Number one: To enjoy the Savior.

II. We Attend Church to Express Our Salvation

Number two: To express our salvation. Look, if you will, now in verse 23: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith...” Did you know that when you come to church, you’re making a profession of faith? Did you know the very fact that you’re here with your brothers and sisters in Christ is professing your faith? Look at it: “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith...” Your attendance in this assembly tonight is your way of saying that, “I am still a believer.” Now, he says, “Let us hold fast our profession...without wavering...” Now, let me give you the background for this passage of Scripture.

There were some people who started out to be Christians. They thought they were Christians, but then, after a while, when persecution got strong, they had second doubts, and they drew back. They joined. They began to worship for a while. They assembled together with the believers. And then, they stopped coming. Now, that’s the reason he says—look down in verse 25: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another...” And then, notice verse 26: “For if we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” Now, what does that mean? Does that mean, after you get saved, if you ever sin once, you’ve had it? No. It means that, after you’ve come to profess faith in Jesus Christ, and then you say, “I don’t want to be a Christian anymore; I’m going back to the Old Testament ways,” he’s saying, “No, there’s no more sacrifice for sin. Don’t bring any more bulls. Don’t bring any more goats. Don’t bring any more turtledoves. Don’t bring any more meat offerings and meal offerings. There is no more sacrifice for sins.”

Go back, if you will, to chapter 10, verse 1: “For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those things, can never, with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then, would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshipers once purged should have no more conscience of sins. But in these sacrifices there is a remembrance made of sin every year.” All the Old Testament sacrifices did was just to remind the people they were sinners, that they needed a Redeemer.

And then, look, if you will, in verse 4—it sums it up: “For it’s not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.” You see, there’s no way that an animal on a sacrificial altar could take away sin. All those sins did was to give the people a remembrance of sins, that they might put their faith in a coming Messiah.

Pavlov, who was a psychologist, did some things called conditioned responses with dogs. He would take dogs, and ring a bell and feed them, ring a bell and feed them, ring a bell and feed them. He got to all he had to do was ring a bell and the dogs would

begin to drool and salivate, because that was what he called a conditioned response. All of the Old Testament sacrifices were conditioned responses where God was showing the people they were sinners, and the wages of sin is death, and they needed a sacrificial Savior. So He goes back over here, and He says, “For if we sin willfully after we receive the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice of sin.”

What is to sin willfully? It is to turn from Jesus. You cannot turn from Jesus and go back to the Old Testament. There are no more sacrifices for sin. That is done! It is finished! It is over! Well, these people, some of them have started out professing to be Christians, and then they said, “No, we’re going back to the old way.” How did they know that they were going back to the old way? They stopped attending the worship service.

Now, let me tell you something, folks. Attending the worship service is one way of saying, “I still believe—I still believe.” There are a lot of people who have joined Bellevue who don’t come anymore. Did they lose their salvation? No. They most likely never had it. Look, if you will—you’re in this same chapter—look in verses 38 and 39 of this same chapter: “Now, the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” There are some who draw back to perdition. That means judgment. Now, the writer of Hebrews is saying, “Those of us who are still attending, we’ve not drawn back. We’ve not failed. We are going on. We are holding fast the profession of our faith.” Now, there are some, I’ll admit, who began, but then they fail. They go back. A key verse here in another epistle is 1 John 2, verse 19. Here’s what the apostle John said: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” They assumed in the New Testament times, if people stopped attending the worship service, they never had been saved. That’s what they assumed. Attending the worship service was a profession of faith. It was a way of expressing salvation. It was a way of saying, “I still believe.” And when people stopped attending, they just assumed, Well, they never really ever believed. They didn’t lose their salvation; they never really had it.

I think I’ve told you about the prodigal pig. I know you know about the prodigal son, but let me tell you about the prodigal pig. And I hope you know enough Bible to know that this is Adrian’s parable. But when the prodigal son got down in the pigpen, he said, “I’m going to rise, and I’m going to go to my father, and I’m going to say to my father, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and no more worthy to be called your son.’” And the pig said, “What’s that?”

“I’m going to go to my father.” He said, “Why are you going to your father?” “Oh, you

ought to see my father's house. My father's house is wonderful. In my father's house, there's bread enough and to spare. Even the servants in my father's house are eating better than I am down here in this pigpen. My mother's a wonderful cook and a wonderful housekeeper, and my father is a rich, wise, and godly man. And I'm going home. I'm getting out of the hog pen." And the prodigal pig said, "Well, that sounds wonderful. Can I go with you?" He said, "Well, come along, and I'll be glad to have you. Mom, Dad, this is my friend, the pig. He wants to come and stay with us, if he can." The mother of the prodigal son says, "That's your pig? That's your friend? Well, okay. You two come on in, but Mr. Pig, you're going to have to take a bath. You're going to have to scrub. You can't come in my living room looking that way."

So this pig has to be scrubbed from top to bottom. Then it's time for dinner, and the pig wants to put his snout in the plate. She said, "Now, Mr. Pig, first of all, we're going to say the blessing, and then we're going to eat with a knife and a fork, and we're going to use good manners, and we're going to wipe our mouth." The pig wants to go out and sleep in the mud. She says, "No, Mr. Pig, you're going to sleep in house. You're going to sleep in a bed. You're going to sleep on a clean sheet, ta-da-ta-da." After a while, the pig says, "You know, I just don't like this. I'm not made for this. What I'm going to do, I'm going to rise and go to my father." And back he goes back to the pigpen.

Now, there are a lot of people who are just like that. They come to church for a while, they stay in church for a while, and they say, "You know, I don't like this; I'm not made for this." You know the reason why? The Bible says, in the Book of 1 Peter, "It is happened to them according to the true proverb, the sow that was washed is returned to the mire." It doesn't mean a person loses his salvation. God never called one of His children a sow. And it says, "The dog is returned to his vomit." That's not a very elegant phrase, but have you ever seen a dog turn around and eat his own vomit? The dog will eat something that upset his stomach. He regurgitates, feels better, starts to walk off, and he looks back, and says, "Now, there's a warm meal." It's disgusting. But a dog will do that. That's a dog trick. "The sow that was washed is returned to the mire, and the dog to his vomit." That's the reason that people go back once they come to the church. They stop attending—the sow that has been washed. You'll never change a pig by washing it, and you'll never change a dog by letting him regurgitate. The dog is still a dog; the sow is still a sow. God never called one of His children a hog or a dog. They go back. Why? "They went out from us because they were not of us; for had they been of us, they, no doubt, would have continued with us." And so, what he's saying is, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." The fact that you are here is saying, "I still believe."

Did you know that when you backed out of your driveway tonight to go to church,

you were preaching a sermon? When your neighbor saw you this morning get up—you and your family, with your Bibles—got in your car, backed out and came down here, they know where you're going. They know why you're going. And you are saying, "I believe in Jesus." The very fact that you're here is your way of testifying that, "I believe in Jesus."

Why do we attend church? Number one: to enjoy the Savior—let us go boldly into the Holy of Holies; number two: to express salvation, saying, "I believe. I hold fast the profession of my faith. I am not wavering."

III. We Attend Church to Encourage the Saints

And then, number three—here's the third reason that we attend. Not only to enjoy the Savior, not only to express the salvation, but we go, the third reason, to encourage the saints—to encourage the saints. Look again in verse 24: "And let us consider one another to provoke with love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."

Did you know that we encourage one another? The Bible never teaches a lone ranger Christianity. You see, we have a responsibility as believers and also as brothers. We're to encourage one another. The Bible has so much to say about one another. I've copied down a number of scriptures. You won't even be able to write them down I'm going to give them so fast. But I want you to listen and get the total impact. I'm talking about a one another faith.

John 14, verse 13: "Wash one another's feet."

Romans 12:10: "Prefer one another."

Romans 12:16: "Be of the same mind one toward another."

Romans 14:13: "Do not judge one another."

James 3:11: "Do not speak evil one of another."

Romans 4, verse 19: "Edify one another."

Romans 15:7: "Receive one another."

Romans 15:14: "Admonish one another."

1 Corinthians 12:25: "Care for one another."

1 Peter 4:10: "Minister gifts to one another."

1 Corinthians 16:20: "Greet one another."

Galatians 5:13: "Serve one another."

Galatians 6:20: "Bear one another's burdens."

Ephesians 5:21: "Submit to one another."

1 Thessalonians 4:18: "Comfort one another."

Hebrews 3:13: "Exhort one another."

James 5:16: “Confess your faults to one another.”

James 5:16: “Pray for one another.”

1 Peter 4:9: “Use hospitality one to another.”

1 John 1:7: “Fellowship with one another.”

Do you think God’s trying to tell us something? I’m telling you that the Bible says we need one another. And this verse said this: “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.” You encourage me, and I encourage you. And you don’t go to church simply for what you can get. You come to church also for what you can give.

And I want to make a confession. I have a good memory. Joyce said, “And he’s got a good forgetery, also.” But I have an excellent memory, and I can remember many things that happened many years ago. But I cannot remember one sermon my pastor preached when I was a kid—not one—and I have a good memory. But I’ll tell you what I do remember. I remember the people in our church when, as a teenager boy, I got saved.

I remember Mr. Holt, a businessman, handsome, grey hair, a no-nonsense, but kindly man. And I remember watching that man’s lifestyle and thinking what a great man that is.

I remember Mr. Holloway, a great, big, old tall housepainter, a great bulbous nose, kind of looked like Ichabod Crane, got saved from alcoholism, turned on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ, devoured the Bible, was a great soul winner. Mr. Holloway—I can remember him encouraging me over and over and over again.

I remember Mr. Phillips, who worked for the Otis Elevator Company, and was a man with a great sense of humor, could fix anything with his hands. I remember that man would come out and watch me practice football, and put his arms around me, and tell me what a great guy I was, when I really wasn’t.

I remember Lucille Matheson. Tears are welling up now as I think of her. Her husband forsook her, left her with a little boy to raise. And, Joyce, you remember Lucille Matheson. She took me. She called me Akie. That was my nickname: Akie. She said, “Akie, you’re going to memorize this verse. You’re going to learn this. You come over to my house this afternoon. We’re going to learn these verses.” And she would write, and she would pray, and she would encourage me in the Lord.

I remember these people, and many people like them, and I can tell you that the young man then is the man who’s standing behind this pulpit now. And those people are living their lives through me because they exhorted me, and cared for me, and watched over me as a boy.

You teachers have such an incredible ability to be an influence upon these boys and girls and one another. Let us exhort one another. We’re here to encourage one another.

We're here to encourage the saints. Therefore, why should you attend the worship service? Well, why should you attend any family function? Why should you attend when your family gets together for Christmas? Why should you attend? When your family gets together for Thanksgiving, why should you attend? When it's dinnertime, why should you come and sit down at the table? Because it's family. This is what we do together. We are a family of friends. This is when we meet as brothers and sisters in Christ. And your very presence here is an encouragement to me. I hope mine is to you, and yours to one another. Why do we attend church? To enjoy the Savior, to express the salvation, to encourage the saints. So the Bible says we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

And how do we encourage one another? Let me just tell you several ways, and I'll be finished: By your very presence. Do you know what your presence says to me here? Your presence says, "God is important to me," but it also says, "My brothers and sisters are important to me." By your presence.

By your praise. When you praise God, there's something electrifying and contagious about praise. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 19, says, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Psalm 145, verse 4: "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts."

How do we encourage one another? By our participation. Participate in the service: sing, smile, pray, study, praise, testify, welcome, greet, hug, encourage one another.

I read some years ago about a traveler in a French village. It was called Doubs—D-O-U-B-S. He went there on a Sunday evening, and he saw people there hurrying to church through the streets, and all of them were carrying a lantern. This man asked about it. He said, "It was planned this way. The architect built the building without any lights in the building." The only lights in that church building would be the light that people brought with them to church. And the more people who attended the worship service, the brighter it would be. And those that stayed away darkened the building. And so it was built back in 1550. Everyone who goes there makes it brighter, for he knows if he stays away, it will be darker and the service sadder.

Have you ever thought about the fact that when you don't attend a worship service, it's a vote to close the doors? If everybody voted the way you voted, there would not be a worship service that night. Think about it. How do we exhort one another? By our praise. By our presence. By our participation.

Conclusion

Now, the Bible says we're to exhort one another, "and so much the more as we see

the day approaching.” These are dark days, and I’m telling you, I need you; you need me; we need one another. And let’s say in our hearts, “Unless providentially hindered, we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We are going to worship together. We are going to work together. And we’re going to witness together for Jesus Christ. And, together, we will enjoy the Savior. Together, we will express the salvation. And, together, we will encourage the saints.”

Now, there are times when you have to miss a family meal. There are times when you’re away from the home gathering, vacation, or work. But never when Mama fixes dinner, and says, “Come, dears, it’s on the table,” should you just sit, and say, “Well, I just don’t think I want to come in tonight. I just think I’ll stay up in my bedroom, or I’ll just continue to sit here and watch the ballgame.” Very frankly, that is an insult to the one who prepared the meal and all the others at the table. We are in this together. And God’s people said, amen!

Let’s pray together. Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus that You will help us to see the importance of being together in Your house. In Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

Patience

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 17, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:32–37

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

HEBREWS 10:36

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 36: the Bible says, *“For [you] have need of patience”*—can you say “amen” to that?—*“For [you] have need of patience”*—there’s not a’ one of us that does not need patience—*“that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise”* (Hebrews 10:36). Now, what he’s talking about here is waiting on the promise.

Now, let me tell you something as we get into the message tonight. With God, timing is more important than time. Now, you think about that. So many of us—we want it and we want it now. We want instant coffee. Or, I’ve got a coffee brewer at home, and it’s got a little thing so you can pull it out and get a cup while it’s brewing. We want instant credit. We want instant gratification. *Tomorrow* is almost a dirty word in today’s vocabulary. Yet, so many times, with God, there is a time of waiting between asking and receiving. And, our verse says here that: *“[We] have need of patience, that, after [we] have done the will of God, [that we] might receive the promise”* (Hebrews 10:36).

Now, Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a great preacher of yesterday, and Spurgeon said that God’s promises are like checks. He said, “Bible promises are like checks drawn on Heaven’s bank”—“Bible promises are like checks drawn on Heaven’s bank”—

“that we endorse by faith and then present to God for payment.” Well, that’s good—like checks drawn from Heaven’s bank. We endorse them by faith and then present them to Heaven’s bank for payment. The only problem is this—that sometimes those checks are post-dated. I mean, it is a check; it is a promise, but sometimes it just seems that God delays.

A. Reasons for Delays

Now, before we get into the heart of the message, let me tell you that God does have some reasons for delaying—different factors.

1. The Development Factor

One is a development factor. Just put in your margin “James chapter 1, verses 3 and 4”: the Bible says, “*Knowing this, that the [testing]*”—or, “*the trying*”—“*of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that [you] may be perfect*”—that word perfect means “mature”—“*and entire, wanting nothing*” (James 1:3–4). So, sometimes God does not give us what we want just when we want it, because God is developing us and God is growing us. You may not be spiritually ready to handle the blessing that God has for you.

Every parent knows that there are things that the parents want to give to the children, but they cannot give them right away. You know, every parent has to determine what is good for a child, and then every parent has to determine when what is good for the child is good for the child. You don’t want to do the right thing the wrong way. One of my little grandsons was in my office a while back, and I learned he wanted a pocketknife. And, I had a brand new pocketknife in my left hand drawer that I really wanted to give him, but I knew he wasn’t ready for it. I haven’t given it to him yet. Maybe he’ll get a tape, and he’ll know it’s coming. But, you know, there are things that you want to give, but you just know that they’re not quite ready; and so, we don’t want to do even the right thing at the wrong time. And so, there’s the development factor.

2. The Diligence Factor

And then, there’s the diligence factor. God wants us to be diligent. Now, God does not give promises and answers to those who are not diligent. One of my favorite verses in all of the Bible is Hebrews 11:6: now, the Bible says, “*But without it is impossible to please him*”—to please God—“*for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that*”—what?—“*diligently seek him.*”

When we were little boys, we used to go ring a doorbell sometimes and run away. And, the person come to the door, and there’d be nobody there. I think sometimes we do that with God. Before God ever gets there to answer the prayer, we’re gone. We have to be diligent in our prayers. We have prayers today that are easily offered and soon forgotten—no wonder we don’t inherit the promise. As a matter of fact, some of

our prayers are such wandering generalities, rather than specifics, that many of us could not even remember what we've prayed for—whether or not God has answered our prayer or not.

3. The Devotional Factor

And then, not only is there the development factor and the diligence factor, but there is the devotional factor. You see, he says we're to "*diligently seek him*" (Hebrews 11:6). So many times, we're seeking the blessing rather than seeking the Lord, the Blesser. And so, we're to seek His face; we're not to seek His hand. We are to hold on to God, even when the promise does not seem to come right away.

Now, having said that, there are three things I want to write upon your heart tonight as we look at this scripture telling us how to hold on to a promise.

I. Remember Yesterday's Provision

First of all, there's something to remember: we are to remember yesterday's provision. Would you write that on a slip of paper? Remember yesterday's provision. Look, if you will now, in verse 32 of this same chapter: "*Call to remembrance the former days*"—now, that's a command. Do you see it?—"*Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds*"—now, watch this—"*and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward*" (Hebrews 10:32–35).

Now, what does that mean in plain English? Well, they were about ready to cast away their confidence—that is, about ready to throw away their faith. To put it in today's vernacular, they were about ready to "throw in the towel"—they were about ready to quit—because these people were going through persecutions, they were going through problems, they were going through trials and they seemed greater than they could bear. Now, the writer of Hebrews says, "Well, just remember you've borne them before. You got through before. Remember what happened yesterday, and remember that I was with you and how you took joyfully the spoiling of your goods" (Hebrews 10:34). Now, if somebody were to come in here today and take away the things that we have and just take them from us, we would have no choice, but we could choose to rejoice. And, that's what these people did. The Bible says that they "*took joyfully the spoiling of [their] goods*" (Hebrews 10:34). People came in and confiscated all of their goods. What if you went home tonight and a Roman army had occupied your house, moved all of your furniture out, put Roman soldiers in your house, and told you because you were a

Christian, you have no rights whatsoever? These kind of things happened to these people in this day because they were believers. And, do you know what they did? They just simply praised the Lord.

And, by the way, you better learn not to get too much of a strong grip on the things of this world, even as we preached this morning, because we may see that happen one more time. And, as a matter of fact, Satan can intimidate you about these things. Satan will come to you and say, “If you don’t knuckle under, if you don’t get in line, I’m going to take away everything that you have.” And, you know what you need to say to Satan? “I don’t have anything. It all belongs to God.” And then, Satan says, “Well, I’ll tell you what then—if you’ll serve me, I’ll give you a lot of good stuff.” And, you can say to Satan, “You can’t give me anything. I’ve got everything.” Amen? So, what’s he going to do with somebody like that? Listen to this verse—2 Corinthians 6, verse 10: *“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things”* (2 Corinthians 6:10). Satan says, “I’ll take it away.” You say, “I have nothing.” “I’ll give you something.” You say, “I already possess all things.” What can Satan do with a person like that?

And so, what the writer of Hebrews is doing—he’s telling these people who are going under a trial, trying to hold on to a promise... He is saying to them, “Just remember yesterday. Remember what you’ve already been through.” We sang about that this morning—a great song this morning: “I’m not going to quit. I’m not going to let up. I am going through.” What the writer of Hebrews is saying is that the God that was faithful then is the God who will be faithful. The God of our yesterdays—listen—*the God of our yesterdays is the God of our todays and the God of our tomorrows*. And so, He says in verse 35: “Don’t throw in the towel. Don’t cast away your confidence. Remember”—he says—“remember” (Hebrews 10:35). Look at that verse again and see what he says in verse 32: *“call to remembrance the former days”* (Hebrews 10:32). Has God brought you through before? Well, do you think that the God who brought you through before is not going to be able to bring you through again?

Over and over again in the Bible, we are told to remember. Put down “Psalm 77, verses 11 and 12”: the psalmist said, *“I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings”* (Psalm 77:11–12). When Moses had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, he reminded them of all that God had done for them and he told them to remember all of the works of the Lord. We have the Lord’s Supper here at our church on a regular basis. And, what is the purpose of the Lord’s Supper? It is to remember. Jesus said, *“This is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me”* (1 Corinthians 11:24).

How prone we are to forget all of the works and the goodness of God. And then,

even when we do remember, God help us, we're guilty of selective memory. We don't remember all of the deliverances of God in the past. We somehow just remember other things. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, going to Canaan, they got into some difficulty in the wilderness. And, do you know what they said? "Oh, we remember Egypt. We remember the onions and the garlic, and we remember the melons and the fish that we had in Egypt." They didn't remember Pharaoh's lash on their back. They didn't remember making bricks without any straw. Isn't it amazing what faulty and selective memory we sometimes have?

Every person in this room who has ever walked with God very far—you know that God has seen you through dark times. Is that not true? You know that God has seen you through dark times. And, what he says is, "Remember. And, don't you throw in the towel. Don't you cast away your confidence" (Hebrews 10:35). God has brought you through things, and it's been so wonderful. You say, "I will never, never, never doubt God again." Have you said that, then later on find yourself doubting God again?

One time, Joyce looked at me. She got so romantic. She looked at me, and here's what she said: she said, "Adrian, you're so wonderful." She said, "If I ever, ever criticize you about anything, I want you to remind me of what I'm saying right now about how wonderful you are." And, you know, I've had to remind her many times. She forgot how wonderful...and I have to remind her just how wonderful I am. We forget sometimes just how good our God is, and we think... We get in difficulties and trials, and God brings us through; and we say, "Thank You, Jesus. I'll never forget." And then, another trial comes, and we do forget.

And, what the writer of Hebrews is saying is, "Remember, even when they came and took away your goods, how you just praised God and God saw you through" (Hebrews 10:32). And, he says, "Don't throw in the towel. Don't quit" (Hebrews 10:35). So, that's the very first thing you do when you want to hold on to a promise—is just remember yesterday's—remember yesterday's—provision. God took care of you yesterday.

I have a prayer journal, and I haven't been using that prayer journal for a long time—not that I haven't been praying, but it was a prayer journal I used to keep in sort of a yellow binder. And, I had some prayer requests written down in there. And, going through some books, putting some things away, I found that old prayer journal—it was years old—and opened it up, and I read some prayer requests I had written down. I just wanted to shout all over the house—the prayers that had been answered that I had written down so long ago. And, the truth of the matter is, had I not written them down and found that book, I guess I would have forgotten all of the wonderful things that God did for me as I had prayed and asked God for this thing, and this thing, and this thing. And, I was so blessed.

By the way, Jim, we sang a song this morning, and you guys changed the words of

that song. Somebody changed the words of that song: “Come, Thou fount of every blessing” (Robert Robinson). We got a modern rendition of that this morning. Some songwriter over there in Nashville or somewhere has gone through a changed a lot of words in that song. And, they were all right, but they’re not as good as the old words. And, one of the phrases in that song is “Here I raise my Ebenezer” (Robert Robinson). Now, they left that out because most folks don’t know what an Ebenezer is. But, we don’t want to dumb ourselves down to our lack of Bible knowledge; we want to bring our Bible knowledge up to our... We want to know what the hymnist meant when he wrote it so long ago. And, in 1 Samuel chapter 7 and verse 12: Samuel said to God’s people as they had come through many trials and so forth—he said, “Let’s set up a stone here—a rock, a rock of remembrance—lest we forget what God has done for us” (1 Samuel 7:12).

When we moved out here, remember what we did? We had those stones of remembrance—do you remember that?—because I got some of Bellevue’s old-timers out, and we had a banquet. And, I said, “Folks, I want you just to tell me. I want you to got back into the riverbed of your memory and tell me things that God has done for this church—how God brought us through so many times, how God brought us through Jordan.” And, they told me this, and this, and this. And, we got twelve stones—twelve stones of remembrance—and we put them on the platform to remember what God has done. Now folks, when you want to hold on to a promise, you remember yesterday’s provision. And, don’t throw in the towel. The God who brought you through before is the God who’ll bring you through again. That’s what he’s saying. He said, “Just don’t cast off your confidence. You remember yesterday’s provision” (Hebrews 10:35). Now, John Newton, who wrote “Amazing Grace,” also wrote these words:

*His love, in times past, forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last, in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through (John Newton).*

I like that.

II. Resolve Today’s Patience

Now, here’s the second thing: not only do you remember yesterday’s provision, but you, therefore, resolve—resolve—today’s patience. Look now in verses 35 and following: “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward”—that is, “God rewards faith”—“For ye have need of patience”—he’s talking about today, now—“that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35–36). Don’t throw away your confidence because you’ll need it again. What a tragedy to throw away your most valuable possession, which is your confidence, when

you're in trouble!

Now, the word *patience* here literally means “endurance”; it means “the ability to bear up under trials and difficulties.” Many fail to receive because they fail to endure. Now, this is really the language of athletics. And, the two sports that I had any ability in at all were football and track. And, let me tell you about running track. I've run some distance races. If you are running a mile race and you're 100 yards ahead of everybody else, if you quit running, you're going to lose the race, no matter how far ahead you are. You cannot win if you quit. Patience—endurance—has been called the *queen of virtues*.

Now, what is patience? Patience is more than waiting. It is more than passive resignation to trials. It is more than suffering silently. William Barclay says this: “There is no single English word which transmits all of the fullness of its meaning.” That is, to take the word *patience* as it's used in the Bible, you could not take one English word and say that is a synonym. The word in the Greek language literally means “to abide under.” It has the idea of steadfastness. It has the idea of constancy. It has the idea of staying power. But, it is patience—it is patience—that is the bridge between doing the will of God and receiving the promise. Look at it again in verse 36: “*For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, [you] might receive the promise*” (Hebrews 10:36). Now, it's patience that links the will of God and the promise together.

Again, let me tell you what William Barclay has said. And, by the way, William Barclay was somewhat liberal in some of his beliefs, but he had a tremendous insight into the languages and history. And, here's what William Barclay had to say. And, I want you to listen to this, and I want you to listen carefully now, because the Sunday night crowd is more able to understand anything than any other crowd. Nod your head. Okay. Now, here's what he says about patience: he says, “It is not the patience which can sit down, and bow its head, and let things descend upon it, and passively endure until the storm has passed. It is the spirit which can bear things not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. It is not the spirit which sits statically, enduring in one place, but the spirit which bears things because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory. It is not patience which grimly waits for the end, but patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn.” Isn't that good? So, patience is not just sitting there—is not just grinning and bearing it. It is not just stoically bearing up, but it is a blazing hope that refuses to let go of the promise.

Now, he says after you've done the will of God that you'll inherit the promise (Hebrews 10:36). Many of us are good at reciting the promises without obeying the commandments. Faith—and endurance—is an attitude and an action. It is belief with legs on it. If you believe the promises of God, then you're going to be doing your duty; you're going to be obeying the commandments of God. Psalm 37, verses 1 through 3: “*Fret not thyself because of evildoers*”—boy, I tell you, I have to refer to this verse every

so often when I watch the news—*“Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; [and] so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed”* (Psalm 37:1–3).

Now, to trust in the Lord is simply to do good. And, if you’re not doing good, you’re not trusting. And, if your troubles and your trials cause you to drop out, then you have need of patience. You’re not truly trusting. If you drop out in time of trouble, what you have done is to cast away your confidence—you have thrown away the thing that you need more than anything else in time of trouble. Now, Satan wants to incapacitate you. He wants to paralyze you with fear and discouragement. Now, what do you do when you don’t get the answer right away? Number one: You remember yesterday’s provision. Number two: You resolve today’s patience: “Lord, I will endure.”

III. Rest in Tomorrow’s Promise

Number three: You rest in tomorrow’s promise. Look, if you will, in verse 37: *“For yet [in] a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry”* (Hebrews 10:37). That’s tomorrow. Just hang on.

Now, what this is, is a quotation from the Old Testament. It’s really a quotation from the Book of Habakkuk. It’s found in Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 3. Habakkuk wondered where is God: “Why doesn’t God do something? Why has God let the wicked get away with all that they get away with? God, where are You?” And, Habakkuk went up into his high tower to see what God would say. And, God spoke to him, and here’s what God said in Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 3: *“For the vision is yet for an appointed time”—you can’t hurry the promises of God—“the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and [will] not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come”* (Habakkuk 2:3). Now, what is he saying? Well, Habakkuk was perplexed. He couldn’t understand, but he learned that what he could not understand he could just stand under. “Just wait, Habakkuk, the vision is not yet” (Habakkuk 2:3).

You see, we want God to explain things to us. We get antsy. We want it, and we want it now. But friend, God does not explain things to us. God didn’t explain things to Habakkuk. He just told Habakkuk, “It’s not time, Son. You just wait—the promise will come” (Habakkuk 2:3). God doesn’t owe us explanations; God gives us promises. You know what Jesus said to His disciples? He said, “I have many things to tell you, but you’re not able to bear them” (John 16:12). Don’t get the idea that all you need is an explanation. You wouldn’t be able to understand God’s explanations if He gave them. God knows when the time is right. And so, what Habakkuk did was to change the question from *why*, until he had the answer, which is *who*. He began to look to the Lord.

And, he closes this same chapter that the writer of Hebrews is talking about in Habakkuk 3, verses 17 through 19.

Now, before I read that to you, let me say that at dinnertime we were talking about Y2K. Everybody's talking about Y2K: "What's going to happen? What's going to happen?" I don't know, and you don't know. Everything from nothing to the world closing down is being prophesied. Well, Habakkuk said this, and I love it, and I think it's a great text for 1999, no matter what happens—Habakkuk 3, verses 17 through 19—I want you to listen to it: *"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls"*—that is, these were people who were agrarian; these were farmers and shepherds. And, what they're talking about—what Habakkuk was talking about—was the total collapse of the economy. Let me just bring it up to date: "Though the economy collapse, though everything fall through." Yet Habakkuk says—*"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places"*—and then, he gave it to the Minister of Music to sing—*"To the chief singer on my stringed instruments"* (Habakkuk 3:17–19). He's just saying, "Just take it and sing it" (Habakkuk 3:19).

And, I'll tell you, in these dark days, God's going to give us a song. And, I hope that you have a song, and I hope that when you get a promise from the Word of God that talks about the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Revelation 11:15), you will remember yesterday's provision, you will resolve today's patience, and you will rest in tomorrow's promise, and you'll not let go, you'll not throw in the towel, you'll not cast away your confidence.

Somebody put these words by Habakkuk into a song and into a poem:

*If the fields refuse a harvest and the trees no longer bear,
If the flocks forsake their shepherd and my head be bowed with care,
Yet I know His ways are wondrous, with this man made out of dust,
And these lips of clay shall praise Him though the world be turned to rust.
If the roses lose their fragrance, if the birds no longer sing,
If the rivers cease their flowing and the bells refuse to ring,
I know that God is in Heaven; I know that all is well,
So my lips will sing His praises and the gospel story tell.
I will praise Him; yes, I'll praise Him. There will be a brighter day.
There will be a bright tomorrow. God will never pass away (author unknown).*

Now friend, our standard of living may change, but our standard of life will not if we know the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, you have need of patience—you have need of patience. You have need of patience, that you might inherit the promises (Hebrews

10:36). Remember yesterday's provision: He saw you through then; He'll see you through again. Resolve today's patience—not just hunkering down. Remember, it is not patience that solemnly waits in the dark; it is patience that gloriously anticipates the dawn. And then, rest in tomorrow's promise: "though it tarry, it will come" (Habakkuk 2:3). Get a hold of the Word of God and never, never, never let it go. I've spoken to you, but I want to tell you—I've spoken to me tonight, also.

Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. And, if you're going through a promise right now—going through a trial right now, rather—and trying to hold on to a promise, just remember yesterday and tell God, "Lord, I will endure by Your grace and for Your glory. And, no matter what happens, I will wait on You, my God." Tell Him that right now. We're going to wait for just a few moments. Those of you who are listening by radio, bow your head and tell the Lord the same thing. In Jesus's name. Amen. †

When Bad Things Happen to Good People

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 22, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:32–39

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

HEBREWS 10:36

Outline

Introduction

- I. Mature Faith Realizes the Power of God
- II. Mature Faith Recognizes the Purpose of God
- III. A Mature Faith Remembers the Promises of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and open them to Hebrews, chapter 10. Tonight is just a kind of a continuation or a postscript of this morning’s message about the stoning of Stephen. Stephen was a good man; he was full of the Holy Ghost. Because he was full of the Holy Ghost, he was full of wisdom; he was full of faith; he was full of power; and yet, he died by being stoned. I want to talk to you tonight, therefore, on this subject:

“When Bad Things Happen to Good People”—“When Bad Things Happen to Good

People.” Now, in Hebrews, chapter 10, and verses 32 and 33, you have the story of

God’s people that were enduring affliction. Verses 32 and 33 say: *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.”*

Sometimes, it happens to you and sometimes, it happens to your friends. And then, he

goes on to speak of himself. For he said: *“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds,*

and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods”—that is, their material possessions had

been confiscated by the enemy—*“knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better*

and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great

recompense of reward.” Now, what had happiness is this? These people were

suffering—they were suffering emotionally; they were being scorned and reproached.

They were suffering physically—they would be beaten; they were being beaten, abused, and put into prison. They were suffering economically; their goods—their material goods were being confiscated, and they were being made, overnight, to be paupers. Some of them who were Christians were thinking about throwing in the towel. Some of them were just thinking about quitting. And so, the writer of Hebrews is telling them, “Don’t quit.” *“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, For ye have need of patience”*—now, the word “patience” in the Bible literally means “endurance”—*“that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith”*—now, that’s the key: living by faith; understand it—*“the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”* Don’t throw in the towel. When bad things happen, good people don’t throw in the towel. Don’t draw back. Don’t cast off your confidence. You’re going to have to live by faith.

Now, let me ask you a question: Have you ever prayed for something that you really wanted and you endeavored to trust the Lord for it, and, not only did you not get what you wanted, but things got worse? You prayed and asked God for healing, and you got sicker. You prayed and asked God for money, and you got poorer. You prayed and asked God to get you out of difficulty, and you got into greater difficulty. Some kids, you have prayed that somebody would fall in love with you, yet the girl you wanted fell in love with somebody else, won’t even look at you, and now pretends she doesn’t know you. You planned a Sunday school picnic and it rained, and you had asked God for good weather, and yet it rained. Anything like that ever happen to you? Just kind of nod your head like this. Sure, okay. Does that mean that God has forsaken us, or does that mean that faith has failed? Not at all. Now, I want you to understand that I’ve read chapter 10—part of chapter 10—it just sets the setting for chapter 11. Chapter 11 in the book of Hebrews is the roll call of the faith—it’s God’s hall of fame, and all of the great, exciting things that God has done by faith are included. And then, he kind of sums it up. I pointed out this morning, beginning in verse 32 that he’s running out of time, and this is what he says, beginning in verse 32—this is chapter 11, verses 32 through 34: *“And what shall I more say? for time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to fight the armies of the aliens.”*

I. Mature Faith Realizes the Power of God

Now, let me say this about a mature faith: Mature faith—this is point number one, if you're making notes—mature faith realizes the power of God; mature faith sees that God can do anything, and the writer of the book of Hebrews has just shown us what God can do.

Boy, I tell you, we all love these stories. There's hardly a boy or girl that doesn't know the story of Daniel in the lion's den—how God gave those lions lockjaw, and ole' Daniel trusted the Lord, pulled up a lion, made a fluffy pillow out of him, got out his New Testament—Old Testament, rather—and began to read between the lions, just having a wonderful time, and doing his devotions. We love that. You don't love the pun, but you love the story. The pun is part of your punishment, but we love the story of Daniel and the lion. We love the story of the three Hebrew children. It's cool in the furnace—we love that, oh boy—how God delivered them, and how they came out without even the smell of smoke in their clothes. Oh, that's a wonderful story. We love the story of how they escaped the swords, and how Moses and the children of Israel went through the Red Sea—how God opened a forty-eight lane super highway through the Red Sea. Ha, I believe that it got so dry that they kicked up the dust storm going through that Red Sea—how God just opened the waters for them. What a wonderful story! We all love those stories. We love the story of how God got Peter out of prison. Before long, we're going to be preaching on the book of Acts, of how God just sprang Peter—I mean, of his jailbreak with an angel helping him—how he gets out of prison. What a wonderful story—an exciting story, a thrilling story—and we need to understand this.

And, there's not a' one of us who has been walking with the Lord very long but who could tell a similar story. Somehow, somewhere, if you think back, God has worked a miracle for you. Maybe, He healed you; maybe, He gave you a financial miracle; or maybe, He gave you a domestic miracle. God, in some way, has done something wonderful for us all, at some time, and we can look back and say, "Thank you, God. Thank you for what You did." And, I could tell you—and it almost sounds like bragging, but I'd be bragging on Jesus—some of the wonderful things that God has done for me that I don't think any man would ever make me believe was happenstance, was coincidence, or was not the direct hand of God—a miraculous working in my life. And, I want to say, dear friend, that the very first thing you have to understand when bad things happen to good people is that mature faith realizes the power of God. You realize that God can do anything? He can do anything, okay? And, there are enough examples in the Bible, in contemporary life, and in your life to know that God can do anything.

II. Mature Faith Recognizes the Purpose of God

Now, second point: Not only does mature faith realize the power of God, but also,

mature faith recognizes the purpose of God. Now, you see, God doesn't always have, in His purpose, to deliver us—sometimes, He has a different purpose. Now, we've been shouting and talking about all of the wonderful things that happen to these people, but if you begin in verse 35, then you're going to find the other side of the coin: *“Women received their dead raised to life again: and others”*—just underscore that phrase “and others.” Now, these others are doing the same thing by faith—*“others by faith”*—look at it—*“were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned”*—remember, Stephen was stoned—*“they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains and in dens and caves of the earth.”*

Now folks, I want to tell you about these others. They loved God, too, and they believed God, too. You can study the Bible, and you can find out that some of God's choicest saints suffered—I mean, terrible persecution. The prophet Zachariah was stoned to death. Isaiah was put in the trunk of a hollow tree. His body was stuffed in there, and then, Hezekiah had them take a saw and saw him in half—the prophet Isaiah. “They were sawn asunder,” the Bible says, and Stephen was stoned. Early Christians were fed to the lions, and if you've been to Rome, then you've gone to the Coliseum. Some of them died in the Coliseum—most of them died in the Circus Maximus, where they were food for lions and objects to their attainment, as they reddened the sand of that arena with their blood. You can study *Fox's Book of Martyrs* and find out that, all through Christian history, Christians who loved God have suffered. Some of them were sewn up in bags with poisonous serpents; others had oil poured over them, and they were set afire to burn as human candles. Many of them were crucified like our Lord; some of them were tied to beaches at low tide and had the tide come up and drown them.

What I'm trying to say is this: that you had better not get your theology from circumstances. If you get your theology from circumstances, then you'll come to this conclusion: God doesn't love you, 'cause, sooner or later, a bad thing is going to happen to you. And, if you just have your eyes on circumstances, then you're going to say, “If God is with us”—you're going to say, like Gideon—“If God is with us, then why is all this happening to us?” You know, that's what the angel said to Gideon: *“The LORD is with thee, though mighty man of valour”* (Judges 6:12). Gideon said that if God is with us, then why are all these things happening to us? (Judges 6:13). Now, you see, if you just go by appearance, then you're going to get the idea that God doesn't love you. For example, in John chapter 11, there's a story of Lazarus who died. And, the Bible says:

“Now Jesus”—in John 11, verse 5—“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” Jesus loved them. Then, in John 11, verses 14 and 15, the Bible says: *“Then Jesus said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I’m glad...”* That sounds hard-hearted, doesn’t it? A few verses up, it says Jesus loved them, and then, Jesus said: *“Lazarus is dead. And I am glad...”* Why? Because, He had another plan for Lazarus—a higher plan. They couldn’t understand it, but at that time, they had they gotten their theology from circumstances; they would have said, “Lord, You don’t love us, because, Lord, You could have kept Lazarus from dying, but You didn’t do it.” Now you see, dear friend, bad things can happen to good people. Let me give you another verse of Scripture: Romans, chapter 8, verses 35 and following—the Apostle Paul asked a rhetorical question, and I want you to listen to it. He said: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter”*—now, watch this next verse—*“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”* Now, he doesn’t say that, without all of these things, we are conquerors—not that God delivers us from all of these things, but in all of these things—in tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—in all of these things, we are more than conquerors.

Listen, difficulty does not mean that God has abandoned you. Now, we’re in Hebrews chapter 11. I want you to turn over to Hebrews chapter 13 and see how he sums this up. Look, beginning in verse 5: *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have”*—that is, regardless of your situation, be content; the word “content” means “self-sufficient, self contained”—*“be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”* Now, it doesn’t say, “The Lord is my helper; man can’t do anything to me.” It says, “God is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do to me.” Now, what He said is: *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5). I am not a Greek scholar, nor the son of a Greek scholar, but the students tell me that actually, what He is saying is this: He’s saying it strongly—“I’ll never leave you.” There are literally five negatives there, and what we could say, if it was translated properly, is what He is saying is this: “I will never, never, never, never, never leave you.” I understand that a young theological student was trying to explain that to an old mother in Israel who had walked many, many years with Jesus, and she just smiled and said, “Well, God might have to say it five times to you Greek boys, but once is enough for me. “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Now, He doesn’t promise to keep us out of trouble, but He just simply says, “I am not going to leave you alone.”

Most of you know that Joyce and I, after we just graduated from seminary, had a

little boy named Philip who died on Mother's Day, on a Sunday afternoon; it was one of those sudden crib deaths. He was several months old, and we left to go to be with our parents that afternoon. They quickly called in a preacher; they got a minister of education from the First Baptist Church to come over to Parkview Baptist Church and asked him, "Would you preach tonight for our pastor and for our church?" I remember, as we left, our little pastorium that was right next to the church—there was no air conditioning, the windows were opened, and the people were inside singing. And, I heard them singing, "He hath promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone." And, that was true in our hearts and in our lives, and it has been true and it will be true. You see, listen: Faith—real faith—does not judge by circumstances. There are those who have the victories of faith, but there are others who are not delivered, and if you judge your theology by circumstances—if you judge God by circumstances—then you're going to make a terrible mistake.

John the Baptist almost made that mistake. You see, John the Baptist was down there, by the river Jordan, and he was preaching. He had a kind of a rock for a pulpit, the river Jordan for a choir, and he had all those sinners out there fore a congregation. And, he was shaking his finger, and he was saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And then, John the Baptist got put in prison. John the Baptist was an outdoors type of fellow. He was a man of the wilderness—a free spirit. Now, John the Baptist is put in prison—in a dingy, dark, dismal prison—and he preached a Christ who had power, a Christ who was going to judge people and all of this; and now, here's John the Baptist in prison. John the Baptist can't figure it out. John the Baptist is saying, "If He's the Messiah—if He has all of this power, and God told me to preach it—then why am I in prison? Why can't He get me out of prison?" And, John the Baptist almost lost his faith. As a matter of fact, he sent messengers to Jesus. He said, "Would you ask Jesus if He's really the one who should come, or should we look for somebody else? Is He really the Messiah, or was I mistaken?" Now, it was an honest doubt, and he sent an honest question to Jesus; and, Jesus gave him an honest answer. And friend, if you have honest doubts, then bring them to Jesus, and He'll give you an honest answer. It was an honest doubt, and here's what He said to John the Baptist, and I want you to listen. Matthew, chapter 11, and verses 4 and 5: "*Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight—the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*" What did Jesus tell John the Baptist? "John, I've got all the power in the world—even power to raise the dead," and then, Jesus said to John: "*And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me*" (Matthew 11:6). You pay attention. If Jesus didn't get John out of prison, it wasn't because Jesus couldn't get John out of prison, okay? It wasn't because

He couldn't. He just had another plan—that's all, that's all. Blessed is the man who's not offended in me. Blessed is the man who not only can stand at Jordan and give it, but can stay in prison and take it. Now, John tried to get his theology from circumstances, and he almost lost his faith. Yes, yes—mature faith realizes the power of God, but mature faith also recognizes the purposes of God.

I want to say something friend: It's one thing to have faith escape, but it's another thing to have faith to endure. It is one thing to have faith for deliverance, but it's another thing to have faith to die. Stephen died by faith. He was a man full of faith, and it was his faith that allowed him to stand there and take those stones when he could have turned the other way, when he could have renounced Jesus, and when he could have turned his back on Jesus. Listen to me: Faith is not receiving from God what you want; faith is accepting from God what He gives. Now, learn that. The big question when you're sick is not—Do you have faith to be healed? The big question is—Do you have enough faith not to be healed and to still praise Him? And others, others who by faith didn't escape, others who by faith suffered—they loved God as much as the one who escaped loved God. Listen, folks: The ways of God are beyond us. It is not that God cannot; He just may not. For example, God had a purpose in the stoning of Stephen. Nobody else knew what God was up to, but God knew that ole' Saul was there, who later became Paul. Now, nobody else knew that. We know it by looking back, but they didn't know it then. We're going to be reading where James is put in prison. In a little bit, when we get into the book of Acts, James is put in prison, and ole' Herod cuts off the head of James. All right now, just a little bit later Peter is put in prison, and Peter is released from prison—miraculously, an angel comes, the jail doors swing open, and Peter comes out of prison. Now, you explain that to me. You explain to me why James died and why Peter was released. Now friend, there's no way to explain that. Did God love Peter more than He loved James? James went to the executioner's block, and Peter got out and went to a prayer meeting. If you get your theology from circumstances, then you're going to conclude that God doesn't love you. The next time that you read that book of Hebrews—the eleventh chapter—don't stop 'til you get to the others. That's there, too. And, some escaped by faith, and some endured by faith.

III. A Mature Faith Remembers the Promises of God

Now for the third thing I want to say. The first thing is that a mature faith recognizes the power of God. He can do it. He can do it, and a mature faith, dear friend, also realizes the purposes of God. He may not do it. He may have a different purpose, and He is sovereign God. His way are not our ways. The third and final thing that I want to say is that a mature faith remembers the promises of God. Go back now to Hebrews chapter 11, and look again at the promises of God. Now, let's get a running start on this, and I

think we're going to see it. Now listen, verses 32 through 40: *“And what shall I more say? for time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight thee armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again”*—that’s the power of God—*“and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth”*—that’s the purpose of God, and now, mature faith remembers the promises of God—*“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect”*—that is, complete. Now, what do verses 39 and 40 mean? They mean that God has promised that His ultimate purpose will be fulfilled. These verses do not mean that God is not going to keep His promise, but that He will keep His promise.

But now, listen: God’s promises are always on time, and they’re always by His schedule. For example, God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham. Abraham doesn’t have it today, but He will have it. God has promised that the meek shall inherit the earth. They may not have inherited it today, but they will inherit it. God has promised that the kingdoms of this world will become the Heavens of our Lord and of his Christ. Hatred is on the throne today. Right seems to be on the scaffold, wrong on the throne, but Jesus will reign. Our loved ones that we prayed for—and we say, “Dear God, heal them”—they will be healed, they will be made absolutely perfect, and they will be made like the Lord Jesus. Friends:

*Have faith in God, He’s on his throne,
Have faith in God, He watches over His own;
He cannot fail, He must prevail,
Have faith in God, Have faith in God (McKinney, B. B.).*

Conclusion

A mature faith realizes the power of God. A mature faith recognizes the purposes of God, and a mature faith remembers the promises of God. And, if you get in trouble and you say to God, “God, get me out of trouble,” and God doesn’t get you out of trouble, then just keep on serving Him. Remember what those three Hebrew children did when

the king said, “If you don’t worship my idol then I’ll throw you into the fiery furnace. What do you have to say for that?” They said, “King, we don’t even have to think about it. Our king—our God—is able to deliver us, but if He doesn’t, then we’re not going to bow before your idol. If He doesn’t, it’s not because He’s not able, it’s just that He’s got another plan. We’re not going to bow; we’re not going to budge; and we’re not going to bend—we’re going to serve Him.” Would you say that? God’s able to deliver me; He’s able to heal my body; He’s able to reverse my financial situation; He’s able to do it all; but, if He doesn’t, then I’m still not going to worship the devil. Habakkuk, chapter 3, and verses 17 and 18, and this is the last verse—listen: *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stalls: Yet will I rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* Praise the Lord. Let’s pray.

How to Wait on God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 4, 2002

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:36

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”

HEBREWS 10:36

Outline

Introduction

I. Remember Yesterday’s Provision

II. Resolve Today’s Patience

III. Rest in Tomorrow’s Promise

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s precious word and open, if you would, to Hebrews chapter 10 and find verse 36. Let me ask you a question. Do you ever need more patience? Ha, do you? I’m going to tell on myself this morning. I spoke harshly to Joyce early this morning. Now you might not have called it harsh, but I knew it was, and went upstairs to work on this message, and had to come back down and say, “Sweetheart, I want you to forgive me for my lack of patience.”

Ah, look at this verse: “For ye have need of patience...” And I think all of us could say what? Amen. “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might you, or ye might receive the promise.”

Now, friend, one of the things we want to learn tonight is this: How to wait on God. How to wait on God. With God, timing is far more important than time. Now we’re all wrapped up in time. We want it and we want it now, whether it’s, ah, instant coffee or whether it’s instant credit. Tomorrow is a day that’s almost not in our vocabulary at all. But God’s Word says that we need patience, “...that we might inherit the promise.”

Now sometimes, we say, “Lord, where is the promise?” But we learn as we study the Word of God there’s often a period of time between asking and receiving. Some of us have asked God for a long time for some things that we’ve not yet received. And so, sometimes, God delays. And if God has been delaying an answer to prayer, or there’s something you want God to do, and you want God to do it in a hurry, and you’re in a hurry and God isn’t in a hurry, I want us to look at, ah, this Scripture here and find out

why sometimes, ah, we wait and what we can do while we're waiting - how to get hold of a promise, in spite of delay, in spite of doubt and sometimes discouragement.

May I lay three thoughts on your heart tonight? If you need patience, three things the writer of Hebrews tells us to do here, and I want you to learn them.

I. Remember Yesterday's Provision

First of all, I want us to remember yesterday's provision. Just remember what God did for you yesterday. Hebrews 10. Now let's look in verse 32: "But call to remembrance the former days..." That's it! "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after that ye were illumined, or illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions: partly, while ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, while ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Now here's the thing: Look in verse 35: "Cast not away therefore your confidence..." Plain English – don't throw in the towel! "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward."

Now, whoever wrote the book of Hebrews (I personally think was the apostle Paul) is talking to people who are wondering, *Where is the promise? Why doesn't God do something?* They were discouraged. They were about wed, ready to, as I say, to throw in the towel. And Paul says, "Don't do that. Don't cast away, don't throw away your confidence." He says, again look in verse 32: "But call to remembrance the former days..." Remember the times you had trouble, heartache, fear, persecution. Remember when they came in and confiscated everything you had. Remember when you had compassion on me when I was in prison. Remember those hard days? Remember those difficult days? Remember how God saw you though?

Is there anybody here who can not look back on the past? If you've been a Christian very long, when it was bleak, when it was tough, when it was hard, but you trusted the Lord and He saw you through, didn't He? He saw you through. I mean, every one of us. If, if you've been on the trail very long, you can say, "Yep, ha, I can remember God saw us through."

Now, these people had all their goods taken away. Suppose, when you got home tonight, the Gestapo, the KGB, or something like that, had been into your house and carted away everything that you had because you're a child of God? What would you do? Well, notice what he says about these people here. Look in verse 34: "You had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods..."

Now, some people get upset when the stock market is down and their blood pressure is up. How about if some ruthless, despotic power just came in and, and absolutely ripped away all that you had. These people rejoiced. When I, when I thought

of this, I thought of an ancillary verse I'd like for you to jot down. It's 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 10. Paul talks about the, ah, the, the seeming contradictions in the Christian life, and he says, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." Now that's the thing I want to zero in with you right now.

We're talking about bad times, tough times, things taken away from us. Paul said to those Corinthians, "You had nothing, and yet you possessed everything." You know, the devil would come to those people and say, "Look, if you'll serve me, I'll pay you well." And, ah, they'd say, "You can't give me anything, Mr. Devil. I already have everything." Well, he says, "If you don't serve me therefore, then I'll take away everything you have." "Ah, you can't take away anything. I don't have anything." Ha, that's what, that's the way the Christian lives, as possessing nothing, yet having all things.

So, over and over again in the Bible, the Bible tells us not to forget what God has done for us. There's not a mother's child in here, I'm telling you, if you know the God that I know, that has not been in deep water, not been in trouble, not been in anguish, not had insurmountable, ah, problems, and God saw you through them.

I'm thinking of some in my own life right now, some times when I was in such desperation that I literally shouted at God – not in disrespect, but shouted at heaven, saying, "O God, how? O God, why?" As I look back now, I see the hand of God, how God led, how God strengthened, how God sustained. Over and over and over again, brothers and sisters in Jesus, we are told to remember.

We're coming up, we're coming up on our centennial – 100 years, 100 blessed years as a church. Ah, in January, we will began our 100th year, because Bellevue was founded in 1903. And here's the theme verse we're going to have: Psalm 77, verses 11-12: "I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings." May God have mercy upon us if we forget what God has done for this dear church. I, ah, you, for 100 years God has blessed us. That doesn't mean there've been no problems. There have been great problems, almost insurmountable problems, but we look back and we remember what God has done for us.

When Moses was about to go to heaven, turning everything over to Joshua, Moses got the people of God and he rehearsed to them all of the things that God had done for them. It didn't mean they'd not had any problems. They had problems. But Moses said, "Don't forget the works of the Lord. Remember what God has done."

When we come here on a Sunday evening and have the Lord's Supper, why did the Lord tell us to do that? He says, "This do in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11 and verse 24). How easy it is to forget even that Jesus died for our sins on the cross. That's why we have the Lord's Supper. Don't forget!

Now most of us are guilty of selective memory. Ah, we, we tend to remember things selectively. When God took the children of Israel out of Egypt and would bring them to Canaan, they were out there in the wilderness, and they began to complain. And they said, “Ah, we remember the melons. We remember the garlic. We remember the leeks. Ah, we remember the fish.” Why didn’t they remember Pharaoh’s lash? You know, isn’t it amazing how we just kind of have a selective memory?

Have you ever heard anybody talk about the good old days? You know what the good old days are? A combination of a poor memory and a vivid imagination. Folks, these are the good old days. Every day is a wonderful day if you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. But, what, what’s this man saying? Don’t forget! Don’t forget how God saw you through.

A while back, Joyce said to me, “Adrian, you’re so wonderful. You’re just precious. Adrian, if I ever, ever again say anything critical of you, remind me of this time. Remind me of what I’m saying right now. You’re just wonderful.” Folks, I’ve had to remind her a lot of times of what she said. It’s so easy to forget how God sees us through.

I keep a prayer journal. Now I don’t refer to it every day, but it’s got some long-time prayers in it. It goes back maybe twenty-five years. Ah, more, more than that. I’ve had that prayer journal for a long time. And I get it out and look at it. One day, not so long ago, I got it out and I looked at it, and I just had to lift my heart and my hands to God for answered prayer, things that I’d asked God for and things that God has done that somehow I’d just forgotten and failed to give Him praise. We are to remember the works of the Lord. When there is something that’s not working out right now, God says, “Remember the days of old. Remember.”

Let me give you another Scripture. First Samuel chapter 7, verse 12. God had taken the children of Israel and done some great things for them. And Samuel was the prophet. And the Bible says, “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it (who knows the name of it?) Ebenezer (called it Ebenezer), saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.”

Do you know what Ebenezer means? Well, you sing it all the time, Brother Jamie. “Here I raise mine Ebenezer; hither by, from, by Thy I’ve come.” Ebenezer literally means “Rock of remembrance.” Rock of remembrance. What Samuel did, he said, “We’re going to have a stone. It will be a memorial. And Ebenezer, a rock of remembrance, to remember what God has done for us.” God forbid that we should fail to remember yesterday’s provision.

II. Resolve Today’s Patience

Now here’s the second thing: Not only remember yesterday’s provision, but resolve today’s patience. Yesterday’s provision; today’s patience.

Look again in Hebrews chapter 10. Now look in verse 35: “Cast not therefore away, cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” Patience.

Now do you know what a lack of patience will do? It will cause you to throw away your most precious possession. What is your most precious possession? It’s your confidence, your faith, your hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, don’t throw that away ‘cause you’re going to need it again. What a tragedy, what a tragedy if we come to a place and things don’t work out just like we think that they ought to work out. We toss in the towel. We throw away our confidence to the Lord.

Now the word *patience* here; he says here: “You have need of patience.” The word literally means “endurance.” The Greek word means “to bear up under.”

William Barclay – you can get some good ideas from William Barclay. Don’t get a lot of your theology from him. He’s got some squirrely thoughts sometimes, but he’s a brilliant man. Hum, hum, “What kind of recommendation is that, pastor?” Well, anyway, he’s good in word studies. And William Barclay said this about this word Greek word for *patience*: “There is no single English word which transmits all the fullness of its meaning.” The word literally means “to abide under.” That’s what patience means. It’s not the ability to thread a needle or to, to build a model or work a puzzle. It means to stay under pressure. It has the idea of constancy. It has the idea of steadfastness. It has the idea of sticking power. Now I think Mr. Barclay has written one of the most incredible statements about patience that I’ve ever read, and I’ve copied it out for you, and I want you to listen to it because I think he’s dead on on this. And I want you to listen to it. He’s talking about endurance. Now not only are we to remember yesterday’s provision, but we resolve today’s patience. Now listen.

He says, “It is not the patience which can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm has passed. It is the spirit which can bear things not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. It is not the spirit which sits statically enduring in one place, but the spirit which bears things because it knows these things are leading to a goal of glory. It is not patience that grimly waits for the end, but it is patience that radiantly hopes for the dawn.”

That’s good, folks. That’s good. You have need of patience. God told me when I was preparing this sermon, “Adrian, you have need of patience.” Patience is not indolence. Patience works while it waits.

You know, look, look in verse 36. Hebrews 10 now, verse 36: “For ye have need of patience (now listen to this), after that ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.” What do you do while you’re waiting for the promise? The will of God. You don’t just sit around and say, “Now, God, I’m waiting on You.” That’s not endurance.

You see, to receive the promise, we must do His will. A lot of us want to recite the promise without obeying the commandments. Real faith is both an attitude and an action. Real faith is belief with legs on it. And so, we have to do our duty while we're waiting on the promise. Let me give you another ancillary verse right now. Just stay here in Hebrews and maybe just let me quote it for you. But in Psalm 37 – you're going through a deep time now, a difficult time and you don't like waiting on God. Maybe somebody's done you wrong. Psalm 37, verses 1 through 3: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." And then, he goes on to say to wait upon the Lord. Trust and do good while you're waiting.

I've seen people get discouraged. They drop out. They cast away their confidence. They close up shop. They quit witnessing. They quit singing. They quit going to Bible class. They quit tithing. They just close down because, ah, it, it's not happening. "Pastor Rogers preached this, and he promised that, and he said this and that, and it's not happening. And I've put in the principles, turned the crank, and nothing came out, so I'm going to give it up." Don't do it! Trust in the Lord and do good. Keep on witnessing. Keep on singing. Keep on praying. Keep on submitting. Keep on being faithful. Keep on keeping on. "You have need of patience, that you might inherit the promise, after that you have done the will of God..."

Obedience is the bridge between where we are now and the promise, and we need to trust in the Lord. Satan wants to incapacitate you, and he wants to paralyze you with fear that leads to inactivity.

Now here's the third thing: Remember yesterday's provision. Resolve, resolve today's patience. If you don't see it, you just bear up under it. Just bear up under it. Remain there. Remember what Barclay said now. "...not with grim resolution, but radiant hope waiting for God, what God is going to do." And here's the third thing now: Remember yesterday's provision, what God has done. He's seen you through before. Resolve today's patience. "I will stay here. I will trust God. I will not quit. I will not cast away my confidence."

III. Rest in Tomorrow's Promise

Thirdly, rest in tomorrow's promise. Rest in tomorrow's promise.

Look now in verse 37 in Hebrews 10. Look in verse 37: "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." Ha, ha, I love that. The answer, the answer may be just right around the corner, right over the horizon.

One day, I was in Washington, D.C., and I was in Senator's Helms office. And I know Senator Helms. I love him. I respect him. He's a dear man of God, Jesse Helms of

North Carolina. Senator Helms said to me, “Adrian,” he said, “I want to tell you a story.” He said, “I was just speaking not long ago with that Russian dissident, Solzhenitsyn.” If you know anything about, ah, Russian history and literary geniuses and all of this, Solzhenitsyn was the top of his class—a philosopher, a dissident, a man that suffered much for his faith. Solzhenitsyn had been put into a Russian Communist concentration camp because he would not knuckle under because he was “dangerous” to the state. Jesse Helms said, “Mr. Solzhenitsyn said to me, ‘They put me there, locked me away. I could not receive mail. I could not send mail. I could not write anything because I had nothing to write with. I could not read anything because reading material was forbidden. There was no radio, no television, no communication with the outside world. We were put in a cell, not able to talk with other prisoners. And then we were put and forced to hard labor day after day in the blazing hot sun and could not communicate, say a word to anyone else.’ He said, ‘I endured that for a while. And then, after a while, it began to work on my mind.’ Solzhenitsyn said, ‘I wondered, did anybody know that I was even here? Does anybody care? I’m so isolated. I’m, I’m alone.’ He said, ‘I was a believer in God, but my mind began to play tricks on me. I was ready to throw in the towel. I was ready to quit. I was ready to cast away my confidence.’ He said, ‘I decided I would take my own life.’ And he said, ‘My faith wouldn’t let me do that.’ But he said, ‘In my twisted mentality, I hit upon a plan. The guards were standing there with their high-powered rifles.’ He said, ‘I made up my mind that during a hard work day I would just cut and run and they would shoot me between the shoulder blades. Then it wouldn’t be my taking my life. They would have killed me.’ He said, ‘I know that was wrong, that was wrong thinking, but,’ he said, ‘that’s how my mind got.’ And he said, ‘I made up my mind that this would be it. I, a particular day, I was ready. I was sitting on the ground, ready to spring up. I put my hands down, ready to jump. I saw the guard. He had the gun.’ And he said, ‘Another prisoner came. I don’t ever remember seeing him.’ He said, ‘Maybe he was angel, but he came and stood before me, and he said, he had a stick, branch from a tree.’ And he said, ‘He looked into my eyes as if he knew every thought. He looked right through me. And then he took that stick and drew a cross in the dirt.’ And he said, ‘When I saw that, I knew he was a messenger from God – man or angel, I know not, but I knew that he was a messenger from God, and I knew what I was about to do was very, very wrong. And I sat back down.’ He said, ‘Little did I know that in a matter of days I would be a free man in Geneva, Switzerland, just a matter of days.’”

You know, sometimes, we’re just ready to throw in the towel, aren’t we? We’re just saying, “Well, I can’t wait any longer.” But he says here in Hebrews 10, verse 37: ‘Yet, for yet a little while he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.’ Do you know what he’s doing there? Do you know what the writer of Hebrews is doing? He is quoting the Old Testament. He is quoting the book of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk was perplexed. He was ready to throw in the towel. He was ready to cast away his confidence. He was ready to let go of the promise. He'd been talking to God, and said, "God, why?" And here's what God said to him: I'm going to read this time from the Old Testament, Habakkuk 2, verse 3: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time..."

Now remember when I started out on this message, I told you with God timing is more important than time? Remember that? "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come. It will not tarry."

Now you don't have to understand everything to trust. Warren Wiersbe rightly said, "We don't live by explanations; we live by promises." God doesn't owe you any explanation. Why? First of all, you wouldn't be able to understand. He would say, "This is why I'm doing it," you would say, "Yeah, but, Lord, You could have done...." No! God says, "Your ways and My ways are different. As the heavens are high above the earth are My ways above your ways and My thoughts above your thoughts." There are a lot of things that we can't understand. Jesus said, "I have many things to tell you; you're not able to bear them."

So Habakkuk stopped asking why and he started learning who. And I'm going to read a few verses from Habakkuk and we'll be finished.

Habakkuk chapter 3, verses 17 through 19. Now these are good verses. They're good verses for us when we're in tough times. Habakkuk 3:17-19: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the fields, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat, the flock shall be caught off, shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. Yet (boy, I love that word. That's in verse 18), Yet, yet I will rejoice in the LORD (not in circumstances, in the LORD), I will joy in the God of my salvation." New Testament – rejoice in the Lord always. "I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places." Then he says, "Give that to the minister of music." That's, that's to the chief musician.

What was Habakkuk saying? He was saying that our standard of living may change but not our standard of life. I will trust in the LORD.

Conclusion

So, when tough times come, when it's difficult to wait on God, remember yesterday's provision. Remember how He saw you through? Remember how He did that? Resolve today's patience. Say, "When I don't see, when I don't understand, I have need of patience. I will hold on. I'll continue to do the will of God." And then, in God's timing, you'll receive tomorrow's promise. It will not tarry. God cannot fail. He will not fail. He must prevail.

Would you bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you have been, ah, waffling, wavering, losing hope, losing confidence, would you ask God to forgive you? Would you say, "Lord, whatever You want to teach me. If I have need of patience. If that's what You're trying to teach me." And, by the way, you won't learn anything till you learn patience, not anything worthwhile. Say, "Lord, let patience have her perfect work, that I may be perfect, entire, and wanting nothing."

Father, seal, I pray, in the name of Jesus the message to our hearts. Thank You, Lord. Amen.

The Only Way to Live

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 5, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 10:38

“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

HEBREWS 10:38

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Conclusion

Introduction

The title of the message: “The Only Way to Live.” We live in an age where we have a lot of people who are called stars—movie stars. And we have a lot of people who are called idols—sports idols. In my humble but accurate opinion, we have too many stars, and too many idols, and not enough heroes. I’m going to be talking to you today about heroes—Bible heroes. The title of this series that we’re going to be in is this:

“Champions of Faith”—“Champions of Faith.”

We’re going to study primarily in the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews about champions of faith. But that chapter is set up by Hebrews chapter ten. If you’ll find that for just a moment. And I want you to notice verse 38—Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 38. Here is a great statement, and it is so abundantly and eminently true: “Now, the just shall live by faith.” The just shall live by faith.

Now, that, friend, is a quotation from the Old Testament. It’s a quotation from the book of Habakkuk. Habakkuk was perplexed. He lived in a day of violence, a day of

degradation, a day of apostasy, a day of danger, and he bombarded heaven, and he wanted God to answer. He wanted God to explain things, so he could get along in life as it is, and God said, Habakkuk, you couldn't understand, if I told you what I'm up to. You think I'm not working? I'm working, and Habakkuk, here is your responsibility. You are to live in this uncertain age, by faith.

You want me to tell you how to live? Don't live by explanations. Live by faith. Now, that's not a lot of hocus pocus, smoke and mirrors. We're going to see that has spiritual steel and concrete in it. "But the just shall live by faith." That is the only way to live. As a matter of fact, this scripture is quoted here in Hebrews. It's quoted again in the Bible, in other places. As a matter of fact, it is quoted three times in the Word of God. I wonder if God is trying to tell us something. Well, I know He is: "The just shall live by faith."

So we're going to be talking about faith today. Now, you have some problems, and I have some problems, there's not a problem that we have that does not relate itself somehow to faith as the answer. For example, worry—anybody here worry? Let me see your hand? Don't lift your hand. I think that's almost pandemic in our society, is worry. Well, why do we worry? Lack of faith. Worry is a mild form of atheism. Worry is a way of saying, God, this problem is too big for You. Or, if there's a God at all, You're not able to handle it. And so, worry is just faith turned inside out. And faith is worry turned inside out. And, if you're prone to worry, you need to strengthen your faith.

Are you lonely? You say, "Nobody, my children don't call. I don't have any friends. My friends have all gone to heaven." Or I'm a student here away from family, away, maybe, from your native country. Faith makes God real to you. You are never alone when you have genuine faith, because faith brings Him so near.

Some people here are burdened with guilt. You did something so terrible, so horrible, you hope the world never finds out, but you're not able to forget. You're not able, somehow, to set yourself free from that burden that you carry around like a sack full of stones. Well, why do we have this guilt? Lack of faith. Because faith understands that the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has atoned for that. But you can believe that intellectually, or you can hear about it theologically, but faith lays hold of it.

May I tell you what faith is? Faith is my acceptance of God's acceptance of me. God receives us not because of our own goodness, but, when we come to Him just in faith, therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Disobedience—do you have trouble obeying the Word of God? Do you want me to tell you why you don't obey the Word of God? You don't believe it—you don't believe it. Let me give you an example. The Bible says, "Bring all the tithe into the storehouse and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I'll not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there not be room enough to receive it."

There's not a mother's child in this building that doesn't want the heavens opened above him, and God pouring out such blessings he can't even contain them all. All of us want that, but not all of us tithe. Why? Because we don't believe that promise. You can't tell me if we believe that promise, we would. I mean, if you believed that, wouldn't you do it? Doesn't everyone want the heavens opened, and doesn't everyone want a blessing? They just simply don't believe the Word of God.

Have you ever passed a wall and it has a sign on it that says, "Wet paint. Don't touch"? What do you do? Why? You just don't believe the sign. You somehow just say, "Oh, I don't believe it's wet," and you're going to touch it. Now, why do we disobey? Because we do not believe the Word of God.

So, in our study today, we're going to leave chapter 10, and we're going to come over to chapter 11, and we're going to think about faith: what it is, and how to have it, and the elements of faith.

I. The Description of a Life of Faith

Now, first of all, I want us to look, in chapter 11, at what I'm going to call the description of a life of faith. Now, faith is the only way to live. "The just shall live by faith." And here, God describes faith. Notice in Hebrews 11 verses one and two: "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report."

Now, as we describe faith today, I think it's very important, first of all, that we understand what faith is not, before we learn what faith is. Faith is not blind superstition. You know, I'm amazed not only at what people will believe, or won't believe, but what they will believe. For example, this cult that we've been hearing about recently, the Rialiens. Friend, if you believe that, you've got rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished. Now, faith is not blind superstition, nor is faith closing your eyes to reality. A little boy said, faith is believing in what you know ain't so. No, no, that's not faith.

Faith is not positive thinking, or feeling of optimism. I like to be around positive thinkers. I like to be around optimists. I don't like to drive and get behind a person who thinks before they get there the light's going to turn red. And, by the time they do, it has. You ever get behind those kinds of people? I don't like to be around negative people. I know people who brighten up a room by leaving it. I like to be around optimistic people. But faith and optimism may be in some way tangential, but they're not the same. Faith is not positive thinking or optimism. It may lead to that.

Faith is not a leap in the dark. To the contrary, it is stepping in the light.

And faith is not faith in faith. Bible says, "have faith in God," it doesn't say, have faith in faith. Sometimes people will tell you, just believe, as if believing will make it so. Believing will not make it so.

Now, we're talking about what faith is not. What is faith? Well, he tells us here that faith is three things. And I want you to get these words down in your heart. First of all, confidence, conviction, and confession. Now, I want you to get these in your heart.

A. A Confidence That Rests in Hope

First of all, it is a confidence that rests in hope. Look at it: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." Well, Pastor, why did you call it confidence? Well, because confidence—and that's the way it's translated in some Bibles. The New American Standard, for example, gives it as "confidence." Why do I use the word "confidence"? Well, this word actually is akin to substance, and substance is an acceptable translation. I certainly believe that. But if I could just hone it a little bit more, it means assurance. Actually, it was used in the language of this day for a title deed.

Now, if you had a piece of property, or an inheritance that you'd not yet seen, but you had the deed, you had the assurance of that which you have not yet seen but you want to have. That's something that you're hope is in. And so, faith is confidence. It is not a will-of-the-wisp sort of a thing. It is substance. Sub-stand—something beneath that we stand on. When we live by faith, it's not smoke and mirrors. We're not walking around on eggshells and Jell-O. There is, as I've said, substance, confidence.

Now, it is the confidence that rests in hope. The word "hope"—look at it there. The word "hope" doesn't mean perhaps. Nor does it even mean wish. Nor does it mean desire. Listen very carefully, or you'll miss the whole thing. The word "hope," in the Bible, means rock-ribbed assurance based on divine revelation. For example, the Second Coming of Jesus is called the what? The blessed hope. Is that the blessed maybe? No. It is rock-ribbed assurance based on the promises of the Word of God.

Now, faith, therefore, is the title deed, the confidence, that what God has said is true, and God will perform it. Now, listen very carefully. There is no legitimate faith without hope. And there is no legitimate hope without faith. These cannot be separated. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Put down the word "confidence."

B. A Conviction That Sees the Invisible

Secondly, now think not only of confidence, but conviction. Faith is a conviction that sees the invisible. Now, here we read it; here, faith is the evidence of things not seen. Now, that word "evidence" may remind you of Columbo, in his rumpled overcoat, looking around for something. Well, it's akin to that. But actually, this word "evidence" literally means a conviction—conviction. Jesus Christ used this same word when He challenged those who were challenging Him, and He said, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" Who can convict Me of sin? Of course, obviously, no one. I wouldn't dare ask my friends that question, much less my enemies: which of you convinces Me, convicts Me, of sin? But the word here has the idea of conviction.

Now, what it means is that, if you have faith in your heart, there is a conviction of something that you've not yet seen. But it is there. It is an absolute confidence that leads to a conviction, even though you've not yet seen it. You don't have to see it for it to be real. Friend, there is an invisible world. That invisible world is electronically all around us right now. There are movies and newscasts and music, and all of that in the air, but we just don't tune it in right now, but it's all there. There is an invisible world out there.

Listen to Colossians 1:16: "For by Him"—by Jesus—"were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible." Don't make a mistake of thinking that everything that is real is communicated to us by the five senses. No, there is a sixth sense. There is another world. There is an invisible world.

Now, what does faith do? Listen carefully. This is important to you. It's the only way to live. Faith enables the believing soul to treat the future as present, and the invisible as seen. You can treat the future as present. And you can treat the invisible as seen by faith. Now, the Bible says you are to live by faith.

C. A Communication That Comes from Heaven

And then, the third thing is, it is a communication that comes from heaven. Now, Hebrews 11 and verse two says, "For by it"—that is, by faith—"the elders received a good report." That doesn't mean they made straight A's. As a matter of fact, it doesn't talk about what they did at all. It talks about what happened to them. They received a good report. That is, God spoke to them out of heaven. It doesn't deal with their reputation. Now, maybe they should have gotten straight A's, but that's not what it deals with. The good report means that they heard from heaven, that God spoke to them. It is not their reputation, but God's revelation, that is spoken of here; that God speaks to them. They were conscious of God testifying to them.

Now, if you put this confidence, and this conviction, and this communication, together, when they come together, then you have something in your heart, inexplicable, but glorious and wonderful, and it is called faith. And that is the only way to live. You will live by faith.

Now, when you put these things together, then you're going to understand, first of all, that faith should not be altered by appearances. Faith should not be altered by appearances. Look again at 11, verse 1: "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." When you live by faith, you live above see level. You live above the level of what you can see. We live in a world that says, seeing is believing. The Bible says, believing is seeing.

Put this verse down—John 20, verse 29: "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." That's you, friend. Thomas there examined the nail prints in Jesus'

hand, the wound in His side. Jesus said, “Blessed are those who have not seen, yet have believed.”

First Peter 1:8—put that down, speaking of Jesus: “Whom having not seen, ye loved.” You see, by faith, we see the invisible, so faith should not be altered by appearances. Don’t let any so called appearance make a lie out of the Word of God, in your heart and your mind.

Number two: faith should not be fettered by feelings. Faith is confidence that goes beyond emotions. I have told you before that your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Faith is the deepest work of God, and God doesn’t do the deepest work in the shallowest part. Don’t live your life under the tyranny of emotions, by feelings. Now, it feels good to feel good. And there’s nothing wrong with feeling good. But feelings are fickle. Sometimes you wake up with a dull headache. Sometimes things will happen, and you’ll get all bent out of shape, because of feelings. Sometimes that happens to preachers.

Now, you know, when I come up here on the platform, I always try to look like I’m having a good time and I feel good. But sometimes I don’t. Surprised? Maybe I didn’t get any sleep last night. Maybe I got an upset stomach. Maybe I’ve got a dull headache, and I come up here, but it’s time to preach, and I’m going to preach. Now, then, you know, sometimes you think it’s going to be a good service, and you get your foot in a lard bucket, and can’t get it out, while you’re preaching. You try to say something, and you get your tang all tangled up. And the ushers won’t ush. And the choir sounds like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm. And you say, good night, God is light years from this place. And yet, heaven comes down. Your emotions had nothing to do with that. You see, listen. Faith is not altered by appearances. Faith is not limited by your feeling. It’s not fettered by feeling.

I’ll tell you something else about faith: faith is not limited by logic. Faith is not altered by feelings, or fettered by feelings, and it is not limited by logic. You know, faith is not contrary to logic. Faith just goes beyond logic.

Now, if this rug is a ditch, and I’m over here, and I’m moving step by step by step by step to this ditch,, and let my walk be logic, then I come to a place where logic ends. And I need to get over there. I need to take a leap of faith. Now, I could completely jump over this rug, but I don’t want to show off. And I come across by a leap. There comes a time when you have to make a leap of faith. Faith is rooted in logic. Faith goes beyond logic. Faith becomes it’s own best logic. It is not contrary; it is not limited by logic.

When Jesus was there with those people following Him, and they were tired and hungry, He called Philip, and He said, “Philip, how are we going to feed these people?” There are 5,000 there. How are we going to feed them? Philip got out his pocket calculator. “Oh,” he said, “Well, it’d take a laboring man a year’s wages to feed these.”

Technically, he was right. But any good red-blooded atheist could have done the same thing. Now, when Jesus asked Philip, “How are we going to feed these people?” he wasn’t asking for information, because the Bible says He knew what He would do. He knew. He just wanted Philip to learn something about a miracle.

And, of course, there was a little boy there with a lad’s lunch and fed the whole multitude with that couple of fish and loaves. Now, you see, if you’re adding up an equation, you’re never going to get the right answer if you leave out one of the elements. You see, what Philip did, he left out God. He just figured without God. Now, logically, it was right. But faith is not limited by logic.

Are you trying to figure out something? I mentioned tithing a while back. Some of you are trying to figure out how you tithe. And you get all the figures, and you say, we can’t do it. Did you add God in? Did you add God in? I mean, is God a part of the equation? Faith, friend, is not limited by logic. Bring God into your calculations.

II. The Dynamics of a Life of Faith

Now, we’ve talked about the description of faith. Let’s talk secondly—let’s shift gears, all right? Put it in another gear, and let’s talk about the dynamics of a life of faith. Let me tell you how dynamic faith is. You see, we live by faith. First of all, faith is the dynamic of spiritual wisdom. There are things that you will never understand apart from faith. Now, look, if you will, in verse three: “Through faith we understand...”—don’t you like that? Don’t you like that—“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Plain English: the visible was made out of the invisible.

Now, God, in the Bible, is not explained. God is not argued. God is just simply presented. And God must be accepted by faith. Go down to verse 6—Hebrews 11 and verse 6: “For without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.”

We’re talking about wisdom now. The skeptic will say to you, “Prove there’s a God.” Don’t ever try it. Never! Why? Because the finite cannot prove the infinite. And you say, “Well, I can’t do it.” And he will smirk. But, it’s not over yet. You say, “Now, friend, prove there is no God.” Of course, he can’t prove there is no God. He accepts by faith there is no God. All people are believers. There are those who believe in God, and those who believe there is no God. They are all believers.

You see, people are trying every so often, about every three or four months, there’ll be some new article in a newspaper about the origin of the universe. Do you ever notice that? But it’s always different; they never have the answer. Every now and then, a scientist will say some good words about God. That doesn’t give me any more faith in God. A little more faith in the scientist maybe, but not in God. What is science? Science

is the study of phenomena now existing. God asked old Job this question, in Job chapter 38, verse 4: “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” There were no scientists there. There’s no way that they can explain it. How do we understand it? By faith. You say, “Well, that takes a lot of belief.” Well, friend, I tell you, it takes less belief than to believe that nothing times nobody equals everything.

That’s what they believe. I mean, good night. No wonder the Bible says, “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.” God is the supreme fact, and the man who denies it is the supreme fool. “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.” Now, remember, faith is not contrary to reason; it’s just simply beyond reason. To go in the laboratory to try to prove God would be like tearing that piano apart to try to find a tune. You can’t do that.

Now, now faith—listen, we’re talking about the dynamic of faith—faith is the dynamic in spiritual wisdom. It is the dynamic in spiritual worship. Look again in verse 6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him”—worship is pleasing to God—“for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.” Now, you say, “God, you prove yourself to me, and I’ll serve You.” No, no, no, no. God’s not going to prove Himself to you. He’s not under any obligation to prove Himself to you. Faith is not a response to proof. That’s what Thomas demanded. And Jesus said, “Thomas, you’ve seen and you believe. Blessed are they that have not seen, but they believe.”

What is faith? Faith is the heart’s response to the character of God. When Jesus Christ came to this earth, He left all of the splendor, all of the glory, all of that in heaven, and came to this earth, and came in a very ordinary, nondescript way. The Bible says, “When we see Him, there’s no beauty that we should desire Him.” What do you think Jesus looked like? You think Jesus looked like the paintings that the painters paint? Like He just stepped out of a beauty salon? White flowing robes moving around with a dinner plate behind His head? Do you think that’s the way He looked? If that’s the way He looked, then why did Judas have to point Him out so they could take Him away?

There’s no beauty that we should desire Him. Very ordinary, nondescript person. But yet, there was in Him all of the glory, all of the serenity, all of the dignity, all of the majesty, all of the purity, all of the character of God, in human flesh, but not because of outward extravagance. He didn’t come in a jeweled chariot down to this earth, born in a palace. Born rather in a stable. And when He did miracles, they were not publicity stunts. Often He would say, “Don’t tell anybody about this.”

Now, friend, if we did them, we’d hit the road. Wouldn’t we? Don’t tell anybody about this. I don’t want that kind of fellowship. Oh, He did miracles that attested to the fact that He was who He said He was. I told you last week we have those people today who advertise miracles, and don’t do them. Jesus did them, and didn’t advertise them.

Why did He come as He did? Because He wanted what He wanted, which is faith.

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him.” He could buy us. He could bribe us. He could convince us. He could take the roof off this building and say, “Boo.” You’d say, “I believe.” He didn’t want that.

Faith is the heart’s response to the character of God. When your eye is right, it responds to light. When your ear is right, it responds to sound. When your heart is right, it responds to God, and that response is called F-A-I-T-H—faith, faith. And so, faith, friend, is the heart’s response to God. That’s the reason the Bible says, “Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” Unbelief never comes out of the head. Unbelief comes out of the heart. Faith is the dynamic of spiritual worship. Faith honors God, and God honors faith.

Now, here’s the third thing. We’re talking about the dynamic of faith. And we say it’s the dynamic in spiritual wisdom. It’s the dynamic in spiritual worship. And it is the dynamic in spiritual wealth—in spiritual wealth. Look again in Hebrews 11:6: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is”—now, watch this—“and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Well how do you seek Him? By faith. Jesus said, “Be it unto you according to your”—what? “Be it unto you according to your faith.”

Now, not according to your fame. Not according to your feeling. Not according to your future. Not according to your fortune. Not according to your friends. Not according to your fate. But according to your faith be it unto you. Faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven. If you pray without faith, you don’t get an answer. “What things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.” Pray, believe, you will receive. Pray in doubt, you do without.

Now, God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Faith is the dynamic of spiritual wealth. How spiritually strong are you? How wealthy are you? What kind of reserves do you have? Well, it is all according to your faith.

III. The Destination of a Life of Faith

Now, let’s move to the third and final point. We’ve talked about the description of faith. We’ve talked about the dynamic of faith. Let’s talk about the destination of a life of faith. You see, life is a journey. We’re headed somewhere. And it is not a casual journey. It is a race. Now, notice here in Hebrews 12. Let’s go on. We’re going to skip all of these champions of faith, because we’re going to come back and take them one by one. All we’re doing now is just laying the groundwork, okay?

All right, here in chapter 12, it’s kind of a conclusion to all of this—verses one and two: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus”—now, watch

this—“the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Now, the life of faith, the only way to live, is a life that has a destination. It is like a race. It has a goal. Now, faith helps us to find that goal, which is the will of God. You know what life is all about? It is to find, to follow, and to finish the will of God—to find, to follow, and to finish the will of God. That, my friend, is the destination of faith. That’s what faith is all about.

A. Be Motivated by the Saints Around Us

Now, how are we going to do that? Well, very quickly, I want to mention some ways. First of all, we’re to be motivated by the saints around us. We’re to be motivated by the saints around us. Listen. He says, “seeing we’re compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.” There they are. You can’t see them. But just as those people up there in the balcony looking down on us, all around us in the heavenly gallery, there in the stands, a great cloud of witnesses. These are the champions of faith who have gone before. Now, there they are in the ring of honor, up there looking down, and we happen to be on the field being watched by the gallery of the great, and they are cheering us on as we run the race. Abraham, Moses, Daniel—they’re up there in heaven saying, “Go, Adrian, go, go”—cheering us on. And that’s the reason I’m going to bring this series of messages on these champions of faith: so they can encourage you. We’re to be motivated by the saints around us.

B. Be Separated from the Surplus upon Us

Number two: we’re to be separated from the surplus upon us. Now, many of us are carrying extra weight. I found that out when I got on the scales this morning. The Bible says we’re to lay aside every weight. Now, these are not sins; these are weights. In the olden days, I used to be on the track team, to run. And, when I would run, I would get the lightest shoes I could get, and just a pair of very light shorts to wear, and a shirt that didn’t even have sleeves in it, just like a shirt made of a light nylon, and to get down there with your hands spread out and your feet there on that starting block, every muscle ready to go, headed toward the goal. Now, one thing I did not do: I never ran with an overcoat on—never. Anything wrong with overcoats? Not a thing in the world. Nice to wear in cold weather. But if you’re in a race, what do you do? You lay aside every weight, everything that is superfluous.

If you want to be a success in life, don’t get in the kindergarten stage of saying, “Is this right or is this wrong? Is this lawful, or is this unlawful?” Forget that. You ask yourself, “Is this thing a weight, or is it a wing?” And friend, never exchange wings for weights. There are some things that are not bad, in and of themselves. But you just

have to say, that's not for me—not if I want to run this race. There are certain things that I am going to do without. I have to be motivated by the saints around me. I am to be separated from the surplus that is upon me, any extra baggage.

C. **Be Liberated from the Snares Beneath Us**

Number three: I am to be liberated from the snares beneath me. We are to be liberated from the snares beneath us. The Bible also mentions, and the sin which doth so easily beset us. All of us know what a besetting sin is. It's something we've been wrestling with for a long time. Actually, this word "beset" means to entangle you. It's something that would trip you up. When you're running a race, ask what it is that keeps tripping you up. Where do you keep falling?

Now, notice what it says. It says, "lay it aside—lay it aside." Come to grips with it. Be done with it. Do you know what the great enemy of faith is? It is sin. Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. You say, "I have intellectual problems." No, you don't. You have dirty rotten sin. I told you that your heart will respond in faith when your heart is right. Now, if you're having trouble with faith, try repentance.

In the Bible, it always comes this way: repentance and faith. Never faith and repentance—repentance and faith. Try repentance. Get your heart right. Get the sin out of your life, and you'll be surprised how quickly the flowers of faith will grow, when you get the sin out of the soil of your life.

"Lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Well, you say, you know, this little sin I have is so precious—kiss, kiss, kiss. Is it? Is it worth God not answering your prayers? Is it worth a right relationship with God? Is it worth not being a mighty power for God? Is it worth it? No! Lay it aside. Be done with it.

D. **Be Activated for the Race Before Us**

Now, next, friend, we're to be activated for the race before us. Notice he says we're to run with patience the race that is before us. Patience means determination. God does business with those who do business. God has a course for you. God has set a race before you, and you're to get on the track.

E. **Be Dedicated to the Savior Above Us**

Last of all, be dedicated to the Savior above us. Look, if you will, in Hebrews 12:2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith."—looking unto Jesus. Friend, listen to me. It's not great faith in God that you need. Oh, we all want great faith in God. But that's a by-product. Not great faith in God that you need. Listen. Look at this pastor. It is faith in a great God. Did that sink in? It is faith in a great God. Do you know what faith is? It is the by-product of looking unto Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of our faith. He's the Alpha, the Omega. He's the one that fires the gun. He's the goal to which we run. He is the coach that coaches us as we run. Put your eyes upon

Jesus Christ.

If you needed to cross a bridge, and you're not sure it could hold you—let's say the Mississippi River bridge over here—you could tremble, and try to screw up your courage: that would be one way to do it—afraid the bridge might fall. But, on the other hand, you could step back, and look at it, and see semi-trucks, 18-wheelers, going back and forth, and automobiles. You could see the great pylons, and the steel, and the girders.

Now, you don't have to make yourself believe. You just go across the bridge because you see what it is, and what it can do. Look to Jesus. Fall in love with Jesus. Study Jesus. You'll find Him in the Word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Conclusion

Now, we're going to be talking about champions of faith. Now, you're going to live by faith, and you will not live without faith. Do you know Jesus? You can exist without faith, but you will never live without faith. Jesus said, I've come that you might have life. You put your faith where God has put your sins: on Jesus Christ.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you already know Jesus, I want you to pray for those round about you who may not know Him. And I want to lead you in a prayer now. God will give you all the faith you need to trust in Jesus. You don't even have to manufacture it. You just say, Lord, help me to believe, and He will. Are you ready to pray? Pray this prayer:

Dear God...—you're not certain that you're saved, pray it right now—Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. Right now, this moment, this moment—right now, this moment—I receive You by faith. I don't ask for a sign. I don't look for a feeling. I do it by faith. I trust You to save me. Because You died for me. You shed Your blood for me. You paid my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. You were raised from the dead. I believe it and I receive it. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. Begin now, Lord Jesus, to make me the person You want me to be. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Believing Is Seeing

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 21, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

HEBREWS 11:1

Outline

Introduction

- A. The Substance of Faith
- B. The Evidence of Faith
- I. Faith Is the Dynamic of Spiritual Wisdom
- II. Faith Is The Dynamic of Spiritual Worship
- III. Faith Is the Dynamic of Spiritual Wealth

Conclusion

- A. Be Saturated with the Word of God
- B. Be Separated from Sin
- C. Be Dedicated to the Son of God
- D. Be Activated by the Spirit

Introduction

Take God's Word please and find Hebrews chapter 11. Tonight I want to speak to you on this subject: Believing Is Seeing. I know that's backward from what we hear. I know that the doubting Thomas's of this world say, "Seeing is believing." The Bible teaches just the opposite. Jesus said to Mary, "that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see." Sometimes it might be good to get things backward. I heard recently about a man who said he thought that all of life is backward. He said, "He believed we ought to die first and get that over with. Then after we die and get that behind us, then the first thing we ought to do is move into a care home and be old for a while in the care home until we get so young they kick us out. And then when we are young enough to be kicked out of the care home, then we ought to go to work and work for a while until we make enough money to retire when we're young, so then we can enjoy retirement when we are young. And then after we've had that retirement, we graduate from college and then go to college, then we graduate from high school then go to high school. We don't have to worry about passing because we've already graduated, so you don't have to study. Then after that you become a child and have no responsibility, you just play all day long.

And after that you float for nine months and then go to heaven.” Sounds like a good plan to me—just everything, just backward.

Well, actually God has put everything in order and He’s a God of decency and in order. And I’m telling you, dear friend; it is not backward when we say, “believing is seeing.” I really want to talk tonight about faith. Look, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” And then verse 3: “Through faith we understand.” Then verse 6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Then chapter 12, verse 2: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” —F.A.I.T.H. forsaking all I trust Him. If there was ever a time for an earth shaking, mountain moving, devil defying, sin destroying, revival bringing, faith; this is the time, this is the age, this is the hour. And not only do we need to possess a faith, we need to have a faith that possess us.

I want you to think with me tonight about faith and this message that we’re calling, “Believing is Seeing.” First of all, I want you to think about what faith is. How does the Bible define faith? The truth of the matter is I can’t find a definition of faith in the Bible. I can find a description of faith. And a description of faith is found right here in Hebrews chapter 11 and I want you to see how the Bible describes faith.

A. The Substance of Faith

First of all, the Bible calls faith “substance.” Do you see it? “Faith is the substance of things hoped for.” Look at it right there in verse 1: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for.” Now that word “substance” in English is very much like the Greek word implies, “sub-stands.” That is, something beneath, “sub,” that you can stand on. That is, faith has reality to it. Faith is not hocus-pocus, faith is not spiritual smoke and mirrors, faith is not walking around on eggshells and jello, faith has spiritual steal and concrete in it, faith is substance. You know, a little boy said, “Faith is believing in what you know ain’t so.” No, that’s not what faith is.

People don’t understand faith. They have all kinds of different definitions of faith. They think that faith is a feeling of optimism or positivism, or “name it and claim it,” or hoping for the best, or whatever, those things are not faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Well you say, “Well, substance, I understand what that means that means reality, but what about things hoped for, what does that mean?” Well, as I have told you I guess numerous times, the word “hope” used in the Bible is very different from the word “hope” used in our vernacular. We use the word “hope” to speak of something that we desire to come to pass; perhaps it will perhaps it won’t, but we hope that it will. Very much like a girl who wants to get married gets a hope chest and she begins to put nice things in there, hoping that she’ll get married.

But the Bible word “hope” does not imply that at all. Oh, maybe like the little boy who

was seen there in the department store watching the rail on the escalator. And he just had his eye glued intently on it as the escalator rail was going around and around. The store manager asked him, “Sonny, are you lost?” He said, “No, I’m just waiting for my bubblegum to come back.” You know, there’s a certain kind of hope that is, maybe it will maybe it won’t. But the Bible word “hope” means, “absolute assurance based on the Word of God.” Now that’s what faith is. Faith is something real. It is an absolute assurance that is based on the Word of God. Faith is the substance of things hoped for.

B. The Evidence of Faith

And then the Bible says, “Faith is the evidence of things not seen,” substance and evidence. What is evidence? Well, evidence is something that says there’s something else. For example, if you’re trying to solve a crime, you look for evidence. Sherlock Holmes gets his magnifying glass and goes around picking up pieces of paper looking for evidence. In the Sherlock Holmes novels and plays and so forth, the detective looks for fingerprints, evidence.

Now faith that you have in your heart is evidence that God is up to something. You see when God massages your heart; He leaves his fingerprints on it. When God touches the human life, you can see the fingerprint of God. And that fingerprint of God, that touch of God, that’s the evidence that God is going to do something very real. And so it’s the evidence of what? Of things not seen, because there’s a great-unseen world out there and the only way that you know it is there is the evidence that you have in your heart. And the evidence that you have in your heart of a great-unseen world is faith. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. That evidence, again I want to say called “faith,” is the fingerprint of the hand of God when God massages the human heart.

Now, faith is therefore what? It is substance. What is it? It is evidence. It is substance of things, rock ripped promises that we have from the Word of God. It is evidence of things that we cannot see but we know are very real. Now that’s the description it.

I. Faith Is the Dynamic of Spiritual Wisdom

Now let me talk to you a little bit about the dynamic of it. What does faith do? I mean, why is faith necessary? Faith is necessary for three vital things that you need in your life: Wisdom, Worship, and Wealth. They all come by faith. For example, look, if you will, in verse 3: “Through faith we understand.” Do you see that? Faith is the dynamic of spiritual wisdom. By faith, we understand. There are things that you can only know by faith. I mean, how do we know how the world came into being? Well, look in verse 3: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Now what that means is, in plain English, that God cannot be argued, God cannot be explained. We just

accept the fact of God by faith. God must be accepted by faith. For example, in verse 6 it says, “He that comes to God must believe that he is.”

Have you ever thought about the fact that there’s no philosophical argument for God in the Bible? You know, I studied philosophy and I studied the philosophical reasons for God. We give them big reasons, the ontological and epistemological reasons for the existence of God. But the Bible doesn’t go through an exercise like that. The Bible just starts out, “In the beginning, God.” That’s just the way the Bible starts. And I accept that God exists by faith. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the hand of God and things were made out of things that were not seen. Moffitt puts it this way, he translates verse 3 by saying, “The visible is made out of the invisible.” That’s a good translation. The visible is made out of the invisible, how do you know that? By faith.

And so the nonbeliever, the humanist, the skeptic, he says, “Yeah, you Christians, you soft-headed Christians, you just accept by faith that there is a God.” And I say, “You’re absolutely right.” He says, “You can’t prove there’s a God.” And I say, “You’re absolutely right, you’re absolutely right. I can’t prove it; I just accept it by faith.” And so he gets real smug, but only for a second, and I say to him, “You accept by faith that there is no God.” I say, “Prove that there is no God.” He says, “I can’t prove there is no God.” And he can’t any more than you can prove there is a God. He is a believer just like you’re a believer. You believe in God, he believes there is no God, but both are believers. And there’s no way that he can disprove God.

You see, science can neither prove nor disprove God. To go into the laboratory, for example, to try to find God would be like taking a piano apart trying to find a song. And we just accept by faith, it’s not a matter of the mind; it’s a matter of the heart. The Bible says in Psalm 53, in verse 1: “The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.” He doesn’t have intellectual difficulties; he has moral difficulties. God has so created man that when man’s heart is right, man’s heart responds to God in a way that the Bible calls “faith.” So faith is necessary for spiritual wisdom, by faith we understand. We know things by faith that we could never learn any other way. That doesn’t mean that we crucify logic, as we’re going to tell you, faith goes beyond logic but it is not antithetical to logic.

II. Faith Is The Dynamic of Spiritual Worship

So faith is the dynamic of spiritual wisdom and faith is the dynamic of spiritual worship. Look, if you will, in verse 6: “But without faith it’s impossible to please God.” It’s impossible to please God no matter else you do, no matter how well you sing, how faithfully you attend, how much money you give, how circumspectly you walk, no matter what else you do. No matter how much you praise God, God would much rather have you believe Him than to praise Him. We think that worship is the sominbonem, the

“highest good.” No my dear friends, faith is the highest good.

You see, no matter what you might say about me, if I am not believable, if I do not have integrity and character, if you cannot believe that I say what I mean, mean what I say, and tell the truth; then if you say you don't believe me, even if I'm telling the truth, and you don't believe me, you have done the worst thing that you could possibly do to me, to my character. The Bible says, “He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar.” There is not a greater thing that you can do to worship God, to give God honor, to give God glory, than to believe Him. Without faith it is impossible to please God. You cannot please God by disbelieving God. And if you please God, it doesn't matter whom you displease and if you displease God, it doesn't matter whom you please. And the way to please God above all things is simply to believe God.

III. Faith Is the Dynamic of Spiritual Wealth

Faith is the dynamic of wisdom, by faith we understand; it's the dynamic of worship; it is the dynamic of spiritual wealth. The Bible says, “And he that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Now I don't know what you get from God. I don't know how much God blesses you. I don't know how much God uses you, but I tell you the measure of it. Jesus gave it according to your faith be it unto you. Faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven. If you do down to the department store here and you want something, you reach in your billfold and take out a credit card, take out a check, or take out some money and you pay for it because that's the medium of exchange. In the kingdom of heaven, faith is the medium of exchange. We get from God, God does for us, and God does through us, what we believe God for. Your spiritual life is not greater than your faith. “He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” and that is implied that you seek Him by faith. So what is the dynamic of faith? The dynamic of faith, my dear friend, is that it is necessary to wisdom, it is necessary to worship, it is necessary to spiritual wealth.

Now let me talk to you just a little bit about the dimensions of faith. I mean, is faith limited? God has just given us this wonderful eleventh chapter of Hebrews to show us that faith is absolutely unlimited. For example, it's not changed; it is not altered by appearances. You see, look if you will, in verse 1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Then verse 3: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Skip over to Chapter 11, verse 7, and read about Moses, “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” Now here he's talking about things that are not seen, things that are invisible.

Folks, there's an invisible world out here and it's very real. And the invisible world is just like the visible world, a very real world. Colossians 1, verse 16, says this concerning the Lord Jesus, "By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible." There is an invisible world that is very, very real. There's more to life than what you can see, touch, taste, smell or hear. And, in many ways, the invisible world is more real than the visible world. For example, the invisible world was here first. Hebrews 11, verse 3: "Things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Again, Moffitt says, "The visible was made of the invisible." The invisible was here first, the invisible will be here last. 2 Corinthians 4, verse 18: "The things which are seen are temporal, the things which are not seen are eternal." Anything you can see, that's temporary. The things that you cannot see are eternal. The things that are seen are temporal, that is they are here only for a time. That which you cannot see is that which lasts forever. So what you need to do as a child of God is to learn to see the invisible.

The Bible says in Hebrews 11, verse 24: "Moses didn't fear the king's wrath for he saw him who was invisible." Now, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he refused to enjoy the treasures and the pleasures of Egypt, because he esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater treasure than the pleasures and the treasures of Egypt. So here's Moses, Moses is over here and he is the grandson of Pharaoh, he's heir to the throne. He can be the potentate of the mightiest kingdom that the world has ever known to that time. He can have it all. He can have fame, he can have ease, he can have luxury, he can have power, and he sees that. All of that was seen. And then the Bible says in verse 24, "But he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,"—that's temporal—"for he endured as seeing him,"—that is eternal.

And so what Moses did by faith, he looked here and saw all of this, that's temporal. And then he took the telescope of faith and he looked off over here. He saw Jesus on the throne, by faith he saw that. He saw the kingdom of Christ, he saw the riches of Christ, he saw the glories of heaven, and then he looked back at this, that he could see. And over here no one else could see it; he just saw the invisible, which is very real. And Moses said, "Hey, I'm going that way. It just makes more sense. There are greater riches there than there are here." Now how did he see that? By faith, "he endured as seeing Him that is invisible." There's an invisible world.

We have a Dothan, Alabama down here that's named after Dothan in the Bible. I've been to Dothan in the Holy Land where Elisha was there in Dothan and he had a servant. And the servant came to him and he said, "Master we are in trouble. The mountains around are filled with the enemies of God and your enemies and they're here

to destroy us and we don't know what we're going to do." You read the story in 2 Kings chapter 6, beginning in verse 15: "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, 'Alas, my master! How shall we do?'" —means, we're in trouble—"And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them,"—and the servant looked around and said, "Well there's just two of us," and here are all of these armies. Now I want you to listen to this: "And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." That's one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible to me. And I get to thinking no matter where I go that God's angels are just all around me, when I'm walking in the Spirit, when I'm obeying God.

Friend there's an unseen world there. The mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire and this young man couldn't see it until God opened his eyes that he might see the invisible. When Moses had to make a choice, how did he make it? He saw the invisible. When Elisha was in trouble, how did he endure? He saw the invisible. When the Apostle Paul suffered, by the way the Apostle Paul suffered as few men ever suffered, but I want you to listen to this scripture: 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 17, the apostle Paul says, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment." I say, "Wait a minute Paul. Do you call being beaten light affliction? Do you call being stoned light affliction? Do you call fighting with wild beasts light affliction? Do you call being put in prison light affliction?" Paul says, "Oh yes—our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Are you suffering? You better get your eyes off of that which you can see and get your eyes on that which you cannot see. I'm telling you folks listen to me tonight. Faith, the dimension of faith is this; it's not limited by what you can see. There's an unseen world. It was here first, it'll be here last, and if you have a choice to make, you better be like Moses and make it in the light of that which can't be seen. You better see the unseeable so you can know the unknowable and do the impossible. If you're in trouble and the enemy's all around you, you better be like Elisha and say, "Lord I see the mountains also full of horses and chariots of fire around about me." If you're like the Apostle Paul and you're going through trouble and pain and affliction, you need to be able to say, "This is going to pass. The things that are seen are temporal. The things that are not seen are eternal."

Conclusion

Well, let me just come and wrap this up and talk to you for just a very few moments about not only the definition or description of this faith, and not only, dear friend, the dynamic of it, and the dimensions of it, but let me talk to you about the development of it. How can you have a faith like this? I mean, how can you have strong faith? I want to go back or at least from another viewpoint, and show you one more time how to have strong faith. Because, believe me, faith is, well, there's nothing more important. Faith pleases God.

A. **Be Saturated with the Word of God**

Now there are four things that you must get in your heart and mind. I'm going to give them to you very quickly, if you would have strong faith. Now listen to me. First of all, you must be saturated with the Word of God. Look, if you will, in Hebrews Chapter 12, verse 1, he says, "Wherefore,"—do you see the word "wherefore?" What does the word "wherefore" refer to? It refers to everything he said in Chapter 11, the illustrations, the promises, and the precepts. "Wherefore,"—on the basis of the Word of God—"seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Now, God gave this book, God gave this Word to engender faith in your life. Romans 10, verse 17, says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." Dwight L. Moody was a man of great faith but he gave this testimony, he said, "In my younger ministry I used to pray and ask God for faith. I used to beg God for faith. I used to pray for faith. I used to request faith." And very frankly he said, "I was weak in faith." But then he said, "I discovered Romans 10 verse 17, 'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.'" And he said, "I stopped praying and asking God for faith and I began to saturate myself with the word of God and I found faith welling up in my life."

B. **Be Separated from Sin**

Are you listening? You want to have a strong faith? Saturate yourself with the Word of God; be saturated with the Word of God, saturated with the Bible. Secondly, look at it again, separated from sin. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,"—now watch it—"let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Weights are things that weigh us down; sins are things that trip us up. You don't run a race with an overcoat on. You don't run a race with your feet chained. He says, "Get rid of this excess baggage. Get rid of these things that will entangle you, so you can run the race. And the race is the race of faith."

Now, tonight, is there in your heart any unconfessed, unrepented of sin? If there is, you're going to have difficulty believing God. Do you know that the great enemy of faith

is sin? “Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.” Unbelief does not come out of the head it comes out of the heart. And in this third chapter of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews says, “Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” Unbelief is not a mental problem; it always comes out of an evil heart.

You see when your heart is right it’s easy to believe God. And so, if there’s sin in your life that’s the reason you’re having difficulty believing God. Get your heart right and pure with God. Be saturated with the Word, separated from sin. And I don’t know what your pet sin may be. I don’t know what it is—whether it’s pornography, maybe it’s dishonesty, maybe it’s lust, maybe it’s pride, or laziness—I don’t know what it is, but I’ll tell you one thing: It’s not worth the price you’re paying for it. Because you know what’s happening, it is killing the faith in your heart. There is nothing more damning, more debilitating, more stultifying to faith than sin in the heart. “Lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.” And you’re going to have to lay it aside. Don’t say, “God take it away.” He’s not going to take it away. You’re trying to put the blame on Him. You lay it aside.

C. Be Dedicated to the Son of God

Now watch, you want to have strong faith? Saturate with the Word, saturated with the Word of God, separated from sin, and then, thirdly, dedicated to the Son of God. Look, if you will, again in verse 2: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” You see, when you put your eyes upon Jesus Christ—and how do you do that?—through the Word because this book is written about Jesus. As you study the Bible and you discover who Jesus Christ is faith is the byproduct of looking to Jesus. He is the author and the finisher of our faith. He’s the One that engenders faith and He is the goal towards which we’re running. He’s the One to which faith brings us. He’s the author; He’s the finisher of our faith. He is the One that pulls the trigger that starts the race. He is the end of the goal that welcomes you there. He’s the One that gives you the strength to run the race. He’s the coach and you keep your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, it’s not primarily great faith in God that you need. It’s faith in a great God. To see who Jesus Christ is, to know Jesus Christ, to understand Jesus Christ, is to have faith automatic in your heart and your life because he engenders faith in your heart to know Him and to love Him.

D. Be Activated by the Spirit

Now watch, saturated with the Word, separated from sin, dedicated to Jesus, and then activated by the Spirit. He says here, “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Now, do you know the difference between faith and belief? Belief is the first cousin of faith but it is not faith. Faith is belief with legs on it. Faith does something. Faith acts.

Faith moves. The reason that some of us, very frankly, don't really understand faith is we want it all to be academic. But if you will read this eleventh chapter of Hebrews, which is God's hall of fame, God's hall of the faithful, all of them did something by faith. "By faith Moses forsook Egypt, by faith Noah built a boat, by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice, by faith Abraham obeyed God." By faith they did something. Saturated with the Word, separated from sin, dedicated to Jesus, activated by the Spirit, and you'll just find that faith growing in your heart and in your life. Let's believe God.

Bow your heads and pray. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father, thank you for your Word tonight and I pray that You will make us strong believers in Jesus dear name. And Lord I pray tonight should there be anyone here who is not saved that tonight they would give their heart to Jesus and be saved. In His wonderful name, Amen.

Understanding Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 6, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:1

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

HEBREWS 11:1

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Nature of Faith
- II. The Necessity of Faith
- III. The Nurture of Faith
 - A. You Must Be Saturated with the Word of God
 - B. You Must Be Dedicated to the Son of God
 - C. Activated by the Spirit of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn please to Hebrews chapter 11. I want to talk to you tonight about understanding faith. Now, folks, I don't know what else you do in the Christian world but if you don't believe God everything else is a failure because the Bible says, “...*without faith it is impossible to please him*” (Hebrews 11:6). And, if you displease God it doesn't matter whom you please and really if you please God it doesn't matter whom you please. And, the way to please God is to believe God and in order to believe God you're going have to understand what we're talking about when we talk about faith.

Nowhere in the Bible can I find a definition of faith. We do find a description of faith and that description of faith closely akin to a definition, but not exactly the same thing is found in Hebrews chapter 11. And, it's the great faith chapter linked to chapter 12, but let's look at the first verse. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Hebrews 11:1). Now, folks, faith is so vital, it is so important. As a matter of fact, the early Christians were described by this phrase, they were called, *believers* before they were called “Christians.” As a matter of fact, no one has a right to call himself a Christian who is not a believer. That's just a description of a Christian, but not only is faith our description, faith is our duty.

Some people were asking the Lord Jesus what should they do to do the works of God and Jesus answered in John chapter 6 and verse 29: “*Jesus answered and said*

unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29). That's your duty, just to believe on God, your chief duty is faith and faith is the fountain out of which all other duty and all other service grows. But, not only is faith our description and faith our duty, it is our delight. What a joy to believe God and to know God through faith. So, let's just think tonight as we have a study tonight on understanding faith.

I. The Nature of Faith

First of all, what is the nature of faith? A little boy said, "Faith is believing what you know ain't so." Well, that's not what faith is, that's just the opposite of faith, faith is believing what you know is so. Now, the word *faith* here may also be translated "belief" or "trust" and basically it involve, first of all, an agreement. You mentally agree that something is true. In your heart you say our heartfelt, "Amen" to what God has said. You're persuaded, but that agreement is not yet faith. That agreement turns to an attitude. The attitude that comes out of that agreement is confidence, trust.

First of all, you believe it to be true, and then because you believe it to be true, you put confidence and trust in it. And, it's not quite faith, it's very close now and then you act on it and it becomes faith. Agreement plus attitude plus action is true Bible faith. As you study the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews it tells what people did by faith. Faith is belief, but it is more than belief. It is belief with legs on it and when you have feet to your belief and legs to your belief you have real belief, real faith.

Now, here God describes faith. Look at it in chapter 11 and verse 1: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for"—that's the first description. Secondly, he says—"faith is the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Now, look at the word *substance*. That word in the Greek is very close to our English word, *substance*. So, you think of something beneath you, you think of something substantial, or something to stand upon. Now, what God is saying is that, "Faith is something substantial that you can stand on, faith is substance." Faith is not hocus, pocus, willy-nilly, there it goes, "What was it?" type of stuff, faith is not smoke and mirrors.

When you're living a life of faith you're not walking a round on eggshells and Jell-O. Faith has steel and concrete in it, spiritual steel, spiritual concrete, but faith is substance, it's something that's solid that you can rest on. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1). Now, I've said this the last month a lot. But, we need to understand what hope means in the Bible. In the Bible, the word *hope* doesn't mean something that you wished, or an uncertainty. But, what it describes is a certainty that is based upon a divine promise that you are anticipating with gladness. Now, you can have a certainty that is based upon divine promise like judgment, but you don't anticipate it with joy so you wouldn't call judgment a hope it's just a certainty.

But, the second coming of Jesus is called a blessed hope. You know He's coming and you're praying even so come Lord Jesus. So, the Bible word *hope* is a certainty based upon the promise of God that you are anticipating. Now, look at it this way. Faith is the reality, the substantiation that we're standing on things that we know are coming to pass because God has promised them. Does that make it clearer? Things that we know are going to happen, because God has promised them, things that are hoped, or not just things that we wish, but things that we have substantiated because God has promised. And, so the things that are hoped for are the things that we are assured of because we have a Word from God.

So, that's the first description of faith, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" that it is the reality of the thing that God has promised, and we know are going to transpire (Hebrews 11:1). And, then he goes on and gives us the second description. "Faith is the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Now, the word *evidence* here means "conviction." They get enough evidence against you in a court, they convict you, and faith is the conviction of things not seen. Now, we say in this world, "What you see is what you get." We say that, "Seeing is believing." But, God says, "What you get is what you don't see and believing is seeing." You see, there is a seen world and an unseen world and the unseen world is more real than the seen world. So, a Christian ought to be living above see level, that is, S-E-E. He ought to be living above that which he can see with his eyes.

Now, sometimes when we talk about having faith, these people say, "Why don't you talk about things that are real?" And, "about things that are real" they mean to say like this microphone, this pulpit stand, these clothes, those pews you are sitting on, the carpet, the walls, and so forth. They call all of that real, but folks, I want to tell you that there is an unseen world that is more than the seen world.

Colossians says that Jesus, "created all things seen and unseen" (Colossians 1:16). And, He created the unseen world before He created the seen world and then He made the things that we can see out of things that you cannot see. Now, look in verse 3, look at it. "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God*"—now, read it carefully here—"*so that things which are seen*"—that is, this pulpit stand were made out of things—"*were not made of things which do appear*" (Hebrews 11:3). Now, that's kind of backing into it in the King James English. Moffatt translates "That which is seen was made out of the unseen, that which you can see is made out of what you can't see."

I mean, dear friend, God made the material world out of the invisible world. The invisible world was here first. The invisible world will be here last. When all of this has evaporated and turned to nothingness 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verse 18 says: "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things*

which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). Everything that you can see passes away, it's temporal, it has time value, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

Now, faith is the conviction of things not seen, there's another world that is more real than the world that you can see. You say, "Well, I just don't understand that." Well, we of all people ought to understand it, our Great Grand pappies may have had difficulties understanding it, but we ought to be able to understand it. For example, this pulpit is made of atom, and those atoms are invisible to the naked eye, and they're bounded together by electrical forces. And, this thing is actually made out of what can't be seen.

Let me give you another illustration, in the air tonight, in the atmosphere there is music and drama, sports and news, all kinds of beautiful fantastic pictures in the air, right here in this room. And, all we'd have to do to prove it is to get a television set, plug it in, tune it, and we'd just draw all of that right out of the air and we'd see it. Now, where is it? It's right here, you can't see it now can you? 'Cause you don't have a tuner. Now, if you told your Great Grand pappy that he'd say, "Call the guy with the butterfly nets and carry him away." But, we can understand that now in this generation.

I mean, right here in this room, there is an unseen electronic world all around us, you understand that now, don't you? You don't understand how it works, but it's still true, that you know that it is here. Now, folks, if we'd never heard of television, personally, it'd still be true and our disbelief and our denial wouldn't change the fact. There's a spiritual world out there, the fact that you've never heard of it or don't believe in it doesn't take away the reality.

Now, folks, faith is this, look. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" it is the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). It is saying, "I believe that there is an unseen world out there and that's what is going to enable you to live victoriously in this world." Just fast-forward to verse 24 of this chapter. "*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*" (Hebrews 11:24–25). And, by the way, there is pleasure in sin. The devil is too smart to go fishing without any bait on his hook. Why did Moses choose affliction rather than pleasure? Why did he choose to suffer rather than to be rich? Why did he turn his back on the pleasures and the treasures of Egypt? Well, notice verse 26: "He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches"—Now, he just gave up dirt for diamonds—"He esteemed the approach for Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, now watch it, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:26–27) Moses had faith and faith sees the invisible.

Now, go back to our definition again. Now, "Faith in the substance of things hoped

for” the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). There is a great invisible world and faith stands on the Word of God, faith says, “There’s promise.” It is a blessed hope, I lay hold on it, I have a conviction of it though I have not seen it with my eyes, it is real. And, faith reaches into the future, and it brings the future into the present, and the eye of faith sees.

II. The Necessity of Faith

Now, let’s talk a little bit about the necessity of faith. We’ve talked about the nature of it what is the necessity faith? Well, first of all, you’ll never ever really understand anything without faith. Notice in verse 3: “Through faith we understand,” “Through faith we understand” (Hebrews 11:3). Now, you can go to the greatest universities of this land, you can have more degrees than a thermometer, but if you don’t have faith you really don’t understand what it’s all about. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Hebrews 11:3).

Now, you see in the Bible God is never explained. You expect to find an explanation of God somewhere in the Bible? You don’t find it. A defense of God somewhere in the Bible? An argument for God somewhere in the Bible? God is never explained, God is never argued, God is never argued, God is just presented. The Bible just starts out, “*In the beginning God...*” (Genesis 1:1). That’s it. He’s just simply presented. And, the Bible writers never try to prove the existence of God and if you’re smart you’ll never try to prove the existence of God.

Every now and then I’ll pick up a book where somebody says, “To prove that God exists.” The only way that you’re going to know that God exists is not by any kind of proof, but by faith Look in verse 6: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is...” (Hebrews 11:6). You’re just believing. “Well,” you say, “Now, wait a minute, that’s hard. I want proof.” And, the skeptic will come to you and he’ll say, “Prove there is a God.” If anybody ever says that to me, I just smile and I say, “I’m sorry, I can’t.” and, he’ll just laugh like he’s won the argument. And, I say, “Wait a minute, we’re not finished yet, I want you to prove there is no God.”

Now, you see listen, the finite can never prove or disprove the infinite. Nobody can prove that God exists, but correspondingly nobody can prove that God does not exist. The scientist can never prove how the world came into existence, they can talk, they can posture, they can have a hypothesis, but they can never prove it. Notice verse 3: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God” (Hebrews 11:3).

You see, science is limited, do you know what science is limited to? Science is limited to the laboratory, science has to study phenomenon and processes that now

exist, something that they can weigh, something that they can measure, something that they can feel, something that they can see. But, when it comes to the creation of the world silence must prevail because the scientist wasn't there. There's no way that he can say how it happened. Do you know what God asked Job? Job chapter 38 and verse 4? Job was kind of arguing with the Lord and God says, "Now, shut up, Job. I want to ask you a question, '*Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding*' (Job 38:4). Now, Job, you're trying to tell Me how I ought to run things. Son, were you there when I made it all? Where were you, Job, when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Folks, the only way that you're going to understand how it all happened, you'll never understand it in the laboratory, no scientist on earth ever will. He can't 'cause he doesn't have the tools, he just simply wasn't there, there's nothing he can measure, there's nothing he can observe. All he can do is have a hunch.

Now, that's the reason when a person says to me, "You prove there's a God" I just simply say, "Hey, just prove there's no God." You can't. Now, he says, "You Christians just believe there's a God by faith." I say, "That's right and you believe there is no God by faith." By faith he says, "There is no God." See, all people are believers. I believe there's a God. He believes there is no God. The atheist cannot demonstrate there is no God. To go into the world that God made and in a laboratory to try to prove God would be like trying to tear that piano apart to find a song. You, dear friend, can never prove or disprove God. Faith is so necessary to understanding. Until you come with a child like faith you'll never understand what it's all about.

Now, it's not a matter of the mind. Somebody says, "Well, I know a brilliant man who doesn't believe in God." Well, do tell. I know some brilliant people who believe in God. "Well," you say, "I know a stupid man who believes in God." I know some stupid people who don't. It is not a matter of reason. Listen, what we believe is not contrary to reason. What we believe is beyond reason. Do you see the difference? It is above reason, by faith we understand. That's the reason the Bible says in Psalms 53, verse 1: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God...*" (Psalm 53:1). You see, you know how much time the Bible gives to atheism? One half of one verse, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God..." (Psalm 53:1).

Now, notice the fool doesn't say in his mind, "There is no God." The word for *fool* here is the word "noble" and it literally means not a person who is mentally deficient, but a person who is morally deficient. The fool does not say in his head, "There is no God," not at first. At first he says in his heart, "There is no God." And, what he believes in his heart shows up in his head. Have you ever noticed how complicated the arguments for not believing in God are? They're worse than the people who try to prove there is a God. They come with these double-jointed, odd-tooth's convoluted arguments, trying to prove there is no God.

Have you ever noticed how simple it is for a child to believe in God? It's easy to believe in God because it comes natural, it's supposed to. The Bible says of God that "God has set eternity in our hearts." (Ecclesiastes 3:11) We're all born with a God consciousness, a person has to argue against what he knows innately to believe in God. I told you the other Sunday, but I think it's a good time to remind you of the Brown Trucking Firm over in Atlanta, Georgia where they give a lie detector test, a polygraph test to all of those who work for them before they hire them. And, one of the questions is, "Do you believe in God?" And, every person one hundred percent who said, "No," the thing said, every one of them, the thing said, "Liar." "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 53:1). Now, it shows up in his head, but it begins in his heart.

A child was raised in an atheistic family, taught from childhood there is no God, there is no God, one day the little boy in that family looked into the face of his daddy and said, "Daddy, do you think God knows we don't believe in Him?"

Think about it. You see, folks, it is by faith that you understand God. You'll never understand God, we accept God by faith. Now, listen friend, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 53:1). The supreme fact is God. And, the supreme fool is the man who denies the supreme fact. Faith is substance, faith is evidence, that's the nature of it, the necessity of it. You'll never understand anything until you begin with faith.

But, look not only is it necessary to understanding God, it's so necessary to pleasing God. Look in verse 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). You see, if God wanted to, God could remove your need for faith, God could prove Himself to you, God could move into this auditorium right now and perform a miracle. He could just take the roof and say, "Boo" and everybody would say, "I believe." If he wanted to, I mean, He could move in here and show Himself with a dazzling display of glory.

Why doesn't He do that? Well, if He did that He would cheat you and rob Himself of the glory that He wants. You see, God wants you to respond to Him by faith. God could threaten you, God could bribe you, God could coheres, God could overwhelm you, and take away the need for faith. But, if He did there would be something missing that God wanted you to have and it's faith because faith pleases God. Why does faith so please God? Because faith gives glory to God, faith honors God.

How does faith honor God? When you understand what faith is, faith is a response to the character of God, to the character of God. Not primarily what God can do, but just simply who God is and faith responds to God's nature, God's character by believing in God. Faith loves God not for what God can do, but for who God is. That's the reason when the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world He laid aside glory, and all of that

majesty, and all of that beauty that was inherently His.

He left all of that in Heaven and He stepped out of that throne room, came down through that dark Judean night, was born through the portals of a virgin's womb and where? In a little insignificant Middle East village called Bethlehem, in a barn with cow dung on the floor, laid on straw, wrapped in course cloths, worked in a carpenter's shop, "...*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46). You did brother, Nazareth, of all places, that's where the hillbillies were, that's where the hicks were, but you got three good daughters, brother. That's where Jesus was reared and the Bible says when we see Him there's "...*no form nor comeliness...there is no beauty that we should desire him*" (Isaiah 53:2). Nothing extra on the outside, He left all of that, being in the form of God He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation took upon Him the form of a servant and humbled Himself. And, yet He said to people, "...*followeth me...*" and they followed Him (John 8:12).

"Well," you say, "They followed Him because of the miracles that He did." Oh no, those were the people who left Him first, those miracle mongers. As a matter of fact, many time when He would perform a miracle He'd say, "Don't tell anybody about this, this is not P.R., these are miracles of compassion. And, yet in a way to authenticate who I am. But, they were not primarily means to get a following." There were those who followed Him because of the miracles, the loaves and the fishes, they were the first to leave, but people followed Him for another reason. They saw in Him the character of God.

He laid aside the glory and the splendor, but He did not lay aside His nature. He was God and there was that inner beauty, He was full of grace and truth. And, there was something in the hearts of men and women when they saw Him they responded to Him. And, that response was not primarily a response to what He could do, it was primarily a response to who He was. Are you seeing the difference? Not to what He had, but to who He was, His very essence, His very nature, His character, full of grace and truth. And, they followed Him because there was something about Him that caused their hearts to respond and that response to their heart is character to His nature the Bible calls faith and that pleases God, that pleases God.

Faith is a response of your heart to the nature, the character of God. When your heart is right, your heart responds to God by faith like your eye responds to light when your eye is right, like your ear is right. Your heart responds to God when your heart is right and that heart response is what the Bible calls *faith*. And, friend, when you respond to God that way it pleases God because God is saying, "These poor folks are not asking Me to prove Myself. They're not demanding that I cohere them. They don't demand that I do some celestial trick."

"Oh," they say, "Give us a sign from Heaven." Jesus said, "No sign will be given to

this sinful and adulterous generation.” (Matthew 12:39) They said, “...*come down from the cross*’ and we’ll believe” (Mark 15:30). Thank God He didn’t, but oh folks, there were those who believed even when He was on that cross that dying thief turned to Him and said to Him, with a cross for a throne and spikes for a scepter, and thorns for a crown, he said, “I thy Kingdom” and Jesus said, “...*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*” (Luke 23:43). Folks, faith pleases God, without faith it is impossible to please Him. You see, faith is necessary to understanding, by faith we understand, faith is necessary for pleasing God, for without faith it to please Him.

Now, you get this right in your heart tonight. By faith we give God pleasure and through faith God gives us treasure. Now, look at verse 6 again. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). You receive what you need in this world by faith, whatever it is, faith, is the medium of exchange in the Kingdom of Heaven. The medium of exchange in our world today is money in the Kingdom of Heaven it’s faith, bid unto you according to your faith.

Now, what do you need? Well, whatever you need you’re going to receive through faith, “...He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). You need to be saved? Let me give you some verses. Don’t turn to them, just jot them down, Habakkuk 2:4: “...*the just shall live by his faith.*” Romans 1:17: “...*The just shall live by faith.*” Galatians 3:11: “...*The just shall live by faith.*” Hebrews 10:38: “...*the just shall live by faith...*” You get the idea God’s trying to tell us something? Four times “The just shall live by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

You want to be saved? You’re not saved by doing good works, joining a church, living a good life, giving your money, all of these things are well and good, they can’t save, “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic monk, a scholar, he had been taught salvation by works. He had felt that if he could only keep enough church observances. Enough ritual, if he could only do enough, pray enough, that somehow he might make it into Heaven.

One day in Rome he was on his knees praying on what was called the Santa Scala, the Holy Stairs. Stairs believed by these people at that time to be the stairs that Jesus ascended up to Pilate’s judgment hall. And, he was on each stair doing penitents, asking God to forgive him, on knees, climbing those stairs trying as it were to get right with God, trying to find peace with God. And, he had been studying however the book Romans and the Word of God came into his heart like a shaft of gospel sunlight. And, God took a truth and exploded it in his heart and mind. “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). And, he saw and saved by grace through faith.

You say, “Well, everybody knows that.” Folks, they didn’t use to know it and thank God you know it and there are millions in the world who don’t know it. And, even us,

our, our city of Memphis, Tennessee, if you were to go to the Mid-America Mall, or to a shopping mall somewhere, and just start asking people, “How do you get to Heaven when you die?” Most of them would say, “Do good, live right, be a church member, be baptized, do this or that.” They still don’t understand, dear friend, that you’re saved by grace through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God not of works lest should boast. Friend, when you believe God, when you trust God, you honor God. Faith honors God and therefore God honors faith, it’s necessary to salvation.

I’ll tell you what else it’s necessary for, it’s necessary for sanctification. You want to live a good life? How do you live the Christian life? You live the Christian life the same way you got it. The Bible says, “As you receive the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him” (Colossians 2:6). How did you receive Jesus? By faith. Then how do you walk? By faith. The Galatians had trusted Christ to save, and then there were some people who said, “Now, that you’ve trusted Christ to save your salvation by the way that you work.” And, Paul said, “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you...*” (Galatians 3:1). You begun in the Spirit, now you’re going to be made perfect in the flesh.

Oh friend, listen, you’re saved by faith and you walk by faith. And, the Bible says in 1 John chapter 5, verse 4, watch it: “Here is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith” (1 John 5:4). You’re going to face a world out there tomorrow and as they say in the vernacular, “It’s a jungle out there.” Now, look folks, when you get outside the stain glass prison, when you get outside the salt shaker, you get out there tomorrow sitting here and singing these wonderful songs, you’re with your brothers and sisters in Christ, you get out there in the meat ringer, how are you going to live? By faith. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

You want to be sanctified? Oh, trust God. Listen, you live the Christian life not by trying, but by trusting. Now, some of you are going to do battle with the devil. Some of you have boys and girls in your family who are on narcotics. Some of you have children who are sleeping with someone else, even rooming with someone else of the opposite sex without the benefit of a marriage license. Some of you have children who are agnostic, some have children who have denied the faith. Some of you have children who are demon possessed. How are you going to deal with those children?

Your heartaches and breaks, you would give every drop of blood in your veins to deliver those children. Well, friend, let me give you a verse of Scripture, show you how faith is necessary in this battle with Satan, there was a demon possessed boy in Mark chapter 9. And, the disciples had tried to cast the demon out of this boy and they could not. And, the father came to Jesus and the father said, “Jesus, I have brought him to your disciples and they couldn’t do anything for him. Lord, if you can oh, if you can, please do something.” Now, notice this father was putting the “if” on the Lord Jesus. And, Jesus ups the “if” right back on this father. And, “*Jesus said unto him, If thou canst*

believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

Now, the problem was not with the Lord, the Lord was able, but the Lord said to this father who had this demon possessed boy, "If you can believe all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23). *"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief"* (Mark 9:24). And, I love that folks, because his faith was there. It wasn't perfect, but it was there. Now, learn this, God does not demand of you perfect faith, faith is like a seed, you can take that seed and plant it. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24). And, *"When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him"* (Mark 9:25).

Now, the point is this, that not only can we, but must we believe for other people. I believe by faith we can break the power of Satan in the hearts and lives of our young ones and our neighbors, our husbands, our wives, our parents. We must believe for these people. They sometimes cannot believe for themselves until we believe for them in intercession and prayer coming to our Lord in desperation. I'm telling you that faith is necessary in salvation, I'm telling you it's necessary in sanctification, I'm telling you it's necessary in spiritual warfare, it is necessary in supplication.

Matthew 21, verse 22: *"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive"* (Matthew 21:22). Have you ever prayed and at the end of your prayer said something like this, "Now, Lord, we really trust you for this and we really believe. Amen." And, you knew you didn't believe. How many of you, now lift your hands, be honest. I'm lifting mine, go ahead and be honest. I'm going to ask you one more time, because I don't want you without. I'm not going to trick you or trap you. I just want you, how many of you have ever said, "Lord, I ask you for this and I really believe you for it. And, I thank you Lord, amen." Let me see your hands. Now, that's much better.

Now, look, I want to ask you another question. How many of you when you said that knew in your heart that you really didn't believe. Would you lift your hand just like I am? Now, look folks, sometimes we say, "We believe" and think by saying it that makes us believe. We think maybe we can fool God. We don't fool Him. We think maybe we can fool us, but when we examine it we didn't even fool us. I want to tell you something else. How many of you have prayed and asked God for something and when you did as you were praying you felt that faith in that? And, you did believe and you knew it. I have and you have too. And, I'll tell you every time God answered your prayer, every time, every time when you believe, when you trust, what things so ever ye desired, when you pray, believe that you receive and ye shall have it.

That's very interesting. Faith isn't something God gives you to spend for whatever you want, God gives faith when He wants something done. You see, if you have faith to

spend for whatever you want, suddenly you've become God. So, in order for God to remain sovereign, God only gives you faith when He wants something done and you're able to latch on to it. Now, faith for what God wants to do comes through a certain channel and I want to give you this and I'll be finished tonight.

III. The Nurture of Faith

But, I want to show you not only the necessity of faith, but let me show you now for just a few moments here the nurture of faith. How do you get this faith? Now, we're in chapter 11, just turn over to chapter 12 and let look beginning in verse 1: *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses"* (Hebrews 12:1). Now, "the great cloud of witnesses" are just like those folks in the grand stand at a ball game they're all of the people in Hebrews 11 who did all of these glorious things by faith. They're up there in the grandstand, now we're on the playing field, it's our turn, they're the alumni and we're on the playing field. *"let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us"*—now watch, who's still talking about faith—*"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Now, folks, faith can never be manufactured. You cannot make yourself believe, faith is a gift, just listen to these Scriptures. Don't turn to them, were running out of time 2 Peter 1, verse 1: *"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith..."* (2 Peter 1:1). Faith is something that you obtain. Listen to this. Ephesians 2, verse 8: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). What is the gift of God? The faith. Philippians 1, verse 29, listen to this verse. *"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake"* (Philippians 1:29).

Now, I'm not talking about suffering, but I'm saying it is given to you to believe in Him. God gives you faith. Now, in order for God to give you faith there is a channel that nurtures that faith, and I want to give you three things here very quickly. And, I'm not going to illuminate them or expand them, but I want to give them to you.

A. You Must Be Saturated with the Word of God

First of all, you must be saturated with the Word of God. Now, notice that first word in chapter 12: "Wherefore seeing," now that refers to what God has said in chapter 11 (Hebrews 12:1). And, really what has been said in all of Hebrews up to that point. Now, God gave us an entire chapter in The Word on faith because Romans 10, verse 17 says that: *"...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Remember we said that, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1). The "things hoped for" is this, you must have a word from God. God must speak to you.

God must give you a Bible hope, a reason.

B. You Must Be Dedicated to the Son of God

Now, secondly, not only must you be saturated with the Word of God, but you must be dedicated to the Son of God. Look again, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...” (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Now, we must learn to have faith by looking at Jesus and looking away from every thing else, don't spend a lot of time examining your faith, just keep your eyes upon Jesus. Know Jesus, love Jesus, study Jesus, and in order to look to Jesus you have to “...lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset...” you (Hebrews 12:1).

C. Activated by the Spirit of God

Third and final thing before we close. Saturated with the Word of God, dedicated to the Son of God, and, activated by the Spirit of God. Let us lay aside every weight and to run the race that is set before us.

Conclusion

Now, listen, we're to run with endurance, we to keep on keeping on. How does a runner develop his legs? By running. How do you develop your faith? By keeping on living the Christian life, you run the race that is set before you by enduring. This entire eleventh chapter that it refers to is an action chapter. I want you to find something today, tomorrow that you can do by faith. I want you to let God drop a promise into heart as you get into the Word of God and God gives you hope you begin to develop your faith, grow in faith and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Wings of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 14, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:1–2

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

HEBREWS 11:1

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Introduction

Take God's Holy Word and turn to that dynamic chapter on faith, Hebrews chapter 11, and look at me for a moment after you've found it, and I want to tell you something about faith. Tonight, I really want to talk to you about faith, how to live the Christian life. Now the law says run, but it gives us no legs. Faith says fly, but it give us wings. And I want to talk to you about, "The Wings of Faith." The world, as we've seen, has broken the sin barrier. Science has broken the sound barrier. It's time we broke the faith barrier. It's time we learn to believe in God. The need of the hour is for an earth-shaking, mountain-moving, devil-defying faith in Almighty God. If there was ever a time that we need faith, it is this time and this moment. The early Christians were not first called Christians. They were first called believers, believers. That's the way they designated themselves. That's the way they were described. No one has a right to call himself a Christian who is not a believer. Jesus said in John 6:29: "...This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Our description and our duty is to believe. When

God looks at you, God would measure you this way: Not according to your fame, not according to your friends, nor according to your fortune, not according to your feeling, but according to your faith be it unto you. The measure of your faith is the measure of your success or the measure of your failure. Now not only do we need, therefore, to possess a faith; we need a faith that will possess us. And I want us to find out what the Bible has to say about this kind of faith.

I. The Definition of Faith

First of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to call the scriptural definition of faith. Let's see what faith is. I read verses 1-2: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it (that is, by faith) the elders (that is, our spiritual forefathers and patriarchs) obtained a good report." Now what is faith? A little boy in Sunday school was asked what faith is. He says, "Well, faith is believing what you know ain't so." No, that's not what faith is. Really, it is just the opposite. Faith is believing what you know to be so. Now the word that is translated *faith* here may also be translated belief or trust. And the whole person is, en, e, involved in this matter of faith - the, the will, the emotions, the mind. What happens is this: That God says something and there is a heartfelt agreement. Let me give you three A's. Number one: Agreement. God says something and you agree with it. In your heart you say, "That is truth!" There is a heartfelt agreement. Now that agreement leads to a second one of these qualities that make up true Bible faith, because that alone is not faith. There must be with that agreement an attitude of trust, an attitude of trust. When you say, "I know it to be so," then there comes out of your heart an attitude that comes on the heels of that agreement. But you have not quite yet there to biblical faith. There's one more, ah, part that is so important. Attitude and then, my dear friend, action. Agreement, attitude, and action. Agreement. In my spirit, I say, "Amen. It is true." Attitude. I trust. I commit. And then action. I do something about it. Now you read this entire 11th chapter of the book of Hebrews and it is a roll call of the faithful, and it tells what they did. It is the most action-packed chapter in the Bible. By faith, so and so did so and so. By faith, so and so did so and so. And by faith, so and so did thus and such. Let me give you a definition of faith and show you the difference between faith and belief. Faith is belief with legs on it. It does something. First of all, that agreement. That agreement leads to an attitude of trust. And that attitude of trust leads to action. And then you have Bible faith. Now Bible faith is not a leap in the dark. It's not believing what you know ain't so. It is just the opposite. It is a, it is a leap into the light by faith. Now look at what God says about faith.

A. Faith Is Substance

First of all, He says that, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for..." Look at that word *substance*. Now the Greek word *substance* and our English word *substance* are

very much alike. Sub-stance. Sub, something beneath you. Stance, something that is firm, something you can stand on. When a person is trusting God, he has beneath his feet substance. He's not walking around on egg shells and Jell-O. He's walking around on spiritual steel and spiritual concrete. That is substance, substance. Now look at it again. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for..." Now look at the word *hope*. I have told you, I suppose, several times in the last several months that the word *hope* does not imply uncertainty; it implies certainty. Now we use the word *hope* different in our modern vocabularies than the Bible writers and the translators of the King James Version of the Scripture use the word *hope*. In the Bible, the word *hope* means this: It means a divine certainty that is based on a divine promise. Hope means a certainty that is based on a word from God. Things hoped for are the things that God has promised. Now let me read it to you this way: Faith is the reality of things expected, things hoped for, things that are expected.

B. Faith Is Evidence

And so, that's what the Bible says that faith is. It is substance, first of all. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Now here's the second thing the Bible says faith is. Not only is faith substance, but faith is also evidence. Faith is the substance of things hoped for; faith is the evidence of things not seen. Have you ever heard this expression: What you see is what you get? Have you ever heard this expression: Seeing is believing? Well, my dear friend, both of those are just the opposite of what the Bible definition of faith is. The Bible doesn't say what you see is what you get. The Bible says just the opposite. What you don't see is what you get, and believing is seeing. Now I'm not playing with words. Listen to it again. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. You see, there is an unseen world that is a very real world. Look, if you will, in verse 3: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were made of things which, ah, which do, were not made out of things which do appear." Let me just rephrase that and say, what you can see was made out of things that you can't see. Now we know that's true, ah, of the molecular structure of the universe. Ah, our whole universe is made of, ah, invisible atoms, ah, a, a molecular structure that really you cannot see. This is, by the way, is one of the greatest scientific statements in the Bible before the realm of atomic science ever came. The things that are seen are made out of the things that are not seen. So faith is the evidence of the unseen. You see, there is an unseen world out there. The unseen world was here first. The Bible tells us in verse 3 that the seen world was made of the unseen world. And I want to say that the unseen world will be here last. You know, we, we, as Christians, are looked on as being, ah, ah, ninnyes for believing in what we can't see. But, my friend, I want to tell you that what cannot be seen is more real than what can be seen. What cannot be seen was here first and it's going to be here last. Second Corinthians

4:18 says the things which are seen are temporal. That means temporary. But the things that are not seen are eternal. Now what is more real, that which is temporary or that which is eternal? Just fast forward in chapter 11 and look, if you will, in verses 24-25: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible." Now there, what happens is this: That the way that Moses lived was that he saw that the pleasures and treasures of Egypt were not the ultimate reality. He "...endured as seeing him that is invisible." Now what is the definition of faith? Faith, number one, my dear friend, is substance. What do I mean by that? Faith is your ability to make present substance out of future reality. May I say that again? Faith is your ability to make present substance out of future reality. Faith is the substance of things that you know will come to pass that you know. And so, faith reaches out into the future and brings the future into the present, and it takes the unseen and makes it real in your heart and in your life. You say, "Brother Rogers, that's a little confusing." Well, stay with me and I think it will smooth out here in just a moment. But God says, as He gives us a Bible, scriptural, spiritual definition of faith, faith is, first of all, substance, and then it is evidence. Now it is evidence of things hoped for. That, that means, dear friend, that believing doesn't make it so. You see, the world's definition of faith is that if you have, if you believe strong enough, you can make it so. But that's not the Bible definition of faith. It's just the opposite of the Bible definition of faith. The world's definition of faith is positive thought. It is, it is, it is positive thinking. If you believe hard enough, try hard enough, it'll come to pass. And that's the reason why some people just tell me when I, I don't want to do a certain thing, or don't think I ought to do a certain thing, or don't think I can do a certain thing, they say, "Man, just have faith. Believe you can and you can." No, that's not so. You can believe that you can fly, ah, ah, out of that second story window, but you can't do it. You can't do it. And believing won't enable you to do it. You jump out; you're going to hit the ground unless God tells you to do it. Believing doesn't make it so. You can't believe until it is so. Faith is the evidence of things hoped for. Things hoped for means that they are already there. God has promised them. And, therefore, because God promised them, you can have faith for it. Now I'm broadcasting right now. My voice is going out over the air. How do those people know that I am here? They know that I'm here because they're hearing me. And, ah, my voice is going out to them, and they're listening to me, and so they have reason to believe there is an Adrian Rogers. They have reason to believe that I am preaching because they hear these signals that are being sent to them. Now let me ask you, when they hear that radio

signal, does that bring the radio station into existence? No. The radio station has to be there before they can get those impulses. You see, my dear friend, ah, the impulses that they're getting, the voice that they're hearing, the words that they're hearing and all of that is the evidence that the station is there. They didn't bring the station into being. That's only the evidence that the station is there. And, dear friend, the faith that you have in your heart doesn't bring something into being. The only reason that you can have faith is because it is already so, it is already so. God has said it's so. God had made it so. God has given it to you. And, therefore, because God has given it to you, then, correspondingly, you have faith in your heart. And that's the difference between Bible faith and just positive thinking. Positive thinking says if I believe hard enough it'll be so. The Bible says it is so. Believe it! Believe it! Faith is the evidence of things hoped for. And things hoped for means the divine certainty based on the Word of God, because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Faith is evidence. And then, my dear friend, faith is substance. It is something that you can stand on, and you're not a fool for believing in faith.

II. The Dynamic of Faith

Now let me talk to you not only about the demands of faith, but let me talk to you about the dynamic of faith. Let me tell you what this kind of faith will be.

A. Faith Is Necessary for Spiritual Wisdom

First of all, this kind of faith will give you spiritual wisdom. Look, if you will, in verse 3: "Through faith we understand (do you see that?), through faith we understand..." This is the first dynamic of faith. You have understanding. And what do you understand? You understand how everything got started to begin with. Look. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." You see, dear friend, how are you going to explain the existence of this universe? Did you know in the Bible that the existence of God is never explained, the existence of God is never argued? God is just simply presented. You would expect to find somewhere in the Bible some writer who would write to try to prove the existence of God. You don't find one, not one. You just see, the Bible writer just says believe, just believe in God. Look again in verse 6: "For without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is..." How do I know there's a God? How to know, how do I know that God is? I believe there is. Well, somebody says, "That's so weak. That's so weak. Prove there's a God." Have you ever had anybody come up to you, a skeptic, an unbeliever, and tell, ask you to prove there's a God? I always enjoy that when they tell me, "Can you prove God exists?" I say, "No." Well, that shakes them a little bit, because they think because I'm a preacher I'm supposed to be able to prove God exists. "Can you prove God exists?" I

say, “No.” Then I say, “Now I want to ask you a question. Can you prove He doesn’t exist?” And if he has one modicum of honesty, he will have to say no, because the finite can neither prove nor disprove the infinite. We can neither prove God or we can neither disprove God. And so the skeptic says, “Well, you, you folks just live by faith. You’re just believers.” I say, “You live by faith also. You’re a believer also. You believe. I believe there is a God; you believe there is no God.” Everybody is a believer. You see, I accept by faith God exists. He accepts by faith that God does not exist. Now science can never prove or disprove God because God doesn’t live in the realm of scientific proof. To take, ah, this world apart, looking for God, would be like taking that piano apart looking for a song. You, you can’t, ah, you can neither prove nor disprove God in the laboratory because God lies outside that realm. You see, the scientists are always talking about how everything got started – creation. I also enjoy reading these articles about how the universe got started. You, you read those. About every six month or so there’ll be another one. It’ll be another theory, you know, about, ah, how everything got started. And it’s, it’s really ludicrous. But, you see, the reason they’ll never prove or disprove anything because science can, is limited to the study of processes and phenomena now existing. That’s all they can study is what now exists. They were not there at creation, so all they can do is offer a guess. I like God’s question to Job in Job 38:4. God said to Job, “Job, where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Where were you, Job, when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Job had to say, “I wasn’t there, God.” And you weren’t there. And no scientist was there. And he will never prove or disprove anything. And he cannot demonstrate there is no God any more than I can demonstrate there is a God. And so unbelief in God is not really a matter of the mind. Lack of belief in God is a matter of the heart. That’s the reason the Bible never presents a proof for God. It just presents God. And then this is how much the Bible gives to atheism. The Bible gives ½ of one verse, Proverbs, ah, excuse me, Psalm 14, verse, ah, Psalm 53:1 and Psalm 14:1: “The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.” The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. And the word *fool* there is the word *nabal*, N-A-B-A-L. And it doesn’t mean a person who is mentally deficient. It means a person who is morally deficient. You see, why does God call him a fool? Well, because God is the supreme fact. And if God is the supreme fact, the man who doesn’t believe in the supreme fact is a supreme fool. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. You say, “But you accept that there is a God by faith.” Yes, I do, and I’ll tell you why in a moment. But I accept by faith that God exists. The Bible says, “By faith we understand, by faith we understand that the world was created, that the world was made out of things which do not appear.” We accept that by faith. Now that doesn’t mean there’s not any evidence on our side. If you have creation, you must have a, ah, a creator. That’s evidence, but not proof. You see, our faith is rooted in evidence. Our faith goes beyond evidence. And

then our faith becomes its own best evidence. I believe because I believe. Now what I'm saying is that faith is necessary to spiritual wisdom. By faith we understand.

B. Faith Is Necessary to Spiritual Worship

Secondly, faith is necessary to spiritual worship. Look in verse 6. Not only do we understand, but we please God by faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is..." Now if God could prove Himself, if God, ah, wanted to prove Himself to you, He could. Somebody says, "If God's so big, God's so great, why doesn't He prove Himself?" Well, He could if He wanted to. Just reach down and take the roof of this auditorium and say, "Boo," you'd say, "I believe." I mean, He'd have no difficulty at all proving Himself to you, but He doesn't want to do that. Because if God proved Himself to you, that would destroy the faith principle. And the faith principle is what is necessary to please God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. You can thank God that He does not prove Himself to you. Thank God that He, He allows you to do it by faith. What is faith? Faith is not believing after you've seen all of the facts. Faith is a moral response to the character of God. I want you to understand that. Faith is a moral response to the character of God. When Jesus Christ came into this world, Jesus laid aside that external glory that was His. Jesus laid aside all of the might, the majesty, the, the, the inherent glory and splendor that was His. We saw just a flicker of it at the transfiguration. At least, we read about it. But essentially, Jesus laid all of that aside. And the Bible says He made of Himself of no reputation. He took upon Him the form of human flesh. And when Jesus Christ came into this world, Jesus Christ did not come into this world in a chariot of fire and a blaze of glory escorted, ah, by an entourage from heaven. No. He came into this world through the portals of a virgin's womb, born in a smelly, stinky, ah, stable with cow dung on the floor. Laid on straw. Wrapped in swaddling clothes. Raised in a carpenter's shop. And Isaiah said, "When we see Him, there's no form nor comeliness nor beauty that we should desire Him." Why? I'll tell you why. Because though He laid aside all of that splendor and all of that glory, He did not lay aside His essential nature: essence of deity – that inward beauty that was there, that was still there. Now the right heart will respond to the character of God when that heart is right like my eye responds to light when my eye is right and like my ear responds to sound when my ear is right. Your heart will respond to God when your heart is right. And that heart response to God is what the Bible calls faith, and that's what pleases God. That's the way you worship God. Without faith it is impossible to please God. If you really, really, really want to please God, believe God. People do all kinds of things to try to please God. They disfigure their bodies. They go on pilgrimages. They fast. They give amounts of money. They do this and that. But the way to please God is to believe God. Now listen. Faith is necessary for spiritual wisdom. By faith we understand. Faith is necessary to spiritual worship. "He

that cometh to God must believe that He is.”

C. **Faith Is Necessary to Spiritual Wealth**

Thirdly, faith is necessary to spiritual wealth. Faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of God. What you need from God you're going to get by believing God. Look again in verse 6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is (that's spiritual worship), and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (that is spiritual wealth).” You see, dear friend, ah, as I say again, that faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of God. Ah, what, what is it that you need? You need to be saved. How is a person saved? Let me give you three verses; one from the Old Testament and two, three from the New Testament. Let me give you four verses. First of all, if you want to jot these down. Very interesting. First of all, don't turn to them. Just jot them down. The first one you wouldn't find until I'm finished preaching. Habakkuk 2:4. All right. Now listen to it. Habakkuk 2:4: “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” Habakkuk says that the just shall live by faith. Then Romans 1:17. Listen to this. “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” The next is Galatians 3:11: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.” And then Hebrews 10:38: “Now the just shall live by faith...” Do you get any idea that God is trying to tell us something? Huh? The just shall live by faith. The just shall live by faith. The just shall live by faith. The just shall live by faith. Friend, do you want to be saved? There's only one way to be saved. This is, this is the spiritual wealth that you get by faith, first of all, is salvation. As a matter of fact, that's why we have what is called The Protestant Reformation, ah, led by Martin Luther in 1517. Martin Luther was a Roman Catholic monk who had tried as best he could to save his own life by living good and by obeying the rules and commandments of the Scriptures in the church, in the tradition of his church. And he was trying and struggling and had no assurance of his salvation whatever, a man who wanted God. But he had been studying the book of Romans and he read that verse from the book of Romans that I just read to you, “The just shall live by faith.” One day, Martin Luther was on his knees. He was doing penance. He was on the Santa Scale, or the Holy Stairs in Rome, ah, thought to be the stairs by which Jesus ascended to, ah, Pilate's judgment hall. One step at a time he would be there, and he's praying, trying to get right with God, begging God to accept him, begging God to receive him. And like a thunderbolt, God spoke to him and said, “Martin, the just shall live by faith!” And he saw it. It exploded in his soul what you as a Baptist just take for granted. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” And God gave him wings. He began to soar. Oh my dear friend, what I'm trying to tell you. Faith is the key to spiritual wisdom. It is the key to spiritual

worship. It is the key to spiritual wealth. You want salvation? You're going to be saved, you're going to be saved by trusting the Lord. But not only salvation, but sanctification. The Bible says (1 John 5:4), "...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Now there are a lot of you who say, "You know, Pastor, I'm saved, but I'm just struggling in my Christian life. I've got worldliness. I've got problems. I've got temptations. How am I going to overcome?" "...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Trying to live the Christian life is like struggling to get out of quicksand. The more you struggle, the deeper you sink till you come to the place where you say, "I can't. He never said I could. He can. He always said He would, and I'm going to trust Him." That's more than a play on words. My dear friend, this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. And if you have, are bound by some problem, some habit, quit trying and start trusting. Believe God for the victory. "...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Now not only are you going to receive salvation and sanctification. It's also true in soul winning. You want to be a soul winner? How are you going to be a soul winner? By believing God. In the 9th chapter of the gospel of Mark there's the story of a demon-possessed boy. The boy's father brought the boy to Jesus' disciples, and Jesus' disciples were not able to deliver that boy from the grip of a personal devil. And then the man came to Jesus and this man said to Jesus, "Master, if You can do something for my son, please do it." And I want to give you the answer that Jesus gave him, and I want you to listen to it because it applies to those of us who have children who are wayward, and children many times who are wayward because they're in the grip of the devil. Maybe they began with drugs or rock music or whatever. And a demonic influence moved into them. And you, as parents, say, "Oh Jesus, if You can do anything for my son, please do it." And here's what Jesus said to that father. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Straightway the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief. And Jesus, when He saw the people came running together, He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, 'Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him and enter no more into him.'" The key to that thing is Jesus did not say if that boy could believe. Jesus said to the father, "If you can believe." Can we believe God for our children? Not only can we, but must we. Can we believe God for our husbands and our wives and those who need us? Yes! "If thou canst believe..." My dear friend, I'm telling you that spiritual wealth comes by faith. Salvation comes by faith. Sanctification comes by faith. Soul winning comes by faith. Supplication, our prayers being answered, come by faith. Matthew 21:22. Jesus said, "In all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Pray, believe, you'll receive; pray and doubt, you do without. God does not answer unbelieving prayer. And, friend, what am I saying? I've given you a definition of prayer. Prayer, my friend, is substance and it is

evidence. And then I've given you the dynamic of prayer. I, I, ah, faith, not prayer. The, the, the definition of faith is substance. The definition of faith is evidence. And then I have given you the dynamic of faith. Faith is necessary to spiritual wisdom. By faith we understand. Faith is necessary to spiritual worship. By faith we please God. Faith is necessary to spiritual wealth. By faith God gives to us, God gives to us His wealth. Listen. By faith man gives God pleasure, and by faith, through faith God gives man treasure. God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Now there's one other thing I want, I want to talk about.

III. The Development of Faith

And not only the description and the dynamic, but I want to talk to you about the development of this kind of faith. How are you going to have this kind of faith? How does it come? Well, let me say, dear friend, that it does come. It cannot be manufactured. It cannot be worked up. Faith, Bible faith must be imparted, and I'm going to show you that in a moment from our Scripture right in front of us. But let me give you these verses before we get there to show you that faith is a gift of God, that is must be imparted. For example, go back to the matter of salvation. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." What is the gift of God? Faith, faith to believe God. It doesn't simply mean that the salvation is the gift of God. The faith that enables you to believe God is also the gift of God. Yes, Jesus died on the cross to purchase that salvation, but where did that faith come from? Do you think it came out of your poor, wicked, depraved, old heart? No, sir. God enabled you to believe on Him. Let me give you another verse that, ah, might make that even more clear – 1 Peter 1:1: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith..." You obtain it. You don't manufacture it. It has to be given to you. Let me give you another verse, Philippians 1:29: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." It was given to you to believe on Jesus Christ. Now how does God impart this faith? All right. There are three principles here. Hebrews 11 begins with the subject of faith. Then it illustrates faith by all of these heroes of the faith. And then we begin in, in, ah, chapter 12, so just fast forward to chapter 12, and you see the word wherefore. Ah, now when you see the word wherefore or the word therefore, you understand what the wherefore is there for, so look at it. It just simply refers backward to all that has been said about faith, okay. So he's still on the same subject. Ah, the only reason you have the chapter divisions, they're just there to keep preachers from preaching too long, that's all. It's all just part of the, ah, it's all just part of the same story right now. So he's just, he's giving you all of these illustrations, and then he says, "Wherefore...." That is, he's going to get practical right now, okay. He's going to show

you now. He's showed you, he's given you a definition of faith. He's given you, he's shown you the dynamics of faith. And now he's going to show you how to develop faith. Now look at it. "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." All right. May I be bold enough to tell you three simple things that Scripture tells us in my estimation about the development of faith?

A. You Must Be Saturated with Scripture

Number one: There is what I want to call the Scripture principle. You must be saturated with Scripture. Now the wherefore just simply refers to what God has said. That's it! God gave Scripture to build faith in you. Romans 10:17 you know. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." You must have a word from God. Now let's go back to our definition of faith. Faith is what? The evidence of things (what?) hoped for. What did I say hoped meant? It means a certainty based on a divine promise, certainty based on divine promise. And where does that divine promise come from? A word from God. Faith, my dear friend, is evidence that is based on certainty, and it is the evidence of the certainty, and that's what the faith is in your heart. And you got the certainty out of the Word of God. God says, "Wherefore (because of this), believe Me. Trust Me." Now let me tell you about the Bible. The Bible is not, first and foremost, a book to be explained. It does need explanation, but it is, first and foremost, a book to be believed. Leonard Ravenhill said, "One of these days somebody's going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves." It is a book to be believed. Now the Bible says that faith comes from a, a word from God, a rhema, R-E-M, R-H-E-M-A, rhema, a word from God. Not THE Word of God, but a word from God. When you read the Bible, God is, is, is, is going to take the Word of God and take a word out of the Word, and God's going to put that word in your heart. He's going to be meeting the need of your heart. Dwight L. Moody said, "I used to pray for faith. I used to pray for faith. I used to pray for faith, and my faith was very weak. And then one day I, I read where faith comes by hearing, and hearing from the Word of God." He said, "I stopped praying for faith, and I started studying the Word of God." And he said, "Faith began to grow in my heart and in my life." Faith comes from the Word of God, literally, a word from God.

B. You Must Be Separated from Sin

Now you must be, first of all, saturated with the Scripture. But then, secondly, you must be separated from sin. Saturated with Scripture; separated from sin. Look at it.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witness, witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Now, dear friend, you must lay aside that weight and that sin. Ah, “...every weight...” Ah, that’s the things that weigh us down. “...and the sin which doth easily beset us....” That’s the things that trip us up. Now some things are just weights. They’re not sins in and of themselves, but get rid of them. Because if you’re going to run a race, you don’t run a race with an overcoat on. Nothing wrong with an athlete running and wearing an overcoat, but it’s not going to help him if he’s running a 100-yard dash or the mile or anything else. So that’s a weight – just lay it aside. An athlete gets down. As best he can, he lays aside every weight and still stays decent – and some of them don’t even do that. But, ah, you lay aside every weight. And then the sin which doth so easily beset us. You trip us up, that trips us up. Now as a spiritual athlete, Paul is using the figure now of a spiritual athlete who is running a race and it is the race of faith. And what he is saying is this: He’s saying, dear friend, that you must be separated from sin. There is nothing in your life that is more faith killing than unconfessed sin. Nothing more stultifying and debilitating to a life of faith than unconfessed sin. When you confess your sin, as I said this morning, it’s like cleaning the windshield on a muddy day so you can see, so you can perceive, so you can understand the things of God. Now I don’t know what that particular sin is that might be in your life. I don’t know what that habit is. I don’t know what that bitterness is. I don’t know what that rebellion is. I don’t know what that idol is. But I can tell you this, friend. Whatever it is, if you cherish it, I really hope you enjoy it because you’re paying a fearful price for it. I really don’t hope you enjoy it, but you understand I’m just being sarcastic. Because, my dear friend, you’re paying a fearful price. I don’t know what it is, but I’m going to tell you this: It is not worth your not having faith in your heart and in your life. You see, the Bible says whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Now, dear friend, ah, sin is debilitating to a life of faith. So you must be saturated with the Scripture, but you must be separated from sin. But now, wait a minute.

C. You Must Be Dedicated to the Savior

Here’s the third thing. Not only saturated with Scripture, separated from sin, dedicated to the Savior. Look again, look at it. It’s very clear. “Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith...” Now this verse literally means, this word, “looking unto Jesus” means looking away from everything else and looking to Jesus. That’s what the Greek verb means. One person translated it this: Off looking to Jesus. Not off somewhere looking to Jesus, but looking off from everything else to Jesus. When a runner runs, he’s not supposed to run looking at the

other people. Every coach will tell you that you lose just a split second of timing, just a split second of equilibrium if you turn your head any other way except keeping your eye right on the goal. You don't look at anything else but the goal. And Jesus is the author. He's the one who fires the gun. He is the finisher. He is the goal. He puts you in the race. He sustains you in the race. And He is the goal that that you're running for. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith..." Now listen to me, folks. It is not great faith in God that you need; it is faith in a great God that you need. You know the difference? You see, quit trying to have great faith and start learning who Jesus is. Just look to Jesus. And the more you see of Jesus, the more you understand of Jesus, the more your faith will grow. I've used this illustration with you before, but let me use it again. Suppose I wanted to cross the bridge going from Memphis to Arkansas, and I'm afraid that the bridge can't hold me up. And so I stand on the Memphis side of the bridge and I try to make myself believe that the bridge can hold me up. Now, of course, it's obvious that the bridge can hold me up. If I don't lose a little weight, it may not later on. But it's obvious the bridge can hold me up, okay, but I don't know that. Now I could, I could be over here trying to make myself believe, trying to work up faith in all of that, or here's what I could do. I could just observe the bridge. I could just look at the bridge. And I see great semi trucks going over the bridge. I see automobiles and people going over the bridge. Then I don't have to make myself believe. Ah, ah, belief is just automatic. By looking unto the bridge, examining the bridge, just watching the bridge, then faith is the by-product of understanding and seeing that bridge. Now faith is the by-product of seeing and understanding Jesus Christ. Look to Jesus. Understand who the Christ of the Scripture is. Get in the Word of God. And when you begin to look at Jesus, look to Jesus, look to Jesus, look to Jesus, He is the author and the finisher of your faith. Now just lay aside all sin. That dims your view of Him. And then look to the Lord Jesus. Here's the fourth thing and I'm going to be finished. You've got to be saturated with the Scripture. You've got to be separated from sin. You've got to be dedicated to the Savior.

D. You Must Be Activated by the Spirit

And then you've got to be activated by the Spirit. When you look to Jesus, then what do you do? Look at it. "...run with patience (verse 1) the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus..." Now when you see Jesus and He beckons you, "Get in this race," and He tells us to run, then you run. Remember I told you what faith, the difference between faith and belief, and I said that faith is belief with legs on it. Now you are to run with endurance. How does an Olympic runner develop his skill? There's only one way. Not by studying books about running, but by running. How are you going to develop your faith? Not just simply by listening to sermons on faith, but by believing God. Find something that you can believe God for and begin to believe God for that. And then

you're going to see yourself growing in grace. I was reading a book recently a while back about how they built the first, ah, bridge over the Niagara River there at Niagara Falls. And what they did was a very interesting thing. First of all, to get across that river they tied a string to a kite and flew a kite to the other side of the, ah, river. And then to that string they tied a cord and brought the cord back across the river. And from, to that cord they tied a rope and brought the rope back across to the other side of the river. And then to that rope they tied a chain and brought the chain back across to the other side of the river. And then they tightened the chain and they had a line built, and as a result they built a mighty bridge. First, just a string. Why don't you just, why don't you believe God for something tonight? I mean, why don't you just fly that kite of faith tonight and say, "Lord, maybe I'll just..." Hey, I'll tell you a good place to start. I hadn't intended to say this, but I put it in just for you, Ashley. Why don't you start tithing? Good place to start. "Prove Me herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts..." Hey folks, if you can't tithe, what are you going to do with the big stuff? I mean, that's kindergarten. That's Mickey Mouse. I mean, if you can't trust God with a dime out of a dollar, what are you going to do when the big issues of life come? "Bring ye all the tithe into the storehouse and prove Me herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I'll not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing there shall not be room enough to receive." Just begin there. That's a good starting place. You don't end there. You just start there.

Conclusion

What I'm trying to say is this: Look, folks, look, look. Faith, faith is what? It is being saturated with the Scripture. "Wherefore..." God has said all of these things. God has given you this definition of faith. God has made these promises. "Wherefore..." All right. God said it. I'm saturated with Scripture. Then I'm separated from sin. I lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset me. I don't want anything that will dim my view of Jesus. And then, my dear friend, I am dedicated to the Savior. I look to Jesus. I say, "Jesus, You're my all. I look to You. You're the author, the finisher of my faith." And then I run with patience the race that is set before me. And as I run, I'm activated by the Spirit of God, and my faith begins to grow, and I get strong in faith.

Faith Makes the Difference

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 3, 1978

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:1–4

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

HEBREWS 11:3

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Introduction

Have you found Hebrews 11? Keep turning to it—Hebrews chapter 11. And, this morning, I want us to think on the second in this series of messages that we’re bringing on God’s hall of fame—how to be in God’s hall of fame. And, of course, the thing that will put you into God’s hall of fame is faith. It is faith that makes the difference, and that’s what our sermon subject is this morning—“Faith Makes the Difference.”

Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it”—that is, “by faith”—“the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made [out] of things which do appear. [But] by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh”* (Hebrews 11:1–4).

Now, you are going to find out that Abel is the first of God’s heroes that are listed in this marvelous eleventh chapter—what we call “God’s hall of fame.” The very first hero is a man named Abel, and that’s the man we’re talking about. And, the Bible says, *“By faith [he] offered to God a more excellent sacrifice”* (Hebrews 11:4). You’re going to find out that Abel was a very ordinary man, and he was a sinful man. He was very much like we are. And, if Abel could be in God’s hall of fame, so can I—and so can you. For you

see, when God looks for someone to place in His hall of fame, God does not look for ability; God looks for availability. God does not look for scholarship; God looks for relationship. It matters not who you know; it really matters whose you are. And so, God is saying, “according to your fame, not according to your fortune—not according to your friends, but according to your faith be it unto you.” It is faith that makes the difference! And, I want you to learn that as we study here about Cain and Abel.

Now, the Bible says particularly in verse 4: *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”* (Hebrews 11:4). Well, let’s see what that’s talking about. Would you turn, please, to Genesis chapter 4, for a moment? Genesis chapter 4—and I want us to see the story here. I’m reading, in Genesis chapter 4, the story of Abel’s sacrifice and Cain’s sacrifice. Now, you know that Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. And, both of these boys were religious boys, and they came to worship the Lord. They came to make an offering, and I read here in Genesis chapter 4, verse 3: *“And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of the flock”—or, “the firstlings of his flock”—“and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him”* (Genesis 4:3–7).

I. Faith Makes a Positive Difference in Religion

Now, I want us to notice the difference that faith makes, and the first thing I want you to notice is that faith makes a positive difference in religion. Now, you know today we hear a lot of people just tell us that all religions are the same. That’s not so. Well, they say, “Of course, all religions are therefore not the same, but all religions are just as good.” And, that’s not so—it is absolutely not so. You know, somehow, in America, we’re thought of as bigoted if we don’t put our arms around everybody else regardless of what they believe and say, “Now, your religion is just as good as my religion,” or, “My religion is no better than your religion.” Let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: there really are only two kinds of religion in all of the world—only two kinds.

Now, we have divided religion up into a lot of different categories. We say there’s Christianity, and we say there’s Buddhism, and Mohammedism, and Confucianism, and Rheumatism, and all kinds of religions. And, we’ve even taken Christianity, and we’ve divided Christianity up into little segments or denominations. And, we say there are Baptists, and Methodists, and there’s Presbyterian, there’s Episcopalian, Church of God, Church of Christ, this thing and that thing. But, I want to tell you, folks, that all

religion can be put into two categories—true religion and false religion. That's it—true religion and false religion. And, these two boys, Cain and Abel, represent all religions of all kind—the true religion and the false religion.

What is false religion? False religion is salvation by works, by human effort, and merit. True religion is salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I want to show you what I'm talking about. In Genesis chapter 4, we find that Cain was a tiller of the ground. And, notice here again in Genesis chapter 4, the Bible says here in verse 2: *“And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground”*—that is, boys and girls, he was a farmer—*“And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD”* (Genesis 4:2–3). So, I want you to notice, first of all, the religion of Cain. And, write out by your...by this particular verse, I want you to write just these words: “Jude 11”—Jude, J-U-D-E 11, because Jude 11 speaks and says this: *“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain”*—*“the way of Cain”* (Jude 1:11).

A. **The Religion of Cain**

Now, what is the way of Cain? What is the religion of Cain? Why is it that when Cain came to worship the Lord that the Lord had no respect for his offering at all? Cain was a farmer—nothing wrong with being a farmer. If you're a farmer, I'm not on to farmers. But, Cain was a farmer. He was a tiller of the ground, and God had said, “Cursed is the ground.” Not only was the ground cursed, but Cain was a sinner because he was a son of Adam. And, the Bible says, *“In Adam all die”* (1 Corinthians 15:22). So, here is a man with wicked hands and wicked fingers offering to the Lord the fruit of the cursed ground as an offering to the Lord.

Now, it might have been very beautiful—I'm certain it was. It probably looked like a county fair. All of the luscious fruit, all of the vegetables, all of the flowers, all of these things he brought to the Lord. And, he was being very religious. And, perhaps in his own way, he was being very sincere. But, what was wrong with it? It was the religion of his own imagination. It was the religion of his own ingenuity. It was the religion of his own effort. You see, the Bible says that man was to earn his living by the sweat of his brow, and it takes a lot of sweat to be a farmer. And, God says, when you get something out of the earth, it's going to take sweat—it's going to take effort. And, here is Cain with his sweat, his perspiration, his ingenuity, his effort. But yet, with the cursed ground and with his wicked hands, he's bringing an offering to the Lord. And, the Lord will not accept it because it is the religion of work—it is the religion of self-effort.

And, you would be surprised how many people have that kind of religion. They believe they're going to get to God by their own self-effort. They believe they're going to get to God by their own works. They believe in culture, but they don't believe in Calvary.

But, the Bible says that the religion of Cain is no good. Let me give you another verse to put down there by Genesis chapter 4. It is Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22, and I want you to listen to it. And, you're going to find out what was wrong with the religion of Cain—why the Bible says, *“Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain”* (Jude 1:11), why God had no respect for Cain's offering. Here it is—Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22. Listen to it: *“without shedding of blood is no remission”* (Hebrews 9:22). Cain brought a bloodless sacrifice, and God would not accept it. *“And without shedding of blood is no remission”* (Hebrews 9:22). Cain brought vegetables, but you can't get blood out of a turnip. *“And without [the] shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sins]”* (Hebrews 9:22).

Where did he get this idea? What motivated Cain to bring vegetables? What motivated Cain to bring fruit and flowers or whatever the fruit of the ground was that he brought? What motivated him to do it? He got the idea in his own head. He did not get it by divine revelation. He got it by human ingenuity. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Well, I'm looking for a religion that suits me”? Well, you better stop it, and you'd better find one that pleases God. You'd better not find a religion of human ingenuity, but you had better find one of divine revelation. You see, you can be very religious but very lost. Many people are religious, but lost. American's don't need religion, as such. Most Americans need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. I want to tell you that religious people are sometimes the hardest crowd to win Jesus Christ. Did you know that? It was a religious crowd—the most religious society on the face of the earth—that crucified Jesus Christ. It is the religion of Cain. It is the religion of human ingenuity. It is the religion of the sweat of the brow. It is the religion of self-effort. It is the religion of works, and God will not accept it. It's amazing how many people have this kind of religion. It is not rooted in the Word of God.

B. The Religion of Abel

Now, secondly, I want you to notice the religion of Abel. The Bible says that God had respect to Abel's offering, and God received his offering. And, the Bible says, *“By faith [he] offered...a more excellent sacrifice”* (Hebrews 11:4). What did Abel offer to the Lord? Look at it again here in Genesis chapter 4 and verse 4: *“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering”* (Genesis 4:4). What did Abel bring? He brought an animal. Now, the Bible doesn't say what animal it was. I believe it was a lamb that Abel brought. And, he brought this lamb or this animal, and the animal was killed as a burnt offering to the Lord. And, this represents the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Oh,” you say, “Brother Rogers, you're just reading into that. It doesn't say anything there about the Lord Jesus Christ.” I believe it's there with all of my heart, and I want to

tell you why I believe that Abel offered this sacrifice by faith. Now, learn this about faith, and draw up close and listen to me now: you cannot have faith unless God first speaks. Did you understand that? You cannot have faith unless God first speaks. Faith is the response—your response—to the Word of God and the will of God. You see, the Bible says that *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). Therefore, in order for you to have faith, God must speak. How could Abel have faith to offer this sacrifice unless God had first of all sacrifice He wanted? God had already shown them what kind of a sacrifice He wanted.

The first gospel sermon had already been preached. It was preached in Genesis chapter 3—in verse 15. I want you to look at it. We’re in Genesis chapter 4, but look in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15: God said to the serpent, *“And I will put enmity”—“warfare”—“between thee and the woman, and between thy seed”—that was Jesus Christ. “Thy seed”—that is, “the antichrist”—“and her seed”—that is, “Jesus Christ”—“it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15). The seed of the woman is going to bruise the head of the serpent. Jesus Christ is going to crush Satan’s head. But oh, also, Satan is going to wound Jesus Christ. And, here is the first gospel sermon that is ever preached in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15.

And then, God gave an illustration of that sermon. Look into Genesis chapter 3, verse 21: and *“unto Adam and also to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them”* (Genesis 3:21). They had been trying to hide the shame of their nakedness with fig leaves, sewn together. And, I’m sure that being as clever as they were and as intelligent as they were, it must have been beautiful. And, I believe that Eve stood over there, and Adam said, “Oh baby, that really looks good!” And, she says to him, “Adam, green is your color!” And oh, they’re so proud of what they do, until God comes walking in the midst of the garden. And, the Bible says they *“hid themselves from the presence of the LORD”* (Genesis 3:8) because the religion of man’s works cannot stand the all-piercing gaze of a righteous and a Holy God. It, again, was the works of their hands, and it would not suffice. And, God took an innocent animal, God slew that animal, blood was shed, and God gave them a covering. In the Bible, salvation is spoken of as a covering, as a *“robe of righteousness”* (Isaiah 61:10). And, innocent blood was shed. Why? Hebrews 9:22: *“without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”*

Now, Cain and Abel knew this. God had already spoken, and that’s how, by faith, Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice. Let me show you something amazing. Did you know that Abel was a prophet of God—a holy, righteous prophet? He was a preacher, a man of God. Write down in the margin “Luke chapter 11, verses 49 through 51,” and listen to this. Amazing. You think that somehow Cain and Abel were just a couple of little boys just fooling around out there in the wilderness, and they didn’t know what kind

of an offering to offer and that just by a hunch that Abel offered a lamb. Oh, no. Listen to this. Jesus Christ is speaking. I'm in Luke chapter 11, verse 49: Jesus Christ is speaking about the prophets who have been slain—the preachers who've been slain for preaching the truth—and Jesus said, *“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the blood of all of the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation”*—now, watch this next statement—*“From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias”* (Luke 11:49–51). Cain killed Abel, and that's what it means when it says, *“The blood of Abel”* (Luke 11:51). But, notice Jesus said, *“The blood of all of the prophets”* (Luke 11:50) from Abel to Zacharias. Abel was a prophet of God; he was a man of God.

Well, as a prophet of God, what did he preach? Do you want me to tell you what every prophet who ever lived has preached? You'll find it in the Word of God. Acts 10, verse 43: *“To him”*—“to Jesus”—*“give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him [should have] remission of sins”* (Acts 10:43). Every prophet who's ever been a prophet of God has preached the remission of sins through the Lord Jesus Christ. Abel was a prophet of God, and this man who lived in the dawn of human history, as we know it, brought a blood sacrifice. For God had revealed by precept, God had revealed by example: *“without shedding...is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22). And there, ladies and gentlemen, God has given us in Genesis chapter 4 (Genesis 4) and God has given us in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 4 (Hebrews 11:4) the two kinds of religion. Everybody who's listening to me this morning, whether you're listening by means of radio, whether you're listening by means of television, whether you're in this auditorium, or whether you will listen on a tape later on, everybody has one of two kinds of religion: it is either the religion of Cain or the religion of Abel. It is either salvation by works or salvation by grace. It is either a bloodless sacrifice or a bloody sacrifice. And, I want to tell you, there are only two kinds of religion—the true religion and the false religion. And, it is faith that makes the difference—faith that makes the difference.

Now, if you think I'm narrow-minded, so be it. But, I've never preached the Bible before if I'm not preaching it right now. I want to tell you, there's only one way to get to Heaven and that is in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way.

*Nothing in my hand I bring
Simply to Thy cross I cling (Augustus M. Toplady).*

It is the blood atonement and that alone that's going to save us and make us righteous. And, I thank God that God put Calvary with its bloodstained cross and its bloody slopes across the path of every Hell-bound sin-cursed man and woman, boy and girl. It is only the Lord Jesus Christ that can do that.

II. Faith Makes a Practical Difference in Result

Now, the second thing I want us to notice: not only does faith make a positive difference in religion, but it also makes a practical difference in result. Go back to our text in Hebrews chapter 11—Hebrews chapter 11 again. We're going to notice not only the positive difference but the very practical difference. Someone says, "Well, what difference does it make?" Well, let's see. Hebrews 11, verse 4: "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*"—that's the positive difference. And now, here's the practical difference—"*by which he obtained witness that he was righteous*" (Hebrews 11:4).

You see, there are only two kinds of religion—true and false. And, there are only two kinds of persons—righteous and unrighteous, saved and lost. Now, we like to mix men up in all kinds of categories and degrees. We say there is upper-class, middle-class, lower-class. We say there is red, yellow, black, and white. We say there's rich and poor, ignorant and educated. But, God puts everybody in one of two classes—righteous or unrighteous, saved or lost. You're a saint or an "ain't." That's it. Abel was righteous. And, there's only one way to be righteous—not our own self-righteousness but the righteousness that is imputed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, listen, folks—I'll tell you why Cain's religion was not as good as Abel's religion. There are some people who say, "Well, it makes no difference. I believe just as long as a man is sincere, that's all right." I want to tell you something about God: God is a Holy God. Do you have that down? God is a Holy God. And, God's holiness will not permit Him to overlook any sin. Sometimes people believe that God is too good to punish sin. Pay attention: God is too good not to punish sin. It is God's goodness that says that sin must be punished. If you have one word that would describe God, it would not be *love*, though God is perfect love and infinite love. The one word that would describe God is *holiness*. God is holy, and that means that all sin must be punished.

Now, God has a problem, if we could speak of God having a problem. What is the problem that God has? Well, I'm using human terms, but here's the problem that God has: over here is a lost world, and God loves this sinful world even though we've sinned. But, over here is the righteousness of God that says, "Sin must be punished." Now, how is God going to love, and forgive, and save a world and at the same time be true to His holiness, and be true to His righteousness, and punish sin? I'll show you how. Turn to Romans chapter 3 for a moment, and look in verse 23. Now, we all know Romans chapter 3, verse 23 that says, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). We've heard that preached enough, haven't we? And, it is true. There's no one in this auditorium who could stand up and say, "I have not sinned."

Well, let's just take a test. How many of you have ever told a lie? Lift your hand. Okay. Now, take them down. How many people have ever stolen anything whether it

was an answer in school, a toy out of your neighbor's yard, a nickel off your mother's dresser, or you robbed a bank? Lift your hand. All right. See, we've got a congregation of liars and thieves this morning. Now, that's kind of funny...it's not funny. You see, we're sinners. And, a man doesn't steal because he's a thief. I mean, a man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. The problem is not what we do; it's what we are. We do what we do because we are what we are, and these things proceed out of the heart. And, the Bible says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*" (Jeremiah 17:9). And, "*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). And, God is a holy God. God cannot let one-half of one sin go unpunished without ceasing to be a holy God.

Now, God has a problem. He loves us with an infinite love, with an everlasting love, and yet we're sinful. So, continue to read Romans chapter 3, verse 23: "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*"—but, notice verse 24. Here's the hallelujah part—"*Being justified freely by his grace*" (Romans 3:23–24). You see, you don't buy it. You can't earn it. You don't deserve it. It's free through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Jesus Christ is not the best way to Heaven; Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven. And, I tell you, if there were another way to Heaven—and God's darling Son died on a cross to save me from sin when there's some other way—I wouldn't want to meet that God in a dark alley that would let Jesus Christ die in agony and blood upon the cross when there could possibly be some other way. No, "*[Jesus is] the way, the truth, and the life: [and] no man cometh unto the Father, but by [Him]*" (John 14:6). "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). This redemption is in Christ Jesus.

But, notice in verse 25: "*Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*"—"a propitiation through faith in his blood" (Romans 3:25). Now, that word *propitiation* is a big word. What does it mean? Just write out there in the margin "satisfaction"—"satisfaction." That's what it means. You see, God's... Over here, we said it's the holiness of God, and over here is the love and the mercy of God. God's holiness must be satisfied; God's righteousness must be propitiated. And so, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Very God of Very God, left Heaven, came to this earth, died upon a cross, and with His rich, red, royal blood, He satisfied all of the law's demands. And, our sins are propitiated. Our sins are satisfied; our sins are paid for through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, continue to read, and you'll understand what I'm talking about here. Notice in verse 26: "*To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness*"—remember how righteous He is?—"that he might be just, and the justifier of him [that] believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). Remember how good He is?

Isn't that great? Over here He's just, and over here He's a justifier. He is the Just Justifier. But, there's only one way that God can, at the same time, be righteous and just and at the same time forgive a sinner—one way, one way alone: the blood of Jesus Christ. Don't you forget it.

There are only two religions in the world—true religion, false religion; the religion of Cain, the religion of Abel; the religion of works, the religion of grace; the bloodless religion, the bloody religion. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22: *“without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]”* (Hebrews 9:22). Now, whether you agree with that or not doesn't make any difference as far as this is concerned. It will make a big difference for you. Somebody says, “God said it. I believe it. That settles it.” Well, you can leave the middle point out. God said it. That settles it. Now, you may choose to believe it; and if you want to believe it, that's fine, because then you'll get in on it. But, I'm not preaching my word; I'm preaching the Word of God when I tell you the Bible says, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission”* (Hebrews 9:22).

Why do you think that God put this in the fourth chapter of the Book of Genesis? Why do you think that God took all of the trouble to say in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 4 (Hebrews 11:4), here are two offerings—one was accepted and one was not accepted? You would be amazed how many people think they're going to Heaven because they're offering to God the fruit of their hands. You ask people, “What do you have to do to go to Heaven when you die?” And, they'll say, “Well, be good, do good, keep the Golden Rule, treat your neighbor like you want to be treated, mind your own business.” That's what they think! Listen, if you were to start with Adam and Eve and go all the way down through the chain of human history to this generation, and if you were to take every individual that ever lived and extracted the best quality and the best character traits from that individual from each one, and then if you were to take all of those character traits and put them into one individual and make that one individual a composite of the very best character traits of all of the people that have ever lived, that individual would have to kneel at the cross of Jesus Christ in order to get to Heaven. *“Without [the] shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sins]”* (Hebrews 9:22).

III. Faith Makes a Permanent Difference in the Record

Now, listen—faith makes a positive difference in religion. It makes a practical difference in result. The third thing, finally: faith also makes a permanent difference in the record—in the record. Go back to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 4—at our text. And, the Bible says there, concerning Abel, that *“he being dead yet [speaks]”* (Hebrews 11:4). Now, how long has he been dead? Well, when was this? We don't know. Thousands of years ago—I don't think anybody knows exactly when it was except the Lord, maybe the angels and those already in Heaven. But, somewhere in the eons of the past, there was

a man named Abel. And, somehow he, being a prophet of God—somehow, because God had spoken—somehow he looked down through the corridors of time and he saw that one day Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, would die upon the cross for his sins. And, by faith and what God had shown him, he offered a lamb as a symbol of that faith. And, God said, “You’re righteous, Abel.” Now, friend, how long ago was that? Thousands of years, but *“he being dead yet speaketh”* (Hebrews 11:4). What does that mean? He’s not really dead—he’s not really dead. He’s still alive. We sing that song:

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.*

And, a part of that song says,

*When we’ve been here ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we first begun (John Newton).*

He’s been there for thousands of years, and ten million years from now Abel will still be speaking—he will still be praising the Lord. And, his righteous acts will still be giving a testimony.

I want to tell you something, friend—faith makes the difference. It makes the difference in time; it makes the difference in eternity. But remember, you cannot have faith until God speaks. You can’t just believe in anything; you’ve got to believe in the revealed Word of God. And, the Bible says, *“Without shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22). The Bible says, *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). You know, some liberal preachers are pretty nice guys. Did you know that? You’d think I don’t like liberal preachers. Well, I love them anyway. There are some nice guys who are liberal preachers. I mean, did you know that many liberals are motivated by feelings of altruism, and benevolence, and philanthropy? That’s why they get in the ministry: they want to do good. Now, they don’t understand how to be saved. They haven’t been called of God to preach the gospel, but they want to do good and they want to help people. And, there’s nothing wrong with that, but it’s no substitute for being saved, is it? And so, they get in to the ministry.

And, there was one liberal preacher. He was a very nice guy—very cultured, very compassionate, with human compassion. And, you know, you can be unsaved and have a lot of human compassion. You know, the movies and the television—they like to show the prostitute with a little heart of gold, you know. “The compassion she has!” you say. You can be lost and have a certain kind of compassion. And so, here’s this preacher. This is a true story. He was in his study, and there was a knock on the door. He was a liberal preacher—didn’t believe in the blood atonement and these things. And,

a little girl, a little waitress, a little street urchin was there, dressed in rags, dirty hands, dirty knees, torn dress. He looked down at this little girl, and his heart of love went out to her. And, he said, “Sweetheart, may I help you?” She said, “Are you a minister? Are you a preacher?” He said, “Yes, dear, I am. May I help you?” She said, “Would you please come help me get Mother in?” He said, “What is that, dear?” She said, “Would you help me get Mother in?” He thought that her mother must be a drunkard. Maybe she was out on the street somewhere and couldn’t get in the house. He said, “Tell me about it. What’s wrong with your mother? Is she drunk?” And, the little girl started crying and said, “No, Mama’s not drunk. Mama is dying. Mama says that she wanted me to go find a preacher to tell her how to get into Heaven. Will you come with me and show my Mama how to get in, because Mama says she’s dying?”

And, this big-hearted man, this liberal preacher, got his hat, and his coat, and his gloves, and took that little girl by the hand. And, she led him into that squalid part of town there where there was that filthy shack and that run-down place. And, he went in there, and there on a mat—on a dirty mattress—was a woman, her hair disheveled, spread out on the pillow; her eyes sinking back into her face; her face disfigured, and marred, and scarred by sin. She had not had proper food, medical care—any of these things. And, everybody knows that we all ought to do everything we can do to help those kinds of people. But, listen—there she was, dying. She looked up at this liberal preacher, and she said to him, “Help me. Show me the way! I’m dying, and I’ve lived a terrible life.” And, she told of the sordid, sinful, sorry, selfish life she had lived. And, this preacher—this liberal preacher—began to take his verses, and his philosophies, and his poetry, and he began to talk to her about the Golden Rule, and doing good, and doing right, and living clean, and being moral, and being kind, and all of that. But, her face grew more intense, and she got more anguished. And, she looked at that preacher and said, “All of that is good and fine for folks like you, but that’s no message for me. Don’t you know I haven’t lived that kind of a life? Don’t you know that I’ve lived a wicked and a sinful life? Furthermore, don’t you know I don’t have the strength to live that kind of life? And furthermore, don’t you know I am dying?” And then, with a piteous plea, she said, “Don’t you have a message for a sinful woman like me?”

And, this liberal preacher thought, and he realized that he had no message whatever for her. And then, he remembered the story that his mother had told him as a little child of Jesus and His love—how Jesus died on a cross to save sinners. He’d almost forgotten it. And, in the simplest of terms, he told her in the language of John 3:16 that *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* He told her of the religion of Abel. He quit telling her of the religion of Cain. And, when he gave her that message of the Son of God who died for her sinful ways, she smiled and she said, “That’s the message that

my aching heart needs.” And, she received Christ as her personal Savior and as her Lord.

You say, “Brother Rogers, how do you know that? You weren’t there. You tell it like you were watching—like you were looking on!” Well, the way I know that is the preacher to whom that happened told the story to some other ministers and to some other people. And, you know, as he told the story, he finished by saying, “And guess what? That night, not only did that lady get in, but I came in, too.” You see, he realized the bankruptcy of the liberals’ message. He realized God showed him the futility of the religion of Cain. He showed him that there’s one way to Heaven—one way alone—and it’s through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me put it in the simplest of terms, and I’m finished. You know Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, don’t you? It says this—and pay attention to me: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works”*—not of the religion of Cain—*“not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8–9). You see, you’re saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, listen to it—*“For by grace”*—what is grace? Listen, G-R-A-C-E: “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” Do you have that? Grace: “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” That’s grace—*“For by grace are ye saved through faith”* (Ephesians 2:8). What is faith? F-A-I-T-H: “Forsaking all, I trust Him.” You got that? Faith—F-A-I-T-H: “Forsaking all, I trust Him.” Grace: “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” *“For by grace are ye saved through faith”* (Ephesians 2:8).

Do you know what grace is? Grace is God reaching down out of Heaven saying, “I love you. I want to save you.” Do you know what faith is? Faith is the hand that reaches up and takes hold of God’s grace. Do you want to be saved? You’re saved by grace through faith. Here is the way it is: God says, “I love you, and I want to save you.” You say, “I believe it, and I want to be saved.” And, when your hand of faith takes hold of God’s hand of grace, that’s salvation. That’s it—that is it! *“For by grace are ye saved through faith”* (Ephesians 2:8). “God’s riches at Christ’s expense.” “Forsaking all, I trust Him.” Lord, save me! I’m not bringing the fruit of the ground! I’m pleading the blood of Jesus! And, I come as a sinner, confessing my sin, and trusting Christ and Him alone to save me.

Conclusion

There are only two kinds of religion—the true and the false. What kind do you have? Let us pray. Father in Heaven, we pray today in the name—oh, in the name—of Jesus that You would help everyone who is listening, wherever they may listen, to turn from their own self-righteousness and trust in Jesus—not to offer the fruit of their hands but to plead the blood of Jesus Christ. Thank You, Father, for hearing our prayer. Amen.

Understanding Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 19, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:1–6

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

HEBREWS 11:1

Outline

Introduction

I. The Nature of Faith

II. The Necessity of Faith

III. The Nurture of Faith

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God's Word please and turn with me to Hebrews 11. There are certain passages of Scripture that we come to over and over again in our spiritual pilgrimage. And tonight, Hebrews 11 is one of those. I want to talk to you today about understanding faith. These are fearful and awesome days in which we're living and they call for a dynamic, mountain-moving, earth-shaking, devil-defying faith in Almighty God. Now when we meet our friends here at the church, we have a way of putting out our hands, giving them a smile, and say, "How are you feeling?" Well, there's nothing wrong with asking that. But I have a much more pertinent question that you may ask. "How are you faithing? How are you faithing?" The Bible doesn't say according to your feeling be it unto you, but "According to your faith be it unto you." Not according to your fame be it unto you, but "According to your faith be it unto you." Not according to your friends be it unto you, but "According to your faith be it unto you." Not according to your fortune be it unto you, but "According to your faith be it unto you." Not according to your fate be it unto you, but "According to your faith be it unto you." Well, you say, "Preacher, I possess a faith." That's good, but do you have one that possesses you? Do you live by faith? You see, dear friend, faith, real faith, Bible faith is absolutely essential to living a victorious Christian life. Every blessing of God, and there are so many, but every single one of them must be appropriated by faith. And many people are living like paupers surrounded by spiritual blessings, and yet they have not reached out and received these blessings, because faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of God. And so, ah,

if you want the blessings of God, we're going to show you that you must receive them by faith. And, conversely, almost every failure that we have is a failure because we have not learned the lessons of faith. If you'll look at the failures in your life, you're going to find out that somehow they're related to a lack of faith. For example, do you ever worry? Just kind of nod your head. We do. Why do we worry? Lack of faith. We're saying, "God, I've got a problem, but I just don't really believe You're able to handle it." And, by the way, faith is really a, a, worry is really an insult to God. It really is. It's saying, "God, there's something beyond Your ability to manage or handle in my life." Worry is faith turned inside out, and faith is worry turned inside out. Let's take another problem. For example, loneliness. Do you ever get lonely? Well, loneliness really, abject loneliness, is really a result of a lack of faith, because faith makes Jesus real. And when Christ is with us, we are never, never alone. Well, let's take another problem. Guilt. So many people who have, ah, a feeling of guilt, and we said that guilt is more than a feeling. But what about the feeling of guilt that you have because of the fact of guilt? Your guilt gland is overactive. Why? Because of a lack of faith. You always feel that somehow, some way God has not accepted you, and you feel guilty not of some particular sin; you just feel kind of bad all over. That's the work of the devil. Now the Holy Spirit convict you of specific sin; the devil just sort of condemns you. And if you feel kind of guilty, it's really because of a lack of faith. You know what faith is? Faith is our acceptance of God's acceptance of us. Now what about just disobedience? You disobey the Lord. Why do you disobey the Lord? Well, if there's a plain command in the Word of God and you disobey it, it's because, evidently, you don't believe God's Word or you would not violate it. It's an amazing thing. You put up a "Wet Paint" sign and what will people do? Touch it to see. They just don't believe it's wet or they want to see. And the reason we violate God's Word is we're not absolutely certain that it means what it says. Now let's look. Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it (that is, faith) the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." That means in plain English that the visible was made of the invisible. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before this translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Now think with me, first of all, about this phrase. Look at it. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for..." You know, all people have a, a sort of a, a divine discontent. We all desire something better. We all just have

in our hearts, there must be a better way. There must be something more to life. And there is. But faith is the way that that comes into our lives. Now I'm going to give you a simple outline tonight.

I. The Nature of Faith

First of all, I want you to think of the nature of faith. What is the nature of faith? I don't know of a better, more pertinent verse in all of the Bible concerning the nature of faith than Hebrews 11:1. It's not exactly a definition of faith. I can't find a definition of faith in the Bible. This is a description of faith. Very close to a definition, but not exactly. It, it's very, it tells us, however, what faith is like. Before I tell you what faith is, let me tell you what faith is not. So many people are calling things faith that is not faith. Positive thinking is a very wonderful attribute, but it is not faith, okay. I'm not against positive thinking. Ah, a father told his son, who was doing badly in school, he, the boy said to his dad, he said, "Dad, I think I'm going to fail, ah, this math test." His dad said, "Now that's positive, that's not positive thinking. You need to think positively." He said, "Okay, I'm positive I'm going to fail." Now faith is not positive thinking. Nothing wrong with positive thinking. As a matter of fact, I believe the Bible teaches positive thinking, but that's not faith. It may be an offshoot of faith. It may be a first cousin to faith. But it's not positive thinking. A lot of times, ah, ah, some of these positive thinking lecturers, ah, sprinkle in a little religious phoo-phoo dust in their lecture and call it, ah, faith, but that's not faith at all. Faith is not following a hunch, just sort of a gut feeling that you feel. And you say, "Well, I just feel things are going to work out. I've just got a hunch and I'll call it faith." That's not faith at all. Again, your hunch may be right. You may have an intuitive feeling that things are going to work a particular way, and they do work that way. And that intuitive feeling may be the sum total of a lot of little intricacies that are in your psyche that you know. Maybe you've never even been able to rationalize them all out, but you just have a hunch about certain things. And that's right. You may be right. You may have a certain intuition about things, and that's very wonderful. Nothing wrong with that, but that's not faith. Faith is not hoping for the best. Now it's good to hope for the best, and if you're a Christian, the best is yet to be. Thank God for that. And, again, that's related to faith, but that's not necessarily faith. It's not a feeling of optimism. What is faith? Well, let's look here in the Word of God and see what the nature of faith is. The very, the very word itself may be translated belief or trust. It, it, it is more than more intellectual belief, though. It has the idea of, of trust. Actually, there are three ingredients. Number one: There's what I want to call an agreement. God says something and you agree with it. That is, the mind is brought into play. You agree. You say, "That is so. I, yes, I agree that is so." Now you can agree it is so, and you must agree it is so in order for you to have faith, but you're not yet at faith. You're only at step

one. Now after that agreement, there must be an attitude. An agreement is followed by an attitude. This attitude is an attitude of trust. You agree and then you trust. You say, "Yes, because I know this is so, there is in my heart an attitude of trust." We are persuaded that what God has said is true and, therefore, we can rely on it. Now we're two-thirds there, but it's still not faith. Agreement, attitude. Then action. And when it becomes action, at that moment it is faith. You read this eleventh chapter of Hebrews, you're going to find out that by faith all of these people did something, they did something, they did something. It's a, it's kind of God's, God's Hall of Faith. Do you know the difference between belief and faith? Faith is belief with legs on it. It does something. By faith we do something. What, you see, the word *believe* comes from an old English word. Our English word *belief* comes from an older English word, *by-live*. What we really believe we live by. The rest is just religious talk. Now look at it. Faith, this, this agreement, this attitude, this action, how does it work out? Well, look in verse 1. First of all, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for..." Look at the word *substance*. That word *substance* is very much like in the Greek language very much like our English word *substance*. Sub meaning beneath; stance meaning something you can stand on. That is, ah, faith has spiritual steel in it. It has spiritual concrete in it. It's not a willy-nilly, hocus-pocus, ah, will-of-the-wisp, smoke and mirrors type of things. No, it, there, there's reality in it. It is, you're not walking around on eggshells and Jell-O. Faith is substance. Now it is the substance of what? "Faith is the substance of things hoped for..." Now you've heard me preach long enough to know that hope does not imply uncertainty. Bible hope implies certainty. The word *hope* in the Bible means a certainty based on a divine promise. But not only is it a certainty, it is a certainty that we anticipate and desire. I was telling the businessmen the other day, when I was a boy, on Sunday afternoons we didn't have television or professional football or anything to watch. But on a big day my dad would haul out the automobile and we'd go for a ride in the country. And we used to drive past a particular place and buy a, some cold milk and gingerbread. And, boy, that was a big day, to ride out there and, in, in the country on Sunday afternoon and see things and ride past the farms, and so forth, and buy that gingerbread and cold milk. But my brother, who is a year or two older than I, and myself would sit in the back seat. And every now and then....you know, the back seat was divided – my side and his side. Every now and then I'd get on his side or he'd get on my side and we'd start to complain. And then an elbow would be thrown. And then there'd be a little fight going on. My dad would say, "When you get home, when we get home, you're going to get a whipping." Now that was a promise in, a, in, immutable promise, unbreakable promise. Now it was a promise we knew was going to come to pass, but we weren't anticipating it. I mean, we weren't desiring it. Hope is a promise, something we know is going to come to pass, and something that we do anticipate. Now let me tell

you again. Faith is substance that is based on a divine promise. Hope is based on divine promise. It is a word of assurance from God. The things that we hope for are the things that God has promised. Now if you keep that in your mind, then it'll help you to understand what faith is. You see, faith, ah, believing God, makes present reality a future, or makes present substance out of future reality. Okay. Now that's verse 1. Look at it again. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for (secondly), it is the evidence of things not seen." Now what that, that word *evidence* is is an old English word that may be rendered "it is the conviction of things not seen." That we are convicted. You know, a man in a courtroom gets convicted by evidence, doesn't he? So faith is the convicting evidence. It is the conviction of things not seen. So, ah, you don't have to see something in order to be convicted. It is there if you have a divine promise, something that is hoped for. Now, ah, we have a way of saying, "Seeing is believing." Ah, or, "What you see is what you get." But that isn't what this verse says. This verse says, "What you don't see is what you get." Faith is the conviction of things not seen. Well, somebody says, "There you preachers go dealing in metaphysics and with words, and you've got us over a barrel because we can't see what you're talking about. Give us something real." Well, friend, I want to tell you that the unseen is more real than the seen. And I'm not playing with words when I tell you that. For example, the unseen world was here first. You're in Hebrews, ah, chapter, ah, 11. Ah, look in verse 3: "Through faith we understand that the worlds (that is, all of the planets and the heavenly bodies) were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen (everything that you can see) were not made of things which do appear." That is, everything that's visible is made out of the invisible. The unseen world was here first. Ever, and, by the way, that's a great scientific statement also. Everything that you can see is made of, of molecular structure that you can't see. That's tremendous science right there in the Word of God. You see, the unseen was here first and the unseen will be here last. Second Corinthians 4:18. The Bible says, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen: for the things which are seen are temporal (that is, everything you can see is temporary); but the things which are not seen are eternal." Now wh, what is more real – that which is seen or that which is unseen? That which is unseen was here first. It'll be here last. This is really the unreal. Ah, the real is that which is going to endure. And so we don't, ah, we don't seen in order to believe. We believe in order to see. Jesus said in John 11:40: "Jesus said unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldnest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Not seeing is believing, but believing is seeing. Now, as a matter of fact, ah, while we're on that subject, just look at Hebrews 11:24: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." How did he do that – refuse to be a prince? And, ah, "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the pla, people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a

season.” Can you imagine the pleasures of sin that would be, ah, available to an oriental, ah, king? Well, how did he do that? Well, he esteemed “...the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” That’s a wonderful illustration of our text. Moses just simply looked over into another world. Moses saw that the pleasures and the treasures of Egypt were not the ultimate reality. Now what is the nature of faith? Faith is substance. It is the substance of things hoped for. And hope is a certainty based upon divine promise. And faith is the conviction of things not seen. That’s what it is. And that’s what is necessary to do business in, in the kingdom of God.

II. The Necessity of Faith

So I’ve talked to you about the nature of faith. Let me talk to you a little bit about the necessity of faith. Faith is so necessary in these days in which we live. For example, faith is necessary to understand. You see, look in verse 3: “Through faith we understand...” There are things, friend, that you will never understand apart from faith. “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by.....God...” How did everything happen? Where did this universe come from? How are you going to know what is the secret of the universe? By faith. Did you know in the Bible the existence of God and, therefore, the creation of God of all matter is never argued and it is never explained; just simply presented? The Bible writers never tried to prove the existence of God. God is accepted by faith. Look in verse 6: “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is...” Don’t ever fall into the trap of trying to prove God exists because you can’t prove God exists. If you ever get, you high-school kids in the choir, you get in an argument with your high-school science teacher or your college teacher, your philosophy class, and he will try to prove or disprove the existence of God, you just sit back and, and just kind of smile. And if he says to you, “Are you a Christian?” and you say, “Yes.” And he says, “Proves there’s a God,” don’t ever try because you’ll not be able to prove that God exists. The Bible doesn’t try to prove that God exists. And after he laughs at you when you say, “I can’t prove that God exists,” you just turn to him and say, “Now you prove He doesn’t exist. You prove He doesn’t exist.” You see, it doesn’t lie in the realm of proof. God is infinite and we’re finite. And the finite can never ever prove or disprove the infinite. For example, science can never prove how the world came into existence. Scientists will never understand what you understand in verse 3. See, “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God...” The scientists can’t, he can’t understand that because he wants to prove it. Now in order for a scientist to prove something, a scientist has to go into the laboratory. You see, a scientist is limited to the study of

phenomenon and processes that are now existing. And since the scientist wasn't there when all of this happened, he's just got to be quiet. You see, this is what, what God asked Job in Job 38:4. Job was wanting God to explain a few things to him. And Job, er, God is saying to Job, "Job, you couldn't understand it if I did explain it," and He asked him this question: He said, "Where were you, Job, when I laid the foundation of the earth? Huh, were you there? Explain. Declare if you have understanding." What He's saying to Job is the same thing you need to say to any scientist. You see, listen, folks. The only way that you will understand is to believe. All men are believers. Even atheists are believers. Everybody is a believer. You see, I believe because I choose to believe. The atheists disbelieves, which is a form of belief as I'm going to show you in a moment, because he chooses not to believe in God. He says to me, "Well, you just accept God by faith." I say, "That's right, I do. And you don't accept God by faith. You can't prove that God doesn't exist anymore than I can prove that He does exist. I believe that He does, and you believe that He doesn't, so we're both believers. But I believe in God and you believe there is no God. But we're both believers. You accept by faith there is no God. You can't prove there's no God. I can't prove there is a God." But now, wait a minute. When I said you can't prove there's a God, I didn't say there's no evidence. The evidence is in your heart. The evidence is all around us. There is evidence for the existence of God, and wonderful evidence – outward evidence and inward evidence, objective evidence and subjective evidence. One, I don't have a doubt in my mind about the existence of God, not a scintilla of a doubt. But you never prove God. You receive God by faith. To go into the laboratory and try and prove God would be like taking that piano apart looking for a song. Friend, you, God is not...you see, listen. God is not contrary to reason. He's just beyond reason. The Bible says, "Can a man by reasoning find out God? No. Who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been His counsel?" You see, it's not really a matter therefore of the mind. Your belief or lack of belief is really a matter of the heart. When people don't believe in God, it is not that they cannot believe. It is they choose not to believe. That's the reason the Bible says in Psalm 53:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God..." And when the Bible used the word *fool*, it's the word *nabel*. It doesn't mean a man who is mentally deficient. He may be brilliant. Many brilliant people are atheists. Not a man who is mentally deficient; a man who is morally deficient. That's what the word *fool* means here. You see, it means, the word *nabel* means moral perversity. The morally perverse man has said in his heart there is no God. He doesn't have intellectual problems. He has moral problems. Now why does God call him a fool? Well, because God is the supreme fact. And the man who denies the supreme fact is a supreme fool. You see, God exists. Nature and conscience tell us that God exists. Not proof, but evidence, convicting evidence that God exists. Now you'll never understand that apart from faith.

You see, by faith we understand. Therefore, a fourth grader can know more than an astronomer or a physicist or a nuclear scientist. He can know more by faith about what it's all about. Now not only is faith necessary to understand God, but faith is necessary to please God. Look, if you will, in verse 6: "Without faith it is impossible to please him..." You see, the way to please God is to trust Him. Have you ever thought about why doesn't God just reveal Himself to us? I mean, after all, He could if He wanted to, couldn't He? I mean, God could, could perform miracles. He could overwhelm you. As I've said before, He can just take the roof off this building and say, "Boo," and you'd say, "I believe." I mean, He wouldn't have any difficulty convincing us. Why doesn't somebody say, "If He's so great, if He's so big, why doesn't He just prove Himself to us?" Well, if He proved Himself to you, then faith would no longer be necessary. One of these days, ah, faith will turn to substance and reality and we'll know as we're known. And, ah, then love will abide. But faith won't be necessary anymore. Now why, why does God demand faith? Because, dear friend, God wants something out of you that He can only receive by faith. And if God were to prove Himself to you, just absolutely prove Himself to you, ah, then faith wouldn't be necessary anymore and you would be the loser and God would not be pleased. Without faith it is impossible to please him. Faith is not an intellectual response to God. Faith is not an intellectual response to the fact of God. Faith is a moral response to the nature of God. I hope that sank in. I hope you listened to that. Faith is a moral response to the nature, or let me put it this way: Faith is a moral response to the character of God. Let's put it that way. You see, when Jesus Christ came into this world, Jesus Christ left all of the glory, all of the splendor, all of the majesty that is inherently His, He left it in heaven. And out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe He came. He laid all of that aside and did what? Was born in an obscure village, in a cow barn, wrapped in coarse cloth, laid in a manger with animal droppings and dung on the floor. Then grew up in a carpenter's shop in another village, peasant parents, a carpenter's son. The Bible says, "When we see Him, there's no form nor comeliness nor beauty that we should desire Him." He did not come in a dazzling display of glory. Why? Because He wanted people to love Him for who He was, not for what He could do. He didn't want to overwhelm people. He didn't want to dazzle people. You see, He wanted people to trust Him because of His basic character, because when He left all of the splendor and all of the glory and all of the majesty in heaven, He still brought with Him His basic character of inward glory, inward beauty, inward purity, inward love. And there were certain people who believe on Him not because of what He did, but because of who He was. "Oh," you say, "but they believed in Him when they saw the miracles." Well, think about that for a moment. Those people who believed in Him when they saw the miracles, but they never saw the true character of Jesus, they later left Him, didn't they, when He began to talk about eating His flesh

and drinking His blood? He had to turn to His other disciples and say, "Will you also go away?" You see, dear friend, Jesus never did tricks in order to get followers. They were saying to Him, "If You're the Son of God, give us a sign from heaven. Work a miracle." Jesus said, "No sign will be given this sinful and adulterous generation. I am not here to do tricks and publicity stunts to get followers." He didn't want those kind of followers. When He turned water into wine, the Bible says, "Many believed in Him when they saw the miracles that He did." But John 2 says, "Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew man and needed not that any should testify what was in man." Jesus, many times when He did a miracle, He didn't say, "Hey, go tell everybody how great I am. I'm the Messiah." He didn't say that. He said, "Hey, don't tell anybody about this. Don't tell anybody about this." It's interesting. My dear friend, what is faith? Faith is not an intellectual response to the fact of God. It is a moral response to the character of God. There is something about a person who believes in God. There's something about a heart when that heart is right that causes that heart to believe in Christ. Just like my eye responds to light when my eye is right, my ear responds to sound when my ear is right, my heart responds to the character of Jesus Christ when my heart is right. And that heart response is what the Bible calls faith. And so, dear friend, that's what pleases God, because I have responded to His character. God has not bought me, scared me, bribed me, overwhelmed me with a dazzling display of glory. But I have seen His nature and I've been drawn to Him. The Bible calls that faith, and that's so pleases God. Oh, that pleases God because we love God. Therefore, not for what God can do, though He can do much, but we love God for who God is. And so faith is necessary to please God. I'll tell you what else it's necessary for. It's necessary to receive blessings. Look, if you will, in verse 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is (now watch this), and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." All of the blessings in the kingdom of heaven we receive by faith. He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Obviously, we seek Him by faith. How are people saved? Let me give you four verses from the Bible. First one is Hebrew, Habakkuk 2:4. Please don't look it up. I'll be finished before you find it. Habakkuk 2:4: "...the just shall live by his faith." The second is Romans 1:17: "...The just shall live by faith." The third is Galatians 3:11: "...The just shall live by faith." The fourth is Hebrews 10:38: "...the just shall live by faith..." Do you have an idea God's trying to tell us something? And what is it? The just shall live by faith, by faith. The way that you receive spiritual life is not by trying, but by trusting. And anybody here tonight who wants to be saved, ah, God is a rewarder of those who seek Him through faith. But not only is, is the salvation come by faith. Sanctification comes by faith. I've seen people come forward in services over and over again to rededicate their lives to Jesus, as it were, and then go out to try harder and to fall flatter than ever before. The Bible says in 1 John 5:4: "...this

is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Even our faith. You don’t quit those bad habits by trying. You quit those bad habits by trusting. Soul winning is by faith. Did you know that? Can we have faith in order to win souls? Not only can we, but must we? In Mark 9 you have a wonderful example of that. Nine, verses 23-25. There was a father who came to Jesus with a demon-possessed boy and said, “Master, if You can do anything, please help my son.” And Jesus said unto him, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out with tears and said, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Don’t you love that prayer, because I’ve been there so many times? None of us have perfect faith. All of us are on a continuum between absolute unbelief and perfect faith. “...Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” And notice what Jesus said to him. And, ah, “When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.” Now here was a father who had faith, and here was a miracle performed by the Savior on behalf of that father’s son. And we have to believe God for other people. You know, I was thinking today, this afternoon, about this and knowing I was going to preach on this subject. And I, I was thinking of an episode that happened in my life many, many years ago when I was a young boy pasturing a church. I started pasturing a church when I was 19 years of age. I was pasturing a little country church in a place called Fellsmere. And there was a boy in that church whose name was Johnny Sowell. He was about a 19 year old boy. I just knew that Johnny needed Jesus, and I wanted to lead Johnny to Jesus. And I prayed for him and prayed for him. And I would go to the house where he stayed. He was stayed in kind of a boardinghouse, but it was a house where there were just all kids of children there. I mean, and, and when I would come in, the kids loved me, and they’d pounce me, and we’d play and roughhouse and everything together. And, and I couldn’t get Johnny, who was a very shy and a very timid boy, alone to talk to him about the Lord. I was so burdened for this boy. I just knew. You know, sometimes you just know in your heart that God is ready to do business with a particular man, and He wants you to talk to him. I can remember. I was in Neil Shearer’s living room. Neil Shearer was a frog gigger. That was his, we lived out in the edge of the everglades there. That was his profession. He made good money. Back then made about \$100.00 a night gigging frogs. It wasn’t bad because that’s back in the, in the 50s. And he was a professional frog gigger. That’s another story. But I was in Neil’s house and he was gone. I was spending the night there because I’d come down from the college where I was going to college, and I was praying for Johnny. I, in my mind right now, I can see myself. I was on my face, on my knees, and on my face there in Neil’s living room. And I prayed, “Oh God, O God, I want You to save Johnny. God, You know every time I’ve gone over there, there have been so many people. I’ve never been able, ah, to get to him. Lord

God, I know that You want him saved.” And then I got a word from God, and God just told me to pray this way. I can’t explain it. But I got real bold, and I said, “Lord, this is what I’m going to do.” I said, “Lord, I’m going downtown.” Of course, it wasn’t a very big town. “But I’m going downtown. And, Lord, when I get downtown, I’m going to meet Johnny, and I’m going to ask him if he will ride to Vero Beach with me.” Vero Beach was about 15 or 20 miles away. I had no reason to go to Vero at all except to take Johnny. “And, Lord, he’s going to say yes. And, Lord, I’m going to tell him about You. And, Lord, he’s going to be saved.” I can remember getting up off my knees with tears just flowing down my cheeks, so excited. I got in my Ford automobile, 1950 Ford, and I drove to the start of that little town. Standing there on the street corner was Johnny, just standing there. I had no idea when I was praying wherever he was at all, whether he was at work or anywhere else, but I just felt impressed to pray that way. I said, lo, to Johnny, I said, “Hi, Johnny, how are you doing?” He said, “Fine, preacher.” I said, “Johnny, I’m going to Vero. You want to go with me?” I didn’t tell him what I was going for. He said, “Sure,” and jumped in the car. On the way down I told him about Jesus and on the way back we stopped the car, pulled over, and prayed and he wept his way to Christ and was saved. I’ve never been able to forget that, how it, it was so incredible that God enabled me to see the whole thing before it ever came to pass. You say, well, it was a coincidence. I wish God had given me more of them. But, you know, I just believe, I really truly believe if we were walking in the Spirit and believing God, we’d see more things like that happen all of the time as God guides His people. Just like He took Philip out of the city of Samaria and guided him out there to that Ethiopian, ah, eunuch there in the desert. But, you see, faith is necessary to salvation. Faith is necessary to sanctification. Faith is necessary to soul winning. Faith is necessary to supplication. You pray. You want to be saved. I mean, you want your prayers answered. Well, how are you going to get your prayers answered? Well, listen to what the Scripture says here in Matthew 21:22: “All things, whatsoever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that you receive them and you shall have them.” Pray, believe, and you’ll receive. Pray and doubt, you do without. It’s just that simple. Whatever you want, when God lays it on your heart, you get a word from God. God substantiates that word and then you pray, believing, and you receive it.

III. The Nurture of Faith

Now one last thing and I’m going to be very quick, so don’t tire on me right now. I’ve talked to you about the nature of faith and the necessity of faith. Let me talk to you about the nurture of faith. Let me tell you how to nurture your faith, how to make your faith grow, how to have this kind of faith. Where does it come from? Now faith cannot be manufactured. You don’t get faith just by trying. Faith is a gift of God. I’ll give you three Scriptures that point that out and you just jot them down if you want. Second Peter 1:1.

It says, "...to them that have obtained like precious faith..." Faith is something you obtain. That is, it's not something from within, but it comes from without. Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." What is? That faith. Philippians 1:29: "For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." To believe on Him is given to you. So, so, so all of these teach that faith is a gift. Now how does God impart that faith? Where does it come from? Well, in our same passage of Scripture – we're in Hebrews 11 – just fast forward to Hebrews 12 and look in Hebrews 12. I begin in verse 1 and, ah, I want to read just a few verses here that show you where that faith comes from. Now he's been talking about faith. And then in chapter 12 he uses the word *wherefore*. Do you see that? I've got a King James. You've got something else, I can't help it, but..."Wherefore..." On the basis of everything. He's, He's now is about to make the application. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith..." And in those verses he tells us how to nurture this faith. First of all, we must be saturated with the Word of God. Now that word *wherefore* is a word that refers to all that God has already said. That is, God has already given us His Word to engender faith in our heart. Romans 10:17 says, "So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Now I said that faith is the substance of things hoped for. And things hoped for means divine certainty based upon the Word of God. Now the Bible is not primarily a book to be explained, but one to be believed. And then sometimes not only does God give us the Bible, but God gives us a rama. That is, a word from God, which is a word from the Word. God just takes a lot of Scripture and makes the truth real in our heart. We have a word from God, a spoken word or a rama from God. So that, that's necessary. You must have that. Secondly, not only are you saturated with the Word of God, but you must be dedicated to the Son of God. Notice verse 2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith..." It is the presence of Jesus in your heart and in your life that causes your faith to grow. Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Be dedicated to the Son of God. And this word *looking to Jesus* means looking away from everything else and looking to Jesus. It's not great faith in God that we need, but faith in a great God. Don't spend a lot of time examining your faith. Spend time knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. To know Jesus is to trust Jesus. To trust Jesus is to love Jesus. Well, let me put it this way: To know Him is to love Him, and to love Him is to trust Him. Now, finally, not only must we be saturated with the Word of God, dedicated to the Son of God, but we must be activated by the Spirit of God. Look again in verse 1: "Wherefore seeing we're compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us..." That

is, get all of the things out of your life that would entangle your life, whether it be a weight or whether it be a sin). Ah, we're to run this race. Nobody runs a race with an overcoat on. Nobody runs a race with his legs in manacles. You get rid of this. And, and, and, and let me say this: There's nothing more debilitating, nothing more stultifying, nothing more damning and deadening to faith than sin in your life. If you're having difficulty believing God, it's probably because there's sin in your life. The Bible says, "Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Unbelief always comes out of sin in the heart. So, "...lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us (and watch) and run with patience the race that is set before us." Remember what I said that faith was? Faith is belief with legs on it. And if you'll be saturated with the Word of God, dedicated to the Son of God, and activated by the Spirit of God, you're going to find this faith growing in your heart and in your life. Now you don't have to start with great faith. Just start with faith. You see, the Bible says, "God has dealt to every man a measure of faith..." Act on the faith that you have. Get your faith into action and your faith will grow. How does my arm grow? Wh, when I exercise the, the arm muscle, then the arm muscle grows. It's, that's amazing. Look at that. Boy. All right. Now listen, listen. When you exercise your faith muscle, the faith muscle will grow. Be activated by the Spirit of God. Do you know how they built a bridge over Niagara River by the Niagara Falls? What they did was, they flew a kite over to the other side of the river and let the kite down. And there was a string there. And they tied a cord to that string and brought it back to this side of the river. Then they tied a rope to that cord and brought it back to that side of the river. Then they tied a cable to that rope and brought it back to this side of the river. And then they had spanned the river and with th, that they began to bring these pieces back and forth across until they had a great steel bridge there made of steel and concrete. Why don't you just fly a kite into that realm of faith? Just begin with a little faith. Trust the Lord in little things. You want me to tell you a good place to begin? Tithing. Really. You say, "You're trying to raise money." No, I'm trying to build faith. God says, "Bring all the tithe and prove Me." Hey, friend, tithing is kid's stuff. That's Mickey Mouse stuff. If you can't trust God with a dime out of a dollar, what are you going to do when the big things come, huh? God says, "...and prove Me." Well, I'm getting ahead. I'm going to preach that next Sunday. So let's just stop right there. All right. Now you knew where I was going when I started on Malachi, didn't you? All right.

Conclusion

Now listen, friend. Little faith will bring your soul to heaven. Great faith will bring heaven to your soul. Let's bow in prayer.

Making Your Dream Come True by Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 6, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:1-6; 12:1

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

HEBREWS 1:6

Outline

Introduction

- A. Spiritual Growth Objective
 - B. Physical Health Objective
 - C. Professional Objective
 - D. Financial Objective
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 - I. Be Saturated with Scripture
 - II. Be Separated from Sin
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- Conclusion

Introduction

We talk to you about objectives—your personal objectives. And we said what you need to do is to have some “think” time, to get alone, to be quiet before God and not simply to rush pell mall into life drawing your breath and drawing your salary without stopping to ask this question: When I get where I’m going, where will I be? You’re going somewhere. You’re going to get there. Now, where are you headed? I mean, are you satisfied with the direction of your life? Are you living, or are you merely existing? People without a vision, people without a dream, exist. People with a vision take hold of life with both hands and move into it. And here are some areas. And we wanted you to sit down and think and pray over these.

A. **Spiritual Growth Objective**

A Spiritual Growth Objective: What plan do you have? What kind of a Christian do you

want to be? Do you want to be, for example, a person that has a working knowledge of the Word of God? Is that a goal? I'll tell you, if you don't have that as a goal, if you don't have that as an objective, it's not going to happen by osmosis. It's not going to just happen. You're not going to get it like a fungus in the air.

B. Physical Health Objective

And then, Physical Health Objective: Physically, what do you want for your body? I mean, after all, we're all limited to the degree of the genes and chromosomes that we have, our age factors, and many other things, and medical things, beyond which we cannot move. But, nonetheless, there's so much that we could be, and ought to be, if we would only act rather than react physically. Have you ever thought about it? Such things as we heard about this morning—the garlic diet, ha, ha, ha.

C. Professional Objective

Next, Professional Objective: What do you see yourself doing in your job ten years from now? What skills would you like to acquire? Or do you simply say, "As long as I make enough money to subsist, that's all I want."

D. Financial Objective

What about your Financial Objective? Got your retirement. You've got your savings. What about your ability to give? What about how much money you feel would be a right amount for you to be trusted with?

E. Family Life Objective

What about your Family and your Family Life Objective? We spent a lot of time last Sunday night, and I told you, and shared with you some things that I wrote down for our family—my own personal desires and prayers and goals and ambitions, wishes for my own particular family, and I took time to think those out, write them down, and put them in a prayer notebook so I could keep them, because my family's very precious to me. Have you ever done that? Do you think that good families just happen and they happen by chance? No!

F. Ministry Objective

A Ministry Objective: Do you want a ministry? What kind of a ministry would you like to have? Would you like to be a soul winner? Would you like to be a Bible teacher? Would you like to be a missionary? Would you like to have some sort of a neighborhood influence? Would you want to be a writer? Do you want to minister to children or adults here or somewhere else? Or, do you say, "Well, my ministry, Pastor, is coming, sitting, listening to you preach." You need to think about these things. Now that's last week—My Objectives.

When you have these objectives—these are general objectives—now you have to

begin to quantify, and qualify, and stratify, in order to make these goals. And so, you get goals and strategies. Now, once you get the objective, your objective might be, “I want to have a godly home.” Well, that’s your Family Life Objective. “To fail to plan,” as someone has well said, “is to plan to fail.” So you have to have a strategy. For each of your goals there’s a strategy to meet it. It might include numbers. It might include dates. It might include character qualities, or whatever, and, there’s one not only for your family, but there’s one here for your ministry. And, you can write down. Here’s a place for four goals and strategies for your ministry. Here’s one for finances—Financial Goals and Strategies. You might have to have a lot more paper than this, but this is a start. Physical Health: Goals and Strategies. Professional: Goals and Strategies. Spiritual Growth: Goals and Strategies, and so forth. So that’s going to take some think time for you to do this as individuals and for the family one, as we say, it might be good for you to have a family conference if there are others in your family. And you can do that. Well, that would be such a blessing to you to do that.

Now, what does faith have to do with this? I mean, anybody, saved or lost, can get some objectives, some goals, and some strategies. You don’t have to be a Christian to do that. But what is the difference? We want our objectives to be God-given. We want our goals to come from the heart of God. We want our strategies to be blessed and implemented of God. That means that this is to be done by faith. We have the vision, but the goals and strategies that come out of the vision—the vision is the objectives; the goals and strategies are the middle part of this bridge that relate to faith, because it is by faith that we’ll reach those goals and perform those strategies.

Now, question: What is the difference between a vision and a daydream? I mean, I said you need to get a vision. You needed to have some objectives, over-arching objectives. And out of those objectives, there will come some goals. And out of those goals, there will come some strategies to meet those goals, to obtain that objective or those objectives.

Now, how do we know—I mean, how do I know what I do is of God, it’s God’s plan, and not mine, so I can have faith for it? I can’t have faith if I’m not certain, if I don’t feel in my heart it’s what God wants. “This is the confidence that we have in Him, if we ask Him anything according to His will, He hears us.” So I’ve got to ask myself, is this just something I’ve cooked up? Is it autosuggestion? Is it a daydream, or is it a vision? Have you wondered about that? I have. A lot of things. You know, you might say, “Well, I want to make a million dollars a year.” Well, is that of God, or is that just what you want to do?

I want to build a boat and sail around the world. How do you know whether it’s just something you just tinker with and just sort of a whim, or something that God has said, “This is for you”?

Well, a vision starts with God. You know, over there in Acts chapter 2 and verse 17, I believe, yeah, where God says, “And I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and your young men shall dream dreams, and your old men shall see visions.” Now that comes as a result of God pouring out His Spirit. That is, it is Spirit-led. It is Spirit-impelled. It is not cooked up; it comes down. “I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh...”

A daydream begins with you; a vision comes from God. And where there is no vision, the people perish. When you have a vision, and you believe that that vision is from God, then, and then only can you exercise faith. Faith comes from hearing from God. Faith is a response of the person who has heard from God.

Now, faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not following a hunch. Faith is not optimism. All of these are well and good in the world, but it is not Bible faith. Not even faith in faith.

Now, go back, if you will, for just a moment, to Hebrews chapter 11, and we’re going to look at faith a little bit, and see if we can learn the difference between real faith and a daydream. How we can know these things that we’ve written on this paper, how can we know they’re the will of God? How can we even know what to write? How can we hear from God?

All right now, look at it here, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it—that is, by faith—the elders—that is, the guys that used to be—obtained a good report—or a good testimony.” Now, let’s see if I can illustrate for you right now how faith works.

It says here that faith is what? Substance. It is the substance of things hoped for. Number two: the evidence of things not seen. That sounds so good, but it’s hard to get your hand on it. It’s hard to say, “What does that really mean?” Faith. Let’s look at it again. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for and faith is the evidence of things not seen.”

I need a volunteer. I’m going to get one of these young people here for a volunteer. Let me see which one. I’m going to go way back there. No, he’s too immature. I want to get somebody up here. Let me see here. Excitement reigns here. All right. Do you feel like a volunteer tonight? Good! Come on. All right. See, I thought, boy, she just grinned at me. I said, “You feel like a volunteer?” She said, “Sure.” All right. Now, I’m going to use her as an illustration of a person who has faith. And I’m going to see whether she is a person of faith or not. But the faith is not going to be faith in God; it’s going to be faith in her pastor. And, we’re going to use that to illustrate faith in God.

What’s your name? Robin. Okay, Robin, first of all, why you do think I chose you? Because I was staring at you. You’re here not because you chose me, but because I chose you. I went up there. I could have chosen somebody else, couldn’t I? Yes. But I chose you. You see, we love God because He first loved us. And Jesus said, “You’ve

not chosen me, but I've chosen you." And so, the reason you're here—it was my idea, not yours, right? I mean, you didn't know a few minutes ago you were going to be up here, did you? No. Okay. So I went and got her. She didn't choose me; I chose her, and I called her to me. And I've got her out here. It's because I have reached out to her, and called her, and brought her up here.

Now, I want her, because I chose her, I want her to trust me and believe me. Now, Robin, Christmas is coming, right? Yes, it is. And you need to do your Christmas shopping, right? Yes, I do. And, you probably need some money, don't you? Yes. You need some money. All right. So it would be good if you had some extra money, right? Sure would. Yeah. You could buy some stuff if you had some money, right? Okay. Say if you had ten dollars right now, I mean, ten extra dollars, could you buy at least one present with ten dollars? Sure. Okay. Maybe for me. All right. So, if you had ten dollars, that would help you with your Christmas shopping, right? That would be nice to have, wouldn't it? Yes, it would. Do you want ten dollars? Yeah. Okay now, what I have done right now, I've begun to put something in her heart. I began to lay something in her heart. I had an idea, and I thought it would be nice for her to have ten dollars, also, so I began to put a thought in her heart and in her mind, because when I called her, she came, and she listened, and she's talking with me now, and we're fellowshiping together. Forget them; it's just us up here now. I'll talk to them. And so, we're talking and we're fellowshiping. And, in the course of that fellowship, I'm putting an idea in her mind. The idea I'm putting in her mind: it would be nice if she had ten extra dollars to do shopping with, okay? So think about it a little bit.

Now, that's a hope, isn't it? Yeah. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, right? So she's beginning to get a desire, a hope. But it's only a desire right now. Now, let me say something to you. I am going to give you ten dollars. Now, question: Do you believe me? No! Go back! All right, I want to give you another chance, but you know what? You may be a better illustration than I thought. So, you don't believe me. Do you believe your pastor is a liar? No. Well now, wait a minute. When I said I was going to do it, and you didn't believe me, do you know what you were saying? You're saying, "Pastor, you're a liar." Well, that's right. I mean, didn't I say I was going to do it, and she said she didn't believe me? Now, what does the Bible say? "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." Isn't that right? You want to try again. Okay. All right. I am going to give you ten dollars. Do you believe me? Yes, I do. All right now, now she is believing me. Why do you believe me? Because you told me if I didn't, I'd be gone. Is that the only reason? Do you think I'm an honorable man? Yes, I do. Nice guy? Huh-uh. Do you think I tell the truth? Yes, I do. Do you think I can be trusted? Yes. So when you believe me, what you're really doing is saying some nice things about me, right? Because, I mean, if somebody else were to tell you that, you might not believe it, right? Yes. But, because I

tell you, you believe me, right? Right. Okay. So what you've done when you say, Robin, that I believe you, what you've done is just honored me. You see, faith honors God, and, therefore, God honors faith. Now, if you told me, "I don't believe you're going to do it," I wouldn't have. But, since you said that, "I believe you," then I'm going to do just what I said I was going to do. All right. All right. Don't look surprised. You, I'm telling you, you already said you believe me, so why did you look surprised? All right now, have you got ten dollars in your hand yet? No. Can you see it anywhere? But I'm going to give you ten dollars. Do you have ten dollars? But I'm going to give it to you. Do you know I'm going to give it to you? You absolutely know it? That's just as good as having it, isn't it? Well, I don't think the store clerk would exactly... All right. I want to ask you a question. If you absolutely know that I'm going to give it to you, but you haven't seen it yet, isn't that just as good as having it? All right. So you hope for it. Who put that hope in your heart? You did. I did! Do you believe I'm a trustworthy person? And I say I'm going to do something, but you haven't seen the ten dollars. But when you believe me, that's just as good as having it, isn't it? So is that substance? Yeah, it's substance. Faith is the substance of things hoped for.

Now that word substance means "something beneath we can stand on." Sub-stance. That's what the English word means, and the Greek word means almost the same thing. So you are standing here, Robin, saying, "I've got ten dollars, but I haven't even seen it. All I've got is the pastor's word," right? But that's just as good as having it in my hand, right? Say, right. Yeah, okay. Right. Amen. All right now, that's right. Okay. So faith is substance. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. What she's standing on right now, she's saying, "I've got it, but I don't have it; but I still have it, because he says I have it. And, therefore, I have it, even though I don't see it." Right? Because my pastor said it's mine, right? He says he's going to do it. So that's substance, right? Okay.

Now, let's go a step further. See that songbook over there on the platform? Do you believe there are ten dollars under that? You don't really know, do you? I don't have any idea. You don't know whether it is or not. But there's a songbook right over there. Okay.

Now, Robin, I'm going to tell you that there are ten dollars under that book, okay? Do you believe me? Yes, I do. Have you seen it? No. But I tell you it's there. Do you know it's there? Yes, I do. What is the evidence that you have? I believe you. Right! Right! I don't know whether you can hear or not; she doesn't have a microphone. Lend me a microphone for her over here. All right. All right.

Now, I told her there are ten dollars under that book, but she hasn't seen it. But I said, "Are you sure it's there?" She said, yes. I said, "What is the evidence?" She said, "I believe you." So, what is the evidence that there are ten dollars under there? Faith in you. Faith in me. So, your faith is both substance and evidence, isn't it? Yes, sir. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Who put that hope in your heart? You did. The one

who called you, right? Right. The one you listened to, the one you believe. And so, even though you didn't have it in your hand, you've got substance. You've got ten dollars, right? Right. And the evidence it's there is the faith that you have in your heart that I'm not a liar, right? Right. So faith is substance and evidence. All right.

Now, you've got to act on faith, don't you? Okay. Okay. I want you to go pick up that songbook. I sure hope there's ten dollars under there. All right. All right. Give her a hand.

Now, suppose Robin had said, "Yeah, I believe you, and all of that," but she never did go pick it up? She didn't really believe. Just saying you believe is not believing. Belief is faith with legs on it. All right? So, she picked it up, and it is now hers, because faith is made perfect by works, and she claimed, and laid hold of that which I wanted her to have, right? You're a sweet girl. God bless you. Thank you. Have a wonderful Christmas.

Okay now, now, you see, faith is the evidence that you have what God has given you even before you have it. And it's the substance. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. It is the evidence of things not seen. But, where did she get that faith? I put it in her heart. I called her, and I told her I would do certain things, and she just had to believe I meant what I said.

Now, suppose when I called her, she said, "I don't want to go up there. I don't want to talk to you. I don't want to have anything to do with you." It would have been her privilege, wouldn't it? Or suppose when I called her up here and told her certain things, she said, "Well, I just don't trust you." Or, suppose she said she trusted me, and then did not act on it? You see, look, if you will, in chapter 11 and verse 6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Now, if she had not believed, she would not have received the reward. And, if she had not believed me, she would not have pleased me. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. Suppose she stood up here in front of all of you people and said, "You know, our pastor's not trustworthy. I don't believe him." When we fail to believe God, do you see what the testimony we give about God? Do you see why the Scripture says, "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar?"

But now the real question comes. You say, "Pastor, I wouldn't have any trouble if I could hear from God as clearly as Robin heard from you." I mean, if God would say, "I'm going to give you ten dollars," then I'd say, I believe you, Lord. But God doesn't speak to us that way. That's the way we as human beings communicate, but God does not speak that way. God communes to us in the Spirit, and through His Word. And that's the reason the Lord Jesus Christ said, "If ye abide in me, and my word abides in you, then ye shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." And so, to hear God, and to

say, “God, is that You speaking, or is that just something I’ve cooked up?” that’s really a very crucial and a very critical point. And how to tell one individual that he’s heard from God is very difficult, for what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man that’s in him.

Now, let’s see if Robin gets a good report. Look in verse 2—chapter 11 and verse 2: “For by it the elders obtained a good report.” Well, let’s give her a report card. Did she come when she was called? Yes. Give her an A. Did she listen? Yes. Did she have hope laid in her heart? Yes. Give her an A. Did she believe, and have faith, and turn faith into substance? Yes. Give her an A. Did she have faith as evidence? Yes. Give her an A. Did she receive? Yes. Give her an A. That’s her report card.

Now, you need to be able to learn how to have that kind of faith, and to hear God. I want to give you four steps on hearing God about these goals, and then we’ll have prayer, and have the Lord’s Supper. All right?

Now look, if you will, into how chapter 12 begins. It begins with “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses—that’s all of those who, the saints in glory who’ve already gone on to heaven—let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God.” And, in these verses there are four things that I believe will help you, as they’ve helped me, to have faith, and here they are.

I. Be Saturated with Scripture

First of all, you must be saturated with Scripture. You must be saturated with Scripture. The wherefore refers back to chapter 11, and actually all that he said in eleven chapters. The book of Hebrews is written to teach us to believe in God. And so, when he makes all of this treatise about faith, and when he gives us these definitions of faith, and these illustrations of faith, and these encouragements to faith, then he says, wherefore, let’s have faith.

Now, faith comes by hearing the Word of God. You cannot work up faith. It cannot be manufactured. Robin could not have stepped out of the choir and said, “I’m going to believe tonight that the pastor is going to give me ten dollars,” if I didn’t have in my heart and mind a desire to give her ten dollars. She could not have controlled me with her belief. She had to hear from me. She had to hear from me. I mean, she couldn’t believe I’m going to do anything till she hears from me, isn’t that right? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. You’ve got to hear from God.

Now, you’re going to hear from God empirically from the Word of God, and subjectively from the Spirit of God, but we’ll get to that in a moment. Let’s just say, first

of all, you've got to be saturated with Scripture.

Now, remember John 15, verse 7. Jesus said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you." Now, it's not just simply knowing the kings of Egypt and the kings of Israel, not just knowing the names of the apostles and the books in the New Testament; you must get a word from the Word, and God will speak to you in His Word. Many of the goals that I wrote down for my family came right out of the Word of God.

One of my life's blessings, for example, one of my life's verses, is, "The generation of the upright shall be blessed." And I can have faith for those things, because I know that God has said something in His Word. All right. So you must be saturated with Scripture.

II. Be Separated from Sin

Number two: You must be separated from sin. Now look: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us..." We need to lay aside extraneous weights, whatever it is that's a drag on our lives, the seemingly harmless things, but yet they work against our faith; and then, the sin itself, those things that are an absolute contradiction to the Word of God, and even those harmless things become sin if we allow them to keep us from the goal. So, we must be saturated with Scripture. We must be separated from sin.

Now, listen. There is nothing more deadening, more debilitating, more stultifying, more smothering, to faith than sin in your life. Willful rebellion and faith do not co-exist. They just don't do it. I mean, you can figure that out yourself. For example, suppose you and your wife have one of those horrendous arguments. And then you're steamed at one another, not even speaking, and you go into the child's bedroom, and the child has a raging fever. And you're both believers, and you know you've sinned against God because you've been out of fellowship with one another. And this child has a burning, raging fever, and you want God to heal that child. And the two of you get down by the bedside to pray. Don't you feel silly? You know that you know that, first of all, you've got to say, "Honey, I'm sorry. I was wrong. Forgive me. May God have mercy on us! Let's get this sin out of our lives so we can pray." Isn't that true? You can't pray with faith, when there's sin in your heart and in your life. And I don't know what your sin is, but, folks, let me tell you something. There is no sin worth not having faith. No, I mean, that's too big a price to pay, because without faith it's impossible to please Him. So you must lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us. I mean, when you see the goal, when you see what's on the other side of the bridge, and you've got to cross that bridge, and faith is one of the pillars of that bridge, and sin is eating at the

foundation, and you've got to get to the other side, deal with that sin. So you are saturated with Scripture. You're separated from sin.

III. Be Dedicated to the Savior

Thirdly, you're dedicated to the Savior. Look, if you will, here again in verse 2: "Looking unto Jesus the author and the finisher of our faith..." Faith comes from Jesus. It's a gift of God. We don't manufacture faith. Listen to this: 2 Peter 1, verse 1: "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained like precious faith." Faith is an attainment. It comes from outside. Philippians 1, verse 29: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." That verse says it is given to believe. Faith is a gift of God, and it comes by looking unto Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of your faith. It begins with Him. It ends in Him. It lives by Him. And, if you're having difficulty with faith, get in the Word of God, repent of all known sin, and fill your life with Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus said, "If you abide in me, and my word abides in you, ye shall ask what you will..." When you get right with God—I mean, truly right with God—when you get full of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you know what you have? You have the mind of Christ! And so, when you're writing those things down, who's doing the writing? Jesus in you! "For it is Him that works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure. And this is the confidence that we have in Him; if we ask Him anything according to His will, He hears us." If you abide in Him, and His words abide in you. You just don't run into God's presence with a little shopping list. So, you're saturated with Scripture. You're separated from sin. You are dedicated to the Savior.

IV. Be Activated by the Spirit

Next, you're activated by the Spirit—activated by the Spirit. Now, look, if you will—he says, "...let us run with the patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..." The difference between belief and faith is, faith is belief with legs on it. I mean, she over here said, "I believe you." That's substance. I said, "Do you believe there are ten dollars under that book?" There is. What is the evidence that you have? She says, "My faith." All right. But now she needed to lay hold of that. She needed to do something.

In this eleventh chapter of Hebrews, it lists what people did by faith. And so, you are saturated with Scripture, separated from sin, dedicated to the Savior, and activated by the Spirit.

Conclusion

Well, you say, "Pastor, well and good, if I am certain that what I have on my list is the

will of God.” Well, you don’t know the will of God just like that. The Bible says, “The path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more unto a perfect day.” At first, it’s dark, and you can’t see a thing. Then, it is gray dawn, and you see no color, just massive shapes. And then, the sun comes up, and you see color, but there are long shadows. But then, as the sun rises to a perfect day, high noon, it is full of color and no shadows. And, that’s the way you find the will of God. “The path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more unto a perfect day.” And so, if there’s something, you say, “Is this Your will for me, God, in my business? Is this Your will for me in my health? Is this Your will for me in my finances? Is this your will for me with my children? Is this Your will for me in my profession? As God begins to speak, you listen and say, “Lord, if this is You, just keep speaking.” And, the light shines more and more unto a perfect day.

I’m told that when they built that bridge across the Niagara back in the days before they had helicopters to do a lot of that work, massive helicopters that lift ropes and beams, they flew a kite across the Niagara River with a string. It landed on the other side. Those people on that side took that string and tied a cord to it, and they pulled it to this side. Those people tied a rope to that cord and they pulled it to this side. And they tied a cable to that rope and pulled it to that side, until they spanned that river with enough substance to build a bridge.

You might just have a string tonight. Say, “God, if this is of You, help me to tie a cord to it.” Before long, you have these convictions that this is the will of God for my life. And, I’ve watched God work in my own heart, and in my own life, and in my family, that way. And then, as those convictions become a bridge, it’s a bridge to the future. You have a vision. You have faith. And then, we’re going to talk about obedience later. Let’s pray together.

Father, seal these thoughts to our hearts. We love You and praise You. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Seeing the Invisible

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 14, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:1, 3

“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”

HEBREWS 11:3

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word, and turn, please, to Hebrews chapter 11, if you would, please. And we’re going to continue what we began this morning talking about faith. And tonight, we’re going to be talking about “Seeing the Invisible.” I don’t know whether or not you’ve ever endeavored to see the invisible, but you’ll not be victorious in the Christian life until you learn to live above see level. That is, to live about what you can see with your natural eyes. We have a saying, that seeing is believing; but the Bible teaches that believing is seeing. We have a saying that what you see is what you get, but according to this Bible definition of faith, what you don’t see is what you may get through faith.

Notice what it says here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1: “Now faith is the substance—that is, the guarantee—of things hoped for...” And remember what hope means. It means assurance based on the promise of God mingled with anticipation. “Faith is the guarantee of things that God has promised, that we anticipate having; it is the evidence of things not seen.”

There are some things that are very real that are not seen. When I was a little boy, I used to hear these words: “Last night I saw upon the stair a little man who wasn’t there.

He wasn't there again today. Oh, how I wish he'd go away." There are a lot of things that we think we see that are not real, but there are some things that we don't see that are real.

Now, don't turn to it, but put in the margin Colossians chapter 1 and verse 6, and listen to this: "For by him—that is, by Jesus—were all things created..." Now, friend, there wasn't anything created that Jesus did not make. Everything that you see has this stamp upon it: Made by Jesus. Now, listen. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible"—so right away we get a clue that when Jesus made the universes and He made the worlds, He brought into existence things that we can see; things that are visible, and things that we cannot see—"...whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created by him and for him."

So tonight, I want you to think with me, first of all, about the reality of the unseen world. There is a world out there that is very, very real. It is the invisible world. It is the spiritual world. And your ignorance would be magnified if you were to say, "Because I cannot see that world, it does not exist." You would be like a blind man saying, "Because I cannot see a rainbow, there is no rainbow." Or if we were to bring a man from the deepest jungles of Ecuador, who'd never seen civilization, and tell him that this room tonight is filled with television signals. There are pictures here in the air. He may not believe you, but his unbelief would not take away the fact that there are invisible forces in this room in that electronic sense. How much more in the spiritual sense? Learn this: there is more to this life than what you can touch, what you can taste, what you can smell, or what you can hear, or what you may see with your eyes. As a matter of fact, what you see is not the final word on anything. Listen. Listen, as we think about the reality of the unseen world.

The unseen world was here first. Look, if you will, in verse 3—Hebrews 11 and verse 3: "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." In plain English what does that mean? Well, Moffat translates it this way: that the visible is made out of the invisible. Everything that you can see was made out of what you cannot see. The visible is made out of the invisible. So the invisible was here first. And everything that you see is made by the great, eternal, invisible God existing as Christ before He became flesh. That's the reason you have to laugh at these people who, go into the laboratory, to try to prove that God doesn't exist. It, it's really laughable.

I was reading an article, oh, two or three weeks ago about how they say that man has created life in the laboratory. I said, "Well, I'll just read that." So I read the article. And down at the bottom it said, "Well, man didn't really create life. They have made some, synthesized, put together, some lifelike substances that in some ways act like

life. And you can just kind of read through it. They're trying to replicate, duplicate somehow the spontaneous generation of life in order to say, "We don't have to depend upon God, the giver of life." Now, they don't state it that bluntly, but you don't have to be a rocket scientist to find out what's going on. It reminds of someone, we'll say, whose father is a master builder. I mean, he can build the most magnificent home and edifices, gorgeous in every detail. He has a child. And that child, while his father is absent, takes his father's blueprints, takes his father's building materials, takes his father's tool and studies his father's methods. And then, in his father's absence, he builds a little chicken coop that can hardly stand on its own. And then, he points to that chicken coop and says, "See that! That proves that my father doesn't exist." That's what people do in the laboratory. They take God's tools, they take God's materials, they take God's methods, they take God's plans, and somehow try to prove that God Himself doesn't exist. But, friend, it is absolute foolishness. Everyone knows that out of nothing nothing comes. And before all things was God. All things are from Him and they are for Him, and He created the invisible world. And the things that are seen are made out of things which are not seen. The invisible world was here first.

Now put this verse down, 11 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 18, and you're going to learn that the invisible world will be here last. The apostle Paul was in great difficulty, but he says, "I am getting along fine," and here's why. "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Paul said, "I'm surviving here by looking at things that are not seen"—"...for the things which are seen are temporal..."—now what does the word temporal mean? It means "temporary"—"...the things that are not seen, or the things which are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." Are you picking up something here? You see, the invisible world was here first, and the invisible world will be here last. Now sometimes when you talk about faith, people say, "Well, talk to me about something real." Well, I want to ask you a question. What is more real—what you can see that got here last and will be gone first or what you cannot see, which was here first and will outlast what you can see? You see, the invisible world is more real than the visible world. There is an unseen world. And the Bible tells us here that faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen. Okay. That's the reality of the unseen world. It's a very real world.

I. The Resources of the Unseen World

Now, I want to talk to you about the, the resources of that unseen world. Once you begin to pat into the unseen world, you find out that God begins to pour incredible resources into your life.

A. In Time of Trouble

You see, there is a rich resource, but it's unseen, but very, very real. It's a resource in

time of trouble. Now I just read this, verse, but now I want you to turn, if you will, to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and let me show you about the resource of the unseen world. Just take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and begin with me in verse 3. He says, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Unsaved people just can't see the gospel. They don't understand. They can't see the invisible. "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves y our servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in ou8r hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Oh, friend, I hope you can see that tonight. I hope that God will turn the light on so that you can see the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. You don't see Jesus Christ's face literally. Paul didn't mean that. Christ was in heaven. But he was saying that you could see the invisible.

Then he talks about us down here on this earth. He says, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels..." He says, "I've got Jesus on the inside. I'm like a clay pot, but He's on the inside." "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Paul said, "The strength is not in the clay pot. The strength is in the treasure inside the clay pot in the vessel." And then Paul talks about the trouble he has with the earthen vessel. Look. "We are troubled on every side, but not distressed; we are perplexed—that is, I don't know what I'm going to do next—but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." One paraphrase says "knocked down, but not knocked out." I like that. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Christ, of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For which we live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake"—that is, Paul was just a hop, skip, and a jump away from death it seemed like. They were always out after him—"...that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." Paul said, "The life that I live so near to death is the life that is bringing life to you."

Now, look in verse 13. How does, how did Paul keep on going? What made this man the greatest missionary that ever lived? "We having the same spirit of faith—got that?—the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and present us with you." That is, "Look, I believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, I am not intimidated by death." And he says here, "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." Now he says, "For which cause we faint not..." Paul, how do you keep on going? Paul, how is it that you were

shipwrecked? Paul, how is it that you were stoned? Paul, how is it that you fast? How is it that you were whipped? How is it that you were a night and a day in the deep? How is it that you were left with, for dead? How is it that you fought with wild beasts? How do you keep on going? Why don't you quit? Why don't you faint? Well, he says, "I'm going to tell you. For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish—that's the clay pot], our inward man—that's the, the treasure—is renewed day by day. For our light affliction..." Wait a minute, Paul. Who are you kidding? Did you say light affliction? "Yes, is but for a moment, but our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Now listen to this. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Paul says, "You see all this trouble, all this heartache, all of these people against me? Hey, that's all passing away. But what they cannot see, but what I can see and what I have been looking at, I have been looking with the eye of faith at the invisible. Faith sees the invisible." And what Paul says is this: "In time of trouble that is what keeps me going." The apostle Paul was tuned in to another world.

And this brings me under great conviction because I have to confess to you that I'm pretty much a creature of my five senses. I want to be more like Paul. I want to look beyond this veil of tears. I want to look beyond this valley of trouble. I want to look beyond the things that threaten me and intimidate me and see those things that are not seen in a time of trouble. Corrie ten Boom said, "Look around; you will be distressed." She said, "Look within and you will be depressed. Look at Jesus and you will be at rest"—at rest. Paul, how do you endure? Paul said, "Oh, how do I endure? I see the invisible. The things which are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. So, the invisible world is a resource in time of trouble.

B. In Time of Fear

It's also a resource in time of fear. Take your Bibles and turn to 2 Kings here for a moment—2 Kings chapter 6. Turn to it. You'll enjoy it. Look, if you will, here at an episode in the life of Elisha. I'm going to begin reading in 2 Kings chapter 6, in verse 8: "And the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp." Now the king of Syria was a wicked, malevolent, ungodly man. He was against the people of God. And he'd made a place where he was going to bivouac with his camp. "And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down." That is, the man of God, Elisha, knew where the Syrians were going to put their camp. "And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto

them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?" That is, "There's a leak here somewhere. We've got to get it plugged. Ha, the king of Israel knows everything that I'm going to do in my war." "And one of his servants said, None, my lord..."—it's not that we've got an enemy in the camp—"...None, O my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." You talk about a leak! He said, "Listen. Elisha knows what you tell you wife just before you go to sleep." Well, you can imagine how the king of Syria would feel about this. "And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him—I'm going to fix him. I'm going to fetch him and I'm going to maybe make him a foot shorter at the top—and it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan." Now, that's not in Dothan, Alabama, but Dothan over there, for which Dothan, Alabama is named. "And therefore sent he thither horses and chariots and a great host..."—now, here's one little preacher out there. Here comes a whole army. I mean, horses, chariots, and a great host. They're coming after God's man—"...and they came by night, and compassed the city about." All around Dothan is this army, Syrian army. Well, "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth..."—here's Elisha's servant. He gets up early and he's going for a little walk—"...behold, a host compasseth the city both with horses and chariots. And his master said, and his servant said unto him, Oh, alas, my master! How shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Now, there are just two of them, and as far as they could see, and perhaps thousands of Syrians out there, and horses and chariots. And he said, Elisha says to him, "Hey, son, don't worry. Don't be afraid." Now, notice verse 17: "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man..." I like that, "the young man."

I didn't start wearing these till I got to be 41. I came here. I ought to sue this church. When I was 41, I didn't need these things. I came here. And I was going over to Al Childress' house one night and I wasn't quite sure where it was. And I pulled into a service station to look up his address in a phone book. And I got that phone book out and I looked at a sheet of grey. I said, "Uh-oh, I have become a man!" I couldn't read that at nighttime.

This was a young man right here. He'd gone out. He probably didn't need glasses. But Elisha says, "LORD, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw—O listen to this—and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Does that bless you or does that bless you? Oh, listen. Here all the things that can be seen, but the man of God could see what could not be seen with the natural eye but with the eye of faith. What a resource in time of trouble to see the unseen, because just like the king of Syria, Satan is blustering and intimidating the church today. And Satan is that sinister minister of

fear. But, thank God, not only was there spiritual intimidation; there was spiritual communication in that day. And Elisha knew everything that the king of Syria was up to because God told him. And, you know, God is still communicating those things today?

A while back, I had a very serious need, about three or four months ago, a real need. And I had three different people to communicate with me in different places around America, and said, “Brother Adrian, I felt deeply impressed to pray specifically for you. Did you have a need?” And I said to each of them, “I had a very real need, and I want to thank you. I want to thank you so much for your prayer and your care for me.” God has a network. God just, just lets His people know. And there was spiritual intimidation, spiritual communication, and spiritual illumination.

God said, “Listen, young man, fear not. They that are with us are more than they that be with them.” Did you know the Bible says the angel of the LORD encamped round about them that fear Him?” Isn’t that wonderful? You know, I found this verse. This has blessed me today. Psalm 68 and verse 17: “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them...”

Just think about going down, down the road tonight and twenty thousand chariots round about you, each one of them driven by an angel, and God leading the host. God leading the host. There’s an unseen world out there.

Now, what kept Paul in prison when he was there? How could Paul sing praises to God in prison? How could he go through the shipwrecks and the heartache and the tears and the trouble? He saw the invisible. He said, “We look not at the things which are seen, but we look at the things that are not seen.” How was Elisha so full of courage there at Dothan? Well, he could see. He saw the invisible.

I want to give you another illustration of this. Turn to Hebrews chapter 11 with me. I want you to see an episode in the life of Moses. Now you know that Moses was raised by Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, he was the heir to the throne. And he could have been the most powerful man on earth. But I want you to look here in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 24: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” That is, the grandson of Pharaoh. He just refused that. “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt...” Now you think about this. Moses had at his fingertips and within his grasp what most of the people in this world want—position, the king of Egypt; pleasure, the lavish court life of an eastern monarch; possession, the riches of Egypt. Position, pleasure, possession—it was all right there, but he refused it all. And not only did he refuse it, but he reached out and said, “I am willing to have reproach.” You know, the Bible says, “All who live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” He said, “I’m willing to be persecuted. I, I’m

willing to be thought badly of. I am willing to suffer with the people of God.” But, Moses, how can you do that? What makes you do that? Well, look in verse 27: “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured—how?—as seeing him who is invisible.” Same thing.

C. In Time of Temptation

Listen. In time of trouble, see the invisible. In time of fear, see the invisible. In time of temptation, you see the invisible. Look in verse 26: “He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt...” The word esteemed is a bookkeeping term. What it means, it literally means here counted. He’d been figuring up. He had a ledger. On one side of the ledger was the king of Egypt. On the other side of the ledger was the King of kings. On one side of the ledger was the material. On the other side of the ledger was the spiritual. On one side of the ledger were the glories of the present. On the other side were the glories of the future. On one side of the ledger was the visible. On the other side the invisible. On one side was the temporal. On the other side was the eternal. And old Moses, he’s just doing some thinking. He looks over here and he sees all of these things—position, pleasure, possession. Then he looks and he says over here there’s the reproach of Christ, suffering. Then he says, “I think I’ll look over here.” He gets it in focus. He sees the riches of Christ. He sees by the eye of faith another world. He looks over here and he looks over here. He sees the visible; he sees the invisible, and he says, “I’m going that way. I am going that way!” He was no fool. He was no fool.

No wonder tonight we’re reading about Moses. No wonder Moses was such a great man. Why? Because, friend, he saw the invisible. There is the reality of the invisible. There are the resources of the invisible.

II. The Recognition of the Unseen World

Now, let me talk to you just a little bit about the recognition of the invisible. Let’s see; let’s learn. How do you see the unseen? Remember what we said in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1? “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” You see the invisible not with the eye of flesh, but with the eye of faith. With the eye of faith you see the invisible. Now, let me tell you three things, therefore, that are very true.

A. Faith Is Not Altered by Appearance

Number one: Faith should never be challenged or altered by appearance. No matter what your five senses tell you, if you have a word from God, you stand on the Word of God. Remember Thomas after the resurrection of Jesus Christ? The disciples came to him and said, “Thomas, we’ve seen the LORD.” And old Thomas said in John chapter

20 and verse 25: “Except I see in His hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Thomas said, “If I can’t see, I won’t believe.” That is, seeing is believing. Later, you remember that Jesus condescendingly said, “Thomas, come on. Look. There’s the print of the nails. Go ahead. Put your hand in My side.” At that time, Thomas fell down, and he said, “O my Lord and my God. O my Lord and my God.” By the way, that’s one of the great proves that Jesus is God.

If I were to fall down before Bob Sorrell tonight, and say, “O my Lord and my God,” Bob would say, “Pastor, get up, or both of us will be in trouble. You for worshipping me and me for allowing it.” No, no. But Jesus didn’t say, “Thomas, get up. You’ve made a mistake.” Jesus said to Thomas in verse 29: “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, you’ve believed. Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed—but now notice what He says—blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” O friend, it is faith, not sight, that tells me that Jesus Christ is alive.

Simon Peter caught this message—1 Peter 1 and verse 8—he said, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

There were those when Jesus Christ was on the cross, they challenged Him. They taunted Him, and they said, “Come down from the cross and we’ll believe.” They said to Jesus, “Give us a sign from heaven and we will believe. Just give us something that we can see.” Friend, true faith is not altered by appearance and it doesn’t need visible signs to bolster it up.

Some of you ought to be tithing, but you’re not tithing. Do you know why you’re not tithing? Well, some will try to figure out a way. They say, “Well, you know, tithing is not taught in the New Testament. That’s just, that’s an Old Testament concept. Tithing,” they say, “is just part of the law.” Well, I want you to know, friend, that tithing was taught before the law, during the law, and after the law. But let’s, just for the sake of argument, say that tithing is a part of the Mosaic law. Would you let a Jew do more under law than you would do under grace? If you would, you’re a disgrace to grace. Think about it. Do you think that a Jew would love Jesus more and trust Jesus more with his finances under law than you would under grace? Obviously, it all belongs to God. Someone says, “Well, it’s not just the tithe, pastor. It all belongs to God.” Well, it all belonged to God in the Old Testament. But the tithe is the beginning places where we recognize our stewardship to God. But you say, “But, yes, pastor, all right. I’ll admit that I really ought to tithe, but you see, pastor, I’ve been doing some figuring. And I’ve been adding up what my responsibilities are and what my bills are, and, very frankly, pastor, I have been looking at it and I look at figures, and figures don’t lie. I can’t do it.” Well, there’s nothing wrong with adding things up, but don’t forget to add in the invisible. Don’t forget to put

God in the equation. Now, if you don't put God in the equation, I mean, I mean, you can't, you can't add things up unless you have every factor in. Put God in it. You see, faith is not altered by appearances.

The largest Baptist church in the world, I believe, is in Korea. I've preached in that church. My brother friend that I've had in this pulpit, Kim Ke Dong or Ke Dong Kim—it all depends on how you want to say it—is a dear man of God. He said to me, "Adrian, I want to tell you how to grow a church and how to be a man of God." He said, "There's the ant and there's the eagle." He said, "The ant crawls around on the ground and all the ant can see is what is around him." But he said, "The eagle gets high enough he can see over the horizon." And he said, "Adrian, to live the life of faith you have to have the eye of the eagle and not the eye of the ant." Faith is not altered by appearances.

B. Faith Is Not Fettered by Feeling

I want to say this: faith also is not fettered by feeling. When you see the invisible world, it doesn't really matter how you feel about it. So many times when we pray we want to get emotional. And there's nothing wrong with emotion. There's nothing wrong with feeling. But I've told you before that your feelings are the shallowest part of your life. Your salvation is the deepest work of God. And God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part. There's nothing wrong with feeling good. It feels good to feel good, but faith is not fettered by feeling.

Have you ever waked up and wanted to pray and felt that you ought to pray, but just didn't feel like? Kind of groggy, kind of... you feel bad mostly all over. You just, you, and you just don't want to pray. So you say, "Well, you know, I, my prayers wouldn't get above the light bulbs, anyway." And that's probably your problem. You think God's above the light bulbs. He's down here too, folks. But you say, "Well, you know, I just think I'll skip it." Then later on, you maybe, maybe your problem is you didn't sleep well because you ate sauerkraut and ice cream the night before. And so you say, "Well, you know, I've got this dull headache. I'm kind of queasy. I feel like I swallowed a canary. I just think I ought to take a couple of Alka Seltzer." So you take a couple of Alka Seltzers and thirty minutes you're feeling better. Hey, I feel pretty good. I believe I'll pray. You pray and have a wonderful time. Well, I want to ask you a question: Was God in those two pills, plop, plop? I mean, was that God? I mean, it, it, are you now more spiritual? You're not one bit more spiritual. You just feel better, you see.

When you come to God in prayer, when you pray, don't offer the brass of your emotions. You come with both hands filled with the incense of Jesus' worth. You understand what I'm saying? You see, how do you, how do you get into this invisible world? Faith is not altered by appearance. It's not fettered by feeling.

Now, I'm going to let you in on a little preacher's secret. Confession is good for the soul. Sometimes I don't feel like preaching, did you know that? You say, "I could tell." I

mean, there are times... Hey, folks, I preach all the time. I mean, I get up and I'm supposed to be ready to preach. It's just like taking off in an airplane. You've got to get off the landing strip because the pine trees are down there. I mean, you've got to get off. It's time. Here I come, ready or not. It's time to preach. And, and, you know, I can go to bed on Saturday night feeling wonderful; wake up on Sunday morning feeling terrible. But it's time to preach. And it seems like I get here on, on those mornings and the weather will be kind of like it was this morning, although I felt wonderful this morning. And maybe the choir will sound like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm, and the ushers won't ush, and I see a little lady looking for a seat and an usher just standing there like that. And I want to pick up a song book and say, "Psssssst, show that lady a seat!" Then I get up to preach and I get my foot in a lard bucket. Can't get it out. Can't pronounce words. Can't think straight. And I think, you know, God is a billion light years from this place. And give the invitation and heaven comes down and God moves. And God says, "Adrian, your feelings don't have anything to do with it. It is My word and My power that I honor."

C. Faith Is Not Limited by Logic

There's an invisible world out there, friend. And I want to tell you something else. Faith is not altered by appearance. Faith is not fettered by feeling. And faith is not limited by logic. You say, "Well, it doesn't make sense to me." Well, friend, there's a lot of things that don't make sense to you. You don't even know how a brown cow can eat green grass and give white milk and churn yellow butter. It doesn't have to make sense to you. You know, faith is just simply standing on God's Word. And I want to say this: that faith is not contrary to logic. You don't have to check your brains at the door to be a Christian. But faith goes beyond logic. Faith goes beyond reason. In order to be faith, there is an invisible world out there. And, and, and you look beyond that. Paul, in all of his trouble, looked at the things that were not seen. Elisha there surrounded by the enemies saw the things that were not seen. Moses endured, seeing Him who is invisible. And how do we see? We see with the eye of faith. And where do we get the eye of faith? We hear from God. When we know the unknowable, that is apart from God, then we see the invisible, that is apart from God invisible. And then we do the impossible; that is, apart from God.

Conclusion

Folks, it's about time we begin to tune in to that other world. It was here first. It'll be here last. Now, you know, we need to grow in faith, don't we? My faith is so weak, but I know it's there, and I want my faith to grow.

I was reading how they built the first bridge over the Niagara River. Do you know what they did? It was back before the days of helicopters and modern machinery. They

flew a kite over the Niagara River with just a little kite string. It landed on the other side. On the other side they tied a cord to the kite string and drew it back across the river. On this side they tied a rope to the cord and drew it back across the river. On that side they tied a bigger rope and pulled it back across the river. On this side they tied a cable and drew it back across the river. And before long they had a bridge.

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. Lord, take the little faith that I have and help it to grow. A little faith will bring your soul to heaven. Great faith will bring heaven to your soul.

Father, help us to grow in faith; Lord, to see over the horizon, to see through the material onto the spiritual. Lord, to look at the things that are not seen, but the things that can never pass away. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Blood Makes a Difference

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 12, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:4

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”

HEBREWS 11:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Contrast in Their Worship
- II. The Consequences of Their Worship
- III. The Conflict of Their Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit. And that's what ignites that imagination and anticipation of when we stand in His presence.

Find Hebrews chapter 11, and, in just a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 4. Now, the central theme of the entire chapter of Hebrews chapter 11 is that God is to be worshiped. And, if God is to be worshiped, He must be worshiped in Spirit and in truth. Let's read, if we will, Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 4: “By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” So really, we're going to have a sermon from a dead man this morning. Not me, but Abel. “He being dead yet speaketh.”

Beyond a shadow of any doubt, one of the most interesting men I've ever met was a man I pastored in Ft. Pierce, Florida. His name was Charlie Fisher. We called him Uncle Charlie. He was no bigger than a minute, but he weighed two tons spiritually. He was a man that was fearless for the Lord Jesus Christ. Uncle Charlie had an old airplane with canvas sides. He'd written across the sides of that airplane, “Christ is the answer.” It had an open cockpit. He'd put his goggles on, get a basket full of tracts, and fly over county fairs, and dump out the tracts on the people, and circle around the field with that

sign on there, “Christ is the answer.” I prayed with him so many times. He would pray and get happy in the Lord, and get on the floor and crawl around and begin to giggle, praising the Lord—absolutely fearless.

When I baptized Uncle Charlie, he had already been saved for a long time, but I needed to baptize him before he came into the fellowship of our church. And I wasn’t prepared for what happened. I put him under the water, and when he came up out of the water, he stood up, and lifted both hands, and said, “Glory to God.” He said, “buried in the likeness of His death, and raised in the likeness of His resurrection!” Incredible individual.

Uncle Charlie finally died. He told his son, Lee, who was a dear friend of mine, he said, “Don’t worry about my funeral. Just invite all my friends, and take this tape recorder, and push the button. That’s all you have to do.” He said, “I’ve already taken care of everything.” And so, the funeral came, and Uncle Charlie was there in the casket; all of his friends were there. Lee got up and pushed the button, and it was Charlie. He said, “Hello, everybody.” Said, “I’m Charlie Fisher. I’m up here in heaven. It is wonderful up here.” And he began to tell everybody about how glorious heaven was, and all of the things that Jamie was just singing about, and he preached a sermon on how wonderful heaven is. And then, he said, “I want to tell all of you to come and meet me in heaven.” The only man I ever knew who preached his own funeral. Charlie Fisher preached his own funeral. “He being dead was yet speaking.”

Well, there’s another man who has preached his own funeral, and that’s a man named Abel. And we’re going to learn about him today. Now, what we see in Abel is a shadow of the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, the Old Testament is a book of shadows that point to New Testament truths. For example, in Colossians chapter 2, verse 17, the Bible tells us that the Old Testament is a shadow of things to come. Now, you think about shadows. A shadow must have light, and it must have something to shine upon. Now, the light is the Old Testament Scripture, and the body that the shadow shines upon is the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the angle of the light determines the sharpness of the shadow. In the early morning, the shadows are not real clear, and they’re somewhat distorted. By midmorning, the shadows become clearer. Then, at high noon, there are no shadows at all. Now, in the Old Testament, we have shadows that pointed toward the Lord Jesus Christ. But when Calvary came in the New Testament, then it’s high noon. What we’re going to see here in this story of Abel is the beginning of these shadows that are pointing to the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, look again, if you will, in chapter 11 verse 4: “By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice.” Well, where is that story found? The story is found over here in the book of Genesis. So turn, if you will, with me to Genesis now, for a moment—

Genesis chapter 4. Open your Bible. It's very important, or you won't understand Hebrews 11, if you don't understand Genesis chapter 4. Do you have it in your Bible? Now, watch. Genesis chapter four.

Now, "Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived..."—now, Adam and Eve, obviously, the first humans here upon the earth—"and she conceived and bare Cain,"—now, Cain was her firstborn—"and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel"—that's the one we're talking about today—"was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground"—one a shepherd, and one a farmer—"and in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground and offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell."

Now, we're going to stop reading there, but stay, keep your bookmark there, in Hebrews chapter 11, and then Genesis chapter four, because we're going to go back and forth so we can understand it. What we have here is a shadow of the cross in the offering that Cain made. See, two offerings, in the offering that Abel made—two offerings. Cain offered the fruit of the ground. He offered vegetables to the Lord. Abel offered to the Lord a slain lamb of the firstlings of the flock. The Bible says that God accepted the offering of Abel, but He did not accept the offering of Cain. One, the offering from the ground, the fruit of the ground; the other, a spotless lamb. Now, we're going to see in this chapter, Hebrews chapter 11, and Genesis chapter 4, some contrasts. Are you ready?

I. The Contrast in Their Worship

First of all, there was a contrast in their worship. Two boys, they're worshipping God. One is worshipping in Spirit and in truth. And the other is worshipping by His own ingenuity. Now, remember Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 4: "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice." Now, what was the difference? Well, may I say this? And listen to me very carefully. All religions are not of the same value. In America today, we're looked upon as politically incorrect, and almost un-American, if we don't put our arms around everybody else, and say, "Your religion is just as good as mine." It is not true. God has respect unto Abel's offering. To Cain's offering He did not.

Now, we're supposed to be tolerant today. And I believe in tolerance in some areas, but I do not believe in tolerance that sacrifices truth. And there's nothing today so intolerant as the intolerance of those against those of us who say there is a fixed standard of right and wrong. There is a true religion, and there is a false religion. This world doesn't need religion. It has too much religion. This world needs Jesus.

And may I tell you that David Barak, who is a scholar, tells us that in the world today there are 9,900 different religions—9,900, almost 10,000 different religions. And some of these religions have many gods. The Hindus have 300 million gods. I didn't stutter, and I didn't misread that—300 million gods in Hinduism. And even Christianity, we divide Christianity up into Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist, and Episcopalian, and Catholics, and so forth. But listen to me. There are only two religions in the entire world: the true and the false. Now, that may seem narrow to you, but that's what our lesson is all about. There is the religion of grace and the religion of works. There is the religion of Cain, and there is the religion of Abel.

Now, let's look at this. And I'm not going to ask you to take my word for it. Let's just look at the Bible and see what the Bible has to say about it. Because I realize what I'm preaching today is politically incorrect. So be it. Look at the worship of Cain. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 4: "By faith, Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." What was the way of Cain? The way of Cain was the way of good works. It was salvation by his own effort. He was a tiller of the ground. And the Bible says that you're going to till the ground by the sweat of your brow. What Cain offered to God was his own toil, his own sweat, his own effort.

Now, when he came to God with this offering of vegetables and fruits, it must have been beautiful. I mean, it must have looked like a county fair. There's the most, fragrant fruit, the most beautiful flowers, the most succulent vegetation. And he offers this to God, because he's been out there plowing the ground. But the Bible says, "Cursed is the ground, of the sweat of your brow, when you till the ground." And what he has done is he is offering his own work to them. Put in your margin Jude verse 11: "Woe unto them for they have gone the way of Cain." What is the way of Cain? It is to try to save yourself by your own good works rather than by the grace of God. It represents culture rather than Calvary.

Now, you're in Hebrews chapter 11, and in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22, the Bible says, "without shedding of blood is no remission." There is no salvation apart from the shedding of blood. What did Cain offer? Vegetables. Have you ever heard this statement: you can't get blood from a turnip? You can't get blood from a turnip. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. "Well," you say, "Adrian, that's what you say." No, that's what God says. "Well," you say, "I have my own religion." So did Cain. "Well," you say, "I'm looking for a religion that suits me." So did Cain. And Cain died and went to hell. "Woe unto them, for they have gone after the way of Cain." Most of the people in America don't need religion. They need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. Most of the people in America are egomaniacs strutting to hell, thinking they are too good to be damned.

When I first came to this city a little over 30 years ago, a lady met me. She was kind

of giddy, but she was trying to impress me. And she said to me, “Oh, Dr. Rogers. We are so happy to have you in our city. “ She said, “I’m in a Bible Study group,” and she said, “we’re studying that new edition of the Bible.” Now, at that time, the new Bible that was being studied and passed around was called, “Good News for Modern Man.” I think many of you remember that—Good News for Modern Man. It was so funny to me. If you knew the lady, you’d know what I’m saying. She was trying to impress me. She said, “Pastor Rogers, we are studying that new Bible—Modern News for Good Man.”

I tell you, that’s a lot of what we have today: modern news for good man. Friend, man is not good, and the news is not modern. It’s as old as the book of Genesis, and it is good news for bad man. That’s what it is. It is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is not salvation by works. And here Cain offered the fruit of the ground.

Now, what did Abel offer? Well, the Bible says Abel offered of the firstlings of his flock. Go back again, if you will, to Genesis chapter four and verse four: “And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock.” Abel’s offering was based on a blood atonement. Now, let me tell you the difference between these two. I said, people need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. Religion is what sinful people do for a holy God. The gospel is the good news of what a holy God has already done for sinful man. The Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 4, “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice.”

Now, where did Abel get the idea of bringing a blood offering to Almighty God? Now, remember, it was just a shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where did he get that idea? Well, when Adam and Eve sinned against God, they tried to clothe themselves with fig leaves. What is that? The fruit of the ground. What did God do? God came into the Garden of Eden, and God made them coats of skin, animal skin. How do you get coats of skin? Blood had to be shed. Where did Abel learn the idea that it takes blood, without shedding of blood is no remission? He learned it from his parents. You say, did he really know this?

Listen to me. Abel was a prophet of God, a prophet. You say, “Where do you get that?” Put in your margin Luke 11—Luke 11, begin in verse 49—Jesus is speaking: “Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets...”—underscore that—“that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias”—all of the prophets. Abel is called a prophet of God. Abel was a martyr who died for his faith.

Adam and Eve had two sons: one a martyr, one a murderer. Abel was a prophet. He understood the Word of God. Now, you say, “Did he really understand about the Lord Jesus Christ?” Well, if he was prophet. Put in your Bible Acts chapter 10, verse 43: “To

him—Jesus—give all the prophets witness.” Now, if Abel was a prophet—and he was, and the Bible says, “to Jesus give all the prophets witness”—back there in the Garden of Eden, just outside the gates of Eden, was a man named Abel who offered a spotless lamb that is a picture, a prophecy of Jesus who is to come. Isn’t the Bible a wonderful book? The Bible is a wonderful book. Don’t get the idea that these people out there are just plowing with sticks and didn’t know anything.

No, and let me say something else. The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was not an afterthought. It was not an emergency action. God had the redemption by blood in His heart before He ever made the world. Put in your margin Revelation chapter 13 and verse 8. The Bible says, “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him whose names are not written in the book of life from the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Jesus was in the heart and mind of God from the foundation of the world. Before He swung this world into space, God had redemption by blood in His mind.

You take the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you cut it anywhere, and it will bleed. There is a red river of life. It begins to flow in the book of Genesis, and it flows all the way through to the book of the Revelation, the chapter I just read to you. That river began to flow when God made coats of skin for Adam and Eve. And then, that river passed on down when Abel took of the firstlings of the flock and offered a blood sacrifice to the Lord.

The first act that Noah did when he came out of the ark, after Genesis 6 and the flood came, was to offer a blood sacrifice.

God called Abraham, and Abraham, the father of the faithful, God said to Abraham, “Abraham, take your son up to Mount Moriah and sacrifice him.” And, at the last moment, when the knife was about to fall into the bosom of Isaac, God said, “Abraham, don’t hurt the lad. Don’t harm the lad. Look. Over here is a ram caught in the thicket.” I like to think of it as a ram crowned with thorns, his horns locked in that thicket. Take that ram and sacrifice him. No wonder Jesus said, “Abraham saw My day, and was glad.” Abraham way back, more than a millennium before Jesus ever came, knew something of the blood sacrifice.

And then, God called Moses, and God said to Moses, “Moses, take My people from the land of Egypt, the land of sin and darkness and slavery, and bring them into the promised land.” And God said, “Moses, when you do this, in order to let the people go out, take a lamb. Tell every family, take a lamb, and sacrifice that lamb, and put the blood of that lamb on the doorposts of that house, because My death angel is going to come through the land of Egypt.” And God says, “My death angel is going to be looking for something. He’s going to be looking for the blood. And, if the blood is there upon the doorposts, watch it. When I see the blood, I’ll pass over you.” That’s where we get the word “Passover.” Now, friend, it was the blood that caused the death angel to pass

over. I tell you, had they put rubies and diamonds and gold and emeralds upon that door, the death angel would have come. Had they written beautiful poetry, and put it upon that door, and nailed it there, the death angel would have come. Had they taken a live and spotless lamb, and set that live and spotless lamb there, the death angel would have come.

People say, “Christ is my example.” No, He has to be your Savior. Now, you’re not saved by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ. God says, when I see—the what?—the blood, I will pass over you. Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins. And then, after Moses, they got in the land, and God gave them the Levitical law, and they were told how to make those sacrifices. And every smoking altar of every Jewish temple, it all points to the coming of Jesus. And thousands and thousands of lambs, and rams, and turtle doves are offered, and blood is shed. Why is this? The Bible says over here in chapter ten, it’s impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin. Why all of those sacrifices? God is just pointing toward Calvary. This red river of life begins to run. I’m telling you these are all shadows, these are all types, these are all lessons, and that river runs and runs and runs till it finally comes to Calvary. When Jesus bows His head and dies, and the precious blood is shed. This is what God is getting people ready for.

Pavlov, the Russian psychologist that experiments in what we call “conditioned response,” he got his dogs—you remember reading about him in Psychology class. He had his dogs, and he would ring a bell and feed the dogs, ring a bell—feed the dogs, ring a bell—feed the dogs. He got the dogs where all he had to do was ring a bell, and they’d begin to drool. They’d begin to salivate because they knew that the bell meant food. What is God doing in the Old Testament with all of these sacrifices beginning with the skins that clothed Adam and Eve, beginning with Abel’s offering? What is God doing with all of that? God is conditioning His people. There is a conditioned response. When they see the blood, they know that sin means death, sin means death, sin means death, sin means death. And therefore, people are ready for the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He died upon the cross. For without shedding of blood is no remission. Don’t think this was incidental, friend. This is fundamental. There was a contrast in their worship.

II. The Consequences of Their Worship

Now, secondly, not only is there contrast in their worship, but friend, also, there was a contrast. And I want you to notice the consequences of their worship—the consequences of their worship. Look, if you will, in Genesis 4, verses 5 and 6: “But unto Cain and his offering God had not respect. And Cain was very wroth”—in plain English, he was ticked off; he was angry—“and his countenance fell. And the Lord said to Cain,

Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen?"

Now, God did not have any respect for Cain, and all of his good intentions, and all of his good works. The difference between Cain and Abel is the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness. Now, you would say, God would just say to Cain, "Well, you tried and you didn't get 100 percent on the grade on the test, but I'm going to grade on the curve." God doesn't grade on the curve. God doesn't just give "A" for effort. And God will not overlook sin. Put it down big, plain and straight. God will not overlook sin. You know, there are people that say, "Well, God's too good to punish sin." You got it backward. God is too good not to punish sin. If you had to go through all the lectionaries and dictionaries of the world to get a word that would describe God, and put it into one word, of course that would be impossible. But, if you had to choose one word above all other words, it would be the word "holy." Holy means that God is a holy God. God never has, God never can, God never will, overlook sin. All sin must be punished. If God overlooks sin, God would topple from His throne of holiness. God would cease to be a righteous God.

Put in your margin Romans chapter 3 and verse 23. It speaks of our being saved: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And, by the way, you want to know what definition of sin is? Coming short of the glory of God. Don't lie down in the gutter alongside some old hypocrite, and say, "I'm longer than he is." Don't measure yourself that way. Here's the glory of God. Here you are. The gap between the glory of God and you—that's sin. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God—all of us.

Now, notice verse 24: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." What does the word "propitiation" mean? It's a big word. It means satisfaction. Nothing can satisfy the righteousness of God, the holiness of God, except the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. God cannot, God never has, God never will, let any sin go unpunished. Your sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in hell. But it will never be overlooked. I've frequently said, when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. If God were to let sin go unpunished, God himself would become a sinner. All Christianity is described in three sentences: I deserve hell. Jesus took my hell. There's nothing left for me but His heaven. That's what it's all about. It is salvation by grace. And the consequences of that worship is lasting, not only in time, but in eternity.

Now, Abel was killed by Cain, but he didn't cease to exist. "He being dead, yet speaks." For the child of God, death is not a period, but a comma. He still lives on.

III. The Conflict of Their Worship

Now, here's the third and final thing. I want you to see not only contrast in their worship,

and the consequences of their worship, but I want you to see the conflict of their worship. Look, if you will now, in Genesis four, verses five and eight: “But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very angry, wrath, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wrath? Why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.” Sin is like an animal, crouching at the door. That’s what that literally means. God says, if you do what I tell you to do, you’ll do well. God is no respecter of persons. And, “sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire.” That is, sin is ready to devour you. “And thou shalt rule over him.” That is, if you’ll do right. “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, that while they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”

Now, I want you to listen very carefully. The first murder was over religion—the first murder was over religion. And it was a religious crowd that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ. And I say, Adam and Eve had two sons: one was a murdered; the other was a martyr. Why did Cain kill Abel? Because his heart was not right with God. No man can be wrong with God and right with his fellow brother. False religion is characterized by force. Our faith is characterized by love.

Now, you think of what is happening in the world today. You think of the people who are being murdered in the name of religion. Think of our Southern Baptist Missionaries in Yemen who paid for their faith with their blood. They’re showing the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps Cain was too refined to offer a blood sacrifice, but he was not too refined to plunge a knife, or whatever, into his brother’s bosom.

Now, listen to John 16, verses 1 through 4—Jesus said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service.” Does that sound reasonable? I mean, does that sound contemporary? “The time will come that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, that ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.” Jesus said, no fine print in the contract. I’m going to ask some of you who have not yet done it to come forward this morning to give you heart to Jesus Christ. But when you do, if you’re sincere, it may mean that you will die for what you’ve done here this morning. You say, “I won’t come.” It’s your business. But Jesus said, I’m going to tell you ahead of time. The time will come when they who kill you will think they do God a service.

Now, friend, the word “martyr” and the word “witness” are the same word in the Greek language. Death doesn’t make martyrs; it just simply reveals them. What is our

true faith? True faith is never based upon force. One of the greatest mistakes the so-called Christian church ever made was the Crusades, when we tried by force to spread our faith. Friend, Islam is an idea, like Communism is an idea, and you cannot kill an idea with a bullet or a bomb. The only thing that will kill an idea is a better idea. And that is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You say, don't you believe in self-defense? I believe in it with all of my heart. And I believe there are times when we need to go to war, but not to spread the Christian faith. We spread the Christian faith with love.

I want you to listen to what Ravi Zacharias had to say. And, by the way, if you want to get a good book, get the book Franklin Graham has just written called *The Name*. Franklin Graham quotes Ravi Zacharias in this book, and he says, "The teaching of Jesus is clear. No one ought to be compelled to become a Christian. This sets the Christian faith drastically apart from Islam. In no country where the Christian faith is the faith of the majority is it illegal to propagate another faith. There is no country in the world that I know of where the renunciation of one's Christian faith puts one in danger of being hunted down by the powers of the state. Yet there are numerous Islamic countries where it is against the law to publicly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and where a Muslim who renounces faith in Islam to believe in anything else risks death."

That's the difference, friend, between true religion and false religion. The salvation of Jesus Christ is by grace through faith, based on the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is never coerced—never. And those who say that some have distorted Islam, it's high time they stood up and said it openly and publicly to the whole world.

Now, listen to me. Cain slew Abel. Cain was the loser, not Abel. He won the martyr's crown. There are two religions in the world, only two: the true and the false. The difference between these two religions is the difference between heaven and hell. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I believe there is another way other than the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ." You do? Well, let me ask you a question. If there is another way other than the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, tell me, why did Jesus die? The Bible says, if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain. If a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, could be saved any other way, then Calvary was a blunder. Why did God let Jesus die on that cross, if there's another way? Why not take the other way? Why did He allow His darling Son to die in agony in blood, if there's another way. There is no other way. Hebrews 9:22: "Without shedding of blood is no remission." There is a red river of blood that flows through all the Bible. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Conclusion

A preacher, a good man, as the world goes, a compassionate man, as the world goes,

had the religion of Cain. There are a lot of preachers with the religion of Cain. He had the religion of Cain. He was from a very liberal denomination. He was in his study. There was a knock on the door. He opened the door, and there was a little girl, just poorly dressed. And he said, "Little lady, what can I do for you?" She said, "Are you a preacher?" He said, "I'm a minister." "Could you help me?" He thought she needed food. "Could you help me?" He said, "Well, if I can, I'll help you. How can I help you?" She said, "Can you help me get mother in?" Well, he thought perhaps her mother was drunk. And the preacher said, "Well, sweetheart, where is your mother? How do you want me to get her in? I'll go to her and help get her in. Where is she?" She said, my mother is dying. She's at home. she's dying. "Well, what do you mean, 'help get my mother in'?" "My mother doesn't know God. She sent me out to find a preacher to help get her into heaven. Can you help get my mother in? My mama is dying." Preacher said, "Yes, sweetheart, I'll go," and he put on his coat, got his hat, and went with the little girl down to the poor section of town. There in that little tenement was a woman on her deathbed, dying, not even with the doctors and nurses to take care of her.

That woman said, "Are you a preacher? Are you a minister?" "Yes, I am." "Are you a man of God?" "Well, I trust so." "Can you help get me in?" Now, remember, he didn't preach the blood atonement. His was a religion of culture and good works, the religion of Cain. He began to tell her about the Sermon on the Mount, and living right, and doing good, and kindness, and all of these things—high, wonderful, platitudinous ideas. The woman had a distraught look on her face. She said, "You don't understand. I have lived a sinful and wicked life. And now I am dying. All that you say sounds very good and very wonderful, but I am dying. I can't do any of that. Don't you have a message for a woman like me?" And that preacher began to think, and he realized, I don't have a message for a woman like that. And then, he remembered the story that his mother told him before he'd gone off to the seminary and gotten educated, about a Savior who took our sins and carried them to the cross, and in agony and blood died, and said, "it is finished, and paid in full." And he went back and told her that old story, though he himself didn't really believe it—told her about Jesus, told about the cross, told her about grace, told her about forgiveness, and led her in a prayer. And she prayed and asked Jesus into her heart, and was gloriously saved.

Later on, that liberal preacher stood up in another preacher's meeting and gave a testimony. And here's what he said. He said, "Sirs, that night, that woman came in, and I came in too! I came in too. I gave my heart to Jesus, and I got saved." What can wash away my sin? Nothing, nothing, nothing, but the blood of Jesus. Two religions, two ways: Cain and Abel; vegetables and a lamb.

Will you lay your pride and your good works in the dust, and will you today say, "Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood were shed for me, O Lamb of God, I come

to Thee, I come.” Will you? For your sake? For His sake? Will you trust Him?

Bow your heads in prayer. If you're not certain that you're saved, I want to lead you in a prayer, and in this prayer you can trust in Christ. Repeating words won't save you. The Bible says it was by faith that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Would you pray this prayer?

Dear God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost. And my good works cannot save me. Thank You that You sent Jesus, a spotless lamb who paid with His own blood my sin debt. And I receive You, Lord Jesus, into my heart now as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus.

Did you pray it? Then, by an act of faith, claim it. Say, thank you, Lord. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. And Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Faith to Walk with God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 10, 1978

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:5–6

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

HEBREWS 11:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Meaning of the Walk with God
- II. The Motivation for the Walk with God
 - A. Family
 - B. Fear
 - C. Faith
- III. The Maintenance of the Walk with God
- IV. The Mystery of the Walk

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, we’re going to continue our series of messages in Hebrews chapter 11—“God’s Hall of Fame.” Last Sunday, we spoke on this subject: “Faith Makes the Difference,” and we showed you last Sunday the difference between true religion and false religion. Now, after we’ve worshipped God, we need to walk with God; and so, today, we’re speaking on this subject: “Faith to Walk With God”—“Faith to Walk With God.”

Turn with me please to Hebrews chapter 11, and I want us to read verses 5 and 6—and this is the story of the man named Enoch: *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:5–6). Now, Enoch pleased God. And, incidentally, if we please God, it doesn’t matter whom we displease; and if we displease God, it doesn’t matter whom we please. And, the way to please God is to have faith in God. But, in what particular way did Enoch have faith in God? What was Enoch’s claim to fame? It was this—that he walked with God. And, he walked so closely with God that God took him to Heaven without his ever even dying. He was the first

astronaut.

Now, turn, if you will please, to Genesis chapter 5, and we'll find out in the Old Testament what the New Testament writer is talking about. Genesis chapter 5 and we begin reading in verse 21. Well, before we get to verse 21, I want you to notice something remarkable about chapter 5. Genesis chapter 5 is like a cemetery—or, it reads more like an obituary column. I want you to notice, for example, in Genesis chapter 5, verse 5: *“And all [of these] days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years”*—now, notice this next phrase—*“and he died”* (Genesis 5:5). And then, verse 8: *“And all [of] the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years”*—but notice the refrain—*“and he died”* (Genesis 5:8). And then, look in verse 11: *“All [of] the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died”* (Genesis 5:11). And, we could go on: and he died, and he died, and he died, and he died. It reads like an obituary column. But, there's one name that stands out like a gardenia in this desert of death, and it is the name of Enoch. I want you to begin reading here, if you would please, in verse 21, and see the change of pace—see the difference: *“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all [of] the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years”*—and you would think it would say that he died, but look—*“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him”* (Genesis 5:21–24). That is, he wasn't found.

God just took Enoch right on to Heaven without dying. That's the reason I said he was the first astronaut. The writer of Hebrews says that he *“was translated that he should not see death”* (Hebrews 11:5). Now, his claim to fame was that he walked with God. And, nothing finer could be said about you than that your faith causes you to walk with God. We're going to study this morning three things: first of all, I want you to notice the meaning of the walk with God; secondly, the motivation of the walk with God; and thirdly, well, maybe even fourthly if we have time... Let's just stop with one or two right there for a moment.

I. The Meaning of the Walk with God

And, think, for a moment, about the meaning—the meaning—of walking with God. What does it mean? Look in verse 22: *“And Enoch walked with God”* (Genesis 5:22).

Incidentally, there are only two people in all of the Bible of whom it is said they walked with God. Do you know which two they were? Enoch and Noah. They walked with God. What does it mean to walk with God? Well, this is a figure of speech—a metaphor—that talks about having the most intimate fellowship with God. Say, why did God save you? Why did God even create you? Somebody says, “So that we could serve Him.” Oh, no, that's not the reason. Friend, if God wanted servants, He could get angels who would

be a lot more obedient and do a better job than we do. Amen. No, God didn't save us primarily to serve Him. God saved us and God created us so that we could love Him and He could love us, so that we could walk with Him, so that we could have fellowship with Him, so that we could know Him in a personal way, so that we could know Him in an intimate way. The Bible says in Micah chapter 6, verse 8: "*what doth the LORD [thy God] require of thee, but...to walk humbly with thy God?*" (Micah 6:8).

To walk with God means to have fellowship with God. Yesterday, Joyce and I took a walk. I said, "Honey, come go on a walk with me," and we walked around on our street, held hands. I don't know whether you saw us or not, but we really held hands. And, we just walked up and down, and I said, "Honey, I'm going to preach tomorrow on walking with God, and I want to get an idea what it's like to go on a walk with somebody." And oh, it was so beautiful. Every tree look like a chandelier, and the sun was coming through; and it was just so beautiful and so wonderful. You see, a walk is having fellowship. A walk is going side by side, hand in hand—two people who are deeply in love. As the songwriter said, "My God and I, we walk the fields together." That's what God wants out of you.

You see, the Bible says that Enoch "*pleased God*" (Hebrews 11:5). It pleases God when we walk with God. Do you know the problem with many of us? We know about God, but we don't know God—we know about God, but we don't know God.

I want to read a portion of an essay written by a seventeen-year-old high school student about the age of these other seventeen-year-old high school students in a Christian high school. I want you to listen to this essay and listen very carefully, because I'm not going to tell you who wrote the essay until I finish reading a few excerpts from it. Now, I'm not going to read the whole essay, for it's very long, but I want you to listen to just a few of the words. Now, pay close attention. Here's what the essay said. And, incidentally, the title of the essay was, "On the Union of Believers with Christ." And, he said—quote, "If we examine the history of man's nature as an individual, we constantly observe that the spark of divinity in his breast, the enthusiasm for what is good, the struggle for wisdom, the longing for truth, are being smothered by the flame of desire and greed. The zeal for virtue becomes deafened by the tempting voice of sin and turns into a mockery as soon as we feel the foolish impact of life." And then, he went on to say, "Our hearts, reason, history, the Word of Christ all call out to us loudly and convincingly to tell us that union with Jesus Christ is absolutely necessary, that without Him we would be rejected of God, that He alone is able to deliver us."

Sounds pretty good. Do you know who wrote it? Are you ready? Karl Marx, the father of atheism and communism—or, the father of communistic atheism and atheistic communism—wrote that. Karl Marx, a student in a Christian high school, wrote an essay—and a good essay—on union of the believer with Jesus Christ. But, there was

one thing wrong: he knew the answer, but he didn't know the Lord. He was a brilliant boy. And, had he written on geography, he would have written a good essay. And, had he written on history, he would have written a good essay. And, had he taken a math test, it would have been a good math test, because he knew about Jesus Christ, but he did not know Jesus Christ. And, he left this school in Germany, he went to London, he wrote the communist bible, *Das Kapital*, he took Lenin and he took his other disciples, Stalin, his protégés, and taught them. And, no man who ever lived has caused more misery, and more hurt, and more woe to body, soul, and spirit than Karl Marx. And yet, here was man who knew about Jesus Christ. He even knew about the deeper truths of union with Christ and abiding with Christ. But, let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: knowing about Jesus Christ and believing in Jesus Christ are two different things—and you never forget it. Do you know what could be wrong with some people here today? They could sit here and nod their heads to the propositional truths that I give and yet never walk with God—never walk with God—never know God personally, never know God intimately. What does it mean to walk with God? It means to know Him personally.

You know, I thought of so many verses that describe how to walk with God. I love the Book of Ephesians—don't you?—because one whole section of the Book of Ephesians deals with walking with God. And, I started to use that to teach you what walking with God meant, and I said, “No, Adrian, don't do that. If you do that, you will never get finished, because it... Don't jump over there in Ephesians.” And so, I said, “Well, I'll just take that verse in Psalm 37—such a wonderful verse.” I want you to look at it—Psalm 37, verses 23 and 24. It talks about walking with God. And, we're just talking about the meaning of walking with God. Psalm 37—listen to it. I begin reading in verse 23: *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”*—I just like that right there, if we just stopped there—*“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”* (Psalm 37:23). Do you know what that means? It means that when I serve the Lord, I'm to do it by walking with Him, by stepping, going a step at a time. *“The walk of a good man is ordered by the LORD”* (Psalm 37:23). And, that tells me that God has a plan for my life. I'm not to live a haphazard, willy-nilly sort of a life. I'm not to be like a ship without a sail, without a compass, without a rudder on a stormy sea. God has a plan for my life.

May I tell you that the greatest discovery on the face of this earth, other discovering the Lord Himself, is to know God's plan for your life, and the greatest achievement is to do it? Do you know that God has a plan for your life? Look at it: *“the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way”* (Psalm 37:23). You know, it's not just that you enjoy the walk. I enjoyed walking with Joyce, but I'd kind of like to think that Joyce enjoyed walking with me. You see, I'm sure that Enoch enjoyed walking

with God, but did you notice what the Bible says? It says that “[*Enoch*] pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). Did you know that God enjoys walking with you? That’s what this verse says. “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and he delighteth in his way*” (Psalm 37:23).

Sometimes I preach a sermon and somebody meets me at the door, and they say, “Man, I enjoyed that.” I said, “Bless God, so did I.” You know, I enjoy preaching—I really do. And, you enjoy listening, I hope—you ought to. It’s good preaching. But, you ought to just enjoy listening. I say it’s good preaching—really, it is, because it’s from the Word. There are a lot of people who can preach the gospel better than I can, but nobody can preach a better gospel than I can. Amen? You know, it’s the Word of God. And, I enjoy preaching; you enjoy listening to it. Listen, when you walk with God—when you walk with God—not only should you enjoy it, God enjoys it. The Bible says God delights in our way (Psalm 37:23). God looks down at us and sees us walking this pilgrim way, and God sees that we’re walking with Him side by side, hand and hand, and God just gets a thrill out of it. Notice: “*the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way*”—now, watch this—“*Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD*” (Psalm 37:23–24) knows that we’re weak. The Lord knows that our frames are so mortal and so weak and we can stumble—we can fall. I want to tell you that all of the Old Testament saints were flesh and blood just like you are. Take courage. God knows that sometimes we stumble, but listen to it: “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand*” (Psalm 37:23–24). Isn’t that a great verse on eternal security?

Say, have you ever tried to teach a little baby how to walk? We’ve had several around our house, and I found out—you take a little baby, and when they’re just old enough to learn how to walk, your big index finger is just a handful for that little baby. And, you’ve reached that finger, and he takes it with his chubby little hand; and he latches on to your finger, and you teach him how to walk that way. And, he walks around, but, you know, about the time his little feet hit a crack in the sidewalk, his knees buckle, and he lets go, and he falls. Well then, you learn better than that. So, next time you say, “Come here, buster,” and you put his little fat chubby hand in your hand. And, his little hand is just about right handful for you—his whole hand. And, this time, you go walking, and he hits that crack in the sidewalk. And, his little knees buckle, and he only sags a little bit, but he doesn’t fall completely. Why? Because you’re upholding him with your hand. Now, that’s what the psalmist is writing about. Listen: “*the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand*” (Psalm 37:23–24). Haven’t you stumbled a many a time? Oh, I know you have. But, hadn’t it been

wonderful—hadn't it been glorious—that God holds on to you? Friend, dear friend, your eternal security does not depend upon your holding on to God; it depends upon His holding on to you.

Now, many times we think we did it. I heard about a little boy who was getting ready to cross a busy intersection with his father—and oh, the cars were coming just like this. And, the father knew it was going to be close, and so the father said, “Now, hold on.” And, they took hands, and were holding hands, and were crossing the street when the father saw an automobile coming like a projectile—just like it'd been shot out of a gun. And, the father realized this was a serious situation, so he took his little boy just by the hand. And, the father just literally drug him across the intersection, the little boy's feet hardly touching the ground. The father just snatched him on across up to the curb. When they got there and settled down, the little boy looked up at his daddy and said, “I held on, Daddy. I held on.” Well, listen—it's God that holds on to us, and I'm so grateful. That's what it means to walk with God in the most intimate fellowship possible, side by side.

*O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms (Elisha A. Hoffman).*

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. [And] though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand” (Psalm 37:23–24). That is the meaning of walking with God—walking side by side in sweet communion.

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known (C. Austin Miles).*

II. The Motivation for the Walk with God

All right, now, secondly, not only the meaning of the walk, but I want you to notice for just a moment, if you would please, the motivation for the walk. What caused Enoch to walk with God? Well, you're here in Genesis chapter 5. May I point out three things that I believe caused Enoch to walk with God?

A. Family

And, the first was family—family. And, that ought to cause us all to walk with God. Look, if you will please, in Genesis 5:21—Genesis 5:21: *“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah”*—do you know what Enoch's boy's name was? Methuselah—

what a name! And, hate to say, I'll tell you, he had a reason for calling him Methuselah. I'll tell you in just a moment, but notice in verse 22—*“And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah”* (Genesis 5:21–22). Now, that's interesting, isn't it? When he was 65 years old, he had a son. And then, the Bible says, *“And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah”* (Genesis 5:22). I believe, in the birth of this son, there was a spiritual upheaval in the life of Enoch and there was something about his family that caused him to walk with God. You see, dear friends, there's something very dramatic about having a child.

Ole' Enoch came home one day, and his wife—now, this is just a little imagination—his is wife sitting over there in there in the corner and she's knitting. And, Enoch says, “What are you doing?” She said, “Knitting.” “What are you knitting?” “A sweater.” “What size?” She holds it up, “About this big.” “Oh,” he says, “you're going to a baby shower.” She says, “Uh-uh.” “Well, why are you knitting a baby sweater?” She says, “Come over here. I want to tell you something.” He says, “Oh, you don't mean it.” “Yes, oh, we're going to have a baby.” Well, from that time—listen—there was a tremendous impact on Enoch's wife. There ought to be.

There was a tremendous impact on my life when God gave us our first son. I remember going down there to the hospital. He was born in the Deland, Florida, where I was going to college. And, seeing that little wrinkled up, red-faced, squalling thing—the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in my life—and saw that little baby... And, Joyce was still there at the hospital. I remember going home and getting by that couch in that little mobile home that we lived in, burying my face there in that couch, and crying, and saying, “O God, if I never do anything else good, O God, if I never pastor a successful church, God, if I never have any money, God, if I never make any impact on this world, dear God, I want to be a good daddy—I want to be a good daddy. I want to so live so this boy will believe in the God, in the Christ, that his daddy believes in.” What better motive can we have for walking with God than that?

There are those all around us—if not your children, my children, somebody else's children. *“No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself”* (Romans 14:7). And oh, *I'd hate to go to Hell, but twice Hell would be Hell for me if I went to Hell and took one of my children with me.* Oh, mister, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ? A soul winner went into a home one time to call upon a man, and try and win that man, and bring that man to Jesus Christ. But, that man, a knowledgeable, savant, urbanite, sat there and listened to this soul winner with his impassioned plea, trying to bring this man to Jesus Christ. And, this man was not exactly rude to the soul winner, but he just gave this excuse, and that excuse, and this silly argument, and that silly argument. Broken hearted, the soul winner left. That man's little son, who was not yet ready for school, was in the room—a preschooler. But, after the soul winner left, he crawled up

into his daddy's lap, put his arm around his daddy's neck, and looked into his daddy's face, and said, "Daddy, we don't want to be an ole' Christian, do we, Daddy?" That brought that father to Jesus Christ. Oh, dear friend, let me tell you something: you have a son, a daughter, and God is holding you responsible to bring that daughter with you, to bring that son with you, to Heaven.

B. **Fear**

His family caused him to walk with the Lord, but let me tell you something else that caused him to walk with the Lord—not only family, but fear. Fear caused him to walk with the Lord. Notice in verse 21: *"And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah"* (Genesis 5:21). Do you know what Methuselah means? Now, it's a composite name, and it means, "When he is gone, it will be sent." Would you ever name one of your children, "When he is gone, it will be sent"? Now, I mean, that's what you call him in English. In Hebrew, Methuselah—Methuselah: "When he is gone, it will be sent." What on earth does that mean? You see, God warned Enoch of the flood. And, God told Enoch, "Enoch, I'm going to destroy this world with a flood."

You see, God always speaks to His prophets. God always lets us know when He's going to do something. The Bible says in Amos chapter 3, verse 7: *"Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but [that] he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets"* (Amos 3:7). Isn't that wonderful? Did you know God doesn't have anything planned that He's not already revealed to us? Isn't that grand? Isn't that glorious? *"GOD will do nothing, but [that] he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets"* (Amos 3:7). And, Jude tells us that Enoch was a prophet of God. And, God revealed to Enoch that the flood was coming, and Enoch said, "Lord, if the flood is coming and if You're going to bring judgment, God, when are You going to do it?" And, the Lord said, "You see this baby? When He's gone, it will be sent." And now, you can understand Enoch lived longer than any other man on the face of the earth. Look in verse 27 and see how long he lived—excuse me, why Methuselah lived that long. Chapter 5, verse 27: *"And all [of] the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died"* (Genesis 5:27).

Why did Methuselah live so long? Because of the mercy of God. Why has it been so long since Jesus Christ has promised to come back to this earth? Has God forgotten His promise? God has not forgotten His promise. The Bible tells us, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise...but is longsuffering to [us], not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). I want to tell you that God, right now, is longing to send His Son Jesus Christ back to this earth. But, there is one thing that is keeping Jesus Christ from coming, and that is the longsuffering of God. God has not forgotten His promise. Listen, God did not want to send that flood—God

did not wish to send that flood. That's the reason that Methuselah lived longer than any other man—969 years—because God did not want to send that flood.

I can show you from the Bible that the flood came the same time that Methuselah died. Let me show it to you. Just get out your pad, and let's do some mathematics. Look, if you would, to Genesis chapter 5, verse 25. Now, remember that Methuselah was born. *"And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and [he] begat Lamech"* (Genesis 5:25). Now, Methuselah was 187 years old before he had his first son. Just write down "187 years." All right, now what? In verse 28: *"And Lamech lived an hundred and two years, and he begat a son"* (Genesis 5:28). Now, Methuselah becomes a granddaddy 182 years after he had his first son. One hundred and eighty seven years—Methuselah has a son. One hundred and eighty-two more years and he has a grandson. Now, add those together. What do you get? 369 years has passed when Methuselah became a granddaddy. All right, Methuselah is 369 years old before he became a grandfather.

All right, now what? Who was Methuselah's grandson? His name was Noah. Methuselah was 369 years old when his grandson Noah was born. How old was Noah when the flood came? Well, let's turn to it. Look, if you will, please, in Genesis chapter 7 for just a moment and verse 11: *"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month...the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights"* (Genesis 7:11–12). When did the flood come? Six hundred years after Noah was born. When was Noah born? Noah was born when Methuselah was 369 years old. Just add it all up. Dear friend, Methuselah was 969 years of age when the flood came and when Methuselah was taken out. I believe here, if you want to find Methuselah's birthday, it's Genesis chapter 7, verse 11: *"the sixth hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month"* (Genesis 7:11). The second month—I believe Methuselah was born, if we were using our months, I believe he was born on February the 17th. And, when he lived 969 years, God said, "That's enough. Methuselah's going to die." And, when Methuselah died, the flood came.

Now, what does all of that mean to us? Listen to me, ladies and gentlemen, that tells us that God, though He often puts His promises a long way off, God doesn't forget His promises. There are some of you who are living in what I call a *fool's paradise*. The Bible has warned us that Jesus Christ is coming. The Bible speaks of the red flames of tribulation that will sweep across this earth. And, many of you are saying, "Oh well, when is the promise of His coming?" I'm sure there are some people that will say, "What is this business that Enoch heard about a flood? Nine hundred and sixty-nine years and it's not yet come." But, it did come, and *"the day of the Lord [will come] as a thief in the night"* (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Are you ready? I don't know when that is going to be. For

God has given us no Methuselah that we can look by. But, I'll tell you one thing: the Bible still says, *"The Lord [thy] GOD will do nothing, but [that] he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets"* (Amos 3:7). And, every man of God that I know that's walking with the Lord is telling this generation, "Get ready. We're headed for a climax"—"Get ready. We're headed for a climax." God is speaking to His prophets—I believe that. Oh, I know that there are a lot of false prophets. I know there are a lot of quacks, and a lot of fanatics, and a lot of kooks. But, there are some men of God who are walking with God and who believe this book and who know this book. And, they are saying, "Get ready."

You say, "Well, I don't believe that fear is a good motive." Well, I do. I believe that fear is a good motive. The Bible teaches that it is. Psalm 25:14: *"The secret if the LORD is with [those] that fear him."* Again, the Bible says, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom"* (Psalm 111:10). The medical doctor uses fear. He says, "You stop smoking or you will get cancer." The traffic expert uses fear. He says, "You slow down or you will get killed." The insurance people use fear. They say, "You get yourself in shape or you are going to die, fatty boy." They all use fear. Now, I don't believe that fear is the only motivation. But, I believe that God warned this man Methuselah, and God said, "Methuselah, things cannot continue to go on as things are going on." Methuselah lived in that last generation—Noah's time—and God warned Enoch. He may have warned Methuselah as well for all I know. The Bible doesn't mention it.

C. Faith

All right, now, let me give you the third reason. I said family caused him to walk with God. Fear caused him to walk with God. But, Faith caused him to walk with God. That's the main thing. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 11, it was by faith the he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5). By faith he walked with God—by faith. He was a man who lived by faith. You see, God was real to him. God was not just someone that the preacher preached about. God was real. Is God real to you? Is He real? I want to come back again and say, you can know about God without ever really knowing God. You can believe the facts of this book and die and go right to Hell. The devil had just as soon send you to Hell from this church building as he had from the gutters drunk. If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, then you are lost.

III. The Maintenance of the Walk with God

All right, let's go on. Not only do I want you to notice the meaning of the walk and the motive of the walk, but I would like for you to notice please the maintenance of the walk. I want you to look at this—look at verse 22. Genesis chapter 5 and verse 22, if you would: *"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years,*

and begat sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:22). Now folks, he didn’t just walk with God a little way; he walked with God down through the corridors of time. He walked with God for three hundred years. That’s 109,500 days he walked with God. Oh, the constancy of his walk! No wonder that he pleased God. And, where did he walk with God? As a family man. He had sons and daughters. That tells us that he had a home and a family. He’s probably a businessman.

You say, “Oh, if I could just get out of my environment, if I could just go off to a monastery.” Friend, *there’s no holiness in a hole*. No, no, you walk with God in your daily life in the humdrum experiences of life or it won’t do you any good to walk with God, at all. I mean, if it won’t work there, it won’t work. He had a home. He had a wife. He had children. He had a business. “Oh,” you say, “well, it was easy back then.” No, it wasn’t. Enoch walked with God when the wickedness and the lawlessness was reaching his climax, where they lived in such a way that God said, “I’m going to destroy them all.” He lived in the days of Noah. He lived in days like our days. For the Bible says, “*As it was in the days of [Noah], so shall it be...in the [coming] of the Son of man*” (Luke 17:26). What I’m trying to tell you is this—that if Enoch walked with God back then, you can walk with God now. Are you paying attention to me? Listen, friend—if it won’t work for you, if it won’t work in your home, if it won’t work in your business, if it won’t work in a wicked age, then it won’t work at all. But, if it did work then, it will work now.

Oh, listen—the maintenance of his walk! You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I’ve got problems.” Well, big deal! Who doesn’t? Let me give you a three-point sermon and a poem on problems. Are you ready? Here’s a three-point sermon and a poem: first point—I’ve got them; second point—you’ve got them; third point—we’ve all got them. Now, here’s the poem:

*Adam had them.
Nobody lives without problems.
All people have problems.*

Don’t say, “Well, I can’t walk with God because of this, because of that.” There’s no excuse. If Enoch walked with God in that ungodly, lascivious age, you can walk with God. He maintained his walk for three hundred years; he walked with God. There’s only one way I know to do it, and that’s the power of the God that walks beside you and the Christ who lives inside you. That’s the only way you can do it. You think the Christian life is hard? The Christian life is not hard—it’s impossible. There’s only One who can live the Christian life, and that’s the Christ of the Christian life. And, He lives it in you and through you.

A man went to see one of these atomic power plants where they generate power—electric energy. And, he was talking to a man who lived near the atomic power plant, and he asked this man this question: he said, “Just how does it work? How do you

produce all that power?” And, this man said, “Oh, we don’t produce any power.” “Oh,” he said, “yes, I know you do.” He said, “I see the great lines going out where all that energy is going out.” He said, “You produce a tremendous amount of power there. How do you produce all of that power?” He said, “I say again—we don’t produce any power.” He said, “Now, wait a minute; explain it to me.” He said, “Mister, the power is already there in that uranium; we don’t produce it—we release it.” Now, you pay attention—that’s exactly what the Christian life is. The power is in the indwelling Christ. It is not your job to produce that power; it is your job to release that power by faith and faith releases that power. Enoch walked with God by faith, and it was faith that turned the dial of his soul on; and the power of God came out through him. I’m telling you today that you can walk with God by faith, and the only way you can do it is to let the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ be your faith. Walk with God by faith.

All right, now, look—look—the maintenance of the walk. For three hundred years, he walked with God. If it won’t work at home, if it won’t work in an evil age, and if it won’t keep on working, you’ve got something that’s false. Okay. If it won’t work at home, if it won’t work in an evil age, if it won’t work and keep on working, you’ve got something that’s false. The maintenance of the walk—he walked with God by faith. Faith was the key, the switch, that released the dynamo, the energy, of God’s Holy Spirit within him.

IV. The Mystery of the Walk

Oh, now, one last thing and I’m finished—not only the meaning of the walk, not only the motive of the walk, not only the maintenance of the walk, but I want you to notice the mystery of the walk. You know, it just climaxes with the mystery. Read. Let’s leave Genesis and go to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 5, where we started, and let’s look at that. Oh, it’s a great verse—Hebrews 11:5: and the Bible says there, “[*And*] by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him.” Now, that’s a mystery. It was a mystery to them. They said, “Where is Enoch?” Now, when the Bible says he was not found, that means they looked for him. Did you know, one day, they’re going to be looking for Jim Whitmire? One day they’re going to be looking for Tom Clayton. They’re going to be looking for Brewer Crawford. One day, they’re going to be looking for Adrian Rogers and about half this choir. The other half had better get saved. One day, they’re going to be looking for us, and they’re not going to find us. You talk about a mystery!

The Apostle Paul says, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we [which are alive] shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52) in a moment—just like that. Oh, we call that the Rapture of the Church. How glorious it’s going to be! Enoch prefigures the Rapture

of the Church. Abel speaks of the martyrs and the Christians who die before the Rapture of the Church, but Enoch speaks of those who will be living when Jesus comes and will never die. We'll be caught up with the Lord to meet the Lord in the air. What a mystery! The world can't understand it. They didn't understand what happened to ole' Enoch who walked by faith.

Conclusion

Say, if the Lord Jesus Christ were to come today, if the trumpet should sound today, would you be ready? Are you walking with the Lord? Have you exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? I imagine one time ole' Jared, who was Enoch's father, said to his wife, "Mrs. Jared"—I don't know what their last name was. I call them Mrs. Jared—he said to her, "Honey, where's Enoch? He hasn't come home yet." She says, "I don't know. His supper is getting cold. I don't know what's gotten into that boy. He's just been talking some mighty long walks lately. He just goes off, and he stays off." And, Jared says, "Yea, you know, he's acting real strange. Why, the other day, I heard him singing a little song: 'This world is not my home. I'm just a passing through.'" "You ought not worry about that boy," Jared says. Well, you know, Enoch just went on to Heaven.

A little Sunday School girl put it this way—said, "God and Enoch were walking side by side, and they'd walked one day so long. God said to Enoch, 'Enoch, we're closer to My house than we are to yours. Just come on home with Me.'" You know, I don't know how it happened, but I know that he never saw death. He was just translated, and he went to be with the Lord.

I want to tell you there's a whole generation of people that's going to happen to, and I have a feeling it's this generation. One will be taken; the other will be left. Two will be grinding at the mill—one taken, the other left. Two will be working in the field—one taken, the other left. Two will be in one bed—one will be taken, the other will be left. It may be at morn when the day is awakened, when sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking, that Jesus will come in the fullness of glory to receive from the world His own. It may be at midday; it may be at twilight. It may be, per chance, that the blackness of midnight will burst into light and the blaze of His glory when Jesus receives His own. Oh, joy, oh, delight should we go without dying, no sickness, no sadness, no dread, and no crying, caught up through the clouds with our Lord into Glory when Jesus receives His own! I don't know when it's going to happen. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen: we may not hear our choir sing the Messiah tonight; we may hear the angels sing it. Did you know that? You don't know. I don't know. No one knows.

"In such an hour as [you] think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 24:44). And, just as God had warned Enoch so long ago, God is warning us today to walk with God. Do you want to please God? Walk with God; know Him intimately, personally. And, the

journey of a thousand miles begins with one step, and the walk with God begins with a step of faith by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and as your Lord.

Let me just tell you this, and I'm finished. A minister, a preacher of the gospel, got in his automobile and was backing his automobile out of the driveway. And, he heard a thump, and he thought perhaps he'd hit an animal or perhaps even better—one of the children's toys. But, he had that dread, that fear, in his mind. And, he got out and looked beneath the wheel of his automobile, and there was his own son—his only son. He picked up that bruised and broken body and made his way to the hospital, but his little boy was dead. Later on, this preacher was talking to another preacher—one of his dear friends. And, this preacher looked at that other preacher and told about how he had backed over his own son and run over his little boy there in the driveway of their home. And, this preacher looked at his friend, and with the tears streaming down his face as he talked about his precious son, he said to his preacher friend, "Bob, I wouldn't have done it for the world—I wouldn't have done it for the world." But, I want to tell you that it was for this world that God gave His Son. Do you realize that? That's what Christmas is all about. "*God so loved this world*"—God so loved you—"*that he gave his only begotten Son*"—to die in agony and blood upon a cross—"*that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but [should] have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). You begin to walk with God now.

*And when we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun (John Newton).*

Learning to Walk With God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 19, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:5–6

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

HEBREWS 11:6

Outline

Introduction

I. A Life of Faith

II. A Life of Fellowship

III. A Life of Faithfulness

IV. A Life of Fruitfulness

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, we're in the Book of Hebrews. Turn to Hebrews chapter 11—Champions of Faith. And the champion that we're talking about today is a man named Enoch. And Enoch was a remarkable man. And I want to read, first of all, from Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 5 and 6: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.” What better could be said about you today, or me, that we just simply please God? “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Now, that's the New Testament commentary on the Old Testament story. Now, let me tell you, even before we turn to the Old Testament, what we're talking about today is walking with God—walking with God. The title of the message: “Learning to Walk with God.”

Now, with that in mind, turn, if you will, please, to Genesis chapter 5—Genesis chapter 5, because we're going to go back and forth from the New Testament to the Old, and from the Old Testament to the New.

When you read Genesis chapter 5, it kind of reads like the obituary page in the newspaper this morning. Look, if you will, in chapter 5, verse 8, the last part of verse 8: “and he died.” Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 11: “and he died.” Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 14: “and he died.” He died. He died. He died. He died. What

a dreary monotony. All of these people—they lived, they breathed, they die, they die, they die. But there's one man, his name stands out like a gardenia in a desert. It doesn't say anything about this man dying. Look, if you will, please, in verse 21, and this is the man Enoch that we're talking about today: "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah. And Enoch walked with God after he begot Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years, and Enoch walked with God and he was not; for God took him." Nothing here about his death. We learn in the New Testament that he was translated that he should not see death. And Enoch, way back over here in the Book of Genesis, is a picture and a prophecy of the Rapture of the Church. He was just caught up to heaven without dying.

You see, the Book of Genesis is the seedbed of all prophecy. Last week, we talked about Abel, and Abel's land, and that was a prophecy what? Of the old rugged cross, the Lamb of God dying for the sin of the world. Today, we're going to see Enoch, and we're going to see the translation of the saints. Are you ready for the Rapture? Are you ready for Jesus to come? Are you ready to be swept up into heaven like old Enoch was so long ago? Some glorious morning, sorrows will cease; some glorious morning, all will be peace. Heartaches all ended, school days all done; heaven will open, Jesus will come. I'm telling you, it's going to be glorious. Some golden daybreak, Jesus will come; some golden daybreak, battles all won. He'll shout the victory, break through the blue; some golden daybreak, for me, for you. Enoch pictures all of that. But the main emphasis is his walk with God. If you walk with God, you'll please God. In fact, this is what God wants of you more than anything else, and that is that you will simply walk with Him. Put in your margin Micah chapter 6 and verse 8: "He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" And Amos 3:3 says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" What a fellowship, what a joy divine, walking with our Lord.

Now, is Jesus Christ a bright, living reality to you? I mean, can you say it—say it and mean it—that you walk with Him? I'm not just talking about coming to church and worshiping Him. You say, "Well, I go to church to worship God." Well, in a sense you do, but come up close and I want to tell you something. You need to bring your worship to church. You know, sometimes I hear preachers get up and pray, and I'm not a judge of someone else's prayers—or shouldn't be anyway—but they say, "Now, Lord, we come into Your presence this morning," and they pray some eloquent prayer. "We come into Your presence this morning." Well, I wonder where have you been? We live in His presence. We don't just come into His presence. Now, there's a sense I don't over-interrupt what I'm saying, but sometimes, you know, I'll be sitting up there, maybe as a guest preacher, and the preacher over there will seem relatively normal. I'm going to be

the guest speaker, and we're talking and having a good time fellowshiping in the Lord, and he seems to be perfectly normal. But then, he leaves that seat, and walks from here to there, and something happens; and the guy who seemed normal over there stands up and begins to talk like he's got a steeple stuck in his throat. And we come to church, and somehow we act different in here. Well, I'm not saying we ought not to act reverently in here, but there can be joy in here, there can be happiness in here, there can be felicity in here. Sometimes people, you know, they want us, when we come in the church service, to get kind of like we've come to a funeral. They say, "You know, we have come to worship God." There's nothing wrong with that. The Bible says, "Be still and know that I am God." The Bible also says, "Clap your hands, O ye people." The Bible also says we're lifting holy hands to God in prayer. The Bible also says, "Make a joyful noise." There's a time to weep. There's a time to laugh. There's a time to cry. There's a time to shout. There's a time to stand. there's a time to be on our faces before God. But I'm telling you, folks, that in here and out there are not to be all that different. We're to be walking with God every day, every step; 365 days a year we are to be walking with God. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning: walking with God, because, when you walk with God, you will please God.

I. A Life of Faith

Now, what is the life that walks with God, and, therefore, the life that pleases God? First of all, it is a life of faith. It is a life of faith. Now, notice chapter 5, verse 24—that's Genesis: "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him." That is, God raptured him. And then, in Hebrews 11, verse 5: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before this, his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." And then, the next verse says, "And without faith it is impossible to please him." Now, it's very obvious—it's very obvious—that it takes faith to walk with God. To walk with God, the first step is the step of faith. And where did Enoch get his faith? Where will you get your faith? Well, the Bible tells us clearly and plainly, in Romans 10, verse 17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." What you hear is the Word of God. You cannot have faith without hearing from God. You cannot. You must hear from God. Now, the word here for faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, it's not talking about the word, the *logos*. It's talking about the *rhema*. It is God is speaking to you personally. God is speaking to you intimately. It may be through His Spirit, it may be through the Bible, but God has spoken to you. Now, you'll never walk with God, you'll never have faith, until you hear from God. Sometimes we get the idea that a man like Enoch way back here in the Book of Genesis, he didn't know anything. Friend, Enoch was a prophet. Put in your margin Jude 14: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam,

prophesied of these, saying, behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints.” You talk about a prophet. Here was a man who was a contemporary of Adam. He was a contemporary of Adam. Get that now. And he looked down through the tunnel of time, and he saw Jesus Christ coming with ten thousands of His saints. That’s what the Bible says. Enoch prophesied, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints.” Here was a man full of the Word of God. I want to remind you that he was a contemporary of Adam. As a matter of fact, Adam was 622 years old—622 years old—when Enoch was born. That means Adam was just in the prime of life. He lived for another 308 years. And Enoch and Adam were contemporaries. And so, it seems normal to me to think that, perhaps one day, Enoch talked with Adam. God walked with Adam. The Bible says that God walked with Adam in the cool of the garden. Can you imagine Enoch and Adam having a conversation? Remember, they were contemporaries for hundreds of years. Enoch says, “Look, there’s Adam; there’s Adam. Hey, Adam, Adam, come over here. I’ve been wanting to ask you a question, Adam. Adam, what was it like in the Garden of Eden? Adam, tell me about it. What was it like when you walked with God? Adam’s eyes fill with tears, his chin begins to quiver. “O Enoch, we walked together, side by side. We walked in majestic meadows. Oh, we climbed mountains together, through luscious forests we walked hand in hand. We talked, we laughed, we fellowshiped. Enoch, it was paradise to walk with God.” Enoch was a man who heard from God. He knew God. He became a prophet of God, and his walk was a walk of faith. Do you have that kind of faith? That’s why I’m preaching this entire series on heroes of faith. I pray that, when this series is over, your faith will be so rich, so strong, so true, so God-centered, that you will be able to say Jesus Christ is a bright, living reality to me, and I walk with Him, and I talk with Him, and He tells me I am His own; and the voice I hear falling on my ear is His voice. Now, to walk with God is a life of faith. Got it? Okay.

II. A Life of Fellowship

Because it’s a life of faith, it’s a life of fellowship. Notice again in Genesis chapter 5 and verse 22: “And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.” And then, notice in Hebrews 11, verses 5 and 6, the New Testament: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation—that is, his Rapture, taken to heaven—he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Enoch walked with God. To walk with God is a figure of the most intimate fellowship with God. Remember Micah 6, verse 8: “He hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee,

but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Why did God save you? Jamie sang about the Old Rugged Cross. Had it not been for Calvary, why did Jesus Christ step out of the glory, come to this earth, bathe this world with His blood—why are you redeemed? Why are you here today? Well, you ask the average person, why did God save you? And they’ll say, “To serve Him.” Friend, if God had wanted servants, He could have gotten a lot better people than us. Angels will serve Him much more obediently than we do. Angels are perfect servants if that’s all He wanted—servants. Why did God save us? To be servants? No. To be scholars? No. Let me show you something that’s going to jolt you here. I’m going to read you something that Karl Marx wrote—Karl Marx. Do you know who Karl Marx was? Karl Marx was the founder of godless atheism. I don’t believe one man in all history has ever caused so much sorrow, so much brutality, so much death, so much war, so much confusion, as this one man, Karl Marx. He was evil epitomized. Keep that in mind, and I’m going to read to you an essay that Karl Marx wrote. He wrote this in a Bible school in Germany, and it was on the subject, “The Union of the Believers with Christ.” Here are the words of Karl Marx.

“If we examine the history of man’s nature as an individual, we constantly observe the spark of divinity in his breast, the enthusiasm for what is good, the struggle for wisdom, the longing for truth, and are being smothered by the flames of desire and greed. The zeal for virtue becomes deafened by the tempting voice of sin, and turns into a mockery, as soon as we feel the full impact of life. Our hearts, reason, history, the Word of Christ, all call out to us loudly and convincingly to tell us that union with Him is absolutely necessary, that without Him we would be rejected of God, that He alone is able to deliver us. Once a man has obtained this virtue, this union with Christ, he will wait quietly and composedly the blows of fate. He will bravely oppose the storms of passion, and endure undaunted the rage of the wicked, for who can crush him? Who can rob him of his redeemer?”

Now, think about that. That’s a great essay. That sounds like it written by one of the saints, one of the great preachers, one of the heroes of the faith. It was written by Karl Marx. Do you know why he wrote it that way? Because he was brilliant. Had he been writing on history, his answers would have been just as well. He would have made an A in whatever subject. The problem was he did not know Jesus Christ personally. He did not know what he was writing about. He left Germany. He became an atheist. He wrote also *Das Kapital*, the Bible of Communism. And, again, I say he soaked the world with blood.

God is not looking for scholars. God is not looking for servants. God is looking for men, women, boys, and girls who’ll walk with Him, who know Him intimately. You know what sometimes frightens me is that you may sit and listen to me preach, and

understand what I say, and not know the One I preach about, not know the Lord Jesus Christ personally. So it is a life of fellowship, to walk in the light, as He is in the light, and to have fellowship. Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way. Again, I want to ask a question: Is Jesus Christ real to you?

III. A Life of Faithfulness

Third thing about this life: It is a life of faith, and, friend, it is a life of fellowship, and it is a life of faithfulness—faithfulness. Now, look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 5, verse 22: “And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.” Three hundred years! 109,500 days Enoch walked with God, day in, day out, good days, bad days, cold days, hot days, hard days, happy days, he walked with God. And he didn’t do it in a monastery. He had a family. He had a job. He had a home. He had children. He had all of this. And he did not do it in some golden age, some easy age. As a matter of fact, he lived in a day of apostasy. He lived in the day that the Bible calls the days of Noah, when people were so wicked that God is getting ready to destroy the world. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, Enoch didn’t have any problems. Those people back in the Bible, they breathed different air than we did.” No, they didn’t. Don’t tell me that your problems and your environment keep you from walking with God. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, you don’t know. You’re a preacher. You don’t have any problems.” Let me give you a little poem on problems. Problems: I’ve got them; you’ve got them; Adam had them. We all have problems. Enoch had them, but Enoch walked with God for three hundred years in a day of apostasy. And the Bible teaches that, as it was in the days of Noah, and that’s when Enoch walked with God, so would it be when Jesus comes again. You have the power to walk with God today. You have absolutely no excuse.

Have you ever passed one of these big atomic power plants that produces electricity, you know, the ones with the big, funnel-like coolers there, and so forth? Well, in the truest sense, they do not produce power—none of them do. All they do is release the power. The power there is in the uranium. It’s not produced; it is simply released. It’s in the molecular structure of this universe. You see, when you have the Lord Jesus Christ in you, you have everything you need. You have all that you need, and you have it continually to walk with God. And so, because of that, you’re to be faithful. God have mercy upon you, if some days you walk with God, and some days you don’t. Enoch walked with God for three hundred years.

IV. A Life of Fruitfulness

Now, here’s the next thing I want to say about walking with God. Number four: To walk with God is a life of fruitfulness. Notice again in Hebrews 11, verses 5 and 6: “By faith

Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation—that is, before he is taken out of this world—he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

It’s so obvious this man had a testimony. This man had a testimony. He was a prophet. His walk with God spoke to the godless age in which he lived. He was a fruitful man. Again, I remind you of Jude 14: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints.” Do you know when Enoch began to walk with God? Now, about the first sixty-five years of his life he doesn’t seemed to have walked with God. There was something that happened in Enoch’s life. He had a crisis. You can read about it in chapter 5—Genesis chapter 5, verse 22: “And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah—and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah.” Enoch comes home one day, and his wife is sitting in the corner, knitting a sweater. And he says, “Sweetheart, you knitting a sweater for yourself?” She holds it up. “Oh,” he says, “that’s too small for you, sweetie. Are you going to a shower?” She says, “No.” He says, “Well, who are you knitting that little sweater for?” She says, “Come over here, Enoch. I want to tell you something.” She whispers... He says, “Oh my; oh my. You don’t mean it. We’re going to have a child?” And they did have a child, and do you know what his name was? Methuselah—Methuselah.

Now, what do you know about Methuselah? Well, Methuselah lived longer than any other man who ever lived, is that not right? How many years? Nine hundred and sixty-nine years Methuselah lived. Nobody ever lived as long as Methuselah. Listen to it, the Word of God, and we’re going to find out in just a moment that Methuselah lived for nine hundred and sixty-nine years. Now, why did they name this little boy Methuselah? I’ve seen a lot of boys and girls named a lot of things. I’ve not yet ever met a man, a child, named Methuselah. Doubtless, somewhere in this world of many people, somebody has named a child Methuselah, but they probably don’t know what the name means. Let me tell you what the name Methuselah means. It means, when he is dead, it will be sent. Can you imagine naming a child, “Hey, when he’s dead, it will be sent, would you get me a glass of water?” That’s his name. When he is dead, it will be sent. What will be sent? The flood. You see, when God is going to send judgment, He always sends warning first. Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto his servants, the prophets.” You see, Enoch was a prophet. Enoch said, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints.” And God also told the prophet Enoch that the flood is coming, and when your baby dies, the flood will come. Don’t you imagine every time Methuselah had sniffles Enoch got a little concerned. He said, “Son,

be careful when you go out and play. Listen, this world is not going to hold together any longer than you hold together.” Now, you understand the reason that Methuselah lived as long as he did—969 years. Why? Because of the patience of God. The Bible says, “The Lord is not slack concerning his word as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish.” It was a wicked age, and God wanted more people to be saved. So God is saying, “Methuselah, live on, live on, live on,” and God is giving mankind one more day, one more chance. But the flood came when Methuselah died. I can prove that.

Let’s do a little arithmetic. Listen. Methuselah was 187 years old when Lamech was born. Now, Methuselah—look in Genesis chapter 5, verse 25—Methuselah lived a hundred and eighty-seven years and begat Lamech. So Methuselah, the little baby, has his first son, he becomes a father, Methuselah becomes a father when he’s 187 years old. Okay, got it? Now, watch this. Now, go down to Genesis chapter 5, verse 28. His first son was Lamech, and now notice verse 28: “And Lamech lived an hundred and eighty and two years and begat a son and called his name Noah.” Now, Methuselah, becomes a father when he’s 187 years old. Then, 182 years later, he becomes a grandfather. Now, if you add those two together—187 and 182—you have 369. Now, who was his grandson? His grandson was Noah. All right, you got that? Now, let’s look in Genesis chapter 7 and verse 11: “In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.” This is speaking of the flood. Now, what do you have? Well, you have 187 years, Methuselah becomes a daddy. One hundred and eighty-two years later, he becomes a granddaddy. Six hundred years after that, the flood comes. Add them up together, and it makes 969 years. That’s the reason Methuselah lived to be as long as he did, and that’s the reason that we understand the meaning of his name: when he is dead, it shall be sent. When Methuselah died, after 969 years, then the flood came. What does that tell us? It tells us, friend, of the accuracy of the Word of God, but it also tells us something of the great love and patience of God, but it also warns us of the wrath of God. And just as it was in the days of Noah, it’s going to be in our day. The flood did come. God was longsuffering 969 years, but yet the flood came. And I want to say to this generation, even now the raging waters of God’s wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of His mercy. One of these days, the dam of His mercy will give way to the floods of God’s wrath, and I don’t know when it’s going to be. But I know that, one day, perhaps soon, Jesus is coming. So why did Enoch walk with God? Well, Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah. He saw the end. He was moved with fear. You say, “I don’t believe on a religion built on fear.” I do. The Bible says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Not the end, but the beginning, of wisdom. The man who does not fear God,

who does not fear judgment, does not have a modicum of sense. Jesus said, "Fear him who is able to destroy soul and body in hell." Fear Him. "The beginning of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Do you fear God? The fear of God is love on its knees. Sometimes you preach on hell, and people say, "Well, I just don't believe in frightening people." I'd rather frighten you into heaven than lull you into hell. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." When he's dead, it shall be sent. I'll tell you, when he had a child, it changed him. When our first son was born it changed me. I was already saved. But I got on my knees and prayed, "O God, O God, I don't want to do anything to cause this child to stumble." I want my children, all of them, and my grandchildren, to believe in my God.

*An old man walking a lone highway,
came at evening, cold and gray,
to a chasm vast, deep, and wide,
through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
for the sullen stream held no fear for him.
But he turned when he had spanned the tide,
and built a bridge on the other side.
"Old man," cried a fellow pilgrim near,
"you're wasting your time with building here.
Your journey will end at close of day,
you never again will pass this way.
You've crossed this chasm deep and wide,
Why do you build this bridge at eventide?"
The builder lifted his old, gray head,
"Good friend on the road, I've come," he said,
"there followeth after me today
a youth whose feet must pass this way.
"This stream, which has been as naught to me,
to that fair-haired boy may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim,
I'm building this bridge for him."*

It's good to see this family sitting down here at the front together, a father and sons. Why? Because we have those who are coming after us. Enoch walked God after he begat Methuselah. I beg you, dad, I beg you, mothers, in the name of Jesus, walk with God. If the next 20 years change as much as the last 20 years, I don't know what the world's going to be like. I look at my little granddaughter, Brianna, and I wonder when Brianna is old enough to be married, if Jesus tarries, what will her life be like? Enoch

walked with God after he begat Methuselah, because he saw impending judgment and his life was life of fruitfulness. He lived for God. He pleased God. Are you walking with God? Were to God that we all had that testimony that Enoch had.

Conclusion

Well, let me wrap this up and just simply say, like Enoch, we are waiting for the end of the age. And like Enoch, we are to be expecting the Rapture. Remember Genesis 5, verse 24: “And Enoch walked with God, and was not, for God took him.” And the Bible says, in Hebrews 11, verses 5 and 6: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.” Not a tomb, but a translation. It was sudden. It was instant. God took him. And the scriptures that I read to you said he was not found. Do you know what that means? They looked for him. They couldn’t find him. One of these days, they’re going to look for us. They’re going to wonder where we are. Unsaved husbands will say, “What happened to my wife?” They’ll go to bed that night and reach over in the middle of the night. She’ll be gone. An unsaved mother will go in to change the diapers on a child. The child is gone. People on an airplane, suddenly there is no pilot. You say, “Pastor Rogers, that sounds so strange. It sounds so supernatural.” You’ve got it! Luke chapter 17—listen to it—verses 34 and 35: “I tell you, in that night, there shall be two men in one bed; one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” First Thessalonians 4, verses 16 to 18: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” This could happen at any moment. Just like Enoch was taken after having walked with God, we could be taken at any moment. And if you’re left behind, if you’re not saved, left behind, you’ll march with the armies of the beast to Armageddon. The saints will have been raptured out and gone to heaven.

Now, Enoch was transformed into the likeness of his Lord in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Why? Because he had this testimony that he pleased God. And what does the Bible say? It says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him.” Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, that’s all very good, but how do I know it’s true—how do I know it’s true?” Well, I’m not depending upon me to convince you. You see, before I came out here this morning, I got on my knees and prayed. And, by the way, I didn’t get on my knees so I could tell you about it; I got on my knees and prayed. I prayed that God would anoint me with the Holy Spirit, because you see, I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. The Holy Spirit of God will testify to you that what I say is true. The apostle said, “We are witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy

Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.” I’m not depending upon oratory or trickery or manipulation. Anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of. But if you want to believe, you can. Remember, faith is not wishful thinking. Faith is not, name it and claim it. Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is taking God at His word, listening to the Holy Spirit who says, “This is true.” Therefore, you have no excuse. You can’t say, “I can’t believe,” for God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. God will enable you to believe.

Is faith a gift of God, or something you do? It is both. Breathing is a gift of God. God gives you lungs, and God gives you air, but you can smother if you wish. And I’m telling you, friend, that God has given you all you need to be, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that, if you’ll just say, “Lord, speak to my heart,” He’ll do it. He will do it. Friend, He will do it. It’s not an emotional feeling. Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. It is an awareness that this is true and you need Him. There is nothing better that could be said about you or me than that you walk with God, and there’s nothing your children need more than a man or a father who walks with God, and a godly mother who walks with God. You say, “It’s too late for me. My family is hellish.” Then, why don’t you today put a new branch on the family tree, and give your heart to Jesus?

Let’s bow together in prayer.

Learning to Walk With God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 19, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:5–6

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

HEBREWS 11:6

Outline

Introduction

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Introduction

Hebrews chapter eleven. We're talking today about "Champions of Faith." Last week, we talked about Abel, and today we talk about Enoch. Abel prophesied Calvary's Lamb, the Lord Jesus who died upon the cross. Enoch prophesies the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And the message today will help you to get ready for the Rapture. The title of the message: "Learning To Walk With God."

Let's look right here in the Word of God, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 5: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death..."—that means he never died. He was taken directly to heaven without dying—"and he was not found"—that is, they looked all around for him, but they couldn't find him—"because God has translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Is that your testimony, that you please God? Well, the Bible says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. My prayer is today, that you will want to please God. And the way to please God is to walk with God. And so, we're going to learn how to walk with God. Take one step at a time, day by day by day, walking with God. Because when you are a Christian, you're not just simply one who has made a decision. You are one who has a life of intimate fellowship with God, walking day by day.

I. A Life of Faith

Now, let me name some things about that life that we have with our Lord. And I pray God He will write these upon your heart. First of all, the walk with God is a life of faith. It is a life of faith. Now, Genesis chapter five, let's look at Genesis chapter five. It's very interesting, because in Genesis chapter five, we have the story that the writer of Hebrews talks about. Now, Genesis chapter five is an interesting story. In a lot of ways, Genesis chapter five reads like the obituary in the newspaper. For example, look in verse eight: "And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years"—that's a long time to live. But notice how it ends—"and he died." Notice verse eleven: "And the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years"—long time—"and he died." Look, if you will, in verse 14: "And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died." Look, if you will, in verse 17: "And all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died." He died. He died. He died. He died. He died. What a dreary monotony.

But I want you to notice one name that stands out like a gardenia in this desert of death. Look, if you will, now in verse 21: "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and was not; for God took him." It doesn't say he died. He was raptured. He was taken straight to heaven.

Now, what delineates this life? Number one: the life that walks with God is a life of faith—a life of faith. Notice Genesis 5, verse 24: "And Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him." Well, how did he walk with God? Well, look in Hebrews 11:5 and 6 now: "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." And, how did he please God? Verse six says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him." So, how did Enoch please God? By walking with God. How did he walk with God? He believed God. So the life of walking with God is simply a life of faith. Well, where did he get this faith? Well, he got faith from the Word of God. The same way I get it. The same way you get it. Romans chapter 10, verse 17: "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

Look up here at your pastor. You will never, never, never, never have faith apart from the will of God. Faith is not guessing at the will of God. Faith is learning the will of God and believing God. Faith is hearing from God and believing God. But, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Now, that word may be through the Holy Spirit. It may be through the pages of Scripture. But you don't name it and claim it. God speaks and you claim it. You believe it. That, my friend, is faith. And without faith it's impossible to please God. You want to walk with God? Do you? I hope you do. Then

you're going to walk—the walk is a walk of faith.

Well, sometimes, when we go back to the Old Testament, the book of Genesis, we say, “Man, what do they know? They didn’t know anything back then—those crude people, plowing with sticks, ignoramuses. They didn’t have television. They didn’t have a computer. What do they know?” It may surprise you to know what Enoch, the seventh from Adam, knew. Did you know that Enoch was a prophet? Put in your margin Jude verse 14: “And Enoch also the seventh from Adam prophesied of thee saying, ‘Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints.’” Now, think about that. Here’s a man only seven generations from Adam, and he was prophesying the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

You see, the book of Genesis is the seedbed of the rest of the Bible. And you see Calvary, as you study Abel. And now you see the Second Coming, as you study Enoch. Enoch is prophesying, Look, behold, the Lord comes. Here He comes followed by the armies of heaven. It speaks of that glorious time when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, He’s going to bring all of the redeemed who are now in heaven with Him back to this earth at the Battle of the Armageddon. Is that not an amazing thing?

Well, Enoch had faith. Where did he get faith? How did he learn? Who taught Enoch? How did Enoch become a prophet? Did you know that Enoch was a contemporary of Adam? Did you know that Adam had walked in the Garden of Eden—can you imagine—with God? Can you imagine the school of theology that Adam must have had? Can you imagine walking in Eden with God? Adam did. He walked in the garden. They talked. Can you imagine how God uploaded to Adam all of these glorious truths? Adam knew all of these things. And Enoch and Adam were contemporaries. They lived as contemporaries. You study the Bible, and you’re going to find out that, when Enoch was born, Adam was 622 years of age. You say, pretty old. Well, he was just in the prime of life. Adam lived 930 years. He and Enoch walked together for 308 years. Think how much that Adam must have taught Enoch about the Word of God. I can imagine Enoch saying to Adam, “Adam, tell me. Adam, what was it like in Eden? What was it like when you and God walked through the Garden?” I can see Adam, as his eyes tear up, his chin begins to quiver. “Oh,” he says, “Enoch, to walk with God, it was just wonderful. We walked through golden meadows together. We walked through pristine green forest together. We climbed mountain peaks together. Oh, to walk with God, it was so wonderful.” You see, Enoch listened to Adam. He knew Abel. He knew all of these. And now, Enoch is a prophet of God who is walking with God.

Question: do you want to walk with God? I mean, walk with God. I’m not talking about just coming to church. I’m not talking about learning the facts. Would you like for God to be more real to you than the person sitting next to you? Possible, so pay attention. Number one: this walk with God begins with faith. This entire chapter is about

faith. And the emphasis is that he walked with God because he believed God.

II. A Life of Fellowship

Now, number two: not only is walking with God a life of faith, but it becomes a life of fellowship. You see, you step in by faith, but you walk on in fellowship. Now, the Bible says here, in Genesis chapter five, verse 22, “And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters.” And, then again, Hebrews 11, verses 5 and 6: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Enoch and the Father are walking hand in hand, in intimate fellowship.

Do you have fellowship with God? You know, I do. I don't boast about it, but I want to praise God for it. I can tell you—and God knows that I am not exaggerating—Jesus Christ is as real to me as those two men over there, and that man over there. I know Him. I know Him. He's real to me. I walk with Him. Did you know where the apostle Paul said, Paul says, “I know whom I have believed”? He didn't say, I know in whom I believe. That's the way many people mistranslate that. Paul didn't want a preposition between him and Christ. He said, “I know whom I have believed”—not, I know about Him. He did know about Him. But he said, “I also know Him.” You may know about somebody without knowing somebody. But you are to know the Lord Jesus Christ intimately. You are to know Him. It is a life of fellowship.

Now, Amos 3:3 says, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Put that in your margin. And then, put this verse down. I love this verse, one of the greatest verses in all of the Old Testament. It is Micah chapter 6, verse 8: “He has showed thee, O man, what is good...”—do you want to know what is good? You want to hear something good?—“He has showed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee?”—number one, what's good? Number two: what does God want?—“to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.” God says, “Look. Show mercy to people. Do right yourself. And just walk with Me.”

Here we have some people: “What does God want?” Some people say, “Well, God wants us to serve Him.” Well, friend, if God wanted service, if that's all He wanted, He'd just use angels. They'd do a better job than we. Always instantly obeying, always on the job, full of power. But God doesn't want mere service. Of course, we should serve Him. But that's not why He created us. Well, you say, “God wants scholars.” God wants us to learn all the facts about Him. No, He wants you to study. But what is the bottom line? God wants to walk with you. Why did He create you? He created you in His image so

He could have fellowship with you. Did you know that you can know all about Him, and not know Him?

I'm going to read to you a part of an essay written by a seventeen-year-old boy who was a student in a Christian school. This boy wrote an essay on union with Jesus Christ. As you listen to it, you're going to say, "that is a good essay." But I'm going to tell you ahead of time, before I read it, so you can be measuring it. The person who wrote it was Karl Marx—Karl Marx, the founder of godless, atheistic communism, the one who wrote the diabolical book, *Das Kapital*, the one who has caused more misery, more bloodshed, more hatred, more violence, more division, I suppose, than any other man who ever lived. Karl Marx wrote this when he was a seventeen-year-old boy. Listen to it:

If we examine the history of man's nature as an individual, we constantly observe that spark of divinity in his breast, the enthusiasm for what is good, the struggle for wisdom, the longing for truth, are being smothered by the flames of desire and greed. The zeal for virtue becomes deadened by the tempting voice of sin and turns into a mockery as soon as we feel the full impact of life. Our hearts, reason, history, the word of Christ, all call out to us loudly, and convincingly to tell us that union with Him is absolutely necessary, and without Him we would be rejected of God. For He alone is able to deliver us. Once a man has obtained this virtue, this union with Christ, he will await quietly and composedly the blows of fate. He will bravely oppose the storms of passion, and endure undaunted the rage of the wicked. For who can crush him or rob him of his Redeemer?

What's the problem with all of that? Not a thing in the world, so far as truth is concerned. But, if he had been writing an essay on geography or history, he would have done just as good a job, because he had a brilliant mind. He knew the answers, but he doesn't know Jesus. He founded atheistic communism. Can you imagine a person knowing all of that truth, and yet not knowing the Lord? You can sit here in this church this morning and listen to this sermon, and, in a sense, understand every word of it, and still not know the Lord. God made you to have fellowship with Him. It is a life of fellowship, and you are to say that great song, "I come to the Garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses. And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own."

Does God walk with you and talk with you? I mean, is Jesus Christ real to you when you're driving around automobile? When you have your pots and pans there in the kitchen, when you're sitting there at your desk, when at school, when you're on the gridiron or the basketball court? Did you know that Jesus Christ is to be very real with you? You are to walk with Him.

Now, sometimes we come to church and we act differently at church. Now, listen carefully to what I'm about to say. Obviously, when somebody is preaching, you're to be

quiet. Obviously, when we sing, you're to join together. But don't change your personality. Don't suddenly get spooky when you come to church. Oh, we're in church now. We're holy, holy, holy. No, listen. A Christian is perfectly natural and naturally supernatural—supernaturally natural and naturally supernatural. We don't change. I told the early congregation sometimes I'll be over here sitting as a guest preacher, and there'll be the pastor, the host pastor of the church, and we'll be talking back and forth, and he seems perfectly normal. And then he gets up, comes over to the pulpit to talk. And this guy is very natural. Dearly beloved—and he talks like he's got a stepple stuck in his throat. Sometimes people don't like to come in the church and hear people kind of greeting one another and chattering like birds in a tree. They say, oh, be quiet, we've come to worship. Friend, when you meet your brothers and sisters in Jesus, be cheerful, be happy. There's nothing wrong with that—nothing wrong with that. Now, you say, But I think we're to be still and know that God is in His holy temple. There's a time to be still. The Bible also says, shout unto the Lord. There's a time to cry. There's a time to laugh. That's what Ecclesiastes tells us. There are times when we're exuberant in our worship. The Bible says, "clap your hands all ye people." The Bible says, "lifting holy hands to God in prayer." There are times when we are to be on our face, on our knees, with the Lord. All of these things are true. All of these things are true. But the point is that we're to be natural. We're to be natural. Don't get the idea that our faith is something that we kind of put on when we come to church. What I'm trying to say is that we are to walk with God 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It is a constant walk.

Now, we come to church to worship, but listen, we also bring our worship to church. How wonderful when people who already have been walking with God come to church to continue to do corporately what they've been doing individually all week long. That's what makes a glorious service. So, when you come in here, and God comes in with you, and you come to praise Him together, it is a life of fellowship. Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way, leaning on the everlasting arms. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

III. A Life of Fruitfulness

Now thirdly, it is not only a life of faith and a life of fellowship; a walk with God is a life of fruitfulness. One of the verses that motivates me a lot is this: "that Jesus went about doing good." Sometimes I just say, Lord, I don't have an agenda today. Just let me go about doing good. Now, why was this man so faithful? He was faithful for 300 years. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter five, verse 22: "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Three hundred years—that's 109,500 days. Good days, bad days, hot days, cold days, snow, rain,

blizzard, drought, flood, war, peace, opposition—walking with God. He didn't turn it on, turn it off. There is the constancy, the faithfulness, of his walk. And, by the way, he did not do it in a monastery. If you read the life of Enoch, he had a family. He had children. Doubtless, he had a job. He had a home. He had business. And he did not do it in an easy age.

When Enoch walked with God, he walked with God at a time called the days of Noah. Violence and vice and wickedness were rampant, so much that God decided He was going to destroy the world with a flood. In the days of Noah, Enoch walked with God. In a day of demonic force, he walked with God.

Now, friend, don't you say, "Pastor, it's easy for you, because you're a preacher. You don't know where I work. You don't know what my house is like. It's hard for me to walk with God." It's hard for anybody to walk with God, if he does it in his own strength. You look at a power plant. We get, say, an atomic plant. And we get electricity from that atomic power plant. Somebody says, that plant generates power. In the truest sense, it releases power. The power is in the atomic energy that is released. And the power that's in my life is because God is releasing His power into me to walk the Christian life day by day. I would not, I could not, be faithful, were it not for the Lord in me. Enoch walked with God. If it's God who walks with you, who empowers you, and every demand upon your Christian life is a demand of the God, who walks within you, and walks with you day by day. I hope you believe that.

It's a life of faith. It's a life of fellowship. It is a life of faithfulness. Are you faithful? Are you walking with God? I hope when we meet back, seven days from now, you will have walked seven days of faithfulness with the Lord. Good times, bad times, hard times, happy times, that you have walked with the Lord.

Now, it is a life, because it is a life of faith, because it is a life of fellowship, because it is a life of faithfulness; friend, it is also a life of fruitfulness. You want your life to count for God? Just walk with God. It's a life of fruitfulness. The Bible says, in Hebrews 11, verses five and six, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony"—now, listen—"he pleased God." That's fruitfulness. He pleased God. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

Why was he so fruitful? What was there about his life that made him a prophet? Did you know that he had a crisis in his life? And, after his crisis, that's when he began to walk with God. Do you know what his crisis was? He became a father. He became a father. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter five, verse twenty-two—go back over there again: "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." He had his first baby, a little boy named Methuselah.

And, when that baby was born, God spoke to Enoch in a special way, and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah.

I'll tell you what: If you have children, and you have any brain and any heart, it's going to drive you to God. Did you know that? It's going to drive you to God. "He walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years." Have you ever thought about the name "Methuselah"? How many of you know a baby, other than the one in the Bible, named Methuselah? I've never met one. Doubtless, you know, the names that people give kids, there's some child around named Methuselah. But, sometimes we wonder why, where did these people get these names? Bible names had special meaning. The name Methuselah means this: "when he is dead, or when he is gone, it will be sent." Can you imagine naming a child that: when he is dead, it will be sent? Well, what does that mean? God said, to Enoch, I'm going to destroy the world with a flood. Well, God, when are you going to do this? You see this baby? When he's dead, it will be sent. You know, the Bible says, in Amos 3:7, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but that he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets." Remember now that Enoch was a prophet And God said, "You see this little baby? When he's dead, it's going to be sent." Every time little Methuselah had a fever, Enoch said, "oh boy, wonder if this is it?" When he's dead, it's going to be sent.

Now, how long did Methuselah live? This explains the mystery. Methuselah lived longer than any other man in all of history; 969 years, as we're going to see later, Methuselah lived. He lived longer than anybody else. You ready for a riddle? The oldest man who ever lived, who died before his father did? Well, who was that? Methuselah. He died before his father did, because his father never died. The oldest man who ever lived, who died before his father did: that is Methuselah. Well, why did Methuselah live for 969 years? The New Testament tells us. The longsuffering of God. God was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And so, God kept giving another day, another day, another day; 969 years God is waiting before He sends the flood, because of God's mercy. God is waiting for more people to be saved.

Why has not Jesus come in our day and our age? God's waiting for more people to be saved. Peter tells us, "Many will say, where's the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. For this they are willingly ignorant of, and one day with the Lord is a thousand years, and a thousand years is one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It could be that the reason Jesus didn't come yesterday is because God wants you saved today. Could be. It could be that God is just keeping the door open one more time. But I tell you, the flood did come. And, even now, the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of

His mercy. And, one of these days, Jesus Christ will come, and it will be too late for you, as it was too late in this day.

I want to show you that the flood came the day Methuselah died. Are you ready to do some arithmetic? Say, yes. Ready to do some arithmetic? Say, yes. Most of you are like I am—you don't like arithmetic. All right, we're going to do it anyway, all right, whether you like it or not. Now, I want to show you something. Look in Genesis chapter five, verse twenty-five: "And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech."

Now, little Methuselah is born. His name means "when he is gone, or when he is dead, it will be sent." Now, he became a father. Methuselah became a father when he was a hundred and eighty seven years of age. He had a son whose name was Lamech. Now, Lamech gave Methuselah a grandson. Now, notice in Genesis five, verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine: "And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son, and he called his name Noah." So Methuselah's grandson was Noah. His son was Lamech; the grandson was Noah. Lamech was born after a hundred and eighty-seven years. A hundred and eighty-two more years, little Noah is born. So that's three hundred and sixty-nine years when Noah was born. Methuselah is three hundred and sixty-nine years old when he becomes a grandpapa. Now, when that grandson whose name was Noah was six hundred years old, the flood came. Pastor, how do you know that? Genesis 7:11: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." The flood came.

Now, see what I'm trying to say, 187, 182—369; add 600 to that—969 years. That day the flood came. Now, you understand, when he is gone, it will be sent. You understand why Methuselah lived to be 969 years, because God was postponing, God was putting off, that day of judgment because of His mercy. But the flood did come. And the day of the Lord will come. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in this day. And I believe that Enoch had a certain amount of fear. Here is a legitimate motive. People say, "Well, I don't believe in scaring people." I do. Why, would to God I could. I'd scare the begabbers out of you. If I could—if I could. I had rather frighten you into heaven than lull you into hell.

Jesus said, "Fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." The Bible says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." One of the marks of the last days is a people, and the Bible says, "there's no fear of God before their eyes." I'm telling you, my precious friend, that God Almighty is a God of judgment. Now, I know that's un-American. I know we're not supposed to believe that God is a God of wrath, but only a God of love. God is a God of love—infinite, matchless, unfathomable, indescribably, glorious love. But He's also got wrath.

Now, if you say God is a God of love, and don't say God is a God of wrath, that's only half of the truth. And when you take half of the truth and make half of the truth all of the truth, that half of the truth becomes an untruth. I can't say that again, but it's true. God says to Enoch, Enoch, when he's gone, it'll be sent. Enoch said, I believe I better walk with God. Did you know that judgment is coming, and you better walk with God? You say, "Don't use fear on me." Your doctor will. Your doctor will say, "Get the cholesterol down; you're going to die." Your dentist will use fear. You don't have to floss all your teeth, just the ones you want to keep. The traffic expert uses fear. The highway patrolman uses fear. No, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; not the end of wisdom, but the beginning of wisdom.

We live in a generation that is being tranquilized into hell. Psalm 25, verse 14: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." You see, Enoch was a prophet. He knew that the Lord is coming. And he says, let me look over here. Let me get this thing in focus. Look at that—wow! The Lord is coming with ten thousand of his saints. The flood is coming. There's judgment coming on this earth. I believe I'll walk with God. Friend, if you had any sense, you'd say, I believe I'll walk with God. I believe I'll walk with God. It was a life of fruitfulness, a life that counts. All of your toys are soon going to be junk. That house of yours, that car of yours, those clothes, that coat—that's all premature junk. What are you doing, for heaven's sake? How are you living in this day and in this age?

Conclusion

Now, let me just wrap this up—let me just wrap this up. Now, the Bible says that, "Enoch walked with God and was not, because God took him." That's Genesis five, verse twenty-four. Hebrews chapter eleven, verses five and six, says that he was translated, that he should not see death. There was a sudden instant rapture, and he's gone. You know what? They looked for him, and they didn't find him. Hebrews says, "he was not found." That means they looked for him. One of these days, they're going to be looking for me. One of these days, they're going to be looking for you. Listen to the words of Jesus. By the way, you say, Pastor Rogers, that sounds so supernatural. Yep, you got it. That's what I hope you'll see. Luke chapter seventeen, verses thirty-four and thirty-five—Jesus says, "I tell you in that night there shall be two men in one bed; one shall be taken, the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

A man reaches over at nighttime to touch his wife; the pillow is warm, but she's gone. A mother goes in to change the diaper on her little precious baby; the crib is empty, the baby is gone. People in an airliner; the pilot is gone. Two grinding at the mill; the one taken, the other left. Enoch walked with God, and was not, because God took

him. Isn't the book of Genesis a wonderful book that prophesies ahead of time the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

Is Jesus real to you? Are you walking with Him? I love the song that Jamie sang, "Had it not been for a place called Calvary." There was a preacher who had a precious baby son. He was the age that we call a toddler. That preacher, in a hurry to go to a meeting, got in his automobile, and was backing out of the garage, when he heard the most sickening thing that any parent can ever hear: a thud and a bump. Uh oh, no! Oh, no, no! He opened the door of the car, went back, and there was the lifeless body of his precious son. Can you imagine what that funeral was like? Another preacher came to stand by this man to give him strength and help, and that heartbroken man of God with tears coming down his cheek said to his friend, "Bob, oh, Bob, I wouldn't have done it for the world."

Let me tell you something. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That's the love of God. Calvary was not an accident. It was not an incident. It was the gift of a loving God. And, if you die and go to hell, you will trample beneath your feet the precious blood of the Son of God. Say, "Pastor, do you believe in hell?" Hell is almost too good for a man who would trample beneath his feet such love. You're here to walk with God. That's why Jesus came, that we might walk with Him and talk with Him, and live forever with Him.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, I want to lead you today in a prayer, if you've never done so. So, you put your faith in the One who gave His Son for the world. Would you pray this way: Dear God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and I need to be saved? Pray that. My sins deserves judgment, but I need and want mercy. Jesus, you died to save me. You shed your blood to save me. You rose and lived to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. Would you pray that? I do trust You, Jesus, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray it, say it, and mean it. Save me, Lord Jesus.

Did you ask Him? Then claim it by faith. Pray this way: Thank You for saving me. I don't look for a sign, or ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You promised, and You cannot lie. You're now my Lord and Savior. I will live for You. I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. In Your name I pray.

How to Please God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 13, 1972

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:6

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

HEBREWS 11:6

Outline

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Introduction

My heart has been thrilled this morning by the music and I want to say to Brother Lane and to this choir and to Brother Bailey you've gotten me so excited I don't believe I'm going to be able to preach. God bless you that's wonderful. We've been treated so graciously, so lovingly by you people that it's almost hard to know the will of God. You've been so sweet and so kind and I love you for it and I thank you for it.

Now, I have come to preach. I'm not the best preacher in the world. There are a lot of people who can preach the gospel better than I can but no one can preach a better gospel than I can because there's only one and God will bless that and God will honor it. The only thing I ask is this, I've come to preach you've come to listen I just don't want you to get finished before I do. We will stay together and listen to the Word of God.

Now there are many things that we could say by way of introduction but I think it would be good this morning for us to open our Bibles to Hebrews Chapter 11, verse 6, and reconsider the last verse that Brother Henry read this morning. It's one of my favorite in all of the Bible. I'm going to speak this morning on this subject: "How to Please God" and, you know, that's the most important thing in the world isn't it, pleasing God. If you please God it doesn't really matter whom you displease and if you displease

God it really doesn't matter whom you please and the Bible in this verse tells us how to please God and it says, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

When God looks at you and God gives His estimate of you, God doesn't say according to your fame be it unto you, and God doesn't say according to your fate be it unto you, and God doesn't say according to your feeling be it unto you, nor does God say according to your fortune be it unto you, but God says according to your faith be it unto you. Now Bellevue has had a great past and she has a great future if she will believe God and trust God. Great churches are built on great faith in a great God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. These are the days for an earthshaking, mountain moving, devil-defying faith in Almighty God and as to the degree that we trust this great God, God is pleased and God will bless us.

I. What Is Faith?

Now I want to ask and answer several questions this morning. The first is this, what is faith? Now it's not as mysterious as a lot of people think. There's not really a lot of mystery or hocus-pocus about it. You live by faith every day. I mean faith is a common ordinary substance. When you cross a bridge that's faith in the bridge. You mail a letter that's faith in the post office. When you drive in Memphis that's a lot of faith. Whatever you do, every day you exercise faith. It is common ordinary stuff. You're exercising faith in the seat that you're sitting in.

Now what is the difference in the Christian's faith? There's not much difference in the Christian's faith so as to the quality of that faith. It is the object of the Christian's faith that makes him different. Rather than putting his faith in bridges and automobiles and post offices and this sort of a thing, he puts his faith in the promises of the great eternal unseen God. He doesn't live by the five senses of sight, taste, touch, hearing, and smell and so forth but he lives by the sixth sense of faith and sometimes that's mighty hard to do.

I was preaching in a revival crusade down in South Florida in a little country town and God blessed and heaven came down our souls to greet and the glory crowned at the mercy seat. God just blessed in a marvelous way. We had a great time. I was so thrilled. It was Saturday night and I was driving home after having preached that night and I was driving in a little Volkswagen that I owned then that had no gasoline gauge. It had one big tank and then a little tank and when you ran out of gasoline in the big tank you turned a little lever and you were on the auxiliary tank. Well I was on the auxiliary tank already and had forgotten about it and was driving along just so happy praising the Lord when I ran out of gasoline on a back Florida Road and it was night late about 11

o'clock.

It had just started to rain. I thought to myself how anti-climatic can anybody get? Here I am out here in the rain in a lonely spot on a black desolate night. It's raining. The ol' bullfrogs in the pond there were singing knee deep, knee deep, belly deep. They were just singing like this and I said, "Oh what am I doing here?" and I remembered that I was going to preach the next morning on faith. And so I said, "Lord, I'm going to get a sermon illustration on faith." I said, "I'm going to pray that the first automobile that stops will pick me up." And I said, "If the second or the third automobile picks me up, it will not be an answer to my prayer."

Now I know you think I was being very choosy but I knew if I stood there long enough at least I felt that somebody would sometime stop and I had to know that it was an answer to prayer. And, you know, I was believing God for this. I really did. I felt led to pray that way and I believe that the prayer that starts in heaven is the prayer that gets to heaven. We just close the gap. You see, that's the secret of praying in faith and I felt impressed to pray this way and also my heart was clean I'd just come out of a mighty revival and the Bible says if our heart condemn us not then have we confidence towards God. I was so thrilled. I was so excited. God was going to answer my prayer and I was going to have a marvelous sermon illustration on faith.

I saw my car coming. I leaned out the window and smiled a little just to help the Lord and do you know what happened? That car came and it slowed down and then suddenly it looked like he put his very foot in the carburetor and varoom right past he went. I could hardly believe my eyes. My heart sank. I was confused. I was frustrated because I had believed God. I knew I was trusting the Lord and I'd ask God for this and I said something then that almost sounds sacrilegious I know. I said, "Well never mind Lord I'll get the next one myself." And when the next car came by I put out my thumb and he went past and then the next and then the next. They weren't stopping for fella like me on a night like that so I finally just decided well I can't be here all night I'll walk and I got out and started to walk.

And I'd not gone very far just a few steps when a car came from the direction in which I was going. He shined his headlights on me and he said, "You need a ride don't you?" I said, "I certainly do." He said, "I came to get you." I said, "You want?" He said, "I came to get you." And then I looked at that car you, know which car it was don't you, it was at first car. He said, "I came by here before." I said, "Yes I know you did." He said, "I started to stop and pick you up." I said, "Well why didn't you stop?" He said, "I was afraid of you." I said, "More important than that I want to ask you a question. Why did you come back?" He said, "It beats me." He said, "I just got down to the crossroads and something"—that's the way he put it—"something told me I should come back and pick you up." Well that something was someone. I had trusted God and God had done

exactly what He said He would do when we trust Him. My five senses had told me that God had not done it but God still honored faith. I almost shouted. The only thing that kept me from shouting is I felt like kicking myself in the seat of the trousers for getting out and getting my head wet to begin with. Why didn't I just trust the Lord?

You know, it's so hard to trust the Lord is in it? I mean our eyes say God doesn't hear your prayer. Our ears say God doesn't hear your prayer. Our fingertips say God doesn't hear your prayer. Sometimes our nose, our tongue says that God doesn't hear your prayer but God is a prayer hearing God and God delights to hear the prayer of His children when His children pray in faith. Faith honors God, therefore, God honors faith. It is taking God at His Word. It is putting. It is putting your faith in the unseen God and His great eternal rock ribbed promises.

II. Why Does God Use Faith?

Now, secondly, why does God use faith? Why couldn't God just make us believe in Him? Well, of course, you know the answer is we would be automatons. If God wanted to God could convince us couldn't He? God could just lift the roof off of this auditorium and say, "Boo" and we'd all say, "I believe." I mean, if that's what the Lord wanted to do. He wouldn't have any trouble convincing us. It's not that God is so limited that He can't make us believe in Him but God wants something from man He can only get when man responds by faith. Men have always wanted God to prove Himself to them but God doesn't prove Himself that way. God just simply reveals Himself to the heart the response in faith.

Now you know in the Bible men said in Matthew chapter 16, "Give us a sign from heaven and we'll believe." That is, you do a trick with the stars and we'll believe, but Jesus gave them no sign. Even when Jesus Christ was on the cross they said, "Come down from the cross and we'll believe," but He would not do that. Jesus Christ refused to coerce men's minds. Jesus Christ wanted a response that He could only get by faith. Even when Jesus Christ would perform a miracle He would say don't tell anybody about it, just keep it quiet, I don't want that kind of followership.

Do you remember reading in the Bible when He asked people not to tell them about the miracles that He had performed? Why is this? Well, perhaps we could understand it if we put it on earthly plane. Every rich man has a problem. You say, "I'd like to see what it is." Well, every rich man has a problem so to speak. He has a lot of money and, therefore, he has these friends around him. Now he wonders how many of these are really my friends? For example, here's a rich millionaire who has a niece and nephew and when he comes to visit that niece and nephew who hope to share in the inheritance the niece says, "Uncle would you like another piece of pie? Here's a pillow for your back uncle." And he tells a story and the nephew laughs, he says, "Uncle you tell the funniest

stories,” and he just laughs. Well what uncle wants to know is would he get another piece of pie and would that nephew laugh at his corny ol’ stories if he made \$150 a week. That’s what he really wants to know. Do they really love me? Are they really enjoying my presence or are they just hoping to get some of what my money can do?

Now, I think God could bribe us if He wanted to. God could buy us if He wanted to. God could frighten us if He wanted to. But God wants a response that comes out of the heart and that response, ladies and gentlemen, is called faith. That’s the reason when Jesus Christ came into this world Jesus Christ laid aside all of the glorious beauty and might and majesty that was His, though He were rich He became poor for our sakes and He came down out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe born through the portals of a virgin’s womb, born in a smelly stable, raised in an obscure village and He refused to do any tricks to get anybody to believe in Him but there was something about Jesus Christ that caused the sincere heart to respond in faith. And when people loved Him, not for what He could do but for who He was, for the very essence, the very beauty of God that was in Him, then Jesus Christ reveal Himself back to these people. This is what God wants. The Bible says without faith it is impossible to please Him.

Now let me say something else, dear friend, about faith. Unbelief or lack of faith is not weakness it is wickedness. It is a terrible horrible sin. Sometimes people say, “Well you have faith and I don’t have faith and I can’t help it. It’s not my problem God just blessed you with faith and God didn’t bless me with faith and if God wants me to believe God will just have to make me believe.” No friend, if you don’t have faith it’s not God’s fault it is your fault. You say, “Well I have intellectual problems.” No you don’t that’s your excuse. You don’t have intellectual problems you have a moral problem. Your problem is not in your head your problems in your heart. It is not weakness it is wickedness. It is not that you cannot believe it is that you will not believe. If you want to believe, the Bible says God has dealt to every man the measure of faith and Christ is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And a man that wants to believe can believe and this is the reason the Bible says, “Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” He doesn’t say an empty head but an evil heart. Unbelief comes out of the heart.

I had this illustrated a while back. A man came into my office. You know, I preach down there at Merritt Island. Many people don’t know where Merritt Island is. It’s the Space Center. It’s the home of the Kennedy Space Center. Man literally goes to the moon from Merritt Island. I know some of you still don’t believe he’s done that but he has. He’s gone to the moon and he leaves from Merritt Island. Well, I had one of these big shots in the space industry come to my office, he brought his wife, and he said, “We need to counsel with you.” I said, “What’s the problem?” He said, “My wife wants to kill herself and I don’t want her to.” I said, “Oh.” And so we started to talk for a while and I

said, “Well, let me talk to you first,” and I talked to the wife for a while and then I found out why she wanted to kill herself. It was him and so I stopped talking to her and I said, “Now let me talk to you for a while.”

I said, “Are you a Christian?” “Oh no,” he said, “I’m not a Christian.” He said, “I just came in here because I thought perhaps you could talk her out of committing suicide.” I said, “You’re not a Christian.” “No,” he said, “I’m an atheist.” “Oh,” I said, “you are an atheist. Well you must be a very intelligent man.” He says, “Well what do you mean by that?” I said, “Well I suppose you know everything.” “Well,” he said, “No I don’t know everything.” He said, “I am well educated.” “Well,” I said, “What percent of knowledge do you think you have?”—or something to that effect I don’t remember the exact words— He said, “Well I don’t know. I know a few things. There are a lot of things I don’t know.” I said, “Well don’t you think there’s a possibility that God might exist outside your knowledge?” “Oh well,” he said, “I never thought of that. Well, what I mean then is,” he said, “I think there is no God.” I said, “Then you’re not an atheist you’re an agnostic.” He said, “Yes that’s what I am an agnostic.” I didn’t tell him the Latin equivalent for that is *ignoramus* I let that pass. But he said, “I am an agnostic. I’m just not sure whether there’s a God or not.”

“Now,” I said, “you’re a doubter. You don’t know whether there is or whether there isn’t. Now what I want to know sir is are you an honest doubter or dishonest doubter?” He said, “What do you mean by that?” I said, “You don’t know whether there’s a God or whether there isn’t but do you want to know?” He said, “I never thought about that.” I said, “Dear friend, that’s why you don’t know because you don’t want to know. The problem is not in your head it’s in your heart. You can’t find God for the same reason a thief can’t find a policeman. Jesus said, “Men hate the light and they will not come to the light because their deeds are evil.” And I read this man a passage of Scripture in John chapter 7, verse 17, Jesus made a promise, “If any man wants to do God’s will he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God.” That means if a man really wants to know he can know. If he doesn’t want to know, if he just wants to play intellectual gymnastics with God, God is not going to show that man anything. But a man who says, “Oh God I don’t know but I do want to know. Oh God I’m sincerely interested. Speak to my poor heart, reveal yourself to me,” I can promise you on the authority of this Book that God will reveal Himself to that man.

Unbelief is a terrible sin. The Bible says in Romans 14, verse 23: “For whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” The Bible says in John 16, verse 9, that the Holy Spirit has come into the world to convict men of sin “because they believe not”—not because they commit adultery or steal—but because they believe not. The Bible says in 1 John chapter 5, verse 10: “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.” This is a terrible wickedness of unbelief. It points the finger in the face of God and says, “Thou liest O God.”

Now, what can faith do? What can faith do in your heart? Well dear friend, whatever you need God is going to bless you when you believe. The Bible says, for example, "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing ye shall receive." Jesus Christ said again, "Therefore I say unto you whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." Friend, your needs are going to be met this morning by faith. You need to be saved? For by grace you are saved through faith. You need to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Galatians 3, verse 14: "That we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith." You need peace in your heart. Some of you are so worried and you know worry's a sin. It's just the opposite of faith. And you need peace and where are you going to get this peace? Not by trying harder, not by clenching your fists and gritting your teeth and knitting your brow. Isaiah 26, verse 3, says, "Thou will keep him in perfect peace who's mind is stayed on thee because he trusteth in thee."

Some of you are having problems. Some of you are trying to quit smoking cigarettes. Some of you are trying to quit reading salacious literature. Some of you are trying to get rid of that ol' vile mean temper and you try and the harder you try the more you fail. How are you going to live the life that God wants you to live? Well the Bible says in Act 26, verse 18, we are sanctified by faith. The Bible says in 1 John chapter 5, verse 4: "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." You need to help other people. You've got a neighbor that you can't win to Jesus. There's somebody that's having a terrific problem. Maybe it's a member of your family that's going the wrong way. Maybe you're having a problem with your son or your daughter and you say, "Oh God, what can I do?" I'll tell you one thing you can do. You can believe God for them. You say, "Brother Rogers, can we believe God for other people?" Not only can we but must we. Jesus Christ said to the father of that demon-possessed boy, not to the boy but to his father, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." And the father prayed a prayer that many of us ought to pray, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." God will start with you where you are and God will lead you to where you need to go. But I'm telling you anything that you need from God Almighty you'll get when you trust Him by prayer that believes Him.

Now, faith is the measure of accomplishment. The Bible says again in Matthew 9, verse 29, "according to your faith be it unto you." There's a parable. Some angels came up to the Father on the throne and said, "Father there's a mortal down on earth and he wants a blessing." And God the Father in the parable says, "And what did he send his faith up in?" And the angel says, "Well he sent his faith up in a thimble." And the Father in the parable says, "Well, fill the thimble with blessings and send it back to him." Then again some other angels came, six of them this time, carrying a great barrel, a huge hogshead if you will, and they said, "Father there's a mortal on earth who's seeking a blessing," and the Father says, "And what did he send his faith up in?" "Well he sent his

faith up in this barrel,” and God says, “Well fill the barrel with blessings and send it back to him.” Do you get the point? According to your faith be it unto you.

III. How Are We Going To Get This Kind of Faith?

Now let me just wrap this up and answer the third question that we want to ask this morning. How are we going to get this kind of faith? How are we going to have this kind of faith, this faith that can do whatever God can do? I want to give you five steps this morning to having earth shaking, mountain moving faith in God. They are very simple steps. I didn't think them up they are in the Word of God. I want to give you five things that will help you to have the kind of faith that will please God and that's the most important thing you had to do this morning is to please God and without faith it is impossible to please Him.

A. Make a Full Surrender to God

Number one, and this is the hardest place so I'll start number one, you must make a full surrender to God. 1 John 3, verse 21 says this, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” Now faith and sin are mutually opposing elements. Many people cannot pray in faith because their hearts condemn them. Have you ever had an argument with your wife and then tried to pray without making it right? I have. I felt so stupid trying to pray without first of all going to Joyce and saying, “All right Joyce I'm wrong, it was me, forgive me,” then the ways open to God, you see? But when our heart condemns us, when we know we're wrong, we can't pray with faith. Faith and sin just don't exist in the same heart. Make a full surrender to God.

You know, God has put certain orders in the Bible. For example, have you ever noticed that the Bible always says, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.” It never says peace and grace, why? Because grace always comes before peace, right? Have you ever noticed that the Bible always uses the term, “Believe and be baptized?” That's why I'm a Baptist. It doesn't say be baptized and believe. The Bible teaches believer's baptism. Believe first and then baptism that is God's order. Let me give you another one. It is repentance and faith, that is God's unbreakable order. If you're having trouble with faith, try repentance. So often it is sin that is the enemy in our lives that keeps us from having the faith in God that we ought to have. And so first of all, make this full surrender to God.

B. Get Into Your Bible

Secondly, get into your Bible. Start to saturate your soul with the Word of God. The Bible says in the book of Romans chapter 10, verse 17, “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Friend listen, there's something about this Book that produces faith in your heart when you read it. You know one of these days somebody's

gonna pick up this Book and read it and believe it and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves. It's not first and foremost a Book to be explained. The Bible is first and foremost a Book to be believed. Read the Bible, see the great and mighty promises of God. He says in this same book of Hebrews, "He hath said that we may boldly say." When God says something in His Word I can boldly say it because God has first said it.

You know, so many times we read the Bible like the Bible is a museum piece. We say, "Oh isn't that marvelous. Oh look at that promise. Oh there's a delightful promise," but we don't really assimilate it. We really don't take it. It's like a woman window-shopping. One man asked his wife, "Why do you call it shopping you never buy anything?" She said, "Why do you call it fishing you never catch anything?" And this is the way that some people go through the Bible. They just kind of look at it like an antique chair, beautiful but not meant to be set upon. Oh no friend, read, read and believe, these are your promises. Get in the book. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And you'll be rich in faith when you're rich in the Word and when you saturate your soul with God's blessed Book that I believe to be the inherent infallible Word of God without any error as God gave it in the original.

Now I want to say something else, pray. I told you these were not earthshaking things they're just simple down to earth things. If faith is a gift, and it is, then pray and ask God for it. You know what the disciples prayed. They prayed Lord increase our faith. Faith is mentioned as one of the gifts of the Spirit. Well if it's a gift ask God for it. Say, "Lord, increase my faith." Be like that man who prayed, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief," and if you pray that sincerely God will start with you where you are and take you where you want to go to.

C. Use the Faith You Already Have

Now the next step, if you would have this kind of a faith, is use the faith that you already have. You have some or you wouldn't be here this morning. Do you know what Jesus Christ said that faith is like? Jesus said faith is like a grain of mustard seed. Now no man can manufacture a mustard seed. A laboratory cannot build one that will grow. You see, a mustard seed is supernatural because it has a germ of life in it. It comes from God. Now you cannot manufacture it but you can plant it. God is saying I put a little faith in your hand, just a little—that grain of mustard seed is about like the speck of pepper that you put on your eggs this morning before you came—take it and plant it because in one mustard seed are thousands of mustard seeds. And God is not putting a premium on little faith when He says faith like a grain of mustard seed can remove a mountain, He's saying the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. That's what He's saying and He's saying faith is not something to hold in your hand, it's not something to put in your pocket, it's something to invest, it's something to plant.

Take the faith that you have, whatever it is, start now with little faith, use it exercise it, and your faith will grow.

D. Keep Your Eyes upon Jesus Christ

I must close but let me say there is one other step to faith and that's to keep your eyes upon Jesus Christ. Fall in love with Jesus. Look to Jesus. I'm talking about those of you who are already saved. The Bible says in the same book of Hebrews in the next chapter, chapter 12, verse 2, that we who are God's children are to be looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. You see, it's not really so much great faith in God that you need but faith in a great God. And isn't He a great God? Isn't He a wonderful Savior? Put your eyes on Jesus. You don't have to make yourself believe, look at Christ.

Suppose I wanted to cross the Mississippi River Bridge and I'm afraid it won't hold me up and so I sit there and I try to work up my confidence. I say, "Oh, I'm going to trust the bridge. Oh, I must do it." And I try to resolve and suddenly I just quit doing that because I look and here goes a semi-truck and here goes an automobile and all these things and I say, "What a marvelous bridge. It's built out of steel and concrete and all of these things. Look what it can do." Friend, He's a marvelous Savior. You put your eyes on Him. You see what He is doing, what He will do, and I'll tell you that that faith will be the by-product of looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Every head bowed, every eye closed, no one stirring, no one looking around. I don't know you and you don't know me very well but I want to ask you this question, how many in this great auditorium this morning can say, "Brother Rogers, I have received the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I know him. He has saved me. He has forgiven me. I have trusted Him by faith as my personal Savior. I am saved." Would you give me that testimony by an uplifted hand while heads are bowed and eyes are closed? Praise God. Thank you for that. Now take your hands down.

Still while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many here this morning would say, "Brother Rogers, I could not say definitely beyond a shadow of a doubt that I know that I am saved but I want to know it. I want to be saved. I want to exercise childlike faith in Jesus. I know that I need to. I'm concerned about my soul." While heads are bowed and eyes are closed this is between you and me and Jesus. How many here this morning would say, "Brother Rogers, pray for me. I need to know Christ as my personal Savior or I have a spiritual need in my life." Would you slip up your hand right where you are? God bless you. Yes, how many more? God bless you in the back. Yes I see you, many of you. I'll not embarrass you or point you out in any way; I just want to pray for

you. How many more say, “Yes, I need to be saved. I need Jesus.” Just slip up your hand right now where you are. We’re going to pray for you in a moment. All over the building, up in the balcony, hold it up high. Yes, God bless you sir. Yes, yes, God bless you. We’re going to pray for you.

Now how many here while heads are bowed and eyes are closed would say, “Brother Rogers, I am saved. I’ve exercised my faith in Jesus but I’m not a member of the Bellevue Baptist Church. I know God has a will about my church membership. Pray with me that as a Christian I might know and do the will of God concerning my church membership.” May I see your hands? Hold it up. Oh many of you. God bless you. I’m going to pray for you. How many more? You’d say, “I’m not saved but I need to be or I’m a member of a church and I am saved but I’m not sure about my church membership, pray for me.” Slip up your hand. Yes, okay.

Now let us pray. Father, we pray in Jesus’ wonderful name for these who’ve said they are not certain that they are saved. They want to be and Lord you want to save them. And Lord you said that they would be saved when they exercise childlike faith in you. You said believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Help them today O God in Jesus name to trust in you. And Father, bless these dear friends who are saved, who love you, whose church membership is elsewhere, these people who worship here, Lord lead them according to your will to become members of this great fellowship for we ask it in Jesus name and for His sake, amen.

Now look up here. In a moment we’re going to sing an invitation hymn and those whose duty it is to receive those who come will be standing here at the front. We’re going to sing hymn number 240, many of you know it by heart, and as we sing this hymn I want those of you who lifted your hand, those of you said yes I want Christ to save me, I’m going to ask you today to take the step of faith. Faith is not believing that Jesus can save you, that’s just head believe, faith is belief with legs on it. I’m going to ask you to do something about it. I’m going to ask you to step out and give your heart to Jesus. We have some trained counselors here at the front who want to pray with you and guide you in this decision. And in front of all of these people I want you to come openly, gladly, unashamedly bold to take your stand for Jesus Christ. Just leave your seat wherever you are. In the balcony come down these entrances, out there to the vestibule and then down here. Those of you who are saved and whose church membership is somewhere else and it ought to be here, I want you to come and transfer your church membership and lead the way for these precious people who will be coming to give their hearts to Jesus. Brother Lane you’ll come and lead us as we sing together hymn number 240, “Just as I Am.” That means not waiting on anything else you’ll calm and trust Jesus. Let stand together as he leads us.

Captain Noah and His Unsinkable Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 26, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:7

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

HEBREWS 11:7

Outline

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- I. The Warning That His Faith Believed
- II. The Work That His Faith Achieved
- III. The Wickedness That His Faith Perceived
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Conclusion

Introduction

Thank you, Rachel, for that beautiful song that reminds us that we're to serve the Lord God with all of our hearts. And that's a challenge to me today. Would you take God's Word and be finding Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7. We're talking today about Captain Noah and His Unsinkable Faith.

I cannot—I cannot—overemphasize the importance of faith. We meet one another in the hallways, and we say, “How are you feeling?” Perhaps we ought to be saying, “How are you faithing?” May I ask you that question today? How is your faith? What is the state of your faith? We're going to learn some wonderful things about faith in one short verse today. Hebrews chapter 11, and let's look in verses seven—look at it: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

Now, we're going to camp right there and tell you that I do believe, and I hope you believe, that the story of Noah and the ark is not myth. It is true history. As a matter of fact, historians tell us, archeologists and anthropologists tell us, in all of the great groupings of the world in ancient history, there is a flood story. Now, of course, the Bible

has it accurately, and other histories have been corrupted and mismanaged. But they all root in a literal fact. Proof that the flood literally existed is that Jesus believed it. Jesus said, in Matthew twenty-four, verse thirty-seven, “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.” If Jesus believed it, I have no difficulty believing in the flood, the time of Noah.

And to this generation, I want to say, we swagger at our technological advance, but someone has pointed out that that, while amateurs built the ark, professionals built the Titanic. That ought to tell us something. Now, Noah may have been an amateur in ark building, but he was certainly technologically advanced spiritually, as he trusted the Lord. There are some great, great ideas and truths about faith here in this chapter of Hebrews, chapter eleven and verse seven, as we’re talking about Champions of Faith.

There are four things I want to lay on your heart about Noah’s faith, and I pray God that they will buoy your faith, keep your faith afloat, help you to have an unsinkable faith in treacherous days, because that’s exactly what Noah had, and it made him a champion of faith.

I. The Warning That His Faith Believed

Now, the first thing I want you to notice is what I’m going to call the warning his faith believed—the warning his faith believed. Look in verse seven: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet.” Now, God warned Noah of the flood. But he had never seen a flood. Do you know what? Noah had never even seen rain. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter two. Just put it in your margin, or turn to it, if you can quickly, Genesis chapter two, verses five and six. It tells of the time before the flood. And it says, “And every plant of the field before it was in the earth and every herb of the field before it grew, for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.” Before the flood, it was not raining. It did not rain. The idea of rain was foreign to Noah’s mind, much less any kind of a flood. God watered the earth by springs, and by rivers, and by evaporation, and condensation and dew. And some Bible scholars believe that there was a great canopy over the earth that maintained a constant temperature like a giant greenhouse. And so, Noah is warned of God of something he has never ever seen before. It was a warning from the Word. He had the Word of God.

Now, again, I want to remind you of a verse that we will mention many times in our study on faith here in Hebrews chapter eleven. And it is Romans chapter ten, verse seventeen, which says, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Now, come up close, and I want to tell you something. Without a word from God, you cannot have faith. Now, did that sink in? As a matter of fact, if you write notes, write that

down. Without a word from God on a matter, you cannot, you have no basis, for a biblical faith. Faith is not a leap in the dark. It is a step into God's light. You must hear from God. We'll say it many times in this study: you do not name it and claim it. You believe it and receive it, because God has named it, and you claim it. Now, that's very important. You do not name it and claim it. You believe it and receive it, because God has named it, and you claim it. God does the naming. You do the claiming.

That brings us back to Hebrews chapter eleven and verse one, which describes faith: "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." I want to remind you one more time that the word "hope" here does not mean maybe, perhaps, or I wish. But hope means bedrock assurance. The Bible calls hope an anchor of the soul. Now, you don't put an anchor in the cloudbank. You think of it. Hope is an anchor of the soul. It is solid. And the word "substance" here—sub-stand: something beneath us that we can stand upon. Where do you get this assurance, this bedrock assurance, called hope? From the Word of God. God speaks.

Now, it's very interesting. You say, "Pastor, I cannot have faith like Noah had, unless I have a word from God. How does God communicate that word to me?" I'm glad you asked that question. Well, let me try to clear it up.

God communicates His word two ways. First of all, there is what we call the written Word. That's the word *logos*—*logos*. That's the 66 books of the Bible, the Word of God. Over and over again, the Bible is called the Word of God. That means the total revelation of God.

But there is another word that is translated word, and it is *rhema*—R-H-E-M-A—*rhema*. And this *rhema* means an utterance. That is, it's not merely the written Word, and I don't deprecate the written Word. I don't fail to appreciate the written Word, but you're going to find out that a *rhema* is a word from the Word, a word that God communicates personally to your heart, a personal word from God, a *rhema* from God.

Let me give you a verse where that word is used, and it is translated "word." Ephesians chapter six and verse seventeen: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the *rhema* of God." That's what Jesus did when Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Jesus took a word from the Word, used it as a sword, and said, "It is written, man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Take that, Satan. He used the Word as a sword. That's the sword of the Spirit, the *rhema* of God.

Don't get the idea that, you know, some people are so superstitious about the Bible. Have you ever seen a B-grade movie when a vampire is coming, and somebody gets a Bible, and says, "Back, back, back." Like, leather and paper and black print. No, no, no, no. The truth of the Bible is where faith comes from. And, when God takes the truth of the Bible, and makes that truth to you, when you get a personal word from the Word

that applies to you in a situation, God is speaking to you. Then, you're going to find faith engendered in your heart.

Did you know that God speaks today? God has His written Word once and for all, settled. But then, God speaks to your own personal heart. And, when God speaks to your heart personally, you have a *rhema* from God, that's when you find faith growing in your heart and in your life. Big, plain and straight: you have to hear from God in order to have faith. Romans 10:14 asks a good question. Put it down, and let me read it to you: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" That is, you have to hear in order to believe.

But let me sharpen the focus a little bit more. This verse, Romans 10:14, says, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" That's my translation. I'm reading today from the King James. But that can be sharpened. The New American Standard says, "How shall they believe in Him whom they've not heard?"

Now, listen. You say, "What's the difference, Pastor?" Listen to this. One says, "how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" And that's, of course, a possible translation. But it literally says, "how shall they believe in Him whom they've not heard?" You see, you hear God. In order to believe Him, you don't just hear about Him; you hear Him.

Now, I can preach Christ today, but if all you hear is Adrian, then, so what? You must hear God. Not that I'm God, but God takes His Word, and God will speak to your heart. You have a *rhema*, a word from the Word. God is speaking to you. That's the reason the apostle Paul said, in 2 Timothy chapter one and verse twelve, "I know whom I've believed." He didn't say, "I know in whom I have believed." I have believed Him. Faith is believing God. You must have faith that hears God.

Now, let me say this about this faith now that Noah had, the faith that he received. It resulted in fear. Look at it, in verse seven: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet"—he had never seen it rain—"moved with fear, prepared an ark." Do you see that? He was moved with fear. Now, some people say, "I don't believe in a religion based on fear." Bible religion is based on fear. Fear is the foundation of faith.

Now, do you know what is wrong with this generation today? May I tell you in a sentence: there is no fear of God in this generation. I'm going to read an extended passage of Scripture from Romans chapter three. I'm going to begin in verse ten, and I'm going to read through verse eighteen. And I want you to listen to this description that I'm going to read to you, and I want you to compare it with society today in America. Listen to it:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way,

they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known.” And now, verse eighteen: “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

All of the above is a description of a generation that does not fear God. Now, put this verse down—Jeremiah chapter two, verse nineteen: “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding shall reprove thee.” Now, God doesn’t have to judge us; we judge ourselves. Listen: “thine own wickedness shall correct thee and thine, thy backsliding shall reprove thee. Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

When Noah believed God, he feared God. Listen. Fear and faith are inseparably linked together. Fear sees God’s power, and God’s holiness, and God’s justice. Faith sees God’s lovingkindness, God’s grace, and God’s mercy. Therefore, the fear of God is not a cringing dread of God. It is love on its knees. I want to mention to you very quickly, because time is of an essence, I want to mention to you this morning nine things that the fear of God will do for you—nine things. I’m going to give you the scriptures very quickly. And here’s the lead scripture—Proverbs twenty-two, verse four: “By humility and fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life.”

Now, let me mention some of the riches, the honor, and the life that comes by fear. First of all, godly living. Proverbs 16:6, “By mercy and truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.” By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil. Therefore, godly living.

Number two: godly knowledge. Proverbs 1:7: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. But fools despise wisdom and destruction.”

Next, godly wisdom. Proverbs 9:10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

Next, godly contentment. Proverbs 15, verse 16: “Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.”

Next, godly worship. Psalm 5:7: “But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple.” This morning, we ought to be worshiping God in His fear.

Look, godly salvation comes through fear. Psalm 85, verse 9: “Surely His salvation is nigh unto them that fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land.”

And godly confidence is in the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 14, verse 26: “In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and His children shall have a place of refuge.”

Godly insight comes from the fear of the Lord. Psalm 25, verse 14: “The secret of

the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will show them His covenant.”

Godly deliverance comes from the fear of the Lord. Psalm 33, verses 18 and 19: “Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”

Now, in my study, I found many more verses that dealt with the amenities and felicities and the blessing of fear. Noah was a man of faith, because he feared the Lord. Listen to it again: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark.” The mark of a society on its last legs is when there is no fear of God. Now, God gave Noah a word of warning.

II. The Work That His Faith Achieved

But now here is the second thing I want you to see: not only the warning that his faith believed, but I want you to see the work that his faith achieved. Having heard from God, he got busy.

Now, look again in Hebrews 11, verse 7: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark.” He went to work. Now, the Bible teaches that faith without works is dead. James two, verse twenty: “But wilt thou not know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” God told Noah to build an ark, and Noah obeyed. The word “believed” comes from an old English word “by live.” What we really believe we live by. Now, don’t tell me that you have faith, if you do not obey. And you have to obey, even when you don’t understand. Noah had not seen a flood, but he had a word. And he obeyed. Warren Wiersbe, a great Bible teacher, said, “Faith is obeying God in spite of circumstances or consequences.”

Now, if you work without faith, that is presumption. If you have faith without work, that is pretense. Faith and work is power. Faith without works is dead. True faith is more than intellectual belief. It is belief with legs on it. It’s not what you eat; it’s what you digest, that makes you strong. It’s not what you gain; it’s what you save, that makes you rich. It’s not what you read, but what you remember, that makes you learned. It’s not what you preach, but what you practice, that makes you a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Noah was a man of faith, and, therefore, he prepared an ark. And he prepared an ark to the saving of his family.

Some of you are going to lose your children, because your faith is a mere intellectual faith, a mere doctrinal faith. It is not a practical living faith that is obeying God, and your children see the difference. Two men in the Bible who are contrasted in my mind—one is Noah, and the other is Lot.

Lot is one of the most miserable creatures in the Bible, and yet he was a saved man. You can read about Lot in Genesis chapter 19. Lot moved into Sodom, the most vile and wicked city on the face of the earth, and he pitched his tent toward Sodom, soon

became ingratiated with the people of Sodom, began to live in the fellowship of the Sodomites, got a place in the political office there in Sodom. God told Lot, and God warned Lot, as God had warned Noah. God said, "I'm going to destroy this place, Lot. Get your children. Get your family. Get out of here!" Just as God had warned Noah to get his family. The Bible says that Lot, this backslidden, miserable, so-called Christian, went and witnessed to his sons-in-law, and they laughed at him. They mocked him, because they had seen the way that he lived. He got his wife. The angel said, "Get your wife, and get out of here, and flee." Lot's wife was so filled with her love for that wicked, vile worldly city that she turned around and was destroyed, turned into a pillar of salt. He took his daughters up into the mountains, and there Lot became drunk and had an incestuous relationship with his daughters. Can you imagine that?

Lot had a saved soul, but he lost his family. I don't want to go to heaven without all my children and my grandchildren. Joyce and I make it a practice, as we did this morning to pray, O God, bless our children. We call them by name, morning and night, and say, O God, bless them. One time I prayed, and I said, some years ago, God, if any of my children are not saved—they're all professing Christians—but if any of them are not saved, O God, I want them saved. I had no reason to believe outwardly that any of them were not saved, but I didn't want them to have just second-hand religion. I prayed that week. That Sunday, when I preached, my darling daughter Gayle came down the aisle, and said, "Papa, Daddy, I'm not sure I'm saved. I want to be saved." Friend, I want all of my children in the ark. "Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his household."

Now, friend, listen to me. The religion that does not begin at home does not begin. Have you heard anybody say, "Well, you know, my loved ones are the hardest ones to witness to." You're not telling on them. You're telling on you. You know why they are the hardest ones to witness to? Because they know you. They know you. Many of us need to go and say, "Will you forgive me for the life that I have lived in front of you?" And then, don't even witness to them. Just say, "Will you forgive me? Just forgive me. I'm a Christian, but I have been a poor example." They'll be watching you for a while. They say, "Yeah, sure, I forgive you." Then, later on, you come back and say, "Would you forgive me for something else?" Well now, what do you want me to forgive you for? "I haven't shared with you the most important thing on earth to me. Would you forgive me for not sharing Jesus with you?" And just give you an open door to share the Lord Jesus Christ with your loved one.

Noah had faith, and that faith was there for the saving of his household. Put this verse down. There was a man filled with demons. Jesus healed him, and the man wanted to follow Jesus. But notice what Jesus said, in Mark chapter five, verse nineteen: "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends,

and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.”

III. The Wickedness That His Faith Perceived

Now, here’s a third thing I want you to see. I want you to see the wickedness that his faith perceived. Look at this verse again: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house”—now, watch this—“by the which he condemned the world.”

Here was a man that lived in a wicked society. Now, don’t tell me that you cannot have faith today because of the societal problems that we have today. Think of the ungodly world that Noah lived in. It was a day of secular philosophy. Genesis chapter 6, verses 5 and 6, tells us that there the imaginations, or the thoughts of man’s heart, were evil continually. And the word “imaginations” there doesn’t mean daydreams. It means philosophies. There was a secular philosophy, like on the campuses of today’s schools, and in the editorial pages of today’s newspapers. The days of Noah were days of secular philosophy.

The days of Noah were days of scientific progress. Now, don’t think they were plowing with sticks. How would you like to build a boat, a ship, about the proportion of an ocean liner that could withstand the most ferocious storm the world has ever known? They were building great cities in this day. Genesis chapter four, verse seventeen, says, “And Cain knew his wife and she conceived and bear Enoch, and he built a city”—built a city. I mean, not the people had houses. Here’s a man like Donald Trump—he built a city. We live in a day of scientific progress. I’m amazed at what we’re doing today. Today, we’re talking about cloning, and I’m going to be preaching a message on that in a while—genetic engineering. The vileness of the Internet—the Internet is a great tool, but it’s a dangerous thing. The pornographers are now talking about virtual reality on the Internet, and virtual adultery. What all that means is ominous.

They were days of social plagues. Notice in Genesis chapter six, verses eleven through thirteen: “The earth was filled with violence. All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth.” Think of the social plagues today. Think of the terrorism, think of the violence, think of the kidnappings, think of the skyjacking, think of the needless murders that stalk the streets here of Memphis, Tennessee, and yet Noah was a man of faith. He believed God in all of that. Think of the violence today against the unborn. I mentioned that last Sunday night.

Let me tell you something that ought to break your heart. Peter Singer has been installed as the first full-time professor of Bioethics at the University Center of Human Values of Princeton University. May I tell you that Princeton University was founded for the preaching of the gospel of the Jesus Christ. Now, here is Peter Singer. Let me tell

you what Peter Singer, now, this professor of Bioethics said: “Killing a disabled infant is not morally equivalent to killing a person.” Not the same. To kill an afflicted baby is not the same as killing a person. He goes on to say, “the life of such a newborn baby is of less value than the life of a pig, a dog, or a chimpanzee.” He says, and he’s the world best-known advocate of infanticide. He thinks that parents should be allowed twenty-eight days after the birth of a severely disabled baby to decide whether to kill it or not. He’s the founder of the animal rights movement. He has taught the idea that human life is sacred. Here’s a new word for you: “speciesism.” Like racism, if you think that a human being is superior to a dog or cat or antelope or a chimpanzee, you’re a speciesist. “Well,” you say, “that’s some looney tune.” Friend, that is a professor at Princeton. Days of social plagues.

Days of sexual perversion. Genesis six, verse five: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually.” Jesus linked the days of Noah with the days of Lot. Luke seventeen, verses twenty-six through thirty: “And as it was...”—these are the words of Jesus now—“And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark. And the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot. They did eat, they drank, they sold, they planted, they builded, but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”

Jesus said, “When I come again, the days of Noah and the days of Lot are going to be replicated.” For further information, consult any newspaper, or listen to any newscast. Are you listening? Do you know what Noah faced? Do you see the wickedness that Noah perceived? And yet, in all of this, Noah lived and he preached.

Now, people didn’t listen to him. But he preached. You don’t measure preaching success by numbers. Barnum and Bailey got a crowd. I’m grateful for the people that are here today, but sometimes Jesus preached crowds away. And I want to remind every preacher, it’s not your job to fill the auditorium. It’s your job to fill the pulpit. Preach the Word of God. Noah preached, and had somebody said, they would have said, “Well, Noah must not have been much of a preacher. Just had a handful of converts.” But he preached the Word of God.

Can you imagine what the newspapers would have said about Noah? Can you imagine what the pundits and the others, this man building this ship? I will guarantee you, if Noah had lived in our day, they would have called him bigoted, because he said there was only one way to be saved from the flood. Number two: they would have called him a fanatic, because he believed in the flood. And, number three: beyond a shadow of

any doubt or peradventure, they would have called him a fun-damned-mentalist. Sure, they would have. Can you imagine the political cartoons? They would have called Noah a calamity howler.

I wonder sometimes what the measurement of preaching is. I was preaching a revival crusade in a south Louisiana town, county seat town. It was pathetic. I preached my heart out. I fasted. I prayed. I wept. I searched my heart. I searched my Scriptures. I did everything I knew to do, but nothing was happening—like pouring water on a rock. And, finally, giving the invitation one night, and holding up my hands, and begging people to come to Christ, nothing happened. I said, “Pastor, you take the invitation. I just need to sit over here. You just go ahead.” And I just took my Bible. During the invitation, I went and sat down. I opened it. I said, “God, I’ve got to have a word. God, I don’t know what’s wrong. I’ve got to have a word, God.” And I opened my Bible and just put my finger on a verse, randomly, but I believe led of the Spirit. And I got a *rhema* from the *logos*. And God said, in Ezekiel chapter three and verse seven, “The house of Israel will not hearken unto thee for they will not hearken unto Me.” And I thought, O God, thank you for showing me this. He said the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee for they’ll not hearken unto Me. And God showed me in an instant, Adrian, they haven’t rejected you. They rejected Me. You’re My servant. The only reason they won’t hear you is they won’t hear Me. I said, “Lord, that’s such a good verse, give me another one.” And again, I put my finger down at random, and I tell you I almost came unglued when I read what it was. It was Ezekiel two, verse five: “And they, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, yet shall they know—yet shall they know—there hath been a prophet among them.” You think about it. God said, whether they hear or not, they will know there has been a prophet among them. That’s what it means when it says, “And Noah, when he preached, condemned them.” One of these days they’re going to have to give an account for that. Our generation also has been warned.

IV. The Wealth That His Faith Received

Now, here’s the final thing I want you to see. I want you to see the wealth that his faith received—the wealth that his faith received. Look at it again: “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became the heir of righteousness, of the righteousness which is by faith.”

What was his legacy? What was the wealth that his faith received? It was righteousness. He was made righteous in the sight of the Lord by faith. Remember chapter ten—Hebrews chapter ten: “The just shall live by faith.” We receive spiritual life when we receive Christ. How was Noah saved? Not by works, but by grace. Genesis chapter six and verse eight: “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” That’s the

first time grace is used in the Bible.

Think of all of the heartache, and the pain, and the difficulty Noah went through. Think of what it cost Noah to build that ark. I don't know where he got his resources. But I have an idea that he put everything into the ark. Maybe when Noah put that last nail in the ark, that was all he had. And he went into the ark a pauper. When he came out, he owned the earth. Remember what Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." When Noah went into the ark, he went in a minority. When he came out, he was the majority. Friend, we're on the winning side. But you have to see this by faith.

You see, the ark is also an illustration of salvation. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, a gigantic object lesson, Peter tells us in the New Testament. The ark is finished. Storm clouds begin to roil. The earth trembles. Great fissures open, water belches out. Rain comes down. But, just before that, God says, "Noah..."—Genesis 7:1—"Noah, come thou into the ark." God didn't say, "Noah, go into the ark." He said, "come into the ark." That means God was in there. I say to you, "Go into the foyer." It means, I'm in here; you go there. But, if I say to the people in the foyer, "Come into the auditorium," that means, come in here where we are. God said, "Noah, come into the ark."

And then, the Bible says that God shut the door. There was a window on top, a door on the side. Noah was in charge of the window, God in charge of the door. You see, I daily can look into the face of God, but I have been shut in to the Lord Jesus Christ. The ark was sealed on the inside and outside with a gluey substance called pitch. It's the same word translated atonement in the Old Testament. God put atonement on the outside, and God put atonement on the inside. And not one drop of water could come through.

Noah, come into the ark. It's a picture, dear friend, of what will happen when you come into Jesus. When you come into Jesus, God shuts the door. You're sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Not one drop of judgment can come to the child of God who is saved in Jesus.

Conclusion

We have a wonderful salvation. We have a wonderful Savior. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. May I ask you a question? Are you in the ark? I don't say, "Do you believe the ark?" Are you in the ark? Are you safe in Christ? Do you know, absolutely know, that you are saved, if you should die this moment, you'd go straight to heaven? May I guide you in this decision and help you to receive Christ. The door is open, and God is saying to you, Come, Come thou into the ark.

Would you pray this prayer: Dear God, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved.

Jesus, You shed Your blood on the cross to pay for my sin. I believe it. I receive it. Come into my life. Take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And I will live for You, Lord Jesus. Not in order to be saved—that's a gift; I will live for You because I am saved, because You have saved me by Your grace. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. In Your holy name I pray. Now, look up here.

Pastor Rogers, if I prayed that prayer, did Jesus save me? Well, repeating words don't save you. You mean it—you mean it. You say, Lord Jesus, I am trusting You. Well, Pastor, how can I tell if I meant it? Remember what I said? Faith without works is dead. Jesus said, if you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you. If you don't trust Him enough to openly acknowledge Him, you're not trusting Him. With the heart man believes unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. That's why I'm going to ask you to settle and seal it by coming forward this morning. If you really mean business—Lord Jesus, I am trusting You—I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. Standing across this auditorium at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister waiting to receive those of you who will be coming forward. If you're in the balcony, there will be a minister under that balcony that says "Redeemer" on my right, or the one up there that says "Messiah" to my left. You go to them.

Pastor Rogers, when I come this morning, what will I say when I go down there? Well, if you can sincerely say it, say this: I'm trusting Jesus. We'll rejoice, give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions, and seal it in prayer.

Now, there are many of you who are saved, who need a church home here today. Don't wait and wait and wait to do what you ought to do. To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin. If it's the right thing to—and it is the right thing to do—if you're a child of God, you need a church home. I want you to come. Say, I want to place my membership here. So, some are coming saying, I'm trusting Christ. Others are coming, I want to place my membership here. We'll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church, and I invite you to come.

Now, let's pray. Would you pray right now. Lord Jesus, help me now in this invitation. Help me, Lord Jesus to do what I ought to do. And give me the courage to do it. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Family Faith, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 10, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:7

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Introduction

Would you take the Word of God and turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7? This morning we talked from Hebrews chapter 11 about faith for the family, and we're talking about that again tonight. This is just more or less an addendum to the message this morning. And, this is the year of the family. We are talking about family faith this Sunday; next Sunday, we're going to be talking about family finances. And so, let's read here in Hebrews chapter 11, beginning in verse 7: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house"*—now, that doesn't mean the place he lived. He wasn't trying to save something with four walls and a roof. When it says *"to the saving of his house"* (Hebrews 11:7), it means *"his family"*—*"to the saving of his family"*—*"by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"* (Hebrews 11:7).

A. **The Titanic**

Everybody today is talking about the Titanic. I have not seen the movie, but I have done reading about the Titanic—much reading about the Titanic. It was called an unsinkable ship, and that’s about the only thing it ever did. It was a monstrous floating palace. It set sail on April the 10th, 1912. It was unequaled in lavish splendor. It had ballrooms. It had beauty salons. It had tennis courts. It had sauna baths. And, it has become a great object lesson that preachers have used and will continue to use, I guess, down through the ages until Jesus comes. Several things as I studied about the Titanic that interested me:

1. **The Confidence**

Number one was the confidence that those who sailed her had in that great ship—quotation: “Everybody knew that the ship was unsinkable.” That was one of the keynotes for luring passengers aboard this ship—that is was an unsinkable boat. And so, they boarded this luxurious White Star liner. Every sailor aboard confidently said that it could not sink. And, Bruce Ismay, the White Star Chairman, stated—and I quote: “I cannot imagine any condition that would cause the ship to founder. I cannot imagine any disaster happening to this vessel. Modern shipbuilding has come beyond that.” He said, “It just can’t happen.” And, it’s no wonder that one of the crewmen flippantly said, “Even God Himself could not sink this ship.” Hmm, well, here was a ship that sailed with great confidence, every assurance of safety, every available luxury. And so, this Titanic set sail.

2. **The Carefree Spirit**

But, not only was there this confidence—there was a carefree spirit. Those on board were having a party. A Mrs. Harris, who was one of those rescued, said—quote: “We were out on a lark. Revelry was the keynote. The weather was superb. The comfort and luxury aboard were all that had been promised. The days passed too quickly. I felt as if I could go on... I felt as if I could go on ’til the end of time.” So, here they are sailing an unsinkable ship, having a wonderful, wonderful time. And, those who were in charge repeatedly called out on watch, “All’s well, and the lights are burning brightly.”

3. **The Calamity**

Soon, however, the lights were about to go out on the Titanic. On the night of April the 14th, this swiftly gliding ship was the only movement on an ebony sea, and the stars were the only light in a cloudless sky; and the sea was very calm—sailing along having a party. Yes, confidence, carefreeness, and then suddenly, calamity. They struck an

iceberg, and they were not expecting, of course, to strike an iceberg. The crew had kept the Titanic at its regulated speed of 22 knots, but at 11:40 p.m., there was that fateful collision with that iceberg. And, in a matter of minutes, a 300-foot gash was ripped into one side of the indestructible ship. Now, for those of us who love the game of football, that's a gash the length of a football field. And, somebody said, "It is as if a giant finger were raked along the side of that ship." And, it opened one compartment, and then two compartments, and then three, and then four, and then five of the watertight compartments; and subsequently and consequently, they began to fill with water. No alarms were sounded, however, but gradually the news spread. Few, however, on board the ship, even after they'd struck the iceberg, seemed to be concerned. And, for those that were concerned, they were soothed with assurance that all that was needed was being taken care of, all that was needed to be done was being done—that assuaged their fear. They were told that danger was a fantasy; and so, the amusements resumed.

However, all was not well. And, at 12:45 a.m. a rocket was fired. It was to be the first of eight futile calls for assistance. Finally, they realized that the ship had to be abandoned. "Women and children first" was the call that went down through the corridors of the mighty sinking palace. By 1:30 a.m. in the morning, the dream cruise had turned into a nightmare. But, for many it was too late. There were over 2,000 aboard the Titanic and lifeboats for only about half that number. Some of the men even disguised themselves as women, that they might get aboard a lifeboat. And, those who were in the lifeboats circled the Titanic as loved ones might stand around a dying friend and as a family would stand and watch a loved one go over into eternity. They circled this mighty floating palace as she slithered into a watery grave. And, those who were in the lifeboats heard the calls of the survivors who were left struggling in that freezing sea, agonizing wails pleading for assistance, and those calls went unheeded because there was no more room in the lifeboats. The unthinkable had happened. The Titanic was sunk—nothing left but some desperate survivors.

The very name *Titanic* comes from the word *Titan*. The Titans were the gods of Greek mythology. They were to be the supreme gods of the universe. One thousand five hundred souls went to a watery grave. There were many classes aboard: those who were traveling luxury (first class); those who were traveling in other classes; and, of course, there were those who below, who were below in the steerage. But, after this calamity, all of those classes did not matter. There were only two classes—saved and lost.

Now, you know, in society, we have all kinds of classes, don't we? But, don't you have the idea that we're kind of on board the Titanic, and don't you have the idea that

we are on a collision course with destiny? And, don't you have an idea that after it's all over, there are only going to be two classes—and that will be the saved and the lost? I thought about that as I prepared this message on the good ship *Grace*—Captain Noah and his ship, the ark. What a difference there was between the sinking of the Titanic and Noah and the ark! I chose this story of Noah and the ark, which is a true story, because I wanted to say one more time of the importance of getting our children off the Titanic and onto the ark, getting our families into the ark of safety, so that we might do as Noah did and prepare an ark for the saving of our house.

I. The Faith of Noah

Having said that, do you notice several things about Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7? The very first thing I want you to notice is Noah's faith. Notice how it begins: "*By faith*"—"by faith"—"*Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, [and] prepared an ark to the saving of his house*" (Hebrews 11:7). Now, that's the same thing that we said this morning about the mother and father of Moses. How was young Moses reared? By faith. How are you going to raise a family in these days in which we live? There's only one way—by faith.

A. A Working Faith

And, it is a faith that is a working faith. "*By faith...Noah prepared an ark*" (Hebrews 11:7). Faith is not sitting around doing nothing, saying, "What will be, will be. I'm trusting God." Faith is belief with legs on it. Noah, because he had faith, he prepared an ark. It was a working faith.

B. A Waiting Faith

And, it was a waiting faith. For 120 years, he was building that ark with the wrath of God in the foreground and the ring of hammers in the background. The Bible says that he did this because he had been warned of God (Hebrews 11:7). That is, his faith, therefore, was based on the Word of God. For the Bible says that "*faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). It was a divine revelation that caused Noah to do what he did. That means that you will not have faith for your family until you hear from God.

C. A Faith that was Willing to Stand Alone

It was faith that was willing to stand alone. Noah was looked on as being strange, weird, eccentric, out of step with everybody else; and precious friend, so will you. Now, don't try to fit in. Noah was different; you must be different. You must stand alone.

D. A Faith that Did Not Depend Upon Appearances

It was faith that did not depend upon appearances. There was no reason to believe there would be a flood from appearances. So far as we can tell, it had never even rained upon the earth. There was a mist that went up and watered the earth (Genesis 2:6). There had never been a universal calamity. There was nothing to suggest a flood—nothing but clear skies, nothing but people, according to Jesus, who were buying and selling and marrying and giving in marriage (Matthew 24:38). Everything was splendid, just as it was on the Titanic. But, the Bible says Noah was different. Noah had faith.

II. The Fear of Noah

Now, here's the second thing I want you to notice—not only the faith of Noah, but I want you to notice the fear of Noah—Noah and his fear—because the Bible says Noah was “warned of God” (Hebrews 11:7). Do you see that? And, he was “moved with fear” (Hebrews 11:7).

Now, this morning, we told you that there were two parents who were not afraid: Amram was not afraid of the king's commandment; Jochebed was not afraid of the king's commandment. And, correspondingly, young Moses was not afraid to turn his back on Pharaoh. But now, the Bible says that Noah was “moved with fear” (Hebrews 11:7). Two kinds of fear—there's the fear of the world, and there's the fear of God. Amram and Jochebed had no fear of this world, and do you know why? They had the fear of God. That's the fear of God that we're talking about now. Noah was “warned of God” (Hebrews 11:7). And, when we say “the fear of God,” that's the beginning of wisdom (Psalm 111:10).

Now, listen to me, precious friend—the fear of God does not mean that we are shocked, dismayed, overwhelmed by the thought of God. *The fear of God is love on its knees*. It understands that our God is an awesome God—our God is a holy God. Now, I hear people say that they don't believe in religion based on fear. Well, I do—I do. Those people, by the way, are, are hypocrites. We live our lives based on fear every day. We fear starvation so we eat. We fear catching a cold so we wear overcoats. We fear those who will break and enter our homes so we lock our doors. We fear being hit by a car so we look both ways when we cross the street. We exercise self-preservation every day in 100 different ways, but the greatest danger that men can face is the wrath of God against our sin and unbelief. And, therefore, any man is wise to be moved with fear to get right with God.

Let me give you a scripture. Jesus said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul”—that is, “Don't you fear the Pharaohs of this world”—“but rather

fear him which is able to destroy both [body] and [soul] in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Don't fear the people of this world; fear Almighty God. The supreme danger is to stand before God unpardoned, un-forgiven, and un-cleansed. And, I had rather frighten people into Heaven than lull them into Hell. Had you not? There is something to be warned about. Noah was moved with fear. Somewhere in years back, I read of some sailors who asked a chaplain, "Chaplain, do you believe in Hell?" He said, "Yes, I do. Why did you ask?" They said, "Simply this—if there is a Hell and you don't believe in it, we don't want you for a chaplain; and if there is no Hell, we need no chaplain." No, Noah was moved with fear.

III. The Foresight of Noah

Now, here's the third thing I want you to notice—not only Noah and his faith, and Noah and his fear, but I want you to notice Noah and his foresight. The Bible says he was "*moved with fear*"; and therefore, he "*prepared an ark*" (Hebrews 11:7). Noah did not wait until it began to rain before he prepared an ark. He did not wait until it began to rain in order to get ready. He had some foresight. He made preparations.

I may have told you about a time I was driving my automobile, going down a main street, and a car shot out of the side street. There was a stop street. The man never even slowed down. I saw him coming, I hit the brakes on my automobile. Finally, he saw me. He hit his brakes, and we both began to spin just like that—just spinning around. And, it so happened that when our automobiles stopped mine was pointing this way, and his was pointing that way, and our windows were about that far apart. I'm looking into his face, and he is looking into mine. And, he said to me, "Where in the blankety-blank-blank did you come from?" I started to say, "West Palm Beach." That's where I was born. "Where in the blankety-blank-blank did you come from?" I said, "Well, I was just coming down the street, sir." I said, "You ran a stop sign, but," I said, "thank God neither of us was hurt." But, I said, "You know, mister—you were seconds away from eternity; so was I." But, I said, "I would hate to meet God with that kind of language in my heart. I would hate to meet God with that kind of blasphemy in my heart." Do you know what he said? He said, "Well, I'll take care of that when I get there." Friend, he will not—he won't take care of it when he gets there. I mean, you can't prepare when you get there—you can't prepare. When it begins to rain, you can't build the ark. The Bible says that Noah "*prepared [this] ark to the saving of his [household]*" (Hebrews 11:7).

Now, we have a generation today, however, that makes no preparation. What did Jesus say would be the marks of the last days? He said in Matthew chapter 24: "But as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man" (Matthew 24:30). They were marrying, giving in marriage, eating and drinking, and they

knew not until the flood and took them all away (Matthew 24:38–39).

A. The Three Marks of Noah's Day

What were the three marks of Noah's day? Well, the same three marks of our day:

1. Indifference

Number one: indifference—eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage (Matthew 24:38). Nothing wrong with those things, but the idea is that life is just going on—eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage (Matthew 24:38).

2. Immorality

And then, the second mark was immorality. The way that they were living was a stench in the nostrils of God. Genesis chapter 6 tells us that (Genesis 6).

3. Ignorance

And, the third mark was ignorance: *“They knew not until the flood came, and took them all away”* (Matthew 24:39). Those are the classic three marks of our generation today—indifference, immorality, and ignorance. However, Noah went against the tide. He *“prepared an ark to the saving of his house”* (Hebrews 11:7).

IV. The Family of Noah

Now, here's the next thing I want you to notice—not only Noah and his foresight, but I want you to notice Noah and his family. Noah *“prepared an ark [for] the saving of his house”* (Hebrews 11:7). Now, the Bible teaches household faith.

Let me give you some verses. Just open, if you will please, to these verses that I've jotted down. Acts chapter 11—just put your bookmark there in Hebrews chapter 11, and turn to Acts chapter 11 with me. Let me show you something—why I believe this is such an important verse for what we are about this year, the year of the family. Acts chapter 11, beginning in verse 13: and Peter here is talking about his vision, and he says, *“And he shewed us how he”—*that is, Cornelius—*“had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved”* (Acts 11:13–14). Just underscore that. “You, Cornelius, and all your house. Cornelius, we don't want you to go to Heaven and leave your family behind.”

And then, look, if you will, in Acts chapter 16. Just fast-forward there just a little bit and look, if you will, in verse 15: it talks about a certain woman whose name was Lydia, and the Bible says, *“And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us”* (Acts 16:15). Now, it's an important thing that when Lydia got saved, the very first thing she did was to share her faith with those who were

in her household.

Now, turn to Acts chapter 16 and look in verse 30 at the Philippian jailer, if you would: and he had asked Paul and Silas, *“What must I do to be saved? And they said”*—verse 31—*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house”* (Acts 16:30–32). And, look in verse 34: *“And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all [of] his house”*—*“with all [of] his house”* (Acts 16:34).

Now, Noah *“prepared an ark to the saving of his house”* (Hebrews 11:7)—not his domicile, not the place where he lived, but his family. Now, we want everybody saved; but folks, I want all my family going to Heaven. The Bible teaches a household faith. That doesn’t mean that you can believe for your children, but it certainly means that you need to have some foresight, you need to make some preparation, you need to say, “I want all my family to be aboard the ark of safety.” I cannot even imagine the thought of being in Heaven without my children, without my grandchildren. I want them to know the Lord. That’s the reason I’ve questioned each of them so carefully, dealt with them so prayerfully, that they might come to know the Lord Jesus. And, I would sit down and talk with each of my grandchildren, face to face, heart to heart, as their parents have done about faith in the Lord Jesus.

I can remember one time, many years ago, I was praying, and I said, “Lord, if any of my children who have made a profession of faith are not saved—O God, please, if they just are members of the church but they are not truly saved—O God, speak to their heart.” I told nobody about the prayer, but the next Sunday my precious daughter, Gail, came down the aisle and said, “Daddy, I’m not sure I’ve really been saved. I want to be saved—I want to be saved.” I thank God for that. We need to be concerned about our children, that they are all upon that ark. Parents, can you imagine a little boy in Noah’s time who would come home to his dad and say, “Daddy, there’s a man over here. His name is Noah. He’s building a great big ship because he said God’s going to send a flood and destroy the world.” Can you imagine that man saying, “Son, don’t worry about that. Old Noah is just a religious fanatic. He’s an old fool. He’s been building that boat now for more than 100 years. No flood has come. As a matter of fact, Son, it’s almost humorous. When I was a little boy I went out and saw old Noah building that boat, and I came to my dad and asked my dad about it, and Son, you won’t believe this, but my dad said the same thing had happened to him. He had talked to his dad about it. Son, from generation to generation, there have always been religious fanatics. We live in one of the finest neighborhoods here. You’re going to one of the finest schools here. Son, your daddy loves you. Don’t you worry about being aboard any so-called *ark*. Don’t you worry

about those fundamentalist believers—just don't worry about that. Everything is going to be all right, Son." Mister, it would be bad enough for you to go to Hell, but for you to take your children with you—how sad that would be! The Bible says that Noah *"prepared an ark to the saving of his house"* (Hebrews 11:7). So, think with me just a little bit about Noah and his family: he got his family into the ark.

V. The Fortune of Noah

The last thing I would have you to think about is not only Noah and his family, but Noah and his fortune. Look at it here, now, again in verse 7. Go back to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7, and the Bible speaks of the fortune that this man had because he obeyed the Lord. The Bible says he *"prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness, which is by faith"* (Hebrews 11:7). That's his fortune—that's his fortune.

Now, he had more than that fortune. Actually, he had a great fortune in other ways. You see, while other people were buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, and going on about taking care of feathering their own nest, Noah was building the ark. Perhaps Noah put everything that he had into building of that ark, because evidently it was a costly project. And, maybe when the last nail was driven into that ark, Noah was bankrupt. God said, "Noah, come thou and thy family into the ark" (Genesis 7:1). And, Noah and his family went into that ark. And, he'd put everything into the ark and went into the ark. According to this world, a pauper—but friend, when he came out of the ark, he owned the world. The Bible says, *"The meek shall inherit the earth"* (Psalm 37:11). When he went into the ark, he was a minority; but when he came out, he was a majority. And, I just love to think about this.

But, the great thing is not necessarily the real estate that he had. The main thing is this—that he was an heir of righteousness (Hebrews 11:7). The things that really mattered to Noah he gained by faith. And so, what is the message here? *The message is there's a ship that we're all familiar with—the Titanic. I have an idea that there are a lot of people who are on board the Titanic right now, and they are saying, "All is well, and the lights are burning brightly." But, I have an idea there are some other people who are on the good ship Grace and have put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—and truly, all is well. Are you on board? Is your family on board? The gangplank is faith. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you'll] be saved"* (Acts 16:31).

Conclusion

Will you bow your heads in prayer? Every head bowed, and every eye closed. How many tonight can say, "Pastor Rogers, I'm on board the good ship *Grace*. I have

received Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. And, that ark is a picture of Jesus, and I am in Jesus, the ark of safety. I know that I know by the grace of God that I'm Heaven-born and I'm Heaven-bound"? If you can give me that testimony, would you lift your hand? Just hold it up. Oh, that's so many of us. Take your hand down.

Now, if you could not lift your hand, let me help you for a moment. You might say, "Pastor, I'm not certain that I'm saved, but I want to be. If I man can be saved, if a man can know—if a woman can be saved, and if they can know—I want to know. I don't want to go through the wrath of God. I don't want to face the floodwaters of God's wrath without an ark of safety. I want to be saved." If you feel that way, let me just guide you in a prayer.

Would you pray this way? "Lord Jesus, I know that You are the Son of God. I know that You died for my sins—You paid for my sins with Your blood on the cross. I know that God raised You from the dead. You promised to save me if I would trust You. Right now, on this Sunday night, in Bellevue Baptist Church, I trust You to save me—right in this seat, right now with all of my heart. I don't look for a feeling; I don't ask for a sign. I stand upon Your Word. You promised to save me if I would receive You and trust You, and I do. By an act of my will, as You have enabled me to do it, I choose You as my Lord and Savior. I trust You to save me. I now belong to You. You are now my Lord, my Savior, my Master, and my friend. I turn to You, and I turn from all I know to be wrong; and I give You my heart forever and ever. And, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You and I will follow You by your grace and for Your glory wherever you lead me. And, Lord Jesus, I'll not be ashamed of You. I'll not try to hide the fact that I've given my heart to You, but I will make it public if You'll only help me. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Noah's Ark and the Titanic

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 29, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:7

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

HEBREWS 11:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. Noah and His Faith
- II. Noah and His Fear
- III. Noah and His Foresight
- IV. Noah and His Fortune
 - A. Substance of the Ship
 - B. Shape of the Ship
 - C. Safety of the Shop
 - D. Size of the Ship

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word tonight—please—and open to Hebrews chapter eleven and we're going to look primarily at verse seven. Hebrews chapter eleven and verse seven. The title of our message tonight is The Titanic and Noah's Ark. We read here in Hebrews chapter eleven and verse seven, *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7).

I think all of us have been amazed and interested—if we're interested at all in that type of thing—in the discovery of the grave of the mighty ocean liner, the Titanic. Some two and a half miles beneath the ocean's surface—thirteen thousand feet down—they have—with a very brilliantly contrived device—photographed that ship, the mighty Titanic. It lies in an area on the ocean floor that resembles the Swiss Alps. It is laying on mountains that deep in the bosom of the ocean. As I told you this morning they said, “The ship was unsinkable” and that's about the only thing that it ever did. It was a

monstrous floating palace. It set sail on April the tenth, nineteen twelve. Anybody here was alive at that time, let see your hand? Few folks here were alive in nineteen twelve, I'm sure you don't remember much about it, but this ship was unequaled in lavished splendor. Everything you can imagine that would bring pleasure to the human heart, mind, and soul was on this ship. They had ballrooms, not one, but many. They had barbershops, beauty salons, tennis courts, and sauna baths on board. And, the sinking of the Titanic is a great object lesson for this day and age.

Now, they were very confident in the ability of that ship to stay afloat. As a matter of fact—the keynote—the thing that they kept saying about this ship back in nineteen twelve was that it was unsinkable. Everybody knew that it was unsinkable. As a matter of fact a sailor confidently said that, “It would not sink” and one sailor said flippantly, “Even God himself could not sink this ship.” And, the chairman of the White Star Company, Bruce Ismay, said this and I'm quoting, *“I cannot imagine any condition which would cause a ship to flounder. I cannot conceive of any vital disaster happening to this vessel. Modern ship building has gone beyond that.”*

And, so they had every assurance of safety and every available luxury. They set sail on April tenth and they were ready for a time of carefree self-indulgence. One of the survivors whose name was Mrs. Harris said and I want to quote her. “We were out on a lark and revelry was the keynote. The weather, it was superb. The comfort and the luxury aboard were all that had been promised,” and she said, “The days passed too quickly. I felt as if I could go on till the end of time. And, there were some people on board whose job it was to keep watch. And, like the old watchmen in the tower, they had a phrase that they would give. And, this is what the watchman said that night and I quote, ‘All's well and the lights are burning brightly. All is well and the lights are burning brightly.’ But, soon, however, those lights would go out because on the night of April the fourteenth that swiftly gliding ship was the only visible movement on that ebony sea. The sea was slick as glass. It was a brilliant night. And, the stars were shining like candelabra there in the cloudless sky and everything seemed to be exactly as they would have wanted it, as they planned it.

They were satisfied with their apparent safety and because they saw no apparent danger in spite of the icebergs the Captain Smith knew about they kept the ship at its regulated speed of twenty-two knots. She's gliding through the water and at eleven forty p.m. she struck. She rammed an iceberg. And, in a matter of just a few minutes a three hundred foot gash was drawn along the side of the Titanic. And, it ripped into the superstructure of this seemingly unsinkable ship. She was built with watertight compartments. One of those compartments was ripped open. Another of those compartments was ripped open. Another of those compartments was ripped and another and yet another. Five of them were ripped open in succession. Engineers say if

four had been ripped open and not five perhaps she would have stayed afloat.

There was another lady on there, Mrs. Cosmo Duff Gordon. As she described it—she was one of the survivors—she said, “It felt as though someone had drawn a giant finger along the side of that ship. Now, no alarms were sounded however, but gradually the news spread. People felt the ship as it was jostled. They felt the iceberg touch but it was such a big ship that no one was violently thrown about. For the people who heard that they'd struck an iceberg a soothing word was given to them that everything would be taken care of and indeed the ship was unsinkable. And, so even after hitting the iceberg they all went back to their luxury. They went back to their dancing. They went back to their play. They went back to their fantasy. They went back to their amusements.

Now, that was at eleven forty, but then the captain began to get reports of disaster below and so at twelve forty five he fired a rocket into the sky for assistance. No one seemingly saw that rocket or if they did they did not respond. It was the first of eight futile calls that would be sent out for assistance. Finally, the unthinkable dawned upon them, the ship needed to be abandoned. The ship was going down and the cry went out as it use to be and I suppose perhaps still would be on the high seas, women and children first. Of course that was back before women had been liberated. Women and children first and this call echoed through the corridors of that mighty sinking palace. And, by eleven thirty a.m. that dream cruise had turned into a nightmare, but for many it was too late. There were over two thousand people on board that ship”—you want to know about many were on board, just about how many that are in this congregation tonight. There were on board two thousand precious souls—“But, there were only lifeboats for about half that many. And, so people crowded into the lifeboats and there was a lot of rudeness, a lot of pushing, a lot of shoving, and a lot of heroism. Some men however even disguised themselves as women in order to get on the lifeboats. And, the lifeboats that were there pushed out and encircled that dying vessel like a family gathering around a loved one who is dying. And, they watched in stunned disbelief as that ship shuttered and heaved exploded in the midst and slithered down into its watery grave. And, those who were in the lifeboats as they pulled at the oars they heard the calls of the survivors who were left struggling in the sea. There were agonizing whales and pleading for assistance, but there was nothing they could do. The lifeboats were already overcrowded. The impossible had happened, the Titanic had sunk and nothing was left but a few desperate survivors.”

It's very interesting, the name of that ship, it was called the Titanic. It was named after the pagan Gods—the titans and the titans—pagan gods of mythology were to have been the supreme rulers of the universe. The great supreme gods of the universe, the mighty titans, but the titanic went to the bottom. What a parallel—excuse me—what if

we could say a proverb, what a story, what a reminder, what a stark contrast with the story of Captain Noah and the good ship grace.

The first time grace is used in the Bible it is used in conjunction with Noah and his ark. The Bible says, *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”* (Genesis 6:8). Let's go back—in the sight of God—and look at our scripture now and see what the Bible says about Noah having looked at the Titanic. I want you to see the stark contrast in Hebrews chapter eleven and verse seven, *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7).

I. Noah and His Faith

Notice the faith of Noah. The Bible says, “That Noah built the ark by faith” (Hebrews 11:7). Now, I want to say several things about the faith of Noah. We need to learn this. First of all his faith was a working faith. By faith he did something. When somebody tells me he has faith but he doesn't know anything about it, doesn't do anything about it, doesn't live by what he professes then he doesn't have Bible faith. The Bible says, *“...faith without works is dead”* (James 2:20). Noah had faith and because he had faith he built an ark. His faith was a working faith and his faith was rooted in The Word of God.

Look at it again, *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet...”* (Hebrews 11:7). He had a word from God. Noah's faith was based on divine revelation. I believe with my heart that the Bible is the divinely inspired, supernaturally preserved, and the absolute basic requirement of your faith. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by The Word of God. It was a working faith, it was a word-based faith, and it was a waiting faith because he had not seen the things that he was preparing for. As a matter of fact, he waited for over a century before the flood came. For a hundred and twenty years Noah prepared and Noah waited because faith can wait.

One of the men of more modern times—who was a man of faith—was named George Muller of Bristol, England. I've talked to you about Muller from time to time. I've asked you to get the biography of George Mueller and read it because of his mighty faith. And, you know I would read stories about Mueller and I would see how Mueller would pray for something one day and God would give it to him the next day. Or he'd pray for it in the morning and he'd get it in the afternoon. And, I'd think oh, how wonderful it would be to have that kind of faith, to could get immediately what I need to be able to just ask God for it and he would supply it right away.

But, then I read something about Mueller's life that I want to share with you. He was speaking one time in Chicago and he said this. He said and I quote, “I have prayed for

two men by name every day for thirty five years.” He went on to say, “Whether I've been on land or sea, whether I have been sick or well. I have remembered them before God by name requesting their salvation. They are both living and neither of them is saved. I shall continue to pray for them daily by name until they are saved.” Do you know who those two men were? They were his own brothers. Now, he said that in Chicago and he said, “I've been praying for thirty five years.” Twenty-seven years after that he was still praying for those two men. He prayed for his brothers for sixty-two years and God answered his prayer and both of those men came to Jesus Christ. I think of Mueller waiting on God, eating on God, and refusing to let God go until God heard his prayer.

I think of Noah's faith. Noah's faith was a working faith. He built an ark. It was a word faith. He had a word from God. It was a waiting faith. It was a faith that could stand alone. Ladies and gentleman, the more I see what is happening in the world today the more I realize that those of us who love God are going to be in the minority and we're going to have to stand alone. Our Lord is now rejected and by the world disowned and by many still neglected and by the few enthroned and Noah was in a minority, but he continued to believe God. He didn't depend upon appearances. It didn't matter what things looked like.

Now, I want to remind you that when God said, “Noah, it's going to rain,” Noah might have said, “Lord, what's that?” As far as we can tell it had never rained on the earth until this time. The Bible says, “*But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground*” (Genesis 2:6). There's no evidence whatever about anything called rain. There was nothing to suggest that a flood was coming. The skies were clear. The Bible says, “it was a time of normal activity.” Men were buying and selling and marrying and giving in marriage. Noah, if he'd been like so many of us would have said, “Lord, can I wait until the clouds begin to gather?” And, God said, “no, just trust me, not seeing is believing.” Believing is seeing. Noah and his faith, look at it again in verse seven, “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet...*” (Hebrews 11:7).

II. Noah and His Fear

The second thing I want you to see is Noah and his fear. He was moved with fear. Now, there are people who think that fear is not a good motivation, but the Bible teaches that fear is a good motivation. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...*” (Psalm 111:10). That means a man doesn't have a modicum scintilla of wisdom if he doesn't fear God. There's no contradiction between fearing God and loving God. As a matter of fact, the one who fears God the most loves him the best and all the fear of God is love on its knees, but Noah was moved with fear. He believed that God meant what he said and so he prepared an ark.

Now, there are people who tell us, “Don't use fear as a motivation.” That's ridiculous. And, those people up there on the coast of North Carolina used fear as a motivation when they told the people to get inland and get away from that coming storm and to board up their possessions. The doctor uses fear as a motivation when he tells us not to inject certain things into our bodies that it will harm us. The traffic expert uses fear as a motivation when he tells about the horrible carnage on the highways and to drive safely. Listen friend, Jesus said, *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matthew 10:28).

Now, there is a danger, let me tell you what the supreme danger is. The supreme danger is to stand before God unpardoned, unforgiven, and uncleansed. And, with death constantly going about in the streets and none of us knowing when we are going to die ought to be moved with fear. And, I think the one thing that's wrong in America today is that we have no longer have the fear of God. God is mocked, slandered, blasphemed, ridiculed, the object, and the but of jokes. We laugh at holy things today. And, I tell you what we need today is a generation of preachers like Noah who will stand up and preach the wrath of God, the coming judgment of God. I had rather frighten you into heaven than to lull you into hell.

III. Noah and His Foresight

Now, the third thing I want you to see, not only Noah and his faith, not only Noah and his fear, but I want you to see Noah and his foresight. Now, notice what happened. The Bible says, *“...moved with fear, prepared an ark...”* (Hebrews 11:7). That is, he made preparation. Noah did not wait until it started to rain in order to get ready because you see, it would have been too late at that time. Now, the people of Noah's day had no foresight. Noah had forecast the coming flood because God had told it to him. Noah is building the ark, but Jesus said, *“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matthew 24:37). They were eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage until the day of the flood came. That is, there was a time of indifference. There was no foresight. There was no preparation, but Noah made preparation.

Now, have you made preparation? Friend, when the flood of God's wrath comes upon this world it'll be too late then. God destroyed the world the first time by water, the second time by fire, but when these events begin to transpire it'll be too late for you to cry out and say, “God have mercy.”

You see, Noah's generation was warned. Do you know how Noah's generation was warned? God spoke to Noah directly, but Noah wasn't the only one. God gave Enoch a son. Enoch's son was named Methuselah and the name Methuselah means “when he is

gone it shall be sent.” Methuselah lived nine hundred and sixty nine years. He lived longer than any man ever lived. “When he is gone it shall be sent.” What shall be sent? The flood. I can take the Bible and show you that the flood came the year Methuselah died. God in his longsuffering, that's the reason the flood was so long in coming, a hundred and twenty years because God in his patience was waiting for people to be saved and hoping that people would repent of their sin and give their hearts to him. But, finally God's patience and God's love turned to justice. And, even now the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of God's mercy.

Now, if you'll think about it and if you'll get out your Bible chronology and study it you'll find out that Methuselah and Adam were contemporaries. Methuselah and Adam lived on this earth together for two hundred years. That is the people in Noah's time heard about the Garden of Eden, they heard about the expulsion from Eden, they heard about the coats of skin, they knew the way of salvation, and they knew the things of God and Noah himself a preacher of God made preparation, there was a foresight.

IV. Noah and His Fortune

Now, I want you to notice something else. I want you to notice Noah and his fortune. Continue to read, look at it. The Bible said, “...*prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith*” (Hebrews 11:7). Now, Noah built that ark. It took Noah many years to build the ark, much time to build the ark, much labor to build the ark, and much money to build the ark. You think of it, all of the time that Noah was building that ark other people were investing. They were buying and selling, and marrying and giving in marriage. Noah was putting everything that he had into the ark and they were putting everything that they had into the things of this world. And, everybody who looked at Noah would have said, “Look how poor Noah's getting, look how rich we're getting, what a bad bargain Noah is making.” But, I want you to notice what the Bible says, “...*became heir of the righteousness...*” (Hebrews 11:7). Everything that Noah put into that ark Noah got back with multiplied interest. Everything that these men laid up for themselves they lost in that flood. And, when the flood came there was not even enough money there to buy them a raft. It would have done them no good had they had it. And, all the so-called real estate was like the real estate in Florida. They sold back during the boom time and it eventually was under water. They lost it all. And, yet on the other hand Noah gave up all that he had that he might devote himself to the building of the ark and he received abundantly more.

Now, I want you to think about it. When Noah stepped off of that ark the whole world was before him. I mean, it all belonged to Noah and to his family. He was the heir of righteousness and the Bible says correspondingly to us that “...*the meek: for they shall*

inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Now, that ark that Noah was on was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm quite sure about this. I'm not trying to make the Bible say things it doesn't want to say. Simon Peter himself told us in his epistle that that ark was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The ark is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Substance of the Ship

If you'll think, dear friend, about the substance of the ark, it was made of gopher wood. It's the modern wood or at least the modern name for that wood is cypress. It's a wood that does not rot and that speaks of the incorruptible humanity of the Lord Jesus. He is God's righteous branch. He was cut down in his prime hood in order to make that ark of safety.

B. Shape of the Ship

But, think not only of the substance of the ship, but you think of the shape of the ship. If you'll look at the proportions over there in the book of Genesis you'll find out that that ship was built like a coffin and the ancient people use to build coffins of cypress wood. It didn't look like the Titanic. It wasn't beautiful and it wasn't luxurious, but this pictures that “we die with Christ, that we might live with Christ” (Philippians 1:21).

C. Safety of the Shop

If you think of the safety of that ship the Bible tells us that God said to Noah, “Noah, I want you to put pitch on the inside and pitch on the outside.” That's a sticky, gooey, tarry substance. Now, that word “pitch” is translated over seventy times in the Bible “atonement.” It's not the normal word for pitch. It means covering. Put covering on the outside. Put covering on the inside. That is the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ in that which covers our sins and keeps out the judgment of God and because that pitch was on the outside and because that pitch was on the inside not one drop of water could come through. That water stands for judgment, but no water could come through. That was a watertight ship because of God's blessed atonement.

D. Size of the Ship

Think not only of the substance of the ship and think not only of the shape of the ship and think not only of the safety of the ship, but think of the size of the ship. It was a tremendously large ship. There was room for all of those animals that needed to come aboard. And, what is God saying when he's talking about this immense size of this great ship? He's telling us that there's room at the cross for you. Whosoever will may come, come and be saved. And, think of the supply of the ship. God said to Noah, “Noah, take everything on board this ship that's good for food.” I want to tell you Captain Noah set a good table there at the captain's table and everything that was needed was there because not only does Jesus save, but Jesus satisfies.

Dear friend, there's salvation, satisfaction, and sustenance in the Lord Jesus Christ. That ship was a picture of the Lord Jesus. As a matter of fact, I could take you to the Old Testament and show you that on the day that ship came to rest on Mount Ararat—listen to this—on that same day was the same day of the year that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. It was in the month of April, three days after Passover when that ship came to rest on Mount Ararat.

You see—dear friend—it is a type and picture of the Lord Jesus Christ resting upon this earth after going through the waters of judgment for us. And, he rested in his resurrection and because of that the Lord's Day is the day of rest for us and we have entered into eternal rest through the Lord Jesus Christ. That ship is a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, in Genesis chapter seven verse one, God said to Noah and to his family, “come thou into the ark” (Genesis 7:1). God didn't say, “Noah, go into the ark,” God said, Noah, “come into the ark” (Genesis 7:1). That meant that God was already in the ark. Had God not been in the ark God would have said, “Noah, go into the ark,” but God said, “Noah, come into the ark” (Genesis 7:1) which means that God himself was in that ark.

And, I want to tell you, dear friend that tells me even more the safety of that ship because had that ship gone down God himself would have gone down. I am in Christ and He is my ark of safety, I come into him. Dear friend, I want you to notice there was a structure of the ark. The Bible says, “That Noah was to make a door and Noah was to make a window” (Genesis 6:16).

Now, when he went in the door, God shut the door. God handled the door and Noah handled the window. The window was not in the side as you see in some pictures, but the window was in the roof. The Bible says make “a window above” (Genesis 6:16). That is, Noah, when he was in that ship was to be heavenly minded. He is to be looking straight up into the face of God. God shut him in that God might have his attention and God handled the door. Noah handled the window. Noah was to be in communion with God when he was upon those seas in that storm.

Now, dear friend, what a marvelous and wonderful picture of our salvation because when we come up the game plank of faith, when we enter into the Lord Jesus Christ—our ark of safety—God shuts the door. For the Bible says, “...*ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*” (Ephesians 1:13). God shut the water out and God shut Noah in. That's the reason I believe in eternal security. Noah was not saved by holding on to the ark friend, he was in the ark and the ark held hands.

I hear people say sometimes, “You pray for me and I'll hold our faithful to the end.” Well, I tell you friend, if Noah had to be saved by clinging to the outside of that ship he never would have made it. He's on the inside. Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but he never fell out of the ark. Amen. And, you can stumble, but “the steps of

a good man are ordered by the Lord” and *“Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand”* (Psalm 37:24). God put Noah in the ark and God shut the door. There was a window opened to heaven for communion with God, but no door for Noah to go out.

Conclusion

And, so my dear friend, the ark is a marvelously wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satisfaction, safety, and sustenance—all of that was in that ark—but Noah entered that ark by faith and God shut the door. Now, there were some people who didn't believe what Captain Noah had to say and there came a day when judgment came. And, God put Noah in the ark, God put the animals in the ark, and then there was a strange eerie silence I imagine. The door was shut and suddenly the sky began to boil and darken and great storm clouds came. Flaming fingers of fire began to flash across the sky and there was a booming thunder and the rising wind began to moan like a funeral dirge. People turned up their faces to see the clouds boiling and water began to fall down in big splotches of rain hit them on their face and perhaps they'd never seen rain like that. And, then perhaps there was an earthquake as the earth rocked and reeled because the Bible says, *“that there were fissures in the earth.”* That is, great places where the water came up out of the earth and belched out there from beneath and from above the waters came and the floods came and the people began to run for the high ground but it did them no good because the Bible says, *“...the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills...”* (Genesis 7:19). I can see them there as they're begging Noah to open the door and let them in. But, God controlled the door, Noah could only control the window and Noah could not let them in because dear friend, it was too late.

Now, Jesus said in the book of Matthew, *“But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matthew 24:37). I want us to bow our heads in prayer.

The Ark of Safety

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Prerequisite of Noah's Faith
- II. The Patience of Noah's Faith
- III. The Prompting of Noah's Faith
- IV. The Preparation of Noah's Faith
- V. The Power of Noah's Faith
- VI. The Proclamation of Noah's Faith
- VII. The Provision of Noah's Faith

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to Hebrews chapter 11. Would you do that, please—Hebrews chapter 11. And I want us to look today at one verse. We're going to spend most of our time just looking at that one verse that deals with Noah's Ark. And we're going to be thinking on this subject: "The Ark of Safety." Now, let's read it together: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."* (Hebrews 11:7)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, that verse is power-packed. And so I want to read it again. And I pray that God the Holy Spirit will etch it upon your consciousness and burn it indelibly into your heart. Listen to it again: *"But by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."*

I was doing some study, and studying the story of the Titanic. You will remember that the Titanic set sail on April 10, 1912. It was quite a ship. As a matter of fact, it was so wonderfully built and so intelligently engineered that it was called unsinkable. Of course, that's about the only thing it ever did, was sink. And the Titanic was a luxurious thing. It was a monstrous ship, a floating palace. It had tennis courts, sauna baths, gourmet restaurants, beauty shops, beautiful promenades, spacious staterooms. Everything that the mind of man could conceive, it seemed like was engineered into that ship—a veritable floating palace. And Bruce Ismay, who was the Chairman of the Board

of the White Star Line, said, "It is impossible to think that any calamity could come to a ship built like this ship." And one of the sailors flippantly said, "Even God Himself couldn't sink the Titanic."

And so, the Titanic set out on its maiden voyage, and there was hilarity and gaiety and laughter and wine and women and song, and it was all there. And the ship was just purring along at twenty-two knots about four days out of port. And they were sailing over seas that were calm and slick and ebony dark. Up in the sky the stars were there like huge candelabras shining in the clear sky. It was one of those beautiful starlit nights. And the music was playing. And those who were on guard and those who were on watch would call out, "All is well, and the lights are burning brightly."

The ship had been built in watertight compartments, so that if one compartment would leak, the next would be there; and if that one would leak, the next would be there; if that one were to take a leak, the next would be there; and so forth right on down the line. And so, the ship is moving along, and it strikes an iceberg. And one of those people on board said, "It seemed as though a giant finger had been drawn along the side of that ship." A crease and a rip, a tear, three hundred feet long, as long as a football field; one compartment was ripped open; two compartments ripped open; three, four; and perhaps it could still have stayed afloat, but the fifth one was torn open, and the water started to pour in. No alarm was sounded. A few people realized that something had happened, but the crew quickly moved to assure them, and the gaiety and the hilarity started again. And the band started to play, and the cocktails were served, and the champagne flowed, and they resumed their merriment.

But then, shortly after midnight, they realized that tragedy had happened. And they shot a flare up, the first of eight distress signals that would not be answered. Soon, pandemonium hit that ship, and the calls went down the corridor: "Women and children first! Women and children first! Women and children first!" And they lowered the lifeboats, but they only had lifeboats for about half as many people as were on board. Over two thousand were on board that ship. Some men even disguised themselves as women to try to get into those lifeboats. And finally they pushed away and circled that great ocean liner like loved ones standing around the deathbed of a dying friend.

And on board were many who were left. And that great ocean liner turned up this way, seemed to give a shudder and a gasp, and then slithered beneath the ocean. And on board were hundreds of people who screamed out, and yelled out, and jumped over into the water, and their piteous cries were heard by those who were in the lifeboats, whose boats were already too full. And that night more than fifteen hundred souls went to an icy and a watery grave. And when that ship had set sail, there were many classes on board. There were the working class, the crew; the vacationing class, those who had

bought tickets, the first-, second-, and third-class passengers. But after it was all over, there were only two classes: the saved and the lost.

Friend, I tell you, after this thing is all over, there are only going to be two classes. I don't care how much money you've got in the bank, and I don't care how elegantly you may be dressed; there are only going to be two classes when it's all over: just the saved and the lost. And Jesus said, *"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."* (Matthew 12:30) No one is half-saved. To be half-saved is to be altogether lost.

What a contrast there was between the Titanic and Noah's Ark! And incidentally, the Titanic got its name from the Titans, who were said to have been the mightiest gods of ancient mythology. But the Titanic was not nearly so mighty as they had thought that it was as it went to that watery grave. And I say, what a contrast between the sinking of the Titanic and Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace!

I want us to think of our ark of safety in the Lord Jesus Christ, because Noah's Ark was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter tells us clearly and plainly that that ark was a type, a picture, a prophecy, an illustration, a lesson of Jesus Christ, who is our ark of safety. And of course, we know Christ by faith. And so, really today, I want us to think about the faith of this man Noah, because that's the emphasis here in verse 7. Look at it again: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."*

Now, there are about seven things I want you to notice about the faith of Noah. And I pray God that your faith will be the same kind of faith that Noah had and your safety will be the same kind of safety that Noah had.

I. The Prerequisite of Noah's Faith

The very first thing I want you to notice is the prerequisite of his faith—the prerequisite of his faith. Notice in verse 7: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God..."* What was the prerequisite for his faith? He had a word from God. God spoke to Noah. God warned Noah. God told Noah what He was going to do. And do you know what Noah did? Noah believed what God said. Do you want me to tell you what faith is? Friend, it is clear and abundant and so simple: Faith is believing God's Word. That's it! Just that simple. Faith is believing what God has said. That's faith: believing what God has said. God spoke to Noah, and Noah believed it. You see, the prerequisite for faith is that God must speak. You can have no faith until God speaks, for the Bible says in the book of Romans, *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17)

Now you'd better hear the Word of God today. What I have to say is not all that

important. What God has to say is very important. And if what I preach to you today is not backed up and confirmed by the Word of God, then I don't expect you to believe it. But if it is backed up and confirmed by the Word of God, then, of course, I would expect you to believe it—not because I say it, but because God has spoken. This Bible is God's Word. And as God spoke to Noah so long ago, God is speaking to you today even more clearly, because He has recorded His Word inerrantly, and He has inspired His Word and preserved His Word. And God is speaking to you today that you might hear His Word, for *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* That is the prerequisite for faith: to hear the Word of God.

II. The Patience of Noah's Faith

But I want you to notice something else: Not only the prerequisite of his faith, but I want you to notice the patience of his faith. Look at it again: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet...”* (Hebrews 11:7) Now, God said to Noah, “Noah, something's going to happen.” But it took 120 years for it to be fulfilled, and Noah patiently waited. Noah did not fail to believe God. You see, it didn't look like it was going to happen. Noah didn't depend upon circumstances. There was nothing at all to suggest a flood. There had never been a flood before. There were clear skies. People were living, buying, marrying, selling. Everything was going on as it had before. And for 120 years it did, and yet Noah kept believing God. *“For by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet...”*

Now, the Bible warns us about a lot of things that we haven't seen yet. I don't want you, dear friend, to lose the patience of your faith. I don't want you to lose the perseverance of your faith.

Have faith in God, He's on His throne;
Have faith in God, He watches o'er His own.
He cannot fail, He must prevail;
Have faith in God, have faith in God.

—B. B. MCKINNEY

Noah did. The patience of his faith.

And so many of us, you see, don't have a faith that's a patient faith. Have you ever read the life of George Müller of Bristol, England? If not, you ought to read his biography. You ought to find out how God used this man of faith, how he had an orphanage, and how he raised literally millions of dollars to feed thousands of orphans, and how God miraculously supplied for him as he prayed and God answered his prayers.

But listen. George Müller's prayers were not always answered instantaneously. One

time, he was speaking in Chicago, and he said, “There are two men that I pray for every day, and I have prayed for these two men for thirty-five years night and day, when I’m feeling well and when I am not feeling well, when I am on land or when I’m at sea. I have called these men by name for thirty-five years, asking God to save them.” He lived twenty-seven years after he made that statement, and he continued to pray for these two men. They were his brothers. Both of them were lost. And George Mller interceded and prayed for his brothers for sixty-two years, and he died, and neither of those brothers had professed faith in Christ when George Mller died.

Shortly after his death, both of them received Christ as their personal Savior and were born again—prayers of sixty-two years! The patience of his faith—the patience of his faith! He had not seen them saved. But I know that he went to his deathbed saying, “God, I’m believing you; God, I’m trusting you; I have gotten a word from you, and I’m not going to let go of it.”

III. The Prompting of Noah’s Faith

Friend, there is the prerequisite of faith: God must speak. There is the patience of faith. And even when we do not see, and even when we do not understand, and even when it’s supposed to rain and there’s a cloudless sky, we keep believing God and trusting God. True faith is patience. It does not depend upon appearances. The third thing I want you to notice about his faith—look at that verse again: “*By faith Noah, being warned of God*”—that’s the prerequisite of his faith—“*of things not seen as yet,*”—that’s the patience of his faith—“*moved with fear...*”—that’s the prompting of his faith—the prompting of his faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

Now it was fear that prompted his faith. It was fear that in a strange way motivated him and got right. You say, “Well, I don’t believe in a religion built on fear.” Well, I don’t believe in a religion built on fear, but I want to tell you that fear is one of the elements of all true religion. The Bible says, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*” (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10) Friend, listen. If you know that there’s a great God, a holy God, a sovereign God, a God to whom you must give an account, and there is not within your heart a concern that you might fail to please that God and be right with that God, there is not in you a modicum of wisdom. “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*”

Now, that’s not all there is to it. There’s the love of God. And there are many other things. But fear is there. And Noah was moved with fear. Fear is a legitimate motive. Other people use it. The doctor uses it. He says, “You’d better stop smoking: you’ll get cancer.” The safety expert uses it. He says, “You’d better not drink and drive: you’ll have an accident.” And sometimes they’ll even put some mangled mannequins in an

automobile and pour red paint on them, and drive them down a parade with a bottle of booze in the hand of the mannequin. What is that? It's a fear tactic, to say, "Don't let this happen to you."

And yet, the preacher somehow is not supposed to warn people about the judgment of God, the greatest and ultimate reality that we ought to fear more than anything else. Sometimes people say when I preach, "Preacher, are you trying to scare me?" I would to God I could scare you! I'd rather frighten you into heaven than lull you into hell. There are some things we need to be afraid of. The Bible says—and Jesus was speaking—*"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Matthew 10:28) That's what Jesus said: *"Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* There are some people who don't know enough to be afraid. And if they are afraid, all they're afraid of is what's going to happen to their body. They fear the death of their bodies.

Years ago, I read a fable about a man who was the servant of a rich merchant in Baghdad. And this servant went into the marketplace one day and he came home with his hands trembling and his face ashen white. And he said to the rich merchant, "Master, I want you to give me some money, and I want you to loan me a horse, for I must leave town immediately." And the merchant said, "What's wrong with you? Why are you so afraid?" "Oh," he said, "master, it's terrible." He said, "Today in the marketplace I came face to face with death. I met death. He was there. He was wearing a hooded garment. He had bony hands. He jumped at me. He made a menacing gesture toward me. Master, I must flee. I've come face to face with death in the marketplace. I must go. Please give me a horse. Give me money."

The wealthy merchant gave to his servant a horse and money, and said, "Go, if you must. Where are you going?" He said, "I'm going to Samarra. There I'll be safe." The merchant thought he would investigate for himself, and he went to the marketplace and looked around, and surely enough, he saw a grotesque and a somber figure. And the merchantman didn't seem to be so fearful. He walked up and touched death on the shoulder. And death turned around and looked him in the face. The merchant said, "Are you death?" He said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Death, I want to ask you a question. Why did you frighten my servant so in the marketplace today?" "Oh," death said, "I didn't mean to frighten him." "Well, he said that you made a menacing gesture toward him." "Oh, no," he said, "that wasn't a menacing gesture. I was startled when I saw him. I threw up my hands in surprise. You see, I didn't expect to meet him in the marketplace. I have an appointment with him tonight at Samarra."

"It is appointed unto men once to die." (Hebrews 9:27) And, you know, we're trying to escape this death, and we think somehow that we can flee this death; but *"it is*

appointed unto men once to die—“*once to die*”—“*once to die.*” Jesus said, “*Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” And the Bible says Noah was moved with fear.

You say, “Well, that doesn’t scare me, Brother Rogers.” It may not. You may not have the faith that Noah had. “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark.*” And so, there was, ladies and gentlemen, the prompting of his faith, which was a legitimate motive called fear.

IV. The Preparation of Noah’s Faith

Then, I want you to notice the preparation of his faith, as we continue to read: “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,*”—now, watch it—“*prepared an ark.*” (Hebrews 11:7) He did something about it. The Bible says that “*faith without works is dead.*” (James 2:26) He prepared an ark. Because he had foresight, because he could see what was coming, he made preparation. He did not wait until it began to rain to make that preparation. You see, that’s what some of you are going to do. You’re going to say, “Well, sooner or later, I’ll get to it.” And then it will start to rain. It will be too late.

I was driving my automobile some time back, and a man shot out of a side street. It was a stop street, but he just came right on out. When I saw him come finally, I applied my brakes as hard as I could. He applied his brakes when he finally saw me. Our cars spun around like this. And then we came up almost looking at each other, his car facing one way, mine facing another way, face to face. We both lowered our windows. He looked at me, and I looked at him. This time I was right and he was wrong. And I was doing right. But it was a near accident. But our cars never even touched. Well, we were both traveling at a pretty good rate of speed. When we finally got stopped, he looked me in the face, and he was frightened, but he said, “Where in the *blankety-blank-blank-blank* did you come from?” I started to say, “From West Palm Beach, Florida.” That’s where I was born and raised. “Where did you come from?”

See, he had not seen me. He just came out; assumed there was nobody on that thoroughfare that I was on. And he was frightened. And I said, “Mister, I was just driving down this road minding my own business. But let me say a word to you. We almost had an accident that could have been fatal to one of us or both of us.” It seemed strange to me that a man could be that close to death and that full of profanity. I said, “You know, one of these days you’re going to meet the Lord.” And I said, “Had you met Him right then, obviously you’ve got a heart full of profanity, because what’s in a man’s heart comes out of his mouth.” I said, “You wouldn’t want to meet God with that in your heart,

would you?” I thought I’d just take advantage of the situation. You know what that man said to me? He said, “Mister, I’ll take care of that when I get to it.” See: “I’ll take care of that when...” No, he won’t—he won’t! He’ll take care of it now, or he won’t take care of it. You see, *“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”* (Hebrews 9:27) *“Noah...moved with fear, prepared an ark.”*

Are you prepared? Friend, if you’re not prepared to die, you’re not prepared to live. You need an ark of safety. You need a place of protection—and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, why didn’t they prepare in Noah’s day? Noah prepared, but the other people didn’t prepare. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man.” (Matthew 24:37) And then, He went on to say, “They bought, they sold, they married, they gave in marriage, and they knew not until the flood came. Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and they all perished.” (Matthew 24:38–39)

And Jesus gave us the three marks of Noah’s day. Let me tell you what they were. The first was indifference: buying and selling, eating and drinking. The second was immorality: marrying and giving in marriage. And the implication there is of multiple marriages. The third was ignorance: *“they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away.”* Indifference, immorality, and ignorance: the same three marks of our day—indifference, immorality, and ignorance.

Now, when I say ignorance, it’s not that they had not heard, because Noah preached a sermon for 120 years with a hammer. He knew. They knew. They had heard. But they were still ignorant. I can imagine them calling a symposium to find out really whether there was going to be a flood, because, you know, even the most secular-minded man has second thoughts when he hears a sermon like this, and he likes to be reassured that Adrian Rogers is something akin to a Neanderthal. And so, the secular mind thinks this way. They say, “Well, we’ll just get some experts together.”

Now, let’s just do a little sanctified imagining and imagine them getting a panel of experts together. And they put them up there behind a table. And there’s a town hall meeting. And there’s a moderator. And we have here a philosopher. And we have here a scientist. And we have here a clergyman. And so, the moderator says, “Ladies and gentlemen, we’ve been hearing this man named Noah who says that God is going to destroy the world with a flood. And of course we don’t believe that. But we just thought it would be interesting to hear what these learned people have to say about it. And so we’re going to ask our panel here if they will speak on the subject.

And first of all, I’d like to introduce a very eminent and well-known philosopher, Dr. Phineas J. Fluffyhead. Dr. Fluffyhead, you have a PhD in Philosophy, and you’ve written

several very learned tomes on the subject. And you are held in great repute at the university. Would you address, please, this gathering and tell us what you think about the idea of a flood from a philosophical point of view.” And Dr. Fluffyhead takes a whiff or two from his pipe and brushes the old white locks from his forehead, rears back in his chair, takes a sip from a glass of water, clears his throat one more time, takes one more puff from his pipe, cleans it out a little bit, and smiles, and has that very wise look, and he says, “Well, let me say that if there is a divine being—philosophy does not deny or affirm really the possibility of a divine being; there may, indeed, be; philosophically, we cannot prove that there is a God; but many who are very wise and learned men believe that there is a higher power—but if there is a higher power, a god of some kind, and he has created this marvelous universe that we see here, let me tell you, philosophically, it seems highly unlikely that the God who had the power, if He did create all of this, would then turn around and destroy with a flood what He had created. I mean, basically, philosophically, it’s unreasonable that such a being would admit that he had made such a colossal mistake. No, gentlemen,” he says as he puffs his pipe, “philosophically, it’s not a very sound idea.”

Well, that made them feel pretty good—I can tell you that—to have such a man say that it wouldn’t happen. But they’re not finished yet. There’s another man there, and this man is an eminent scientist, Dr. Francis J. Formaldehyde. “Dr. Formaldehyde, you are a well-known scientist, and you’ve helped us, and we have progressed quite a bit under your leadership. And many of the amenities and things that we enjoy today have come out of your fertile mind. And we’re so grateful for what science has done for us to bring us to this enlightened age in which we live. Would you tell us, please, what you think of the possibility of a flood.”

“Well,” he says, “from a geological point of view, from an astronomical point of view, and from a historical point of view, I just cannot buy the idea of something called a flood. Why, it would be a break in the reign of natural law. And, really, it’s a physical and a scientific impossibility. To tell you the truth, the whole thing smacks of religious superstition to me, and we don’t deal in superstition; we deal in science. And, sirs, the dictum of science is against it.”

Well, they’re feeling even better. But wait a minute. There’s another sitting at that panel, a noted clergyman, Dr. Cleo Compromiser, D.D. That stands for doodle-digger. “Dr. Compromiser, would you please address this symposium, and would you tell us if there going to be a flood.”

“Well,” he says, “unlike my other colleagues—the philosopher who’s not quite certain, and the scientist who disbelieves in the idea of God—I want to tell you I tend to believe there’s a God. And I’ll tell you what I think about this God that I tend to believe

in: that He's a God of love. I mean, you know, God is love, and that's the basic instinct of our hearts. And the God that I worship certainly wouldn't destroy the world with a flood. And I wouldn't worry about a man named Noah who calls himself a preacher, who hasn't even been to seminary. And, I mean, he has no credentials. He's not ordained. He has no degrees. Don't you worry about him. If perchance—if perchance—in his devotions he thinks he heard God speaking to him—and it may be that God did condescend to speak to the poor fellow, but if he did hear God speaking about a flood—I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that it wasn't literal water that God was talking about, just figurative water, and you don't have to worry about it."

And so they pool their ignorance, as the world is doing today, for the Bible says that *"the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* (1 Corinthians 1:21) And so they knew not. And because they did not know, they did not prepare. But the Bible says, *"Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark."*

There is the preparation of faith. And, friend, the sign, the proof, that you believe what I'm preaching is not whether you nod your head, smile, say *amen*, or put it in your notebook; it is, do you make certain you've got an ark of safety? Are you prepared? I mean, if Jesus Christ were to come now, if your heart were to stop beating now, if suddenly you were taken out in an automobile accident on the way home from church, are you prepared? Noah, because of his faith, made preparation.

V. The Power of Noah's Faith

I want you to notice something else: Not only the preparation of his faith; I want you to notice the power of his faith. Look at it: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."* (Hebrews 11:7) The only saving power is in faith in the saving God. You see, the Bible says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 16:31) There is saving power in faith. *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."* (Romans 1:16) And Noah got his household in, and Noah was saved himself, because, you see, that ark was a picture, a type, a prophecy, of Christ. It was made of wood, and wood is a symbol of the humanity of Christ. Jesus, the Bible says, will grow up *"as a root out of a dry ground."* (Isaiah 53:2) And Jesus was cut down in His humanity. And His body was broken for us that He might become our ark of safety.

When that ark was built, there was a rosin, a substance, that was put on the outside and on the inside. It was called in the Bible *pitch*. It was a tar-like substance. And the word *pitch* is translated *kopher*. And that word *kopher* is also translated—listen to it—

“atonement.” That’s an interesting thing that God would choose the same word for “pitch,” which is a gummy rosin that would make a boat waterproof; He, when He wants a word for “atonement,” uses the same word. Do you know what atonement is? That speaks of what Jesus did on the cross. He atoned for our sins by His blood. And so you could say that Noah put pitch on the inside and outside of the ark, or that Noah put atonement on the inside and outside of the ark, because the same word translates both.

And what is the atonement there for? What was the pitch there for? It was to keep the water out. Well, what was the water? The water was the judgment of God. And what does the atonement do? It keeps the judgment out. And not one drop of water could come through, because of God’s pitch. And not one drop of judgment can come through, because of God’s atonement. That ark is a type of Christ.

And God said to Noah when the ark was finished, “Noah, come thou and thy family into the ark.” (Genesis 7:1) He didn’t say, “Go into the ark.” He said, “Come into the ark.” That meant that God was already in it. Had the ark gone down, God would have gone down. I want to tell you, friend, if I lose my salvation, God will lose His honor, because I’m in Jesus, and He’s in me. And I have come into that ark of safety, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. I came in through the door, for God said, “Put one door in the ark.” (Genesis 6:16) There are not many ways of salvation. There is one. One door and only one, and yet its sides are two. I’m on the inside. On which side are you?

After they came in, the Bible says that God shut the door. What does that tell us about? They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. That’s what happens to a Christian when he believes, when he comes into Christ, the ark of safety. The Bible tells us in the book of Ephesians that, *“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”* (Ephesians 1:13) Not only did God shut the water out; God shut Noah and his family in. Noah might have fallen down inside the ark, but he could never fall out of it, amen? *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD... Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.”* (Psalm 37:23–24)

And so, here’s the power of his faith: he *“prepared an ark to the saving of his house.”* And he got his children in that ark with him. And they were saved by faith: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31)

VI. The Proclamation of Noah’s Faith

I want you to notice something else about his faith as we are coming to the close of this message. I want you to notice the proclamation of his faith. Look again in verse 7: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; ”*—now, watch this—*“by the which he condemned the*

world.” (Hebrews 11:7)

How did he condemn the world by building the ark? You see, dear friend, the same gospel that saves us is the same gospel that condemns us. The gospel is a two-edged sword. It is a savor of life unto life, or death unto death. (2 Corinthians 2:16) Now, what I mean by that is this: If Noah could have been saved, and was saved, those who were not saved could have been saved also, had they done what Noah did. You understand what I’m saying? And the very fact that Noah could be saved was a condemnation to those who could not be saved.

When I finish preaching in a moment, I’m going to give a public invitation, and I’m going to ask many of you to leave your seat and come down here and give your heart to Jesus Christ. Now, the fact that some will come will condemn those who don’t come. The very fact that they come will be God’s way of saying, “I would have saved you if you had done what they did.” You see, the Bible says, “*The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*” (Romans 10:12) There are no favorites with God. There’s no respect of persons with God. And you cannot say, “Well, God wouldn’t save me,” or, “God didn’t save me,” or, “I couldn’t be saved.” Friend, if God saved Adrian Rogers, God can save you. If God saved Bob Sorrell, God could save you. If God saved Tommy Lane, He might save you. It took a lot to save Tommy. No, I want to tell you if God could save a Tommy Lane, I know He could save you. If He saved Adrian Rogers, He can save you.

You see, when a person enters into the ark of safety, that’s just the way of saying, if one could, all could. You see, “*the same Lord over all is rich unto all.*” And so, Noah is proclaiming his faith. He is preaching a sermon. And every God-fearing, Bible-believing Christian is a message to the rest that you can receive Christ, too. And we are proclaiming our faith. When we live our faith, we’re a message to this world that they, too, need to get right with God.

VII. The Provision of Noah’s Faith

Well, let me just close the message. Let me give you the last point here of this simple message. I want you to notice, finally, the provision of his faith. The Bible says, “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world,*”—now, here is the provision of his faith—“*and became heir*”—that is, inheritor—“*of the righteousness which is by faith.*” (Hebrews 11:7)

Have you ever thought about what Noah lost and what Noah gained? Now we say, it pays to serve Jesus. Well, it really does. “It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day, it pays every step of the way.” But I want to tell you something, friend. It costs to serve

Jesus.

Do you think when Noah built this ark that it was easy to do—I mean, when you build a boat like an ocean liner? Here's Noah having to build this ark. I just imagine that he put everything that he had into it. He put his money into it. He put his blood, his sweat, his tears into it. He put his mind into it. He put his time into it. And while Noah is building this ark, other people are building their estates. Noah is working on the ark, and another man is building his factory. Noah is working on the ark, and another man is plowing his fields. Noah is working on the ark, and another man is practicing his industry. And so about the time of the flood, Noah is probably near penniless. These other people are rolling in luxuries and wealth.

And then it starts to rain, and the earth rocks and quivers, and great fissures open up in the earth. And the waters begin to come out from under the ground, and the fountains of the deep are opened. And ominous clouds gather in the sky. They've never seen clouds like this. And a fierce bolt of lightning streaks across the sky. And faces look up, and big drops of rain splatter on those faces. These are wealthy people. These are people who have achieved, because while Noah was building the ark, they were building their estate. And it starts to rain. Noah is in the ark. God has shut the door. At first, they scoff; they laugh. The water is ankle-deep, then knee-deep, then waist-deep. And now, the swirling floods are coming. They begin to scream and say, 'Noah! Open the door, Noah! Now we believe!' But, of course, it was too late. They couldn't even go to the bank and get enough money to buy a raft to float around on. And all that they had dreamed for and schemed for and sold their souls for was under the water. And they perished.

But I want you to understand something. After that boat had sailed around, cradled in the hands of omnipotence, it settled there on Mount Ararat. And Noah opened the door, and he came out, and he looked at a new world—and guess who it belonged to? Noah. An entire world: "There it is, Noah. I've given it to you." Have you ever read where the Bible says, "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall*"—what?—"*inherit the earth*"? (Matthew 5:5) Oh, the Bible says he became an heir of righteousness. This was the provision of his faith.

Conclusion

I want to tell you, friend, "It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day." But the greatest thing that he had was not his material gain. He became heir of righteousness. There are only two kinds of righteousness in the world: self-righteousness and God-given righteousness; earned righteousness and inherited righteousness. Earned righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. (Isaiah 64:6) It will never do. Inherited

righteousness comes by faith, and it's the only kind of righteousness that God will accept. And I want to tell you today—listen to me now—Jesus is the ark of safety. Open your heart, receive Him as your Lord and Savior, and *“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”* (Isaiah 1:18)

The Captain and His Kids

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 17, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:7

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”

HEBREWS 11:7

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s precious Word this morning, and turn with me, please, to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7, Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”* May I tell you that the devil hates family religion and yet the Bible is so full of it?

I was just looking this morning earlier at some verses in Acts, and just thinking about how in the book of Acts, when someone got saved, it just seemed like that they had a burden for their entire house. I was reading there in Acts chapter 11 verses 13 and 14 about Cornelius, who was saved and who was a centurion, which meant an army officer and a Gentile. And, the Bible says that the Lord sent to him an angel who said, *“Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter”*—listen—*“whereby thou and all thy house...”* That is, your household or those who live in your house *“shall be*

saved.”

And, then I was reading also in Acts chapter 16 where a woman named Lydia, who had that church at Philippi that began in her own house. The Bible tells how Lydia believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when Lydia got saved other members of her house got saved, and they all got baptized that day. The entire home got baptized. Thank God for that because they all trusted in the Lord Jesus.

And, then I was reading over there in Acts chapter 16 verses 30 and 31. Again, in the same chapter where that Philippian jailer got saved, but before he got saved, he had to know how to be saved. And so, he asked Paul and Silas, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*” That is, everybody in your household needs to be saved. And, they all got baptized, because they all had received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

And, now I read over here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7 where Noah prepared an ark. And, when Noah prepared that ark, the Bible says that Noah prepared the ark to the saving of his house. That is, all of those in daddy Noah’s family were saved. They came to know the Lord because of the leadership of that dad.

And, I read over there in Genesis chapter 7, early this morning, verse 1: “*And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark...Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark.*” All eight of them were saved. There’s a great emphasis in the Bible on household salvation.

That’s what I want to talk to you today about as we study captain Noah and the good ship Grace. How Noah got his family into that ark. And, I want to talk to you dads how you can get family into the ark of safety, which is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have a title for my message this morning it’s called *The Captain and His Kids, The Captain and His Kids*. I want you to see again about Noah, the Bible says, look at it, what a wonderful Father’s Day verse this is. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark for (or to) the saving of his house. Not only did Noah get in, but he got his kids in also.

Study with me for a few moments this morning, as we think about “*The Captain and His Kids*. Captain Noah and the good ship Grace. Now, in order to understand this story we have to go back to the Old Testament where it happened. So, would you turn with me, please, to Genesis chapter 6 in the Old Testament? And, let’s see this story of how Noah got his family into the ark and what that ark is all about.

So many people just think of that as, perhaps, a fictional story, something that never really happened, maybe a fable, some sort of legend, or saga of some sort. Oh no, dear friend, it was an actual happening. As a matter of fact, if you study the archeological and anthropological records of mankind, you will find out that, all civilizations have a record

of the flood, all of the great civilizations. And, then you let the geologist get his spade, and the archaeologist get his spade, and he uncovers seashells in the top of the Alps, to show that the world at one time was covered by a great deluge.

The flood is not some fairy tale. It was a historical happening. And, the Lord Jesus certainly believed in the flood because the Lord Jesus said, *“And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man”* (Luke 17:26). So, the Lord Jesus believed it, and if he believed it, that’s good enough for me. Now, what I’m trying to say is, dear friend, that what we have in Genesis chapter 6 is a factual happening. But, it’s such an incredible illustration of salvation. And, how we, as dads, today, can get our children into the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our ark of safety.

So now, you ready for it? Let’s just look at it. Open your Bibles here, now, to Genesis chapter 6, and let’s just see what it is all about. May I say, first of all, that Jesus said, *“As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be”* and what were the days of Noah like? Well, look in Genesis 6 verses 1–3: *“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God”—That is, the godly lines—“saw the daughters of men”—That is, the ungodly line—“that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.”—That is, they disregarded God and they went their own willful way—“And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man.”* There was a conflict with the Spirit of God. And, the mind of man went against the will and the Spirit of God. So, what were these days before the flood?

A. Days of Apostasy

Put it down, friend. They were days of apostasy. Verses one through three say they were going against the Spirit of God and the co-mingling of that which is godly and that which is ungodly. They were days of apostasy. But, not only were they days of apostasy, my dear friend, but they were days of anarchy. Begin reading in Genesis 6 verse 4: *“There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.”*

Now, they were not mighty, we’re going to see, to serve God. They were mighty to serve wickedness. Look in Genesis 6 verses 5–6: *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”* God is heartbroken over the sins of this generation. The Bible says it has just broken His heart. And, look in Genesis 6 verse 7: *“And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.”*

B. Days of Anarchy

The days of Noah were days of apostasy, verses 1 through 3. They were days of anarchy, verses 1 through 7. That anarchy is summed up in verse 5. Look in the Bible says in verse 5 that God saw that the “imagination,” do you see it? The imaginations of the thoughts of man’s heart was evil continually. Now, that word “imagination” is a very interesting word. It does not mean daydreams, but it actually comes from a Hebrew root word, which means to fashion something as a potter would fashion a vessel. And, what it means is that it was not daydreaming, but it was scheming and philosophizing. Here was a generation whose heart and mind was set against God. They fashioned wicked philosophies, they espoused filthy causes, and then they tried to pour society into their mold. Exactly what is happening today. They tried to reshape society. And, the same sins that produced the flood in Noah’s day are reaching to Heaven today.

C. Days of Apathy

But, not only were the days of Noah days of apostasy and days of anarchy, my dear friend, they were days of apathy. The Bible tells how they married and how they were giving in marriage. They were buying, they were selling, and they knew not until the flood came. So like this generation. We have a generation that just rolls over and yawns in the face of God. The pleasure palaces are filled today. People are not in the house of God. They care not for the things of God. And, we dear friends are living on the threshold of a greater judgment than Noah knew. So dads, listen to me. Let me tell you what your children are facing. The same thing that they faced in Noah’s day. Apostasy, anarchy, and apathy. Apostasy, anarchy, and apathy. That is the mark of the last days. Now in the face of all of that captain Noah got his kids on board the ark.

Three things I want us to see about that ark this morning. And, I want you to see why I am so excited about Noah’s ark because Noah’s ark is a wonderful and glorious picture of salvation. When you look at the ark you find out what we have in the Lord Jesus. And it’s not happenstance. Simon Peter clearly tells us in the New Testament that the ark of Noah is a picture, a prophecy, and a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having said that, look with me at the symbolism of the ark.

I. The Symbolism of the Ship

All right, if you are taking notes, write it down, the symbolism of the ark. Begin with verse 12 if you will of this same chapter and read with me. Genesis chapter 6 and verses 12–13: *“And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”* That is judgment is coming. That is, judgment is coming. And, therefore in verse 14: *“Make thee an ark of gopher wood.”*

A. Substance

Now, I'm going to stop right there, and write down the substance of the ark. What is the ark made out of? Gopher wood. What is gopher wood? It is cypress. And, what is cypress? Cypress is, perhaps, the most incorruptible of all of the woods.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured in the Bible as a tree. One who will grow up as a root out of dry ground. Remember Psalm 1 speaks of the righteous as a tree planted by the rivers of water. Dear friend, that's what a cypress is. It's a tree planted by rivers of water. And, here's an ark that is made of gopher wood; or cypress wood, and that wood speaks of the humanity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But think not only of the substance of the ark, but think also, in verse 14, of the -safety of the ark' look again in verse 14: *"Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch."* Do you see that word *pitch*? Thou shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

Now, boys and girls, to pitch it doesn't mean to throw it, as a pitcher pitches a baseball, but it means to put gooey tar on the outside of the ark, and to put gooey tar on the inside of the ark. That tar was called pitch. And God said to Noah, "Now, Noah, I want you to make this ark of this incorruptible wood, and then all over the outside, I want you to put pitch. And, then get on the inside of the ark, and all over the inside of the ark, I want you to put pitch."

Now, what was that for? Well, obviously, it was to keep the water out. Now, what was the water? The water was judgment. And God said, "You put the pitch on the outside, and put the pitch on the inside, and that'll keep the judgment out." Did you know that Hebrew word *pitch* is the word *kaphar*? And, do you know how it is translated over seventy times in the Bible, that same word? It's translated "atonement," atonement. When the Bible speaks of the blood in the Old Testament, it says, *"For it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul"* (Leviticus 17:11). You could read it this way. The blood will make pitch for your soul. That's the same word *kaphar*. It means "atonement." And so, here's a play on words. God says to Noah, "Now, Noah, build this boat, and put atonement on the outside, and put atonement on the inside." You see, it is the atonement of the blood that keeps the judgment out. Do you understand that?

B. Safety

So you see here, first of all, the substance of this ship. And, then thank God, you see the safety of this ship, because not one drop of judgment can come through this ship because that pictures and represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Continue to read. Look in verses 14 and 15 again. And the Bible says in verse 14 that rooms are to be in the ark. Well, what are rooms for? Well, rooms are for people to stay in. And Genesis 6 verse 15: *"And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits."*

Without getting into too much detail, may I tell you, my dear friend, that this is three million cubic feet of space. An incredible size.

C. Sufficiency

Now, what I'm saying in all of this is, dear friend, that not only do you see the substance of this ship, and not only do you see the safety of this ship, but you see the sufficiency of this ship. You see, there was room for everything that it was meant to do. May I tell you today, there's room on board for you? May I tell you today, that there is room at the cross for you? But, think again, if you will, and look in verse 15 at the shape of this ark. Notice, that the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. It didn't have a prow. Why? Because it didn't have a helm. No human hands steered this ship. Why? Because it didn't have a destination. God was in charge of where that boat went. There was no prow. It was blunt at this end, and it was blunt at that end.

If you'll study it carefully, you'll find that the dimensions of the ark were the dimensions of an ancient coffin. That was the shape of it. It was shaped like a coffin. Why is that? Because, dear friend, we die with Christ that we might live with Him. When Noah went into that ark, the world that was under judgment was sealed out to Noah, and Noah was sealed in to God. *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"* (Galatians 2:20). Ancient people made their coffins out of cypress wood. So, you see, dear friend, the, the substance of the ark, the safety of the ark, the size of the ark, the shape of the ark, and, now. Notice the structure of the ark... Oh, I love this. Genesis 6 verse 16: *"A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it."*

So here's this boat, this ark has three floors one, two, three, because, you see, that speaks of the humanity of our Lord, the tri-unity of His nature and also His humanity. It speaks of His body, soul, and spirit and we worship one God, in three persons. But, on the side of the ark is a door and at the top of the ark was a window.

Now what does that tell us? Well, dear friend, God controlled the door. Noah controlled the window. Now, you see, Noah was closed in to look up. God shut the door, God put Noah in the ark, and God controlled the door, but Noah was closed in so the only way he could look is up. Now, my dear friend, that ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, when Noah came into the ark his view now was heavenward. Do you see the picture? We know God through Christ. You see, when we come into the ark He brings us in and as God controls the door then we can pull back the window and look into the face of God.

What was God showing Noah? That he's no longer to be worldly minded. He is now to be heavenly minded. He has entered into the Lord Jesus Christ, the ark of safety. But

notice, not only the structure of the ark, but, now notice with me, go down to verse 21 to see the sustenance of the ark.” look in Genesis 6 verse 21: *“And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten”*—That is, folks, the good stuff was on that ark—*“and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.”* May I tell you, dear friend, that when our Lord saves us, He invites us to His table. And, the captain sets a good table.

There is shelter, sustenance shelter, and sustenance in the ark. Because not only does Jesus save, Jesus satisfies. Say, “Amen.” Not only does he save, he is satisfied. And so, you the sustenance of the ark.

D. Schedule

But now, let me show you something exciting. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 8 and verse 4, and I want you to see the schedule of the ark look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 8 and verse 4: *“And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.”*

Well, you say, “What’s significant about that?” Well, friend, this blessed me most of all, as I studied this. You see, the seventh month. Well, what is the first month in the Jewish calendar? It’s October. So what is the seventh month? The seventh month is the month of April. Now, what day in April did the ark come to rest? On April the seventeenth, which is three days after Passover, the fourteenth. When did Jesus Christ come out of the grave? This same day. This is the resurrection day. Jesus Christ came out of the grave on the same day that the ark came to rest upon Mount Ararat.

Jesus stood in resurrection upon the earth, having gone through the waters of judgment, just as that ark did, so long ago. Isn’t that a blessing? Isn’t that exciting, to see how, tucked away here in the Old Testament, God has given us a picture of the salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, who passed through the waters of judgment and stood in resurrection upon the ark? The Bible says the ark rested there. And, my dear friend, our Lord is seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, having let the billows of judgment roll over Him, and He’s not lost a one who has come in to Him.

II. The Salvation of the Ship

So, let’s move from the symbolism of this ship. Let’s move to the salvation of this ship. Let’s find out how captain Noah got his kids on board. Let’s find out how they got on board this wonderful ark because it ought to be a lesson to every dad here today. And, oh, I want to make the lesson so simple today. I’m praying, God, help me not to be complicated. Help me not to be convoluted. Help me just to be plain. Two of the plainest verses of are Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9. Now, if you’ve been around here very long, you know those verses by heart Ephesians 2 verses 8 and 9. I’m gonna

share them with you and tell you how they apply to Noah's ark.

All right, now listen to Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8–10. The Bible says, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* Now, if you remember enough of your high school English, you know what a preposition is. Okay? There're three key prepositions in Ephesians chapter 2 verses 8 and 9. “By,” “through,” and “unto.” “By grace,” “through faith,” and “unto good works.” Keep those in your mind. Keep those three prepositions in your mind and you will understand the theology of salvation perfectly. By, through, and unto. It is “by grace,” “through faith,” and “unto good works.” “By grace,” “through faith,” and “unto good works.” Ephesians 2 verses 8, 9, and 10. Do you have it?

Now, keep that in mind, and I want you to see how that's illustrated in Noah's ark. Now, first of all, what did we say? We said that salvation is by grace, right? All right, now look in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 8. Genesis chapter 6 and verse 8: *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* Do you see it? Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Did you know this is the first mention of grace in all of the Bible? Right here. Noah, grace. How did captain Noah and his kids get saved? By grace. And, what is grace? Grace is God's incredible, indescribable love that causes Him to love us when we don't deserve to be loved, *“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). We have a covenant of grace. Look in Genesis chapter 6 and verse 18, God said to Noah, *“But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark.”*

You see, salvation is a covenant of grace. It is a covenant of grace because we're not saved by good works. You're not saved by joining a church, giving your money, getting baptized, obeying the Ten Commandments, or living right. You can't be saved that way. Salvation is not a reward for the righteous, it is a gift for the guilty. Noah was not saved because he was such a hotshot, a good guy, or a good ol' boy, he was saved by the grace of God. And, if you go to heaven, dear friend, it'll only be because God gave you grace and has prepared a place of safety for you in the Lord Jesus Christ. Okay?

Now listen, very quickly here, it was by grace, but also it was through faith. What does Hebrews 11 and verse 7 tell us? That by faith Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house. Right? So plain, isn't it? By grace, that was God's part. By faith, that was Noah's part. Now, the ark is completed. And, look in chapter 7 and verse 1, and the Lord said unto Noah, come thou and all thy house into the ark. That is, the ark is completed, it's done. And now, our Lord with open arms says to Noah, “Come.”

And when Noah walked up that gangplank, that was faith, dear friend. You see, faith is the gangplank that gets us on board the good ship Grace. Our Lord looked at Noah

and his family, and our Lord opened His arms to Noah and his family. And, our Lord said to Noah, “Come” and Noah said, “Just as I am, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, O Lamb of God I come to thee, I come.” You say, “He didn’t say it in those words.” No, but here God had given him a picture of grace. And God says, “Noah, I have prepared for you an ark of safety, and I want you to come.” and Noah responded, “Just as I am, I come, I come.”

Now, what three prepositions did I tell you to remember? “By” grace, “through” faith, now watch this, “unto” good works. Now look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 9 and verse 1. And the Bible says, *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”* Now, were they saved because they were fruitful, and multiplied, and replenished the earth? No. They were fruitful, and multiplied, and replenished the earth, why? Because they were saved. Do you understand it? Noah wasn’t saved by being fruitful. He was fruitful because he’d been saved. It was unto good works. You see, dear friend, fruit is not the cause of our salvation. It is the sign of our salvation.

“I cannot work my soul to save, that work my Lord has done, but I will work like any slave, for the love of God’s dear Son.” We’re not saved by faith and by works, but we’re saved by faith that works. And, Noah was so grateful for what God had done for him that he took God at His word to be fruitful and to multiply. Just like every one of us ought to be. So, how did captain Noah get his kids aboard? For by grace are you saved through faith? And that not of yourselves, but it is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

III. The Security of the Ship

Now, very quickly, you’re not listening real fast today, so let me speed things up a little bit. Very quickly, let me give you the third thing I really have to say. I’ve talked to you about the symbolism of the ship to you about the salvation of the ship. Let me talk to you about something so glorious today. Let me talk to you about the security of the ship—the security of the ship.

Look if you will, again, in Genesis chapter 7 and verse 1. Now, the Bible says here that God said to Noah and to his house, look at it, the Lord said unto Noah, come thou and thy house into the ark. And then look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 7 and verse 16: *“And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him”* now watch this, *“and the LORD shut him in.”* Huh, huh, who sealed the door? The Lord did. Noah went in and God shut the door behind him. For the Bible says, *“after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”* (Ephesians 1:13). I mean, God shuts us in, friend. Not only did God shut the water out, but also God shut Noah in.

This is the reason I believe in the eternal security of the believer. Do you see, God

shut the door. God said to Noah, "Come into the ark." Now, God didn't say to Noah, "Noah, go into the ark." God said to Noah, "Come into the ark." You say, "What's the difference?" Well, if I say to you, "Go into that room" that means I'm out here and you go in there. But if I say, "Come into this room" that means I'm in here. Come in with me, right?

Friend, if the ark had gone down, God would have gone down. God was in the ark. I'll tell you when I'll lose my salvation, I'll lose my salvation when Jesus Christ loses His relationship with the Father, because I'm in Christ. The Bible in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17: "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation... I am in Christ, as Noah was in that ark. And I am shut in to Christ, as Noah was shut into that ark. You say, "Well, what if you slip and fall? You say, what do you mean, 'what if,' my dear friend?" I slip and fall a lot. I'll tell you one thing, Noah may have fallen down many times in that ark, but he never fell out of it. Huh, huh, he couldn't fall out of it, huh, because God had shut him in. You know, I think a lot of these folks just believe they're going to be kept saved by, somehow, just holding on.

You hear folks in a testimony meeting, sometime, Brother Tim. They'll give a testimony, and they'll say something like this, you pray for me I'll hold out faithful to the end." suppose God had said to Noah, "now, Noah, if you want to be saved, you put some eight pegs on, the outside of that ark. One for you, an' one for Mrs. Noah, one for ham, one for Shem, one for Japheth, one for their wives, and then when it starts to rain, you get on a step ladder, and go up, and hold on to those pegs. Your feet will be dangling; the water will be rising; it's gonna be rough. But Noah, if you can hold onto that slimy peg until the water goes down, you'll be saved. I don't think Noah would have made it, do you? Huh, huh, huh, huh, huh, I can see Noah saying to Mrs. Noah, "honey, you pray for me I'll hold out faithful the end." oh, friend, that's the kind of salvation some people think they have. They think that they're saved by holding onto him. No, my dear friend. We're saved because he holds onto us. And he says, none is able to take them out of my father's hand." Noah was shut into that ship. Oh there are a lot of folks who believe in eternal security. But let me tell you how they believe in eternal security, they believe that they're going to get eternal security one day when they go to heaven; that they're going to step into Heaven and slam the door behind them and say, "whew, umh, boy, I made it, hallelujah. I'm safe now.

Well, wait a minute, how do you know you're safe now, just cause you are in heaven? The angels fell from heaven, dear friend. May I tell you that security is not in a place; security's in a person, and his name is Jesus. And, dear friend, if you're in Christ, you're secure. And if you're not in Christ, I don't care whether you're in Heaven above, you wouldn't be secure. The angels fell from heaven. Thank God for the security of his ship. And the Bible says, "By faith Noah ... Moved with fear, prepared an ark to the

saving of his house.” dads, have you led your sons, your daughters to Jesus? Joyce and I have a little baby in heaven; we have four children on this earth. They all know and love the Lord Jesus. They all believe in daddy’s God.

My son who’s a minister of music now, I remember one day as a, when he was a teenager, I watched his life, I couldn’t see the fruit. I didn’t see the beauty. I didn’t see a concern for souls. I said, ‘Steve, let’s go, I, dad wants to talk to you.’” we went out in the woods; I spent a whole day in the woods. I said, daddy has got to know that you know Jesus.” and there, in the woods, on our knees, we did business with God. I wanted to know, not that he was a church member, but that he knew Jesus as his personal savior.

On another occasion one week I got on my knees and I prayed. I said, “Oh, God, if any of my children are not saved—They’ve all made professions of faith—But, oh God, if any of my children are not saved, Lord, help them to be saved.” The next Sunday when I preached and I had no reason to believe this would be so. I had no reason to doubt my daughter Gail’s salvation. But, the next Sunday, when I preached, as a teenager, my daughter, Gail, came down the aisle. And she said, “Daddy, I’m just not certain that I’ve ever really, and truly, been saved, and I want to get it settled.” And I thank God for the Godly woman that she is today.

Conclusion

Oh, my dear friend, I don’t know how I could stand the thought of going to Heaven and leaving my children behind. “Come thou, and thy house into the ark. My captain brother, is all the crew on board? I mean, have you led your children to Jesus? Are you, sir, on board that ark? Let’s bow in prayer. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Friend, I’m telling you the days of Noah are here again. Our world is headed for judgment that is worse than what Noah faced. And I wonder, today, how many in this building would say, “Pastor, if I died today, or if Jesus comes today, I know I’d go to heaven.” I hope that many of you can say that. “Father God, I pray give the invitation, that many precious souls in this building will come to Jesus. In His wonderful name I pray, amen.

Unsinkable Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 18, 1978

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:7

Outline

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Introduction

Hebrews chapter 7—we're continuing our message today on the subject of faith. We've been talking about God's hall of fame. Already, we've talked about Abel—how he was in God's hall of fame—and we've talked about Enoch, who was in God's hall of fame. Now today, we're going to be talking about Noah in God's hall of fame—the message that we're going to call “Unsinkable Faith.” We're going to study one verse today—Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7: the Bible says concerning this man Noah, *“[And] by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7).

I read a historical account this week of the sinking of the Titanic, and I was amazed as I read that account over again of the story that was unfolded there before me. You know, the Titanic, this great ocean liner that set sail in 1912, was said to have been

unsinkable, and that's about the only thing it ever really did was sink. And, I was just wrapped up in the story. Here was this monstrous floating palace, and it was—it had everything on board. It was filled with lavish splendor. There were ballrooms, and theaters, and beauty salons, and tennis courts, and sauna baths, and all of these things. And, I believe that the sinking of the Titanic is a great object lesson for our age. Three things that I discerned in reading this stories:

A. The Titanic Was Marked by Confidence

First of all, the Titanic was marked by confidence. How confident they were! As a matter of fact, they said, because of the watertight compartments on the Titanic, that it was unsinkable. If one compartment would leak, then another would keep it up. If that would leak, there would be another. And, if that would leak, there would be another. It was just unsinkable. So, they said to anyone who had any fear of water, “Come on. She cannot sink.” As a matter of fact, Bruce Ismay, who was the White Star Chairman of the Board, said this—and I quote: “I cannot imagine any condition that would cause the ship to founder. I cannot imagine any disaster happening to this vessel. Modern shipbuilding has gone beyond that.” And, every sailor onboard said confidently, “It cannot sink.” And, one sailor said flippantly, “Even God couldn't sink this ship.” Oh, what a great ship the Titanic was!

B. The Titanic Was Marked by Carelessness

And, you see, it was not only marked by confidence—it was also marked by carelessness. People weren't thinking about the ship sinking. Since it was “unsinkable,” they were all just having a good time. I read a remark by Mrs. Harris, who stated, “We were out on a lark, and revelry was the key note. The weather was superb. The comfort and luxury aboard were all that had been promised. The days passed too quickly. I felt as if I could go on until the end of time. And, those who were keeping watch on the ship every now and then would sound the hour, and they would say, ‘All's well, and the lights are burning brightly.’” But one by one, those lights were to go out. And so, it was on the night of April the 14th, 1912, as this ship was gliding along on an ebony sea, just as smooth as silk. There was no moon out, but it was a clear night. And, the stars were lighting the heavens, and the ship was moving along very carelessly, thinking that she was an unsinkable ship.

C. The Titanic Was Marked by Calamity

But, not only was it marked by confidence and carelessness—it was marked by calamity, because on that night, moving along at 22 knots, at 11:40 p.m., the Titanic hit an iceberg. And, a 300-foot gash was ripped along the side of that ship. One of the

passengers onboard said it felt as if someone had taken a giant finger and drawn it along the side of that ship. And, one compartment, and then two compartments, and three compartments, and four compartments, and then five watertight compartments were cut open. There was a jolt, and some people felt it. Other people were so wrapped up in the gaiety and wrapped up in the revelry that they did not even know that the ship had hit any object whatsoever. No alarms had sounded. And, for those who were a little frightened, a soothing word of assurance was given that there was no danger. And so, they went right on. The amusements were continued.

But, at 12:45 in the morning, a rocket was fired. It was to be the first of eight attempts to signal someone else. But, all of these attempts were futile, for no one saw the rockets that were fired into the air. Finally, it became apparent that they should board the lifeboats. And so, the call went down through the corridors: “Women and children first!” But, there were still some who refused to believe that there was any danger whatsoever. But, by 1:30 in the morning, that dream cruise had turned into a terrible nightmare. There were over two thousand persons onboard and only lifeboats for half that many. People were crowding into the lifeboats. Men even disguised themselves as women, trying to get on to the lifeboats. And finally, those boats that could be filled were filled, and they drifted out away from the Titanic and got in a circle around that Titanic. One observer said it was like relatives standing around a deathbed of a dying loved one. And, they watched that ship as it began to fill with water and slivered into a watery grave. And, the impossible had happened: the Titanic was sunk! And, nothing was left but just a few desperate survivors.

You know, I was interested to note also what the name *Titanic* means. Where did they get that name—Titanic? It was named after the Titans, who were the mythological gods of Greece and called the *supreme rulers of the universe*. The mighty Titanic, to rule the sea, had gone under. Now, when she set sail, there were all kinds of classes and degrees of people on board: upper class, middle class, and lower class. But, after she sank, there were only two classes: saved and lost. And, as I read this story of the Titanic, as I thought about it, I thought, “What a stark contrast there is between the sailing of the Titanic under Captain Smith and the sailing of the good ship Grace under Captain Noah.” I want us to notice Noah’s ship, the unsinkable ship, and I want us to notice in this message on unsinkable faith several things about Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7.

I. Noah and His Faith

First of all, I want us to notice Noah and his faith. Look in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7: the Bible says, “*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved*

with fear, prepared an ark” (Hebrews 11:7). Noah prepared this ark by faith.

A. Noah’s Faith Was a Working Faith

Now, listen to me: Noah’s faith was a working faith. Get the implication here. The Bible says, *“By faith Noah...prepared an ark”* (Hebrews 11:7). You see, his faith led him to do something. It was a working faith, for the Bible says, *“Faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26). You remember—we studied about Abel, who offered the proper sacrifice. His faith was a worshiping faith. Do you remember we studied about Enoch, who walked with God? His faith was a walking faith. And now, we’re studying about Noah, who prepared an ark. His faith was a working faith. Isn’t it a beautiful order that God is giving us? For first we worship, and then we walk with God, and then we work for God as God works through us. For James says that, *“Faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26).

Now, Noah may have said that he had faith, but had he not built that ark, he would have had no faith. And, he showed his faith by his works. James said, “You show me your faith without your works—I’ll show you my faith by my works.” And, the fact that Noah built that ark was concrete evidence of his faith. Don’t you tell me that you have faith in God if your faith in God is not enough faith to cause you to study this book, if your faith is not enough faith to cause you to worship Him, if your faith is not enough faith to get you to church, if your faith is not enough faith to get you into the baptistery, if your faith is not enough faith to transform your life. Don’t tell me that you have faith. One of these days, you’re going to die and go to Hell because your faith is not real. *“Faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26). Noah’s faith was a working faith.

B. Noah’s Faith Was Based on Divine Revelation

I want to tell you something else about Noah’s faith that makes me just so impressed with Noah’s faith: his faith was based on divine revelation. Look again in Hebrews 11, verse 7: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God”* (Hebrews 11:7). You see, God had spoken to Noah. Noah just didn’t decide, “Well, I think I’ll build an ark because I want to have faith to build an ark.” No, dear friend, you cannot have faith for anything that God does not first of all speak to you about. Faith is not mere positive thinking. It is not faith in faith or faith in yourself. It is faith in God. That’s what we’re talking about. And, all true faith is rooted in the Word of God. The Bible tells us in the Book of Romans that *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). And, before you can have any kind of faith, God must first of all speak. And, if you don’t learn anything else in this series of lessons on faith, I want you to learn this—that true faith, real faith, lasting faith, Bible faith is rooted in the Word of God. You must hear the voice of God before you can have faith. That’s the reason I’m so grateful that we have the Bible.

“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). The Bible is divinely inspired, supernaturally preserved, and is the basis of your faith and my faith.

C. Noah’s Faith Waited on God

I want to say something else about true faith: true faith can wait on God. Now, Noah prepared an ark, but it was 120 years before the flood came. And, Noah waited all of this time for the fulfillment of the promise. Real faith waits on God. Faith rests in the promises of God. And, sometimes faith does not see the fulfillment right away.

I read about George Mueller of Bristol, England. Mueller was a great pioneer of faith. He was a man who believed God and fed multiplied thousands of orphans. Without begging for money, without even really making his needs known, he received millions of dollars to feed those orphans. You read the life of George Mueller of Bristol—it will stir your faith. What a blessed man of faith he was! But, let me tell you about the kind of faith that he had. He was speaking one day, and this is what he said: he said—and I want to quote: “I have prayed for two men every day by name for 35 years. On land or sea, sick or well, I have remembered them before God by name, requesting their salvation. They are both living. Neither of them is saved, but I shall continue to pray for them daily by name until they’re saved.” Now, he continued for 27 years after that—that he continued to pray for these two men, his own brothers. For 27 years after that time, or for 62 full years, Mueller prayed for two men night and day, that God would save them. When Mueller died, they were still not saved. They were both saved shortly after his death.

Do you have that kind of a faith—faith that gets hold of God and faith that will not let go of God until the answer comes, because God has spoken and God cannot lie? I like the faith that this man had. And, Noah’s faith was a faith that could stand alone. I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, as I read the newspapers and see what is happening, the time is coming when they who kill you will think they do God a favor. Did you know that? And, you’re going to have to be willing to stand alone in this world that crucified our Lord once and would be willing to crucify Him again. Our Lord is now rejected, and by the world disowned, and by the many still neglected, and by the few enthroned. But, in a godless age like that, Noah stood for God and his faith did not waver. You had better get your eyes off the crowd, and you had better get your eyes on the Word of God. That’s what real faith is. Real faith is faith that can stand alone.

D. Noah’s Faith Did Not Depend upon Appearances

Real faith does not depend upon appearances. Look again in this verse, and I’m reading Hebrews 11:7: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet.”* There’s no evidence that it had rained up until this point. There’s nothing that says in the

Bible that it had rained. To the contrary, the Bible tells us that a mist went up and watered the earth (Genesis 2:6). And, there was no rain, so far as we know. There'd been no rainbow up until this time. Certainly, there had never been a worldwide flood. And, Noah didn't say to God, "Now God, You say it's going to rain. Just put a few clouds out there and let me feel a few drops, and then I'll believe." Oh, no—*"faith is...the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1). That's what we've already read. And, the Bible says Noah had not seen these things (Hebrews 11:7). All he had was the sheer naked Word of God. God said it, and that settled it. Don't you try to walk by sight. Walk by faith. It may have been a cloudless day when God gave this announcement to Mr. Noah; but nonetheless, he obeyed God.

II. Noah and His Fear

Now, the second thing I want you to notice is not only Noah and his faith, but I want you to notice Noah and his fear. Look at it: *"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark"* (Hebrews 11:7). Noah was *"moved with fear"* (Hebrews 11:7), and that's why he prepared an ark. You see, Noah resolved that he was not going to drown; he resolved that he was going to save his own life. And, there's nothing wrong with that. When God created me and when God created you, He put within you an instinct called *self-preservation*. It is a God-given instinct.

You know, some people accuse preachers of using fear to motivate people. Everybody is motivated by fear. The doctors use fear to motivate us. They say, "You better lose some weight, or you'll have a heart attack." The insurance people use fear to motivate us. They say, "You'd better drive safely or you'll have an accident." And, you'd be surprised how much you do just simply because of fear. You eat because you're afraid you'll starve. You wear an overcoat—you're afraid you're going to catch a cold. You cross the road; you look both ways—you're afraid you're going to get hit by an automobile. There's nothing wrong with that! It's just plain common sense. We're motivated by fear everyday in hundreds of ways except in the greatest way sometimes—the spiritual way. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, your greatest danger is not the danger of being hit by an automobile. Your greatest danger is not the danger of starving to death. Your greatest danger is not the danger of catching a cold. Do you know what your greatest danger is? Listen to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him [who] is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"* (Matthew 10:28). Your greatest danger—your supreme danger—is that one day you would stand before God, unpardoned, un-forgiven, un-cleansed.

Noah was motivated by fear. I said it last week, and I'll say it again: I had rather

frighten people into Heaven than tranquilize them into Hell. There is something to be warned about. The Bible says, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom”* (Psalm 111:10). Are you ready to meet God? Do you know that you’re saved? If not, you ought to be motivated like Noah was—by faith, by fear.

III. Noah and His Foresight

But, not only do I want you to notice Noah and his faith and Noah and his fear, but I want you to notice Noah and his foresight. Look again in verse 7, if you will: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark”* (Hebrews 11:7). Now, look at that word—*“prepared an ark”* (Hebrews 11:7). That means Noah made preparation; he prepared an ark. He had some foresight. Noah did not wait until it started to rain until he started on the ark. Now, what is God telling us about Noah’s faith? He’s saying that like Noah, we should get ready. You see, dear friend, one of these days it’ll be too late. Had Noah not made preparation before the flood, it would have been too late when the flood came.

I was driving my automobile down the road, and I was obeying the speed limit—I really was. And, a man came out a side street, a stop street there, and he paid no attention. He didn’t even see me coming. He pulled right out in front of me. Well, being the expert driver that I am, I managed to get my car stopped. But, both of the cars were asking when we finally got stopped, and we ended up looking face to face at each other through the windows. And, he said, “Blankety-blank, blankety-blank-blank-blank. Where in the blankety-blank did you come from?” I started to say, “I was hatched,” but I didn’t say that. He said, “Where did you come from?” I said, “Well, I just came right down that road there.” He said, “Well, I didn’t see you!” I said, “Well, I was here.” And then, I said, “You know, we almost had a terrible accident.” I said, “May I speak personally to you for just a moment?” I said, “Suppose that I had hit you, and suppose it had taken your life. Would you have wanted to go into the presence of God with that kind of profanity in your heart?” Do you know what that man said to me? He said, “I’ll take care of that when I get there.” It will be too late—it will be too late. He won’t take care of it when he gets there. But, you’d better take care of it now. It’d be no good to stand before Almighty God and say, “Now, dear God, I want to take care of my profanity. I want to take care of my lying. I want to take care of my lust. I want to take care of my pride.” No, the Bible says, *“Prepare to meet [the Lord] thy God”* (Amos 4:12).

Noah moved with fear—prepared an ark! He had some foresight. It’s amazing how many people have wisdom about the future in so many things but not wisdom when it comes to getting right with God. I want you to see what Jesus had to say about the lack of foresight of Noah’s generation. Turn please, for a moment, if you will, to Matthew 24.

Just put your bookmark there in Hebrews 11 and turn to Matthew 24. Jesus is talking about His Second Coming. And, I begin reading in verse 36: Jesus says, concerning His Second Coming, *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”* (Matthew 24:36). No one knows when Jesus Christ is coming. You don’t know; I don’t know. Doctor Lane doesn’t know. No one knows! The angels in Heaven don’t even know.

But notice: *“As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matthew 24:37). Now, Jesus gives us an indication of what the days are going to be just before Jesus Christ comes back to this earth. I’ve told you before, but I want to tell you again, three marks of Noah’s day. I want you to look in verses 38 and 39: *“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all way; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”* (Matthew 24:38–39). What were the three marks of Noah’s day?

A. **Indifference**

The first mark was indifference—indifference. Look in verse 38: *“they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage”* (Matthew 24:38). What does that mean? It means that they were going on with the same humdrum daily round of life. They were thinking about physical, material things, rather than spiritual and eternal things.

You listen to people speak today—listen to the conversation in the barber shop, in the office building—and you’ll find out that 90% of that conversation is built around such things as buying and selling, and eating and drinking, and marrying and getting married, and building and tearing down. We are interested in material things, rather than eternal things. And, the first mark of Noah’s day was indifference. Did you know that we live in a materialistic age today and people are indifferent to spiritual truths? And, don’t kid yourself just because there are two or three thousand people here. If you would drive up and down the streets of Memphis, Tennessee at this very hour, you would find little children out there playing outside, if it’s warm enough out there. You’ll find houses filled with people. You’ll find people going about their regular, everyday business, caring not at all about the things of God. It’s not that they’re anti-God; they’re just indifferent—indifferent!

B. **Immorality**

All right, let me give you another mark of Noah’s time—not only indifference, but immorality. Notice again in verse 38: *“they were marrying and giving in marriage”* (Matthew 24:38). Now, there’s nothing wrong with getting married or giving someone to be married, but the scholars tell us that this is a term that speaks not of normal

marriages, but the multiplicity of marriages. It speaks of sexual promiscuity and immorality. Another one of the marks of Noah's day was immorality. As a matter of fact, the Bible links the days of Noah with the days of Lot. And, that was sexual perversion, sodomy. "As it was in that day, so shall it be" (Matthew 24:37). History is like an old broken record: it keeps repeating itself, and we find ourselves being sucked down into a morass of immorality.

I cannot believe some of the things that are being presented in the city of Memphis, Tennessee for entertainment. You want to find out the level of any particular society? See what amuses them—see what they laugh at. When people start laughing at sin, when people get their amusement and their titillation from laugh at the breaking of God's seventh commandment that says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14), when people get amusement from perversion, you can mark it down...in the days of Noah—the days of Noah: indifference, immorality.

C. Ignorance

And, the last mark of Noah's day was ignorance. Look again. The Bible says in verse 39: "*And [they] knew not until the flood came*" (Matthew 24:39). Now, they should have known, but they didn't know. It was not that they had not been warned; it was not that they did not hear. They were ignorant. One of the stunning marks of our age is man's intellectual abilities and his spiritual ignorance. Man today worships at the shrine of his computer. Man today has all of his degrees, all of his accoutrements of knowledge, all around him; and yet, he is spiritually ignorant. It's like Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Are you a master in Israel, and yet you don't even know these things?" (John 3:10). Oh, you're so wise, but you're so foolish! But, Noah was different from everyone else. Noah—in the face of indifference, in the face of immorality, and in the face of ignorance—Noah made preparation. Have you made preparation? Have you? Are you ready for Jesus Christ to come? If not, why not? You ought to get ready before this service ends to meet the Lord Jesus. "*For in such an hour [that] ye think not the Son of man cometh*" (Matthew 24:44).

IV. Noah and His Family

Now, I want us to go on and think not only of Noah and his foresight, but I want us to think of Noah and his family. Look again, please, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7—the Bible says that not only did Noah save himself, but he got his family into the ark: "*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house*" (Hebrews 11:7). Now, that doesn't mean the physical building; that refers to his family, his household. Not only was Noah saved—his

children were saved, and their wives were saved, and his wife was saved. Are your children in the ark of safety? Do you have the kind of faith that Noah had—a household faith? Noah said, “I’m going to Heaven, and I’m going to take my children with me!” Or, are your children going to Hell, while you go to Heaven? Or are you going to Hell and taking your children with you to Hell?

I was praying a while back in Florida, when I was pastors of a church in Florida, having my devotions, and I felt led of the Holy Spirit to pray this way—and this is the way I prayed, and I said, “O dear God, all of my children have made professions of faith in You, and all of them are members of the church, and all of them are baptized. But, O God, if there is one of my children not saved, dear God, save that child.” I had no reason to believe that there were any of them not saved, but that was my prayer. And, they were all going to church faithfully. They were all reading their Bible. They all professed to be saved. I didn’t tell anyone about that prayer. But, the next Sunday morning, my oldest girl came down the aisle and took her preacher daddy by the hand, and said, “Daddy, I don’t believe I’ve ever really been saved, and I want to know that I’m saved. I want to get it settled.” Oh, dear friend, I’m not asking you, “Are all of your children members of the church?” I’m asking, is your family in the ark? Are they saved? Noah’s faith led him to get his family saved. How important it is that we bring our children to Jesus, and how sad it is if we take our children to Hell!

I can imagine a little boy back in Noah’s time coming up to his dad and saying, “Daddy, may I talk with you for a moment?” And, the dad, a very kind dad, says, “Why, sure, Son. Sit down. Let’s talk. I’d love to talk with you. What’s on your heart, sonny boy?” “Well Daddy, you know Mr. Noah, the man who’s building the big thing that he calls an ark?” The father says, “Yes, I know him.” “Well Daddy, some of the boys were over there playing today, and Mr. Noah sat down on a saw horse and he talked with us, and he said that God is very angry with everybody and that God is getting ready to destroy the world. Mr. Noah said there’s going to be something called a flood, and that people, if they’re going to be saved, are going to have to put their faith in God and come aboard that ark! And Daddy—I was just wondering. Dad—what do you think about all of that?” I want you to hear this father as he says, “Oh Son, forgive me for laughing. Son, I’m not laughing at you, Son. I was just thinking... It’s so funny that you would ask me that today, Son, because, you see, my boy, here’s the funny part: when I was a little boy, I went over to play around that ole’ thing. You see, he’s been building that boat for a long time, Son. And, do you know what, Son? That old man came out, and he told me the same story. Son, it scared the wits out of your daddy when he was a little boy.” And, he said, “Son, that’s not the funniest part. Here’s the funniest part: I went home and told my daddy, your granddaddy. And, do you know what? My daddy, your granddaddy, said

that ole' fool told him the same story and scared him when he was a little boy. Son, don't pay attention to that ole' religious fanatic! They've been saying something about a flood for years! Don't worry about it, Son. Just run out and play. And Son, remember—Daddy loves you. Have a good time today, sonny boy.”

Any fathers like that around? “Oh, don't you let those preachers warn you about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ! Don't you go down there and become any religious fanatic! Remember, Dad loves you, Son, and Dad wants you to have a good time.” Noah brought his family into the ark. Why do you think God put this in the Word this morning? To see to it, sir, that not only are you saved, but that you get your kids on board.

V. Noah and His Forecast

All right. Now, we've noticed Noah and his faith, and Noah and his fear, and Noah and his foresight, and Noah and his family. I want you to notice one other thing with me: I want you to notice Noah and his forecast. Did you know that Noah was a weather forecaster? He really was, and he did a better job than some around here. Did you hear about the weatherman who had to move from one city to another because the weather didn't agree with him?

Now, notice this—the Bible says here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world”* (Hebrews 11:7). Now, how did he condemn the world? He condemned the world by warning the world, by giving a proper forecast, by warning what was going to happen. You see, don't get the idea that this generation was a generation that did not know. God spoke to this generation. Noah had preached a 120-year-long sermon with a hammer, and he preached with the Word of God. And, the Bible tells us in Genesis chapter 6 that “the Spirit of God moved upon those people.” Don't think that they didn't know. As a matter of fact, I want to tell you something interesting: it was probably only 1,500 or 1,600 years from the time of Adam when the flood came. And, if you will do a little arithmetic, you will find out that Methuselah's life overlapped Adam's life by 200 years. Methuselah, who lived right up until the time of the flood, had talked with Adam. He knew about the fall in the Garden of Eden. They knew about the coats of skin. They'd heard about Abel's offering and Cain's offering. They knew that Enoch had been taken. God had spoken to these people; God had warned these people.

How did Noah condemn that world? Because he forecasted the judgment that was to come. He told about the flood, but they would not believe him. Do you want me to tell you, dear ladies and gentlemen, what the judgment of this generation is going to be?

“Light is come into the world, [but] men [love] darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). And, that is the condemnation. Listen to what Jesus Christ says in John chapter 3 and verse 19: *“And this is the condemnation, that light [has] come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). You see, Noah spoke to that generation, and Noah warned them. And, they would not hear; and thereby, they were condemned. And, they couldn’t come to God and say, “O God, I didn’t know.” They did know. The Bible makes it clear and plain that God’s Holy Spirit, through His preachers, had spoken unto them.

VI. Noah and His Fortune

Well, the last thing I want us to notice in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7—not only Noah and his forecast, but Noah and his fortune. Look again here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world”*—now, watch this. We’re talking about his fortune now—*“and became [the] heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7). That is, Noah had an inheritance; Noah gained a fortune. He *“became [an] heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7).

But, that’s not all he inherited. Have you ever thought about the time, the effort, the money, the labor that Noah put into that ark? Have you ever thought about it—what it would have taken to build a ship of such immense proportion, 120 years perhaps in the building? Think of the labor. You talk about a building program. You think about “Together We Build.” Think about building that ark. And, I don’t know how many carpenters he had to hire. I don’t know how much it cost. But, here was his life’s work. And, the whole time Noah was investing everything in that ark, the rest of the people of Noah’s day were buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage. They were living high, wide, and handsome, and I imagine they thought that Noah was a fool. They were investing in stocks, and bonds, and real estate, if they had that sort of thing in that day. And, Noah didn’t have any of these things. But, you see, there came a turning point when all of their so-called *real estate* wasn’t very real because it was all covered with water and all of their bankroll couldn’t even buy a raft to float on. And, it did them no good. They lost it all.

Well, what about Noah? Did Noah lose it all? No, he gained it all! Think about Noah. He stepped off of that boat—the whole world was before him. I mean, he owned it all—I mean, the whole world. It was there. The Bible says, *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”* (Matthew 5:5). You can’t out-give God. Don’t you worry about what you’ve invested for the Lord Jesus Christ. But, let me tell you something, folks:

that's not the real wealth that I'm talking about this morning—that's not the fortune I'm talking about. That's just a pittance compared to the real fortune that I'm talking about. Noah became an heir of righteousness. He didn't earn righteousness; he inherited righteousness by faith. You need to be righteous today, and the only way that you can be made righteous is not by good works, not by keeping the Ten Commandments, but by trusting the Lord. You see, that ark was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter tells us that the ark was a type or a picture of Christ. And, Noah's faith has been for all time a picture of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the reason the ark only had one door, for Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). Jesus said, *"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved"* (John 10:9). There was one door. The gangplank was faith. We enter that door by faith!

And, when Noah went in, God shut the door. Genesis chapter 7, verse 1: the Bible says, *"And...[God] said [to] Noah, Come thou and [thy family] into the ark"* (Genesis 7:1). Notice God didn't say to Noah, "Noah, go into the ark." God said, to the contrary, "Noah, come into the ark." That meant that God was already in that ark, ladies and gentlemen. Now, that may not make a difference to you; it makes a big difference to me. If I say to you, "Go into that room," that means I stay out here and you go in there. But, if I, from in the room, say, "Come into the room," that means you come in where I am. When Noah went into that ark, he went in where God was.

Now, how safe was he? He was as safe as God was. You see, you want me to tell you when I'll go down? I'll go down when Jesus goes down, for I am in Christ. He is my ark of safety. You know, there are a lot of folks who don't understand the doctrine of eternal security. They think that we're saved and kept secure by holding onto God. They think that perhaps it must have been this way—that God built the ark, and He put some pegs on the outside of the ark for everybody to hold onto: one peg for Noah, and one peg for Mrs. Noah, and one peg for Ham, and one peg for Shem, and one peg for Japheth and for their wives. And, God said, "Now, you get a stepladder, and get hold of those pegs when it starts to rain, and you let your feet dangle; and if you can just hold on 'till the water goes down, you'll be saved." I don't think Noah would have made it. I can hear Noah saying to Mrs. Noah, "Honey, you pray for me. I'll hold out faithful to the end." No, he never would have made it—no, no, no. That's not the kind of salvation he had. The Bible says that God said to Noah, *"Come...into the ark"* (Genesis 7:1). And, when he went into the ark, the Bible says that God shut the door, for the Book of Ephesians says that "after that we believe, we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). Isn't it wonderful, dear friend, that we are secure in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Now, you see, Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but he never fell out of the ark. That's what I'm talking about. He was in the ark, and God shut the door. And, all the storm, and all the wind, and all of the waves, and all of the water battered against that ark. You see, it was Jesus who took our judgment, but inside we are safe. Inside we are secure. Inside we are satisfied. Inside of Christ, we are made righteous. You know, some people who don't believe in eternal security—I'll tell you what they do believe: they believe they're going to be secure, but they believe they'll be secure one day when they get to Heaven. They think they're going to step into Heaven, slam the door behind them, and say, "Whew, I made it. Boy, now I'm secure." Well, hold it—wait a minute. The angels fell from Heaven. If you're not secure down here, you wouldn't be secure up there. See, security is not in a place; security is in a person, and His name is Jesus. That ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's our ark of safety. We come into Him by faith.

Conclusion

What was Noah's fortune? He became an heir of righteousness. That means that his sins were forgiven. That means that God gave him a new heart. And, he wasn't just merely saved from a flood. That was an illustration of the fact that he was saved for all eternity. And, one day, we'll meet Noah in Heaven. Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you trusted Him? Have you come into the ark of safety? Are you saved? If not, by faith and being moved with fear, you ought to make preparation, so you can save yourself, get your family saved, and become the heir of righteousness.

I want every head bowed and every eye closed here for just a moment. Father in Heaven, I pray, dear Lord, that You will bless as we give the invitation this morning. I pray, dear Lord, that those who need the Lord Jesus will find Him. And, don't let anybody leave today, dear Lord, without making preparation, without saying an everlasting "yes" to Jesus Christ. O Spirit of the living God, bring conviction and help people to understand just how much they need the Lord Jesus! For we pray in His name. Amen.

Six Principles to Fortify Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 2, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:8–13

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went..”

HEBREWS 11:8

Outline

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Introduction

Choir and congregation, would you take the precious Word of God and find Hebrews chapter 11. In a moment, we're going to take up our reading in verse 8. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, “Little faith will bring your soul to heaven, but great faith will bring heaven to your soul.” How would you like to have great faith? I trust that's what you want. And when you came to Jesus Christ, God enrolled you in the School of Faith. Life is the classroom, the Bible is the textbook, the prophets and the apostles are the professors, and Abraham would have to be the Dean in the School of Faith. We're going to learn about Abraham.

Abraham—a great man. His name has been known through the centuries. It is loved and revered by Jews and Christians alike. What a great man was Abraham. He's called the “father of them that believe.” And most of this 11th chapter of Hebrews that speaks of champions of faith is given over to the life of this man Abraham. Let's look in Hebrews 11, beginning in verse 8: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place, which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is

God. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and she was delivered of a child and when she was delivered of a child when she was past age because she judged him faithful who had promised. And, therefore sprang there even of one, of him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

Now, I'm going to stop the reading right there, except to also reference to you Romans chapter 4 and verse 11, which calls Abraham the “father of all them that believe.” So Abraham has more or less cornered the market when it comes to teaching faith.

I cannot—look at me—I cannot emphasize enough the importance of faith. We're not talking about something that is incidental. Remember that Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith, it is impossible to please God.” Without faith, it is impossible to please Him. Now, you want to please God, don't you? I've told you before, if you please God, it doesn't matter whom you displease; and, if you displease God, it doesn't matter whom you please. And there is no way to please God without faith. We're not talking to you about things that are incidental. Faith is the mark of a Christian. Christians were called believers before they were called Christians. It is our chief duty to believe God. John chapter 6, verse 29: “Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” You want to serve God? Your chief duty is to believe Him. The supreme evil is unbelief. The greatest sin is not murder, rape, arson, pillage, tyranny; the greatest sin is the sin of unbelief. When the Holy Spirit of God comes in the world, He comes into the world to convince men of sin because they believe not. The reason that men are lost, doomed, damned, and go to hell is not because of some sin that they have committed; it is because they will not believe. The Bible says, in John 3, verse 18, “He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believed not is condemned already, because he hath not believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Unbelief is the source of all other sins. Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden because they did not believe in Him. The Christian life, according to Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 38, is to be lived by faith. The Bible says, “The just shall live by faith.” Now, I've given you some reasons, folks. I am telling you that without faith it is impossible to please God. You will never, no never, no never, ever succeed in your Christian life without believing God. That is the reason that we're in these studies, Champions of Faith.

Now, Abraham was a pagan—I mean, an absolute pagan, an idolater. He lived in a place called Ur of the Chaldees when God spoke to him, when God met him, when he himself enrolled in the School of Faith 2000 years before Christ. He was a pagan. And

furthermore—listen—he was 75 years of age when he enrolled in the school. Don't you tell me that you're too evil, and don't tell me that you're too old. Today, if Abraham became the father of them that believed, can you not step into this wonderful, glorious life of faith? Indeed you can. Think of it. A man over 70 years of age. He's in a strange land. He's settled there. He has a beautiful wife. He has a business. He has kinfolk. He leaves it all, as we're going to see, to go to a country he has never seen; and he's marching under sealed orders, as we're going to see. God doesn't tell him where he's going to go. God doesn't tell him how long it's going to take him to get there. God doesn't tell him what he's going to do when he gets there, how long he's going to stay there, or what's going to happen to him. God just says, "Get up and go." And he left, enrolled himself in the School of Faith. And the Scripture that we read said Abraham and Sarah were strangers and pilgrims in the land of Canaan.

Now, so are we. Abraham was not a fugitive. He was not running away from home. Abraham was not a vagabond. He was not looking for home. He was a stranger away from home, and he was a pilgrim heading home. And that's what we're going to learn about him, because what was true about Abraham is not mere history. Friend, it is written for our sake. Why do you think God put this here in the 11th chapter of Hebrews, except to be an inspiration, an informational tool to use?

Now, I want us to learn six powerful principles, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will write them on your heart. They're going to come right out of this passage of Scripture to help you to have that dynamic faith that will bring heaven to your soul. Are you ready? Say, yes. Okay now, let's listen.

I. The Voice Principle

First principle is the voice principle. We must hear God. Now, look, if you will, in verse 8: "By faith Abraham, when he was called—the operative phrase, "when he was called"—to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whether, whither he went." The operative phrase here is, he heard the voice of God. He was called. Remember our Scripture that we come back to over and over again in Romans 10:17: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." There is the voice principle. You must hear God. If you read the story of Abraham in the Book of Genesis, go back to chapter 12, and read right on through about verse 25, you'll read a phrase that will come over and over and over and over again: "The word of the Lord came to him." Let's just take a significant passage. Take your Bible now. Put your bookmark there in Hebrews 11, and then go all the way back to the first book of the Bible, and go back, if you will, to Genesis chapter 12, and let's find what the writer of Hebrews is talking about. I want you to notice now how God comes to Abraham. This is Genesis chapter 12, and we're going to read the first three

verses: “Now, the Lord had said unto Abram...”—there it is—“the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, into a land...”—now, I want you to pay attention now and get ready. I’m going to give you four “I wills,” four times God says “I will,” and I want you to listen to it. He says—“Get these out from thy father’s house, into a land that I will show thee; and I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee; and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Now, here is the voice. He hears the voice of God, and God says, “I will, I will, I will, I will.” That’s the root of faith. That’s where faith comes from. Now, that’s in Genesis chapter 12. If you were to go back to chapter 11, in contradistinction, you would find the people who tried to build a massive tower to heaven called the Tower of Babel. And I want you to notice the difference between Genesis 11:1 to 4 and Genesis 12:1 to 3.

Now, go to Genesis 11:1 to 4: “And the earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar—by the way, that’s Babylon—and dwelt there—and, by the way, Babylon is Iraq—and dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to—now, watch this—let us”—now, if you don’t mind marking in your Bible, just mark “let us”—“make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build that again, let us...”—underscore that—“let us build us a city and a tower; whose top may reach unto heaven”—now watch this—“and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

Now, can you compare that? Compare Genesis 11:1 to 4 with Genesis 12:1 to 3. In Genesis 12, God says, “I will, I will, I will, I will.” In Genesis 11, man says, “let us, let us, let us.” Let us make us a name. God said, “Abraham, I will make your name great.”

Now, I submit to you that most of the people in this city, and cities around the world, are in the “let us” do this. We’re trying to build our high-risers to hell. We’re trying to build our utopias. But faith, friend, hears the voice of God, when God says, “I will.” These people were going to make themselves a name. Anybody know one of their names? We all know the name of Abraham, because God to Abraham, “I will make your name great.”

Now, listen. There’s the voice principle. Comes the question, big question: How can we hear the voice of God? That’s what most of us are asking. You keep saying, “Pastor, I’ve got to hear the voice of God. I want to know how to hear the voice of God. How can I, a mortal, say this is the will of God, and, therefore, I’m going to believe God?” Now, so often, when we pray, we all do this. We pray this way: Lord, if it is Your will.” Do you ever pray that way? Lord, if it is Your will, do this; Lord, if it is Your will, do that; Lord, if it is Your will, heal; Lord, if it is Your will, show us what to do; Lord, if it’s Your will, keep us

safe, if it is Your will. Now, if you don't know the will of God, that's a good way to pray, but that's not the best way to pray. The best way to pray is saying, Lord, this is Your will, and I thank You for it, and I stand on it. You see, put in your margin 1 John chapter 5, verse 14: "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask him anything according to his will, he heareth us." Do you have the confidence to say, "God, this is Your will?" I have confidence. That's where great faith comes. Great faith does not come from guessing at the will of God. Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, how then can I hear the voice of God?" Well, we're going to have to admit something, first of all, that Abraham heard the voice of God in a way that none of us have ever heard the voice of God—at least, I don't think we have. I never have. God appeared to Abraham and spoke to Abraham. He appeared, obviously, through an angel, the angel of Jehovah; but the Lord appeared to him. Look in Genesis chapter 12 and verse 7: "And the Lord appeared unto Abram—his name was called Abram then—and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared to him." God never appeared to me like that. Or, for example, Moses. God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. I've never seen a burning bush, at least not one that burned supernaturally like that. God spoke to Moses supernaturally. I read in the Bible that God spoke to Saul. Saul, who became the apostle Paul, is on the Road to Damascus to put Christians to death, and the Lord appears to him in a vision, a brightness above the noonday sun, a voice from heaven. I've never heard that. I've never seen that. Simon Peter in the Bible was on a rooftop. An angel comes to him. He has a vision. All of these people have heard the Word of God is a supernatural way. Is that what we're waiting on today? No. That is not the norm for us today. Does that mean we cannot hear the voice of God? No. Does that mean that we are less? No. It means that we are more. Do we have less advantage? We have greater advantage. Don't miss this now. To know God, to know the will of God, we have the greater advantage.

Put in your Bible Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2: "God, who at sundry times—that means various times—and in diverse manners—different kinds of ways—spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." Well, how does God speak to us by His Son? The Bible teaches that we have two things—well, really three things. We have the written Word of God. We have the mind of Christ. And we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Now, that doesn't make us lesser than these Old Testament characters. That is a greater advantage.

Now, these Old Testament characters, before they had the Bible, before they knew what we know by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, they had to wait for God to break in with some open revelation, some vision, some ecstasy. We don't have to do that. Friend, I, this morning, can open the Bible and hear the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word

of God—right there. Hey, don't let that go past. When I was born again, regenerated, I received what the Bible calls the mind of Christ. Listen to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 14 and following: "But the natural man—that is, the unsaved man—receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto them, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things—that is, he weighs things and makes appropriate decisions—yet he himself is judged of no man—that is, people can't understand us; we understand them—For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?—but now, listen to this—But we have the mind of Christ." Don't just miss that by nonchalance. We have the inspired, inerrant written Word of God, and we have the mind of Christ.

How can I know the will of God? Friend, when my heart is clean, my motive is clear, and I'm walking in the Spirit, I can assume that what I think and what I desire is the will of God. I can just assume it. You say, that's arrogance. No, it's not. You see, the devil wants to put us under some sort of a pall, some sort of an idea that we couldn't possibly know the will of God. Of course, we can know the will of God. That ought to be the normal condition, that we know the will of God. You say, "Well, what if I say to do something that's outside the will of God?" The Holy Spirit will blow the whistle. He'll blow the whistle. He'll say, "That's wrong. You sinned. Get back in bounds." If you're walking in the Spirit, friend, you will know when the Holy Spirit of God blows the whistle on you. And suppose you're in the Spirit, and there's no sin, but God has a different plan for you? Then God will show you. God will turn you around. Paul is saved to go into Bythinia, but the Spirit forbade him, and he heard a voice from Macedonia. But friend, we can walk in the Lord. It is honoring to God to believe Him and to live in confidence. Now, if you're in doubt about something, wait on God. Don't run ahead of God. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 4, verse 18, "But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It may be dark, and then it's gray dawn, and then there are deep shadows, but colors appear, and then, finally, it's high noon, and you say, "Lord, this is the will of God." If there's something you're wondering about, and you're thinking God is speaking to you, say, "Lord, if this is You speaking, just keep speaking. Confirm it in my heart." That's the way God called me into the ministry. "God, do you want me to preach? Lord, I think You want me to preach. Lord, if you don't want me to preach, You'd better let me know. Lord, You want me to preach." Now, that took place over almost a year. "The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto a perfect day." What is the first principle of these principles? It is the voice principle. You must hear from God. The Word of the Lord came to Abraham, and God will speak to you.

God is speaking to you. And before you say, "I don't know the will of God," let me ask you this question: You look up here, and let me ask you this question. Are you living

by what you already know in the Bible? If you're not, and you're asking God to guide you, you're a big hypocrite. If that offends you, come up and apologize to me, and I'll forgive you. Now, listen. Why should God give you more light when you're not obeying the revealed Word of God that's right here in this book? Think about it. There is the voice principle. We have something better than Abraham. Abraham did not have the revealed Word of God like we have here.

II. The Venture Principle

Now, number two. There is a second principle is what I want to call the venture principle. Not only must you hear God; you must obey what you know. Now, look again in verse 8: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance—here's the operative word now—obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." He heard and he obeyed. Now, he didn't know where it was going to end. That was none of his business. Our responsibility is not to totally understand, but to readily obey. Now, remember, he was leaving all that he knew and all that he loved, and was going out in sheer obedience.

Let me give you a testimony. A little more than 30 years ago, a Pulpit Committee from this church spoke to me about coming to be your pastor. I was pastor, and Brother Jim Whitmire and myself were on the staff down in Florida at a very wonderful church, a growing church, a loving church, a happy church. But your Pulpit Committee came and began to speak to me about coming to this church. Now, we did not want to come to Memphis, Tennessee. I did not want to come to Bellevue Baptist Church. Nothing negative about Memphis, nothing negative about Bellevue—I was just happy where I was, and felt that God was blessing—and He was blessing—and I could see no earthly reason, except as Joyce and I began to fast and pray and seek the face of God, God spoke to our inner being things that we did not understand. I could not have dared to believe what God was going to do here at Bellevue Baptist Church and let me be a part of it. I didn't know that. But I did know that, in my inner person, as God spoke to me, as I understood the will of God, God said, go, and I am so glad we obeyed. I'm so glad that we listened. Now, folks, I don't know where you are right now, but you have to be willing, when God speaks, to obey, whether it makes sense to you or it doesn't make sense. Very frankly, coming up here made no sense to me, none whatsoever; but I was impelled in the spirit to go.

I tell young preachers, they ask me, "When I go to a church, Brother Rogers, what should my attitude be?" I say to young preachers, "When you go to a church, there must be two things: number one, you must be prepared to spend the rest of your life there; and, number two, you must be ready to leave in the next 15 minutes." Both are true. You can't say, "Lord, I'm building a nest." You need to pray, "Lord, if I'm building a nest,

put a thorn in it. I am ready to go.” Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust to obey. Now, friend, God gives you the choice. If you do not obey what you know, don’t ask God for more light. God is not going to give it to you.

Now, are you having a faith problem? If you’re having a faith problem, you’re probably having really an obedience problem. Is there a confession that you need to make? Is there restitution that you need to perform? Is there a gift you need to give? Is there a testimony you need to offer? Is there a place you need to go? Obey. Obey. Do you want faith? The voice principle—hear from God. The venture principle—obey God.

III. The Value Principle

Now, let’s move to the third principle, and that is what I call the value principle. You must establish priorities. Look again, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 11 now. Let’s begin in verse 9: “By faith—Abraham he’s speaking of—he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country—now here’s the operative word, or phrase—dwelling in tabernacles—that means tents—with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

Now, I told you that Abraham was a stranger away from home and he was a pilgrim heading home. Canaan was not his home at that time. He’s looking for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And he’s living in a tent, and he won’t put the tent pegs down too deep, because his motto was “This world is not my home; I’m just passing through.” He had a different priority.

Now, the reason so many of us don’t have faith is because our priorities are wrong. We think that faith is some way to get our will done in heaven when faith is God’s way to get heaven’s will done on earth. “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” So he’s living in a tent.

Now, do you realize—and I had to preach myself this message this morning before I could preach it to you—that our citizenship is in heaven, and we dare not, we must not, get too attached to this world. As we saw yesterday, it can end just like that—the things of this world. I mean, man’s greatest achievement—gone just like that. Philippians 3, verse 20: “For our conversation—that means our behavior, our citizenship—is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” If you’re living for this world, you will not have faith. Furthermore, you’ll be in the junk business. The Bible warns about friendship with the world. James 4, verse 4: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity—warfare—with God? Therefore, whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

Are you worldly? You wonder why you don’t have faith. You think God’s going to give faith to His enemies? Friend of the world. Abraham was not a friend of the world.

When you become a friend of the world, then you begin to live like the world. First John 2, verses 15 through 17: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” And remember that faith comes by the will of God. Now, think of it.

First of all, you become a friend to the world, and then you begin to love the world, and then what’s going to happen? Romans 12:2—you’re going to be conformed to the world. Look at it: “And be not conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God.” Remember I said that you need the mind of Christ to know the will of God? But if this world is squeezing you in, molding you in, shaping you—Madison Avenue, television, Bank America, General Motors, it doesn’t matter what it is; your football team, the fashion designer—what is it? What is it that molds you, conforms you? And then you wonder why you don’t have the mind of Christ. And then you wonder why you don’t understand the will of God. First, it starts with friendship with the world; then, love of the world; then, confirmation to the world; and then, condemnation with the world. First Corinthians 11, verse 32: “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

There are a lot of good illustrations about this. Abraham had with him a nephew whose name was Lot. Now, Lot is following Abraham, and the Bible tells us that Abraham was living in a tent. But Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. He moved into the world. His wife, obviously, became high up in Sodom society, his daughters probably cheerleaders at Sodom High. He becomes a businessman and a some sort of a councilman or something there in Sodom, and he lost it all because he was gravitating to the things of this world. We hear so much today about the separation of church and state. Do you know the message that needs to be preached today is the separation of church and world? Come out from among them. I look at the average Christian today—they look alike, they dress alike, they talk alike, they smoke the same things, go to the same movies, drink the same things. We ought to be different. The Bible says, “Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? We’re to be different.

You want faith? Abraham had a pilgrim character. Now, that doesn’t mean that he was a dropout. Abraham was in business. He had a family. He taught. He even had to go to war several times. But Abraham was not molded by this world.

It’s just us here this morning. May I ask you a question? May I ask you a question? What are your personal goals? Is your personal goal to make enough money to retire,

and have a nice house, and to live in ease, and to have certain things? What are your goals for your children? Do you want them to be successful and famous? Are you more concerned about your spiritual walk with God? Are you more concerned about the character of your children growing in Christ and the kingdom of heaven? Would you leave your present job and take a lesser job for less pay, if it were better for the character of your children? Would you do so? What is your goal? Is it to impress other people? In whose home would you rather visit: the rich and the famous, or the godly and the pure? Most of us are so squeezed in by this world, and we wonder why we don't have faith. Put it down big, plain, and straight: Abraham was a man to whom this world meant very little, because he looked for a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker is God. He had a pilgrim character. And Jesus epitomizes it, in Matthew chapter 6, verse 33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Now, we're just talking about principles of faith, folks, and we're saying, without faith it's impossible to please God.

IV. The Vision Principle

Here's the fourth principle. It is the vision principle—the vision principle. Keep your faith focused. Now, you can hear the message today, and you can agree with it, but as soon as you get back home, you're going to get out of focus, if you're not careful. Now, look again in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 10: "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The operative word is, he looked—he looked. Now, look again in Hebrews 11, verse 13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off..."—that's the vision I'm talking about—"having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." It is so easy to lose the focus that we have of the right values. It is so easy to get earthly minded and worldly minded. Colossians 3, verses 1 and 2: "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

Now, friend, Abraham was a man who had a vision, and his vision enabled him to see the invisible. Remember Hebrews 11, verse 1—our definition of faith: "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Now, that's the important thing. Look again in verse 13: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." That is, they saw the invisible. They saw things that were not seen. Faith is seeing the invisible. And it is so true that we can by faith see the invisible. Let me give you an interesting verse—2 Corinthians 4, verse 18: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Is that double talk? Paul says we're not looking at what we can see; we're looking at what

we can't see. Faith sees the invisible; it knows the unknowable; it does the impossible. Because of the vision there is the focus. You have to keep your faith on these things.

A man went into the psychiatrist's office. The nurse came back to see the doctor, and said, "Doctor, there's a man out here who says he needs to see you. Doctor, I think he's crazy. He thinks he's invisible." The doctor said, "Go tell him we can't see him."

There is an invisible world. There is a world that is more real than this world, and all of these heroes of the faith were people who could see the invisible. Most of us live a life where all we see is what is before us—our car, our house, our job. We never get a vision. We never look upward. We never look onward. You know, even in the material world, you think of the people who make a mark—the explorers, the novelists, the artists, the creators, the inventors—all of these had the ability to see the invisible. Before I ever preached in this pulpit, I would come out here when it was sheer dirt and stand up here and preach. I know that may sound funny to you. But God put a dream in my heart, and what we're doing today.

When Disney World was being dedicated down in Florida, they opened it up with a grand procession. They were all up there in the stands. And Walt Disney had died, and Mrs. Walt Disney was sitting there alongside one of the executives. And all of everything was happening, and all of the fanfares, Disney did it in those days. And the lady sitting next to Mrs. Walt Disney said, "It's a shame Walt is not here to see all of this." She said, "Oh, he saw it; that's why it's here." That's why it's here. He saw it. Now, he didn't see what it has become today, though, I guarantee you. If he knew what's happening today, he'd be doing 180,000 rpms in his grave.

Friend, it begins with a vision. Faith—faith—is setting your affection on something that is bigger than most of us are living for, just drawing our breath and drawing our salary.

V. The Vigilance Principle

Now, here's the fifth principle: and it's the vigilance principle. You must guard your heart. The devil will war against your faith. Look in Hebrews 11:11: "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." Well, that all sounds well and good. God gave Abraham a promise, but you know that he got his eyes off the Lord, and so did Sarah, and they did some terrible things. Old Abraham went down into Egypt when God had put him there in Canaan. I wish I had more time to tell you about that. But God put his faith to a test. God tested him, and he failed the test, at first.

Friend, God will test your faith. A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. The Bible speaks of the trial of our faith, in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 7. Now, when you

live the life of faith, it's not all honey and no bees. Your faith is going to be tested. Abraham should have stayed there in the land of Canaan even though there was a famine. If he knew that God had put him there, he should have said, "If I starve, I'm going to stay here. If God put me here, God's going to take care of me." Be vigilant. Your faith is going to come under attack. I'm going to tell you again, it's not going to always be easy. In churches, don't get the idea that all the lost people are out there and all the saved people are in here. That's wrong. In the home, don't get the idea that you're not going to have any problem with your marriage just because you have faith. In life, don't think there are not going to be any heartaches or any tears. There are going to be problems. But Abraham returned. He came back to the life of faith. I wish I had more time to speak about that, but let me give you the last of these principles because time has gone from us.

VI. The Victory Principle

And it is the victory principle. Enjoy the blessings. Hebrews 11, verses 11 and 12: "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." Sarah got her baby, friend. "Therefore spring there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable." Abraham's name is great. His descendants are great. Abraham has been a blessing to the world. He's been a blessing to me. God gave Abraham the land. God made his name great. And, listen. Think of all the things that God did through Abraham. From Abraham came the Jewish nation. From Abraham came the prophets. From Abraham came the Bible. And in the flesh, from the seed of Abraham, our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It all came by faith.

There is the victory principle. There is no way—no way—you'll live in victory apart from faith. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.

Conclusion

And all of these things are there, right there in the School of Faith. And these are six principles. Look at me. I guarantee it, if you will put these things into practice, your faith will blossom and bloom. And don't tell me it won't, if you have not tried it. And don't tell me that it can't work for you. Abraham was a pagan, when God called him. And don't tell me you've missed your opportunity. He was 75 years of age when he got started in the School of Faith.

And God wants to save you. And the life of faith begins with a step of faith. And that step of faith is to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Bow your heads.

Dress Rehearsal for Calvary

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 2, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:17–19

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.”

HEBREWS 11:17

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Introduction

Take God’s Word, find please, if you would, the book of Hebrews, chapter eleven, and, in a few moments, we’re going to look at verses seventeen through nineteen.

Now, as you hold your Bible in your hand, may I tell you—look at me—may I tell you there is no book like the Bible. None. None whatsoever. The book that you hold in your hand is one book, and yet it is sixty-six books. There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament. There are twenty-seven in the New Testament. They were written over a period of about 1,500 years by at least forty different authors in three different languages, people from all backgrounds and walks of life. But when you bring them together, they don’t make sixty-six books; they make one book, one book that is bound together. It has one hero—His name is Jesus. It has one villain—he is the devil. It has one theme—it is salvation. It has one purpose—the glory of God. And so, if you read the Bible anywhere, standing somewhere in the shadows, you’re going to find the Lord Jesus. And that’s what we’re going to see today as we look in the life of a man whose

name was Abraham. He's the father of the faithful, the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. A name that is revered around the world: Father Abraham, the father of the faithful. And we're going to look back in history, centuries before Jesus Christ was born upon this earth, and we're going to find a wonderful depiction of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, look, if you will, at the scripture that we have here in the New Testament, before we go back to the Old Testament. Hebrews chapter eleven, verse seventeen: "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried"—that is, tested—"offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Now, how was he able to do this? Well, verse nineteen tells us: "Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."

Now, the word "figure" means a type, an illustration. In the Old Testament, God gave illustrations, types, prophecies, figures of that which is to come in the New Testament. Now, why did God do that? Well, many reasons, but one reason. Friend, listen to me. It is one of the great confirmations of the inspiration of the Scripture, when you see way back here centuries and centuries and centuries before Jesus Christ was even born that God gives figures and types and prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only is it, therefore, a confirmation of the inspiration of the Scriptures, but, correspondingly, it is a confirmation of the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as we see Him pictured there, tucked away in the Old Testament. Don't get the idea that the Old Testament is about something other than Jesus. All of the Bible is about Jesus. It's all about Jesus. And furthermore, it is there that we might have the joy that we're going to have this morning of discovering and feasting on these things that are tucked away in the Old Testament.

By the way, before we get to the Old Testament, let me give you a couple verses here to prove what I am talking about is not mere fancy. Put down in your margin John eight, verse fifty-six. Jesus is talking to the unbelieving Jews of His day who boasted in Abraham, and here's what Jesus said to those Jews: "Your father..."—talking about Abraham—"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad." Abraham, Jesus said, saw My day. Now, I want to remind you, this was centuries before Jesus was born.

Let me give you another verse—Galatians three, verse eighteen: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." The phrase that I want to extract from that verse is "that the gospel was preached to Abraham." "The scriptures foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel

unto Abraham.”

Now, having said that, let’s go to this passage of Scripture. Go backward in your Bible to Genesis chapter twenty-two. Just, Genesis, the first book—find the first book, fast-forward twenty-two chapters, and you’re going to come to our text, or, at least you’re going to come to the basis of our text today in Genesis chapter twenty-two.

Now, there are some things I want you to see. What I’m going to do right now is give you a portrait of Jesus that is found in the Old Testament. Are you ready for it? I want you to see and delight yourself and feast on a portrait of Jesus found in the Old Testament—actually, a prophecy of His coming crucifixion on the cross. I want you to see it, and believe it, and then, I want you to ask yourself this question: What does that mean to me today? What does it mean to me personally?

I. The Person Who Is Described

Number one: the first thing I want you to see is the special person who is described. Now, the person who is described is Isaac.

A. Isaac Is a Picture of Jesus

But you’re going to see that Isaac is a picture of Jesus. Look, if you will, in Genesis twenty-two, one and two: “And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt”—that is, test—“Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said—God said—Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Now, Isaac therefore becomes a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you about six ways or more that He is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, his miracle birth was prophesied. Go back even further now to Genesis chapter eighteen, and begin in verse nine. The angel is coming to visit with Abraham and to make a prophecy. “And they said unto him—to Abraham—where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now, Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.” That is, Sarah had gone through the menopause. And, “Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?”

Now, here’s what the angel says: “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” I want to ask you that question. Is anything too hard for God? Of course not! Is anything too hard for the Lord? “At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

B. Isaac Was Born of a Miracle

Now, Isaac was born of a miracle. Jesus was born of a miracle. Put in your margin Isaiah seven, verse fourteen: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

Not only was his miracle birth prophesied, but his birthday was preset. Look in Genesis twenty-one, verses one and two: “And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age”—now, don’t miss this—“at the set time of which God had spoken to him.” God not only prophesied the birth, but God prophesied the set time of the birth. Well, what does that have to do with Jesus? Put in your margin Galatians 4:4: “But when the fullness of time was come, God set forth His Son made of a woman.” Isaac was born at a set time. Jesus was born at a set time.

C. Isaac’s Name Was Divinely Given

Now, here’s the third thing: Isaac’s name was divinely given. Genesis 17:19: “And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac.” Compare that to the New Testament, Matthew one, verse twenty-one, speaking of Mary: “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus.” Isaac was born of a miracle. Jesus was born of a miracle. Isaac was born at a set time. Jesus was born at a set time. Isaac was pre-named. Jesus was pre-named.

D. Isaac Was Conceived of a Miracle

Isaac, again, was conceived of a miracle. Genesis eighteen, verse fourteen: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Remember that Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old when it happened. When the angel came to Mary, and said, Mary, you’re going to have a baby, Mary said, “how can this be,”—Luke one, verse thirty-four—“seeing I know not a man?” That is, I’m still a virgin. “How can this be? And the angel said to Mary, for with God nothing shall be impossible.” What did the angel say to Abraham? Is there anything too hard for God? What did the angel say to Mary? With God, nothing shall be impossible. Sometimes our Jewish friends have difficulty believing in the virgin birth. Friend, every Jew that you see today upon the face of the earth is here because of a miracle birth—every one of them.

E. Isaac Was Loved of His Father

Now, Isaac was loved of his father. Genesis twenty-two, verse two: “and he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.” Ladies and gentlemen, I told you last week this is the first time the word “love” is found in the Bible—right here: “Take your son whom you love.” In Genesis twenty-two, verse sixteen, he’s called Abraham’s only son. Compare that now to John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.” We think about

God loving the world. But friend, I want you to know that God loved His Son before He loved the world. John five, verse twenty: “For the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.”

F. Isaac Was Offered as a Sacrifice

Listen. Isaac was offered up as a sacrifice. Jesus was offered as a sacrifice. Genesis twenty-two, verse two: “And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” And again, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son.”

G. Isaac Was Raised from the Dead

Isaac was raised from the dead. Genesis 22, verse 4: “Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.” God said to Abraham, Abraham, take your son, and offer him as a burnt offering. Abraham takes his son, and counts the days—one, two, three. He comes to the place there where the offering is to be made.

Now, he takes his son, and he starts up Mount Moriah to offer his son. How was he able to do that? Well, remember Hebrews eleven, verse nineteen? He was “accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead.” Now, watch this: “whence also he received him in a figure.” That is, in Abraham’s mind, for three days Isaac was dead. From the day that God said, Abraham, take him and offer him, until the day that Abraham got him back, in Abraham’s mind, he was dead. Abraham received him from the dead.

Now, what is the gospel that you and I preach? That Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and was raised again the third day—1 Corinthians fifteen, verses three through four. Abraham received Isaac back, in a figure. God the Father received Jesus back literally. So, what we’re talking about here is a special person. Isaac represents, prefigures, Jesus. Have you got that? Then move to the second thing.

II. The Place That Is Designated

Not only a special person, but I want you to see a specific place that is designated. I want you to see how this comes together. Now, look in Genesis chapter twenty-two, verse two: “And he said”—God said—“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.” Now, He didn’t just say, go offer him. He said, I have a specific place that I want you to do it.

Now, look in Genesis 22, verse 4: “Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.” Now, think with me, friend, about our universe. There are 100 million known galaxies in our universe. We don’t know what’s beyond that. In those

great galaxies that stretch across the sky, there is one galaxy known as the Milky Way. That Milky Way is 100,000 light years across. That's 100 million billion miles from rim to rim. God goes into that great galaxy out of all of the millions of galaxies, and God finds one little insignificant sun, our sun, 93 million miles away from the earth. And God looks there at that one sun, and around that sun are orbiting a number of planets. God takes one little planet, a speck of cosmic dust called the Earth, and God says, "the earth is the Lord's." And then, on the Earth, that globe there, God takes one land, the land of Israel, and God calls that land "My land." And then, out of that land that God calls His land, He tightens the focus a little more, and God takes in that land one city, the city of Jerusalem. And God calls that city, "My holy city." And then, in that holy city, God takes one hill, Mount Moriah, and He calls that, "My holy hill." That becomes the focal point of all of the universes—a little limestone ridge. God said, "Abraham, I will show you a place, a specific place. You take your only son. You take your only son that you love. You take him there, and offer him in the place that I will show you."

The name "Moriah" literally means, foreseen of the Lord. The place is not incidental. The place is not accidental. It is the same place that Jesus would one day pour out His life's blood. Put down Luke chapter 22, verse 23: "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him." Not a place—the place, the same place.

III. The Purpose That Is Designated

Now, we've talked about a person, we've talked about a place; now, let's talk about the purpose that is designated here. Genesis 22, verse 2: "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." This speaks of the cross—when Isaac was to be offered in that same place that Jesus was to die.

Think of the suffering of the cross that is pictured. Look, if you will, in Genesis 22, verses 4 through 8: "Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." Abraham says, he's going to be slain, but we're both coming back. You talk about faith. We're going to go worship and come again to you. "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife: and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said"—Isaac said—"Behold the fire and the wood: but where is a lamb for the burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

Now, father and son come to a point beyond which the others cannot go. You stay here, and father and son went to commune together. That tells me of dark Gethsemane where Jesus left Peter, James and John and the other disciples, and He went alone to commune with His Father facing Calvary. And Isaac looks at his father. In Abraham's hand there is a torch, a fire in one hand. There is a knife in his other hand. Isaac can read his father's face. He begins now to know what is about to happen. Think of what must have been going through Isaac's heart, as he sees his father go up without a lamb, only with his own son up to that place of sacrifice. Think of what must have been in Abraham's heart. I know, when my first son was born, I ceased to think so much of the love of Jesus, and I thought more of the love of a father. Though both are infinite in their love. I thought how it must have moved the Father's heart to give His only Son to die upon that cross. Think of how much the Lord Jesus suffered. Think how much God the Father suffered as it is pictured here.

Think of the suffering of the cross. Think of the suffering of the cross. Look in Genesis 22, verse 9: "And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood."

Use your sanctified imagination. Here's the altar. Here's the wood. Here's the torch. Here's the knife. Abraham says, "Come here, son. Hold out your hands," and Abraham begins to bind those hands. Now, I remind you that Abraham is well beyond one hundred years of age. I remind you that Isaac is not a child, as we sometimes see pictured. Isaac is a strapping young man. He could have easily outrun the old man. He could have taken the old man and bound him. But he presents himself to be bound. You know what Jesus said? "No man takes my life from me. I lay it down of my self." Here you see the son submitting himself to the father. They said of Jesus, "He saved others; himself he could not save." They were so wrong. He saved others; Himself He would not be saved. He could have come down from that cross, but He did not.

Notice in Genesis 22, verse 6: "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son." Wood is a symbol of humanity. It speaks about the wood of our wickedness being laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. As you see Isaac bearing that wood going up this mountain that one day Jesus would one day die on, think of John 19, verse 17: "And he—Jesus—bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called Golgotha." Isaac goes up that mountain bearing the wood upon which he was to die. Jesus goes up the same mountain bearing that wooden cross upon which He was to die. Think of the sacrifice of the cross that is pictured. Abraham has a knife, and he has a torch, and he has ropes. The cord speaks of the binding power of sin. The knife speaks of the bleeding power of sin. The fire speaks of the burning power of sin, because the fires of God's wrath would burn

themselves out upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The Promise That Is Declared

Now, we've talked about the purpose, which was sacrifice. Now, I want you to think about the promise that's declared here. We've talked about a person, we've talked about a place, we've talked about a purpose; now let's look at a promise. In Genesis 22, beginning in verse 11, Abraham is about now to sacrifice Isaac. Isaac has laid down his life. He had become one with his father. His father now is about to make this offering, accounting that God the Father is able to raise him up. Genesis 22, verse 11: "And the angel of the Lord called out unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said—the angel said—to Abraham, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place"—now, don't you miss this; this is the whole sermon—"Jehovah-jireh: as it is has been said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

Now, the figure changes. The knife does not fall upon Isaac who is representing the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the picture changes, and Isaac now represents us, and there is a ram caught in the thicket. As I have told you before, this ram—this ram—crowned with thorns, his horns locked in a thorny thicket, is taken, and this ram becomes a substitute for Isaac. Isaac gets up off the altar, and the ram is slain in his stead. And the knife did not fall that day upon Isaac, because one day it would fall upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, Isaac had asked his father. "Father, where is the lamb?" Abraham said, "God will provide Himself a lamb." And God did. God did. Remember what John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus coming: "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." When Abraham saw what God did, when Abraham saw that ram that was to take the place the Isaac, and give Isaac back to his bosom, give Isaac back, as it were, from the dead to Abraham, Abraham named that place, Mount Moriah, Abraham named it Jehovah-jireh. Now, what does that mean? It means, the Lord will provide.

Now, friend, listen to me. I don't know what need you have. You listen to your pastor. The Lord is there to provide that need. The Lord will provide. In that day, what was he going to provide? Himself, a lamb. Where was He going to provide it? In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. When is He going to provide it? It shall be seen. He's talking about the day when Jesus Christ would die upon the cross.

Conclusion

Now, it's time to wrap it up. There's so much I could say; I have gone too fast. But I wanted you to get the whole picture. Now, what does this mean to you today? And what does this mean to world missions? Are you ready to apply it to your heart?

Listen, friend. If there were ever a promise—ever a promise—that God would have been tempted to renege upon, ever a promise that God might be tempted not to keep, it would have been the promise to send Jesus. If there were ever a time when God would say, I change my mind, that would have been the time. But I want you to put down this verse. It is very important, because it sums it all up. It is Romans chapter 8 and verse 32: “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.” Do you get the logic there in Romans 8:32? He that spared not His own Son.

Now, when Abraham is taking Isaac up at the last moment, God said, “Abraham, don't do it.” God spared Abraham's son. But God did not spare His own Son. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the one who is prefigured and prophesied here in Genesis chapter 22. God provided Himself a lamb. It doesn't say that God would provide a lamb for Himself. God becomes the lamb. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. God provided Himself as a lamb. God in human flesh died. God the mighty maker died for man, the creature's sin. God died at Calvary for you. Does that mean anything to you, that God laid down His own dear Son upon that altar, that the fires of God's wrath burned themselves out upon God's own dear Son. Because God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Now, you listen to me. You on the back row, you listen to me. You over here, you listen to me. You mister businessman, you listen to me. Listen to what the apostle Paul said, in Romans chapter 8, verse 32: “For if God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up freely for us all; how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?”

My son is with me here in the city these weeks. We're doing a project together. I love him with all my heart. His name is Steve, my firstborn son. If you were to ask me, “Adrian, can I have your son?” Why should I give you my son? “Well, I want to torture him, and then kill him, for some cause that I have. Will you give me your son?” No, I won't give you my son. I don't love you that much. No, I would not give you my son that you might torture him and put him to death. For whatever cause, I would not do that.

But suppose I loved you and your cause enough, your need enough, that I were to give you my own son that he would die in ignominy and shame, be brutalized. If I loved you enough to give you my son, and then you said, “Can I also have his computer? Can I also have his sports jacket? Can I also have his automobile?” Of course! If I did not spare the son, would I not also with him freely give you all things? Friend, if God gave Jesus, He's not going to hold anything else back. Do you understand that? If God gave

Jesus and delivered Him up freely for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? He is the God who provides. If God gave the one great gift, He's going to give all of the others.

I have proved it in life. When I needed a Savior, and I said, "Lord Jesus, save me," He provided salvation. When He called me to preach, and I didn't know how I was going to do it, my dad said, "Son, I wish I could send you to college, but I can't; I don't have the resources," I said, "That's all right, God has called me; God will provide." For eight years, seven of them married, I went through higher education, and God provided. God met my every need. When Joyce and I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, and a little baby was taken to heaven, we looked for comfort. Where would we go? He was there, and He provided the need of every heart. When I began to preach, I wondered what would I preach. First three or four times I preached, I said, Well, I preached the whole Bible; now, what am I going to do? That was over a half a century ago. How am I going to preach? I stand before you to tell you that God has provided Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday from the deep well of His Word. God provides. God provides.

And one of those days, when my feet touch the chilly waters of the river of death—and that day is coming for all of us, if Jesus tarries—my Provider, Jehovah-jireh, will be there. "He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" Now, we're talking about world missions. If you're wondering, Oh, if God calls me to missions, how will I do it? How will I make it? What will I do? I'll tell you how you will make it: Jehovah-jireh will provide it for you. A missionary, back in the days when they sailed to the mission field, was about to get on the boat, walking up the gangplank, the trunks had been packed. They couldn't fly home on a 747 like we do today. The missionary and his family were going. A good friend walked up to the missionary just before he got on the boat and handed the missionary an envelope that was sealed, and said, don't open this envelope; don't ever open it, until you come to the place, if you ever do, where you don't know what else to do, where else to turn, you've run out of resources, you have a need that there is no other answer to, then open this envelope. The missionary put it in his breast pocket. Most of us would have taken it out, you know, to see what's in it. The missionary put it in his vest pocket, stayed his full tenure on the mission field, came home and held up the envelope. It was still sealed, never been opened, because through sickness, sorrow, tears, pain and toil, there never ever was a time when there was not a provision that God did not answer. His name is Jehovah-jireh. And the God who gave the first great gift is the God who will see us through.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. Now, friend, God spared not His own Son for you. God wants you to be saved. You're saved by trusting Jesus. Believe that He shed His precious blood on the cross for you, and that God

raised Him from the dead. The Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you’ll be saved.”

Would you pray, Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me. Save me today. Thank You for doing it. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Pastor, if I pray a prayer like that, would Jesus save me? Well, if you’re sincere. How can I know if I’m sincere? The Bible test is, are you willing to make it public? Jesus said, if you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you. If you confess me before men, I’ll confess you before my Father in heaven. We’re going to sing an invitational verse in a moment. The ministers of our church are going to stand here at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front to welcome those of you who will be coming forward here.

If you’re in the balcony, you may go to the banner that says “Redeemer,” the one to my right over there in the corner. or the one the says “Messiah,” the one to my left, and your right. Just make your way there. And if today, once and for all, now and forever, you are willing to trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, you want to know that your sin is forgiven, you want peace and purpose in life, you want a home in heaven, and you want to be absolutely certain if you died today you would go to heaven, then I want you to leave your seat and come forward. And I want you to say to the minister, I’m trusting Jesus. We’ll take a Bible, we’ll guide you in this decision, answer any questions we can answer, and seal it in prayer. It will take just a few moments. You’ll be so glad you did it. Don’t let the devil intimidate you. And don’t let the devil keep you from coming.

Now, if you don’t want to come, there are not enough angels in heaven to drag you down this aisle, because God wouldn’t allow it. But if you do want to come, there are not enough demons in hell, or anywhere else, to keep you from coming. You may come. The Bible says, Whosoever will may come. Others of you are saved, some of you have never had believer’s baptism. You need to come and say, Look, I know I’m saved, but I want to make an appointment for my baptism. You’re living in disobedience, if you’re not baptized as a believer in Christ. And you can’t grow when you’re living in willful disobedience. You need to come and say, “I want to be baptized. I want to make an appointment for my baptism.” Others of you may need to come and say, I want to transfer my membership. I want to place my membership here. If this is where you worship, and God speaks to you, you just come and say, I want to place my membership here.

Now, some of you feel that God is calling you to full-time vocational missions. I want you to come this morning and tell the minister, I’m just placing my life in God’s hand for His call upon my life. Respectfully, I’m going to ask that no one leave during the invitation, all of us be in a spirit of prayer. If you’re with a friend that needs to come

forward, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful that is. We're going to pray. Then we're going to stand. And on the first stanza, I want you to step out.

Lord Jesus, bring, I pray, the lost to You. Help those, dear Lord, who need a church home to answer. Lord, those that You're calling into vocational missions, help them to say "yes." In Your Holy name. Amen. Let's stand together. You step out and come.

The Testing of Your Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 16, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:17–19

“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,”

HEBREWS 11:17

Outline

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I. Can I Trust God with the Possessions He Has Given to Me?

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A. Informed Obedience

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C. Immediate Obedience

D. Impassioned Obedience

III. Can I Trust God with the Promises He Has Made to Me?

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Introduction

What a wonderful song. Hebrews chapter eleven. In just a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse seventeen, and read several verses. Be finding it. I want to talk to you today about “The Testing of Your Faith.”

Warren Wiersbe has reminded us that a faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. For example, how would you like to get on an airplane that had never been tested? How would you like to have a doctor do surgery on you who had not passed some tests in medical school? I heard of a man who was having surgery, and the doctor said, “You seem nervous.” He said, “Yes, this is my first surgery.” The doctor said, “Yes, I know how you feel. It's mine also.” We want people to have a faith that can be trusted, so therefore it has to be a faith that can be tested.

Now, look, if you please, here in verse seventeen: “By faith Abraham, when he was tried”—do you see that? That word “tried” means, when he was tested, when he was put to the test—“offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” That is, he is the hope of all your descendancy. Your children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are going to come through Isaac—“that in Isaac thy seed shall be called.”

And the Bible says that Abraham offered him up. That means he gave him as a sacrifice.

Now, how could he do that? Well, look in verse nineteen: “According that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure”—in a type—“he received him.” Now, friend, God is going to give you some trials, some tests, to see if your faith is real. Now, in the Old Testament, as we’re going to see in a moment, the King James says, “God did tempt Abraham, and said, offer up Isaac.” Well, the word “tempt” does not mean a solicitation to do evil there. It means a testing, a trial.

Now, test and trials and temptations come in two kinds. The devil solicits us, tempts us to do evil, to cause us to stumble. God tests us to do good in order to cause us to stand. Now, this is one of those testings that we have. What God wants to do is to make our faith strong and pure.

Put in your margin this ancillary verse—1 Peter chapter one, verse seven: “That the trial”—that is, the testing—“of your faith being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tested—or tried—with fire, might be found unto praise, honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus.” When Jesus comes, don’t you want to have a pure faith, like purified gold? Then God’s going to put your faith in the fire.

Some of you right now probably have faith in the fire. Some of you are going through a test, an ordeal. God means you no harm. God wants you to understand whether or not you have the real thing. Now, temptation from Satan, these are pretty well standardized. But the trials that come from God, these are tailor made. God knows where you are, God knows your circumstances, and God may put you through a test.

Now, this is the New Testament commentary on the Old Testament story. To understand what the writer of Hebrews is talking about here in Hebrews chapter eleven, you have to go back to the Old Testament. So let’s just put a bookmark in Hebrews eleven, and go back to Genesis twenty-two. Let’s get the story. Let’s find out what happened here when the Bible says that God put Abraham to the test. I’m going to read fourteen verses in a row, so just open your Bible, look along with me, and hang on. Genesis 22, 1 through 14:

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham”—now, remember, God’s not trying to get Abraham to sin, but to stand. The Bible says, “God tempteth no man with evil, neither can He be tempted.” God is testing Abraham—“and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he”—God—“said, take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest...”—by the way, this is the first time the word “love” is found in the Bible, right here—“whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

Can you imagine? Take your son and offer him as a burnt sacrifice. Verse three: “And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship”—now, watch this—“and come again unto you.”

God had just said put him to death. He said, we’re going to go up there and worship God, make a sacrifice, and both of us are coming back again. “And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provided himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead”—in the place—“of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.”

Ladies and gentlemen, that is an incredible story. God had never before commanded human sacrifice. And now He has commanded Abraham to take the son of promise, the beloved son, and put him to death.

Now, the liberal theologians try to explain this away. But you cannot believe the inerrant, infallible Word of God, and say this never happened. You cannot explain it away. Others who doubt that God is sovereign say, God couldn’t do this. God is sovereign God. God can do anything He pleases. He doesn’t have to get your permission or mine, either one. The command is given, “Take your son.”

Now, remember, this son, Isaac, was the son of miracle birth. He is the son of promise. He is the beloved son. And the Bible says that Abraham, with no hesitation whatsoever, sets out for Mount Moriah. If you look in verse three, “And Abraham rose up early in the morning.” That is, he begins now, with no hesitation, to do exactly what God told him to do.

Use your imagination. Can you imagine—can you imagine—before starting up that mountain that Abraham and Isaac are sitting there around the campfire, can you imagine what Abraham must have felt, as he looks into the face of his dear son, wondering, how will I say this to him? How will I explain it? The memories that he had raising this little boy. All of these things, what will Isaac say? What will his last look at me be like? Put yourself in Abraham's place.

Now, God is going to test your faith by asking you to do something that may surprise you—not by giving up the wrong things and the bad things, but by giving up the good things. It would be relatively easy if God asked us to give up the bad things—give up lying, and stealing, and cheating, and pride—to show that we love Him. But that's not what God is asking. God had given to Abraham a possession, a wonderful son. God had given to Abraham a program—I'll make of you a great nation; you're going to bless the whole world. And that program is going to come through that possession. And God had given to Abraham a promise—"I will do it." And now God just seems to be asking for all of it back. God is just saying, "Now, Abraham, give all of this back to me."

Now, there are some things we give up for the Lord. But the test of faith that Abraham is facing is not what he is giving up for the Lord, but what he is giving back to the Lord of the blessings that we just heard about in that marvelous first song that was sung to us, that Lisa sang to us.

Now, here's the question that I'm going to ask you, and that I've had to wrestle with before I preached this message. Are you able to give your blessings back to God? Not, are you willing to give up your sins for God? Are you willing to give your blessings back to God? That's what Abraham was asked to do. I want to lay three questions on your heart today. And let's see if your faith can pass the test.

I. Can I Trust God with the Possessions He Has Given to Me?

Question number one: Can I trust God with the possessions He has given to me? Can I trust God with the possessions He has given to me? Now, back to Hebrews chapter eleven and verse seventeen: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son." Now, the test was over a gift that God had given to him. Why the test? Could it be that Abraham is coming to love Isaac more than he is loving God? Could it be that he is coming to love the gift more than the giver? Could it be that God now is moving into second place? The angels said the test was to find out whether that was true or not. Listen to me. Let me tell you something about our God. God will never take second place in your life to anything or to anyone.

Now, many of us want to give God a place in our lives. May I say it clearly—God does not want a place in your life. You say, then I'll give Him prominence in my life. God

does not want prominence in your life. God desires, deserves, and demands preeminence in your life. He will not be a part-time God with a duplex for a throne.

Now, many of us like to have God in our lives. But how many of us say, “God, I love You supremely”? You see, we have to be very careful that our blessings don’t become curses. Let me give you a significant verse. Put it in your margin Malachi chapter two and verse two: “But if ye will not hear and if ye will not lay it to heart to give glory unto My name...”—listen—“to give glory unto My name saith the Lord of Hosts, I will even send a curse upon you”—now, listen to this next phrase—“and I will curse your blessings.” Did you hear that? I will curse your blessings. Blessings can become a curse. And God goes on to say, “Yeah, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart”—you’re not listening.

May I tell you what is wrong in God-blessed America today? God is beginning to curse our blessings. We have been blessed like no other nation on the face of the earth, and we spit in the face of God. More vileness, more immorality, more slaughter of the unborn, more disregard for God, more arrogance strutting through the earth. America has been blessed like no other nation, but we put God aside and have concentrated on our blessings. America has been blessed. But I’m just afraid that God is going to turn our blessings to curses unless we turn back to Almighty God. Does that frighten you? It frightens me. Friend, God says, I will not take second place to anybody, anything.

Now, it was not wrong for Abraham to love Isaac. I love my children with all of my heart. As a matter of fact, no one can truly love his son until he loves God as he ought. God is not asking Abraham, do you love Isaac? He knew he loved Isaac. What God wants to know is, Abraham, do you love Me more than you love Isaac?

After the resurrection, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?” Now, some people think that means, do you love me more than all these other disciples love Me? But I don’t think that’s what He meant. I think He’s standing there by the seashore, and He’s saying, “Simon, do you love me more than these your brothers? Do you love me more than you love these fish, and these nets, and these boats, and this way of life? Do you love me more than these things? Simon Peter, I will not take second place in your life.” Are you listening? The test of faith is not primarily between love and hate, but between two loves, those things we love dearly and that which we must love supremely.

Here’s the question I had to ask myself this morning before I could preach this message: Adrian, do you have in your heart any love that is greater than your love for Jesus Christ? I challenge you to ask yourself that question.

Now, if there is in your heart, in your life, or if you consider there may be a love greater than a love you have for God, God’s message to you from this passage of Scripture this morning is, “Get thee up to Moriah, and put it on the altar, and sacrifice it

as a burnt offering.” That’s what God is saying to you this morning. You have to ask yourself this question: is there anything? What could it be? I had to ask myself that question. As a matter of fact, I do this from time to time when I find that perhaps my heart is getting colder, perhaps I’m getting perfunctory, or professional, in the ministry. I get alone, and I don’t make a list of my sins—those are relatively easy to deal with. But I list my blessings—my life, my health, my family, my darling, precious wife, my children, my incredible grandchildren, my knowledge of the Word of God, my ability to preach the Word, the gift of being the pastor of this church, my house, my clothes, any retirement income I may have laid back—just give it to Him. It’s Yours. With an open hand, God, they, and these, are Thine. That’s not easy to do. And you know when you’ve done it, and you know when you’ve just said it and didn’t mean it.

May I ask you a question? Is there anything you would not give back to God that God has already given to you if He asked you for it? That’s a big question. And you say, “God, You gave it to me. Why would you ask it back?” That’s none of your business. Is there anything God has given to you that you would not willingly give back to Him if He asked you for it? Now, listen to me carefully. Anything God has given you, you can trust Him with. And anything God has not given to you, you don’t need. Does that make sense? Anything God has given to you, you can trust Him with. Anything God has not given to you, you don’t need. Yes, I gave you Isaac. Now, take him up to the mountain and sacrifice him to Me. We’re talking about the testing of your faith.

II. Can I Trust God with the Purpose He Has for Me?

Second question I want to ask you: Can I trust God with the purpose He has for me? We’ve talked about possessions He’s given to us. What about the purpose He has for us? Again, Hebrews chapter eleven, verses seventeen through eighteen: “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac”—that’s the possession—“and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called.”

Now, here’s the plan. Here’s the purpose. God had given Abraham a purpose, and Abraham said, “Okay, I’m tracking along. Now, I know what’s going to happen. I’m going to have a son, and this son’s going to have sons and sons, and I’m going to have a great descendancy, people of faith.” And now God says, “Put it to death.”

You know, that didn’t make sense. That did not make sense. Faith is not primarily believing God in spite of the evidence; it is obeying God in spite of the consequences—in spite of the consequences; not knowing why, not having to know why. Obedience is the great proof of our trust and our faith. When we know that we know that we know we have a word from God, we don’t pass it past the judgment bar of our understanding; we just simply obey. There’s only one alternative to obedience. You know what it is?

Disobedience. We are to obey God.

A. **Informed Obedience**

Now, let me tell you what kind of obedience it must be. It must be informed obedience. Don't go out there now and just make some sort of sacrifice to show God how much you love Him. You'll make a horrible mistake. Be in tune with God. Listen to God. Abraham heard God speaking. Many Christians are endeavoring to do things for God that God doesn't want done. And God has not promised to bless any endeavor He has not commanded. We must hear God in order to obey God. It must be informed obedience.

B. **Intentional Obedience**

Number two: it must be intentional obedience. You say, "Well, I'm not informed." May I ask you a question? Are you listening? Are you listening? Do you report to God for duty? Real obedience is not mere absence from doing wrong; it is actively seeking the will of God for your life. Ignorance of God's will is not an excuse, if you don't have intentional obedience—informed, intentional and immediate.

C. **Immediate Obedience**

You know, back in Genesis chapter two, verse twenty-three, God gave the command, and the Bible says, "And in the morning he rose up." There's no wait. There's no delay. As soon as possible, he got on the road to do exactly what God told him to do. Be quick, my soul, to answer Him. Be jubilant, my feet. Procrastination—procrastination—is a form of disobedience. Has God told you to say something, give something, do something, and you're waiting? Don't wait. Real obedience is immediate obedience. Ours is not to reason why. Ours is not to make reply. Ours is to do or die.

Sometimes the test will come, and, if you don't obey right away, you may get into serious trouble. When I was in college, I pastored a little church. On a big Sunday morning we may have had forty present—on a big Sunday morning. And I loved those people, and they loved me. When I graduated from seminary, I was offered the pastorate of a couple of small churches in Florida. I got the letters out of the post office back the same day, one on top of the other. Both of them said, Mr. Rogers, we feel that you should be our pastor. We've prayed over it. Well, I knew that one of them had to be wrong. I felt most likely that both of them were wrong. And I wrote back, and said, "Thank you, but no thanks."

The little church in Ft. Pierce wrote me back. They were running a little less than a hundred in Sunday school. They said, "No, we believe you're God's man." I couldn't get that out of my heart, because frankly, after eight years of study, I was hoping for something a little more than a hundred in Sunday School. But I said, "All right, I'll come." And I told my little church there in Waveland, Mississippi, I said, "Folks, God has called and I must go." And I knew that some of them would want to argue with me about it, so I

tried to be a little poetic. I said, “A nail-pierced hand has pointed to Florida, and I must follow.” And I thought, who could argue with a nail-pierced hand? And that was the rhetoric I used that morning. Yet I had not told the church in Ft. Pierce that I would come. But I already had the offer. No sooner had I walked out of the pulpit, and gone home, even before our lunch, I got a phone call from a man on a pulpit committee from the First Baptist Church of one of the biggest, if not the biggest city in Florida. He said, “We’ve heard about you. We want you to come and be our pastor.” He told me about the staff, and about the budget, and about the amenities. And I had just told that little church that I was going to this other little church. I’m telling you, if God had written it from the ceiling of that room where that I was in boxcar letters, it could have been no plainer. Adrian, this is a test. Don’t fail it. I said to that man, Mr. Rainer, I have made up my mind that I am going to thus-and-such a church. God has called me. I cannot talk with you anymore. Hung up the phone. I don’t say that to pat myself on the back, but I say it to testify to God that, when those tests come, you must obey God immediately. If not, you can get into serious trouble—serious trouble. And I want to say that I had one of the happiest times in my life in that precious church there in Florida that God sent me to.

D. Impassioned Obedience

It must be informed obedience. It must be intentional obedience. It must be immediate obedience. And it must be impassioned obedience—not reluctant, not pouting, not dragging. We need to serve Jesus Christ in these days in which we live with a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional love for Jesus Christ. Oh, to obey Him, not moderately, not carelessly. I’m sure it was a struggle to Abraham. But, thank God, he passed the test.

III. Can I Trust God with the Promises He Has Made to Me?

Now, here’s the third question—and I must hurry to it: Can I trust him not only with the possessions and the program that he has give me, but can I trust him with the promises he has made to me? Hebrews eleven, verses seventeen through nineteen: “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son”—now, that’s antithetical to the promise. Because the promise said, in this son you’re going to be blessed—“of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called,”—how did he do it? Well, thank God verse nineteen is there—“accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”

Abraham had already learned that God is the God of the impossible, because God had given him a son when he was a hundred years of age. Can you see him coming out on a cane out of the maternity ward? “It’s a boy!” One hundred years old; Sarah, ninety

years of age, her womb dead, dried up. He knew that God is a God of miracles. And his faith was steadfast to believe God.

Abraham did not know how God would do it. He just simply knew that God would do it. And God did it. God did not let Abraham sacrifice Isaac. Why? Listen to me. It wasn't Isaac that God wanted; it was Abraham. And he said, "Now, I know that you love me more than you love anything else." What is the heart of the message? Listen. Here it is. If you love it, let it go. If it is yours, you'll get it back. And if not, you will be saved from a fate worse than death, and that is holding on to something that would be an impairment to your spiritual life. Jesus said, "If you love your life, you lose it. If you lose it for my sake and the gospel's, you'll find it."

When we were children, we used to have little saying: "Finders keepers, losers weepers." Did you ever say that? God says, Keepers weepers, losers finders. Lose your life for Mine, and you will find it. The Bible says, in Hebrews eleven, verse nineteen, he was "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." The word here "accounting" literally means considered. It literally means to reckon. It literally means to calculate. It's the Greek word we get our word "logistics" from, that we get our word "logic" from. Abraham is calculating. He's saying, "God, look; look, God, You gave me this boy. I can trust You with him. Lord God, You have a purpose. I can trust You with it. Lord God, You made a promise; then I reckon on it. God, You're going to keep Your word. You cannot lie. I don't have to understand. I don't have to parade it past the judgment bar of my knowledge." And God gave him back his son. And Abraham called the name of that place, "Jehovah-jireh," God will provide.

There was a ram there to take Isaac's place. He was there no sooner, no later, than he was needed. For God is always on time. Now, look at your pastor, and let me ask you this question—and I want to tell you, I have had to ask myself this question before I can preach this message: Is there any good gift that you're unwilling to surrender? I'm not talking about the bad things. I'm talking about the blessings. It may be your finances. It may be your health. It may be your grandchildren. Is there any obedience that you're not willing to perform even though it seems contradictory to what you think is God's way for you? Is there any promise that you cannot trust God with, even when it doesn't make sense? Remember, we don't live by explanations; we live by promises.

Conclusion

You didn't like today's sermon. I didn't like it. Oh no, God, I don't want this kind of test. The faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. God wants you to be strong in faith. For without faith it is impossible to please God.

Do you know what the Bible says about Abraham? Jesus said, "Abraham saw My day and was glad." He saw the coming Messiah.

Would you bow your heads in prayer. The Messiah that Abraham trusted is the one I want you to trust today. He's the One who wants to save you today. He is the one who will save you. I promise, on the authority of the Word of God, He will forgive every sin. He will come into your heart and life with a peace and a presence and a power that is supernatural. And when you die, or when He comes again, He will take you home to heaven.

If you would like to be saved, I want to guide you in this prayer. Now, you may already be religious. You may already be moral. You may already be a church member and baptized. But you've never really settled this matter of salvation. You've never really had that absolute assurance that, if you died this moment, you'd go straight to heaven. It's time to get it settled. I want you to pray this prayer silently, but fervently: Dear God, I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me, and promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. Tell Him that. Right now, I trust You. I receive You into my life by faith. Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You shed Your blood on the cross to save me. I believe God raised You from the dead, and I receive You into my life now as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus.

Precious friend, pray that: Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I stand on Your Word. I don't look for a sign or ask for a feeling. And I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. If You'll only give me the strength. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Faith to Face the Future

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 31, 1978

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:20

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”

HEBREWS 11:20

Outline

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- III. Isaac and His Faith
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Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to Hebrews chapter 11. I trust you've already found it. And, I want us to notice in verse 20 just one verse that will be our verse for study this morning. We've been talking about God's hall of fame. We've been talking about faith—what it is, how to get it, why you need it. And, Hebrews chapter 11 is a listing of the great Old Testament heroes of the faith—people who lived in the Old Testament who were mentioned in the New Testament because of their faith. And, the one that we mention today is a strange one, because, frankly, ladies and gentlemen, had I been writing it—I know you're grateful I didn't—but had I been writing the Book of Hebrews, I don't believe I would have included Isaac. But notice, the Bible says, *“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come”* (Hebrews 11:20). And, that's the reason we're calling the message this morning, on this threshold of a new year, *“Faith to Face the Future.”*

I heard of a student who was finishing up his examinations just before the Christmas holidays, and he had not really studied. And, the professor asked an exceptionally hard question. The student didn't have the foggiest notion what the answer was, but he thought perhaps that he could get by because of the spirit of the season. And so, this is

what he wrote on his examination paper: he said, “Only God knows the answer to this question. Merry Christmas.” Well, the professor looked at it, and the professor wrote this on the paper before he returned it: he said, “God gets 100, and you get 0. Happy New Year.” Now, let me tell you something, folks: God knows some things we don’t know, and that is true. But, we don’t need to get zero, because the things that God knows He doesn’t keep to Himself. The things that God knows He wants to share with us. And, when it comes to these questions that are perplexing to other people, God knows certain things that He chooses to reveal to us so we can face the future with faith.

Now, there are three things that I want us to study as we look at this man, Isaac: first of all, Isaac and his future; then, Isaac and his family; and then, finally, Isaac and his faith. Turn to Genesis 25, and you’re going to find something very remarkable about these two sons that Isaac had. Now, if you’re not a Bible student, you may not know who Isaac was to begin with. But, Isaac was one of the great father rulers of the Old Testament. He was what we call a patriarch—*patri* meaning “father,” *arch* meaning “ruler.” He was a father-ruler. And, do you remember that Isaac was the son of Abraham, the progenitor of the Jewish nation? And then, it was through Isaac that the promised Messiah would come. Now, Isaac had two sons, and they were twins. One of them was red-headed and sort of a brawny sort of a man. The other one was very smooth-skinned and was younger—well, if you could speak of twins one being younger than the other. But, of course, one has to be born before the other. And so, Esau was born first, and he was the elder. Jacob, being born secondly, was the younger. And so, God had a plan for these boys even before they were born.

I. Isaac and His Future

Look, if you will, in Genesis 25, beginning in verse 21, and you’ll see something of God’s plan for the future. Genesis 25 and beginning in verse 21: *“And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus?”*—in other words, “What’s going on in here?”—*“And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder”*—that was Esau—*“shall serve the younger”* (Genesis 25:21–23).

Now, that means before they were ever born, God had a divine plan for these boys—before they ever came forth out of their mother’s womb. And, I want you to see what Paul said about that. Turn to Romans 9. Just lick your fingers. We’ll use our Bibles quite a bit today. You won’t mind that, will you? Romans 9, beginning in verse 10: now, Paul says, *“And not only [thus]”*—or, *“not only this”*—*“but when Rebecca also had*

conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, *The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, [and] Esau have I hated*” (Romans 9:10–13). Now, that word *hated* gives you trouble. It doesn’t mean that God despised Esau. Just translate it this way, and you can do it: “Jacob have I chosen; Esau have I not chosen.” Just like the Bible says, “If we come after the Lord Jesus Christ, we must hate father, and mother, and houses, and land” (Luke 14:26). It doesn’t mean we’re to despise our father; it means we’re always to choose Jesus above anybody else. You see, “Jacob have I chosen; Esau have I not chosen.”

But, the strange thing is this—that before they were ever born, before they came out of their mother’s womb, God says, “This son is going to do this, and this son is going to do that.” Now, we call that *divine election*—*divine election*. And, sometimes when we talk about God’s foreknowledge, God’s predestination, and God’s election, all of us wrinkle our brows a little bit because that is something, folks, that is really hard to understand—it really, really is. *As a matter of fact, I had a preacher friend one time who was going out to witness to a friend. And, it was in a country church; it was a revival meeting. And, you know, in the country churches and the revival meetings, when the pastor comes, they always take him to talk to that one man in the community who’s the hardest nut to crack. You know, “Tell him about the Lord.” And so, this preacher went out there, and this friend of mine was witnessing to this ole’ farmer about being saved. And, right in the middle of the presentation of the gospel, the farmer said to him, “Well,” he said, “Preacher,” he said, “the way I see it, what is to be will be. Do you agree with that?” And so, my preacher friend said, “Well,” he said, “yes,” he said, “I believe that. As a matter of fact,” he said, “I believe what is to be already has been.” And, the old farmer said, “I don’t believe I understand that.” He said, “Neither do I. Now, let’s get back to something we do understand.” And then, he went right back to the gospel.*

Now, there are some things that we don’t understand about divine election, but let me just say that God is a sovereign God, and that God has a plan for history, and that God predetermines certain things that are going to happen. And, God just does that by what the Bible calls *divine election*. Now, some people get a little worried when they hear that, because some people get the idea that somehow they may be predestined to go to Hell. And, you know, there are people who believe that. They believe that God predetermines that some people are going to Heaven and they’re going to Heaven and nothing can stop it, and God predetermines that some people are going to Hell and they’re going to Hell and nothing can stop it. Don’t you believe that, dear friend—don’t you believe that. Anybody can be saved who wants to be saved. Did you understand that? Anybody can be saved who wants to be saved.

And, if you want to be saved today, I've got some good news for you. Listen to these scriptures. Second Peter 3:9: *"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Now, that's a good scripture, isn't it? Listen to this one—Revelation 22:17: *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take [of] the water of life freely."* And, listen to this scripture—1 Timothy 2:3–4: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved"—"Who will have all men to be saved."* God wants everybody saved. So, if you want to be saved today, God will save you. And, don't you let predestination or election keep you from being saved.

One country theologian said, "This is the way election works: God votes for you, and the devil votes against you; and you cast the deciding vote." Well, I don't know if that's exactly the way it is or not, but I want to tell you this much—that whosoever will—whosoever will—may come to the Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 22:17).

But, having said that, let me tell you something—that God still has an overriding plan for history. This world has never gotten out of control. Things haven't gone where God cannot control them. And, man proposes, but God disposes. Man may rule, but God overrules. It's like being aboard a great airplane, say, a 747, and we're flying overseas. And, up in the cockpit is a pilot—a copilot and a navigator. We're back there in the back. Now, we may decide stand or sit. We may decide to read or sleep—decide to talk or to pray, to eat or not to eat. And, we make a lot of decisions, and they're our decisions. And, we live by the repercussions of those decisions, but the whole time that airplane is going to a predetermined destination. And, God the Father is the pilot. God the Son is the copilot. And, God the Holy Spirit is the navigator. And, there's not going to be a hijacking. God is in control of this world. And, He is bringing us to a divine destination, and we call that the predetermined will of God. And, over on the one hand is the free will of man, and we make our decisions and we live by them. But, where man rules, God overrules. And, God is moving history on to its predetermined climax.

And, in God's sweep of history, God saw these two sons: one, Esau, who would be the progenitor of the Edomites; and Isaac, who would be the progenitor of the Jews. And, God says that the younger—that is, Jacob—was going to have the ascendancy over the older—that is, Esau. And, God just planned it that way, and there's nothing you can do about it, nothing I can do about it, nothing you ought to want to do about—certainly nothing I want to do about it. That's God's plan. And so, just put down the first point. There was Isaac and the future. God had revealed to Rebekah and to Isaac His plan for the future. He had a definite plan.

II. Isaac and His Family

Now, the second thing I want you to notice is Isaac and his family. Now folks, if you come from a bad family, don't worry about it, because here's one. Well, you can worry about it, but here's one a little worse, if that's any comfort. I want to show you a family composed of four stinkers: first of all, there was a scheming mother; secondly, there was a sneaky son; thirdly, there was a sensual father; and fourthly, a sorry brother. Now, I want you to notice these. They're all here! I want you to see it.

A. A Scheming Mother

First of all, I want you to see... Turn, if you will please, back to Genesis 27, as we notice Isaac and his family, because there we see the family of Isaac delineated. And, you can just be glad you're not a member of this family. All right, look at it—Genesis 27, and I'm reading in verse 1: *“And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, [and] I know not the day of my death: Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out into the field, and take me some venison; And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; and that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it”* (Genesis 27:1–5).

Now, Isaac is getting ready to bless his son. Now, in this day, the father, the patriarch ruler, who had received the covenant promises from Abraham, would pass those covenant promises down. That covenant promise was called the birthright, and it included material and spiritual blessings. It meant that through these descendants, or through this line, would come the scriptures—and ultimately would come the Savior. And, it was something to be sought and something to be wanted. And so, Esau is about to receive the birthright. But, that wasn't God's plan. God's plan was that Jacob receive it, for the Bible says that Jacob, the younger, should have the ascendancy and receive the birthright in Genesis 25. But, Isaac is about to give the birthright to the wrong son, and he's going to do it for the wrong reason. And so, he says, “Now Son, you go out into the woods, kill a deer, fix it, cook it real good, bring it in. We're going to have a feast. And then, my Son, I'm going to lay a real blessing on you.”

Well, now the plot begins to unfold. Enter the scheming mother—the scheming mother. Look in verse 6: *“And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son”—*now, she's speaking to Jacob—*“obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of*

the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: And thou shalt bring it unto thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver" (Genesis 27:6–12). You see, Isaac was blind, but he could still feel. And, he says, "If he reaches out and touches me, my skin is as smooth as a peeled banana. And, if he puts his hands on me, well, he'll know I'm not Esau. Esau is a hairy man." And, he says, "I know that he won't bless me. He'll curse me."

And, verse 13: "*And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them*" (Genesis 27:13). She says, "Now Jake, go out there, kill a couple of young goats, bring them in. I know how to make goat meat smell just like venison. We'll fool your father, and you can get the blessing." Now, isn't that a shame? Here's a mother teaching deceit. Here she is sneaking around, trying to fool her husband by conniving, and cheating, and intrigue, trying to get what God has already promised. You see, she's fighting a battle already lost when she could be enjoying a victory already won. God said it's going to happen. She doesn't need to help God. Have you ever been guilty of trying to help God? God doesn't need your help. You know, the Almighty is quite sufficient. But, here's Rebekah—now, she's trying to help God. And, you know, the strange thing is, by not leaving the matter in God's hands and by not giving her sons up to God, did you know that she lost Jacob from this point on and he left home, never to come back again, and it was her fault? Ladies, the way to keep your children is to give them to God—the way to keep your children is to give them to God.

B. **A Sneaky Son**

All right. Now, here is the scheming mother. But now, the next thing I want you to see is the sneaky son. I want you to notice ole' Jake—ole' Jacob. Look here in verse 14—what he does: "*And he went*"—Jacob—"*and fetched...them to his mother*"—that is, "the two goats"—"*and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau*"—she went to the closet and got one of his suits out—"*which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: And she put the skins of the...goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck*"—that is, she just put goatskins, boys and girls, on the back of his hands and goat skins back here. Have you ever seen a man with hair all over his shoulders? That's the way Esau was. But now, Jacob had hair all over his shoulders, only it was goatskin—"*And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father*"—now, notice this lie—"*I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and*

eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me” (Genesis 27:14–19).

Jacob, you liar! You’re not Esau. Now, why are you going around by lying, and by conniving, and by cheating to try to get what God wants you to already have? And, here’s this ole’ sneaky boy, Jacob. Don’t you wish Jacob could have just trusted the Lord? You know, isn’t it amazing that some people don’t seem to be able to appropriate the things ready given them? Did you know that the Bible says, *“All these things happened unto them for examples”* (1 Corinthians 10:11) unto us? Did you know that every Christian already has a birthright? A birthright is a spiritual blessing. Listen to Ephesians 1:3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ [Jesus].”* Did you know that you’ve got the blessing, friend? You know, when you start enjoying your blessings, when you stop trying and start trusting, then your Christianity is going to move into a new dimension. How many Christians are fighting, and warring, and scheming, and planning, and conniving, and trying when they ought to be trusting. Learn to live the Christian life by faith. All right. There’s the scheming mother. There’s the sneaky son.

C. **A Sensual Father**

But, I guess the worst fellow was Isaac himself. I call him the *sensual father*. Do you know why Isaac loved Esau more than he loved Jacob? You help me now. Do you know why? I’ll tell you why: Isaac loved Esau more than he loved Jacob for one reason. Oh, I almost laugh when read it, but I want you to see why he loved him. He loved him... If you go back to chapter 25, you’ll find the one reason he loved him. Look in chapter 25 and verse 28: *“And Isaac loved Esau, because”*—now, here’s the great reason—*“he did eat of his venison”* (Genesis 25:28). Now, isn’t that a great reason? What a sot was ole’ Isaac! He loved Esau, the wrong son, for one reason. Boy, Esau could really cook venison! That’s it. And, here are father and son, and here was a son who ruled over his father because he made merchandise of his father’s appetite. Esau was a profane man, but Isaac was a carnal man. He lived in the realm of the flesh.

And, you know, he was constantly deceived because he lived by feelings. You see, you can’t depend upon your senses. Why, look here in chapter 27, verse 2—in chapter 27, verse 2, here: and, Isaac said, *“Behold now, I am old, and I know not the day of my death”* (Genesis 27:2). He thought he was about to die. The fact of the matter is, he lived for 40 more years. His senses deceived him. Why, notice in chapter 27, verse 20: *“And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?”* (Genesis 27:20). Poor old Isaac—he thought the goat meat was venison. He’s so stupid. And then, I want you to look in verses 22 and 23: *“And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and [he] said, The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands*

are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands" (Genesis 27:22–23). Dumb old Isaac—he thought that goatskin was boy's hair. He didn't understand the difference. He thought this was Esau. How could he be so stupid? And then, notice, if you will, in verses 26 and 27: *"And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss, me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed"* (Genesis 27:26–27). Now, Jacob was a mama's boy. He just stayed in the kitchen tied to his mother's apron strings, and Esau was a man of the field. And, here's Isaac—he's saying, "Boy," he says, "it just smells like all out of doors to me—just good old Pine Sol there. It just smells good! Yep!" He said, "That's Esau all right! It couldn't be Jake."

I want you to see how stupid he was. You say, "That's not stupid. Don't be so hard on him. After all, he couldn't see." That's why he was so stupid—to go by his feeling rather than by revelation. You see, friend, your feelings are deceiving. Did you know all of us have been blinded by sin? You know, we're all fools. We're all stupid if we live in the realm of the five senses, because your senses can deceive you. And, any cheap magician can prove to you that the hand is faster than the eye. What fools we are when we live in the realm of our senses! Feelings are fickle, and you'll never get anywhere in the Christian life when you live after the flesh and after your feelings. The Bible says in Romans 8:5: *"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace"* (Romans 8:5–6). Old Isaac wasn't spiritually minded; he was carnally minded. He's just like some of the men who are listening to me this morning. You're pretty clever, aren't you? You're pretty smart. You know how to wave things. You know how to smell things. You know how to feel things. You know how to figure things. But, one of these days you're going to end up so deceived you won't know which end is up. You trust your feelings.

Some people are trusting their feelings to know you're saved. You ask some poor people, "Are you saved?" they will say, "Yeah, I'm saved." You say, "How do you know you're saved?" They say, "Because I feel it." That's ridiculous! Friend, don't you depend upon your assurance of your salvation because of the way you feel. Nowhere in the Bible are you told to feel a certain way and know you're saved. As a matter of fact, the word *feeling* is only used twice in the entire New Testament. The word *faith* is used over, and over, and over again. Listen. If you depend upon your feelings for the assurance of your salvation, your assurance is going to go up and down with the condition of your liver. One day you'll feel good, and you'll say, "Wow! I'm saved! The sky is blue; the birds are singing." Another day you'll wake up on December the 31st. It will be raining and cold, and you'll say, "Boy, I lost it—whatever it was I had." Friends,

don't depend upon feelings.

Now, there's nothing wrong with feelings. I'm not saying it's wrong to be happy. If it makes you happy to be happy, go ahead and be happy. That's all right with me; that's fine. But, don't you depend upon feelings. You say, "Well, I believe in a heartfelt religion." So do I. I have one. And, I'm happy right now, but I don't know I'm saved because I'm happy. I'm happy because I know I'm saved, and I know I'm saved by the Word. What a fool this man was! He said, "The voice—the voice—sounds like Jacob, but the feeling is Esau." You'd better learn to go by the voice of God rather than by your feelings, my friend. You'd better hear the Word of God and listen to the Word of God. Here it is—here it is! Listen!

D. **A Sorry Brother**

First of all, there's the ole' scheming mother. Then, there's the ole' sneaky son. And then, there's the ole' sensual father. And finally, the sorry brother—ole' Esau. He comes in now about this time; he hits the scene. And, I want you to see now what happens in verse 30: *"And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it [to] me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall he blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father"* (Genesis 27:30–34).

The sorry son—or, the sorrowful son. Do you know why he was so sorrowful? He didn't want the spiritual blessing. The Bible says he just despised the birthright. Of course, he wanted the material blessings. He was a profane man. You know, the Bible calls him, in the Book of Hebrews 12:16, *"a profane [man]."* Listen to Hebrews 12:16: *"Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, [like] Esau, who for one morsel of [food] sold his birthright."* Now, that's another story, and I won't tell you that story. But, the Bible just calls him a *profane man*. That doesn't mean he went around cursing. The word *profane* comes from two words—two Latin words: *pro* and *famine*. The *famine* was the holy place of the temple. And, this means out in front of the temple, not having entered into the Temple—on the outside, not on the inside.

You see, you can live a profane life just living for the things of things of this world. What was the trouble with Esau? Esau was earth-bound. Esau cared for present things, not future things—for material things, not spiritual things. And, his life ended in misery,

and so will yours, for the things of this world will never satisfy the longings of your soul and they'll let you down ultimately. Didn't I tell you this was a bad family? I mean, all four of them were bad news. If you had to pick the worst one, you'd be hard put. I don't know whether it would be Rebekah, I don't know whether it would be Jacob, I don't know whether it would be Esau, I don't know whether it would be Isaac, but every one of them blew it. I mean, every one of them, right across the board. We're wondering what kind of faith Isaac could have had after this. But, in the New Testament, he's singled out as an object of faith.

But, by the way, friend, you know, God just kept on working His plan. Do you know what a prisoner said in the Dade County Jail in South Florida? Do you know what he said? I think this is classic. He said it to a friend of mine, and that friend told me; and I can't forget it. Here's what he told me he said: he said, "God does not change us so that He can love us. He loves us in order to change us." Isn't that beautiful? You know, He just loves us just like we are. And, it's by His love that He changes us. And so, God just kept on loving this rascalion of a family. He just kept on pouring His love out on them and kept fulfilling His promise in these people. But, you see, first of all, here is Isaac in the future. God says that the younger is going to have ascendancy over the elder. And then, Isaac and his family—they're trying; they're conniving; they're cheating, some of them trying to make the wrong thing happen, some of them trying to make the right thing happen. But, I want to tell you, God doesn't need your help on either end.

They remind me of some people over there in Stone Mountain, Georgia. On the one hand, a man over here is saying, "I'm going to push this thing over." And, way around the mountain on the other side is a man standing up saying, "I'm not going to let you." Well, the mountain doesn't need either of them. I'll tell you, one man is not going to push it over, and the other man doesn't need to hold it up. And, here is Rebekah and Jacob trying to make God's plan come into being. And, here is Isaac and Esau trying to keep it from coming into being. But, *"the [plan] of God standeth sure"* (2 Timothy 2:19).

And, I want you to listen to these two scriptures. Proverbs 19:21: *"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."* Isn't that great? And, regardless of the Esaus and the Jacobs, the Rebekahs and the Isaacs, the counsel of the Lord shall stand. Or, here's a better one, or just as good—Psalm 33:10: *"The LORD bringeth the counsel of the [nations] to [nothing]: he maketh the devices of the people of [no] effect."*

III. Isaac and His Faith

Well, let's talk a little bit about Isaac and his faith, because it doesn't seem to me like he had faith. It seemed to me like this ole' sensual sot, trying to get a good mess of venison, is living by anything but faith. And yet, the Bible mentions him over here in the

Book of Hebrews, and it says it was “by faith”—“by faith”—“[that] Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (Hebrews 11:20). Well, if we’ll go back to Genesis 27 and read the story carefully, we’ll see where the faith of Isaac began to blossom. And, I want you to see it, and then we’ll be finished.

A. A Realization of the Will of God

I want you to see, first of all, there was the realization of the will of God that came to Isaac. Look in verse 33. It begins to dawn on him finally when Esau comes in and says, “Dad, I’m ready for the blessing,” and Isaac realizes that he blessed Jacob instead. I want you to notice verse 33: it says, “*And Isaac trembled very exceedingly*” (Genesis 27:33). Now, let’s just stop right there. Do you know what that *trembling* was? For the first time—or, at least for the first time in a long time—it begins to dawn on Isaac that God is in business here and that God is overruling all of his stupid plans. And, he begins to see the hand of God, and he starts to tremble. This is not the trembling of rage; this is the trembling of conviction. He’s saying, “I almost blew it. I was placing myself at cross-purposes with the plan, the will, the wisdom of God!” And, he sees how God in His providence and God in His overruling had overruled his willfulness and his stupidity, and he begins to tremble.

Ladies and gentlemen, you had better tremble, lest you miss the plan of God for your life. And, you want a resolution for the New Year? You know what resolutions are? Those things that go in one year and out the other. You want a resolution for the New Year? It is this: to know the will of God, to do the will of God, and to love the will of God. That’s it. To know the will of God, to do the will of God, to love the will of God. And, you ought to tremble, that you would miss the will of God. Here, for this man, here his faith begins. First of all, there is a realization of the will of God.

B. A Resignation to the Will of God

But, more than that—more than that—there is a resignation to the will of God. Look in verse 33 again: “*And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it [to] me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest*”—now, notice this—“*and have blessed him?*”—and notice this—“*[and] yea, and he shall be blessed*” (Genesis 27:33). He says, “I’m not changing.” As a matter of fact, the Bible says later that Esau, with tears, tried to get his father to change the blessing, but Isaac said, “Whom I have blessed, I have blessed.” He’s moving now into a new dimension. Once he has seen the will of God, and once God in mercy has revealed it to him, he’s saying, “I’m taking my stand on the Word of God, and your tears, and your protestations, and your pleadings are not going to change me.” Will you do that this year? Will you take your stand on the will of God? When God shows You something, will you plant both feet firmly on it and say, “Here I stand. And I shall not—I shall not—

be moved.”

C. A Reliance on the Will of God

That was the faith of Isaac—a realization of the will of God; a resignation to the will of God; and thirdly, a reliance on the will of God. He didn't worry about it. Notice in chapter 28, verse 1: *“And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him”*—what a change there is now—*“and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan”* (Genesis 28:1). And, look in verse 3: *“And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham”*—or, “give the blessing of Abraham”—*“to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham”* (Genesis 28:3–4). What a change there is in this old man! At last he's come to his senses! Will you come to your senses? Do you know what he discovered? He discovered a man is a fool who goes against the will of God, because, friend, you just can't do it.

An old Indian was watching them build a lighthouse. He'd never seen a lighthouse on a rocky shore. And, brick by brick, it went up; and finally, they put the light in it, and they put a bell in it. And, the light began to sweep across the water, and the bell rang. And, the old Indian didn't know what it was for. He thought it was for the wrong reason. He said, “Light shine, bell ring, fog come in just the same.” Now, let me tell you something, friend: God's will is not going to be stopped by any of your plans. It's going to be done. Oh, it's God's will that you can choose to refuse His will. It's God's will that you can choose to go to Hell if you want. It's God's will that you can choose to go to Heaven if you want. But, God has a will, and you're not going to change His will. God will let you have your share of your own free will, but under your free will is God's overriding will. Understand it, if you will.

If you don't understand it, let me just tell you this—that you need to be saved. And, you ought to tremble today that you missed the will of God. You ought to just tremble. You ought to take the will of God and stand on it. But not only that, take the will of God and love it, because I want to tell you this about the will of God: God wants for you what you would want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it. God just loves you. He loves you so much! And, even God's plan for Esau is rooted in His love. God's plan for Jacob is rooted in His love. God loves the world, and God loves you. And, you need to respond by faith.

Conclusion

What is faith? A realization of the will of God, a resignation to the will of God, and a reliance upon the will of God. What is faith? A realization of the will of God, a

resignation to the will of God, a reliance on the will of God. That's what Isaac did, and he's listed in the hall of fame. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Every head bowed and every eye closed. Father in Heaven, I pray today—and pray together—that You would help us this coming year to have faith for the future; O Lord God, that we might listen to You and that we might hear You speak; and Lord, because You've spoken, we might realize Your will; and then, that we might resign ourselves to Your will; but even more than that, that we might rely upon Your will, even as Isaac did so long. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Thank You. Amen.

Lessons from a Dysfunctional Family

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 9, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:20

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”

HEBREWS 11:20

Outline

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Introduction

Well, amen. I wonder, does grace still truly amaze you? To think about the fact that God loved us while we were yet sinners, not that He died for His friends, but that He died for His enemies, that the Doctor not only provided the medicine, but the Doctor allowed Himself to take the disease, and that it was Almighty God that did that—does that amaze you—that salvation is the absolute free gift of God?

There was an evangelist who was a gypsy. They called him Gypsy Smith. He was always happy, always singing, full of music, full of power. Somebody asked him, Brother Whitmire, what is the secret? He said, “I have never lost the wonder.” Think about it: “I have never lost the wonder.” His grace still ought to amaze us, should it not?

Turn to Hebrews chapter 11. Today, we’re going to look at one verse in Hebrews chapter 11, and then go back to the Old Testament to help understand it. I’m talking to you today about some lessons from a dysfunctional family. We may be talking about your family. But don’t despair. There is hope and there is future.

Now, home is meant to be the seminary of heaven, but often it is the incubator of hell. And, if you are looking around, you can see that Satan is systemically dismantling

homes in America.

A student from the University of Memphis handed me a paper that was distributed in the Sociology class that student was attending, and I've copied from that sheet that was handed to that student. Here's what is said: "The basic thesis for these two sheets is that 'family' is an important social institution. Well, we would say, that's true. And then, it goes on to say, "It is an active participant in the creation, maintenance, and perpetuation of society." Well, we would say, that is true. But now, listen to another thought: "Equally important..."—now, get this—"Equally important, however, is the realization that the family is also a product of any given society at a particular time in history. As the social structure of society changes, so too must the form or structure of families, and the function and role that families play in society." Did you get that? Now, family is important, fine; but, when society changes, what we call family can change and the role of family may change. That is a lie from hell—that is a lie from hell. Family is not the product of sociology. Family did not come from the swamps of immorality. Family is not something that evolved from primordial ooze. Family is the gift of God. God instituted family in the Garden of Eden. And the first institution was not government, not education, not business; the first institution was family. God put a family in the Garden of Eden.

Only twice in history has the concept of family totally disintegrated. One was 300 years B.C. with the Greek society. The other was 33 A.D. with the Roman society. And when the concept of family was completely obliterated, disintegrated, those societies and that culture crumbled. Friend, we need to go back to the Word of God. There is a war on the family, and you have to admit it: In today's society, family life, godly family life, is difficult.

Have you ever heard of Murphy's laws? Murphy—I don't know who Murphy was, but, to say the best, Murphy was a pessimist. Here's what Murphy's laws are. Number one: if anything can go wrong, it will. Nothing is ever as simple as it seems. Everything takes longer than you expect. If there's a possibility of several things going wrong, the one that will go wrong first is the one that will do the most damage. Well, I believe those things may be true about our homes. I believe that, not only Satan, but Murphy himself, is working against our homes. But there is hope.

Let's look at our passage here in Hebrew chapter 11 and verse 20: "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." Now, that's just one verse, but there is a great story behind it. Look at it again: "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come." Now, with that in mind, I want you to go backward in your Bible to Genesis chapter 25 with me. Genesis is the first book in the Bible; therefore, it will be easy for you to find this morning. And, if you did not bring a Bible, look in the pew right before you. Most likely, there is one there. Or look on with a neighbor, if you will.

Genesis chapter 25, and we're going to begin reading ten verses, beginning in verse 24, and go on to 34, to get the background. Now, this is the story that the writer of Hebrews is talking about when he said that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. Now, here's the background—Genesis 25, verse 24: “And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled—talking about Rebekah, who was Isaac's wife—behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel”—little twins were born, but they were not identical twins, as we're going to see—“and his name was called Jacob...”—all right, you got it? Two boys: Esau, who is red and hairy; and Jacob, we're going to see later on was very smoothed skinned—“and his name was called Jacob, and Isaac was threescore years old when she bear them.” So Isaac is 60 when he has his twins. “And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man—actually, some translate that a smooth man, not hairy—dwelling in tents.” That is, he's a homebody. One was a man of the field, the other man of the fold. “And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Well, now already you're going to find out there are problems in River City. There's a problem in this town. There's a problem in this home. Why? Because here are parents who are having favorites: Isaac's favorite was Esau, and Jacob was mother's pet. Now, notice verse 39: “And Jacob sod pottage”—that's old English. He just cooked a stew—“and Esau came from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint”—that is, “I'm so hungry I'm about to die. Give me some of your stew”—“therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swear unto him: and the sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils—that is, a bowl of chili—and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.”

Now, here's the beginning of a family feud. Two brothers. They are different. They've grown up together. Esau is born first. He's a manly, self-sufficient sort of a man. He is a hunter. He's got a lot of hair on his burly chest and on his arms. He's what we would call today a man's man. He could make his own way. Now, Jacob, as I've said, was his mother's boy. He was a homeboy. He knew how to cook. He stayed home. While Esau's passion was to kill, Jacob's passion was to protect. These boys are so, so different.

Now, Esau has been out hunting. He comes home. He is bone weary. His stomach is growling. He smells something. Jacob has cooked a bowl of stew. He smells it as he comes out of the woods. His mouth begins to water. He says, “Jake, give me some of your stew, buddy.” He said, “No, this is for me.” He said, “Look, man, I'm hungry.” As a

matter of fact, he was worse than hungry; he was hongry. Have you ever been hongry? “I’m hongry.” He said, “Look, I need this.” He said, “Not for you, buddy. It’s for me.” He said, “Man, listen. I’m about to die. I want that.” He said, “Okay, okay. I’ll give it to you. Just give me your birthright.”

Now, what was the birthright? The birthright was a special blessing in this lineage that belonged to the firstborn son. Actually, it linked everything to the blessing that God had given to Abraham. God gave a blessing to Abraham. Abraham gave the blessing to Isaac, and Isaac was to give the blessing to his son, and on and on and on. And the birthright was to follow right on down till it comes not only through Isaac and Jacob and Jacob’s sons, the twelve tribes of Israel, and right on down to Jesse, and right on down to David, and right on down to Joseph and Mary, and on to Jesus. It was a promise that included provision. It included possessions. It included protection. Now, here’s the ironic thing: according to Genesis 25, it already belonged to Jacob. God said that the elder would serve the younger. The second son that came out of the womb would have the birthright. And here’s Jacob trying to connive and get what is already his. And so he says to Esau, “Okay, friend, you want the stew; I want the blessing. We’ll just make a trade. Deal?” “Deal.” And so they shook hands, and Esau eats the stew, and Jacob said, “I’ve put one over on him. I now have the birthright.” What he’s doing is trying to connive to get what was already his.

Now, the Bible calls Esau a profane man. Put in your margin Hebrews chapter 12, verse 16. And the writer of Hebrews is warning, and here’s the warning: “Lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.” For one helping of food, for one bowl of chili, he sold his birthright. He was a profane man. He was a carnal man. He was an earthborn, an earthbound, man. If he had a car, it would have on the bumper sticker, if cars had bumper stickers, “If it feels good, do it!” That’s Esau. Now, Jacob wasn’t much better, as we’re going to see, but the dividing difference between the two is that Jacob wanted the blessing. Jacob had a mind for the things of God.

Now, that’s the background. You got the background? Now, we’re going to look at three basic thoughts.

I. The Failure of a Dysfunctional Family

And the first thing I want you to see is what I’m going to call the failure of a dysfunctional family—the failure of a dysfunctional family. Now, fast-forward to Genesis chapter 27, and let’s read five verses: “And it came to pass that, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said—that is, Isaac said—Behold now, I am old, and I know not the day of my death. Now, therefore take I pray thee, thy

weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau, his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.”

Now, folks, a drama is about to unfold. You’re about to see displayed before you what I call a dysfunctional family. There are four players on the stage, and each one of them seems to be worse than the prior one. Every one seemed to be conniving, wicked, in his own way. Now, let’s look at these four players.

A. **A Sensual Father**

First of all, enter the sensual father. His name is Isaac. Isaac is about to bless the wrong son for the wrong reason. Isaac is a sensual man. Now, we can hardly believe this, because in our study last week we talked about Isaac, who typified the Lord Jesus Christ. But now he’s grown old, and, as he’s grown old, he’s become sensual. He minds the things of the flesh. And about the only thing that will satisfy him is a good meal. In Genesis chapter 27, the words eat, venison, savory meat, and words like that occur about 20 times. Old Isaac loves Esau. He loves the way Esau would go out and kill deer, bring them in, the way Rebekah could cook it, and all he could think about is a good, good meal, and then he’s going to bless this boy. He is a man given over to appetite. He is what we would call sensual. The things that motivate Isaac right now are his flesh, his sensual desires, and he represents typically and spiritually the flesh. Put in your margin Romans chapter 8, verses 5 to 7: “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh—when we’re talking about the flesh here, we’re not talking about venison; we’re talking about that old Adamic nature—but they that are after the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded—that is, fleshly minded—is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God—that means warfare against God—it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be.”

Well, you say, “What does that have to do with me, Pastor?” I’m talking to some dads today, and you dads listen to me right now. I’m talking to dads, and the majority of the dads in America are sensual dads, saved or lost. They are sensual. They are wrapped up in business, in sports, in recreation, in alcohol, in food, in materialism, and these sensual fathers are living self-centered lives, and their families are dysfunctional, their families are crumbling around them. And, sir, the day may come when you will give everything that you have, if you could, to see your son sober again, to see your daughter come home, to see your marriage resurrected from the dead. A sensual father.

B. A Scheming Mother

And then, not only a sensual father, but here's the second actor that appears on the stage of this drama: a scheming mother. Now, look, if you will, in Genesis 27, verses 6-13: "And Rebekah spake unto Jacob, her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau, thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savory meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord before my death. But now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats—that is, young, tender goats—and I will make them savory meat for thy father, such as he loveth. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah, his mother, Behold, Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son. Only obey my voice, and go fetch me them."

Now, Rebekah was a great cook. She was one who taught old Jacob how to cook that pot of lintels. And so she says, "You go get me two goats, two young goats. I know what to do with them. Your daddy will think it's venison, when I'm finished with them. I'll take some sage, and I'll take some salt, and I'll take some pepper, and I'll take some oregano, and I'll take a clove of garlic, and I will marinate these things, and I'll make a stew. Listen, he will think it's the best venison he ever ate, and he'll bless you. He's blind. He can't see. He'll think that he's blessing Esau." Now, notice how she's dividing the family. Notice how scheming she is. She is a scheming mother. She is now trying rather than trusting. The truth of the matter is that she knew, already knew, that Jacob was the one to be blessed. Why is she trying to make something happen that God would say is going to happen anyway? Do you know what happened to Rebekah? Mom, you listen to me. She lost the very son she was trying to bless. After this episode, this is the last time Rebekah ever saw her son, this son that she's trying to keep tied to her apron strings. She lost him. He went away, never returned. She never even saw her burly old grandsons, because she's a schemer, trying to rig things rather than trusting God, not submissive to her husband, not submissive to the will of God, not trusting. Do you know any mothers like that? The world is full of them. The way you keep your children is to give them away to God.

C. A Shady Son

Now, here's the third party that enters the stage: not only a sensual father, not only a scheming mother, but a shady son. If there's anybody that we can call shady, it would be old Jacob. Jacob was a conniver from the get-go. Notice now in Genesis 27, beginning in verse 14: "And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother—that is, the two young goats—and his mother made savory meat, such as the father loved.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of the eldest son, Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob, her younger.” She took Esau’s clothes and put them on Jacob, and the smell of the field would be in his clothes. And she puts them on her younger son. “And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands.” She very cunningly takes the tender skin of these goats and glues it to the back of Jacob’s hands so Jacob’s hands will feel hairy like Esau’s hands. And she puts it upon the smooth of his neck. And verse 17: “And she gave the savory meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau, thy first-born—he’s telling a bold lie—and I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that my soul may bless, that thy soul may bless me.” Now, the birthright is already his, but he’s conniving. He didn’t need to use trickery on Esau. He didn’t need to use trickery on Isaac. No power on earth could have kept the birthright from Jacob. He’s like many believers today.

Did you know we have an incredible birthright in the Lord Jesus Christ? Put in your margin Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” That is a done fact. Yet how many scheming, trying Christians do we have who are trying to do the right thing in the wrong way? They are fighting a battle already lost rather than enjoying a victory already won.

D. A Sorry Brother

Now, let’s look at the fourth person who comes into this scene: first of all, the sensual father; then, a scheming mother; and then, a shady son; and now, a sorry brother. Look, if you will now, in Genesis chapter 27, beginning in verse 30: “And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac, his father, that Esau, his brother, came in from his hunting. And he also had made savory meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat his son’s venison, that thy soul may bless me.”

Now, old Esau is out there looking around. He sees a deer. He shoots it with his arrow. He guts it. He cleans it. He skins it. He brings it in. He cooks in. He puts in the vegetables, and so forth, and everything is ready. The only problem is Isaac has already blessed Jacob. “And Isaac, his father, said unto him, Who are you? Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry—that’s the reason I call him a sorry brother—and he said unto his father, Bless me,

even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtlety, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is he not rightly named Jacob—the word Jacob means con artist or supplanter—for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him lord—that is, I have made Jacob lord—and all of his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.”

Now, here was a man who lived for the things of this world, and his life ended in sorrow. Now, he wanted a blessing, but the blessing he wanted was not the blessing of the birthright; it was property and power and possessions. He was sorry, but he never repented over his sins. He’s just sorry for the repercussion. Now, he was earthbound and he was just a sorry, sensual man.

Would you not say that’s a dysfunctional family? Now, folks, think about it. You think about it. Here’s favoritism. Here are two brothers that hate one another. Here’s a dad who is sensual. Here’s a mother who is scheming. Here’s a son who is shady. Another son who is heartbroken and a lout. And they’re all together in this one family. Now, God is at work in this family.

You say, “Pastor Rogers, my family is a mess.” Good news. God is still God. I want you to see what God did. You know, our Scripture over there in Hebrews 11, verse 20, says, “By faith Isaac blessed his sons.” And so, God is still at work. Now, a wise man once said—and I’ve quoted it many times: “God does not change us in order to love us; God loves us in order to change us.” God loves your family. God loves you. You say, “Man, my family is one royal mess.” Hang on!

II. The Faith of a Disciplined Father

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see: not only the failure of a dysfunctional family, but I want you to see the faith of a disciplined father—the faith of a disciplined father. Now, Genesis 27, verse 33, the Bible says, “Isaac trembled exceedingly”—I did a little study on this word tremble. It actually means quake. I mean, he is shaken down to his boots. He realizes what he has done. He realizes now that he has tried to override the will of God, and he trembles exceedingly. And then, he says—“and said, Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him?—now, watch this—Yea, and he shall be blessed.”

Now, here Isaac is coming over on God’s side. He realizes he’s been deceived. He realizes he’s been a fool. But he also now realizes that God is at work. Look in Genesis chapter 28, verses 1 to 4: “And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged

him—that is, he’s going to bless him again. Now, he’s reaffirming the blessing—blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, and go to Paddanaram, the house of Bethuel, thy mother’s father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban, thy mother’s brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people—now, watch this, verse 4—and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”

Here was a daddy who was shaken. Here was a daddy who comes to his senses. Here was a daddy who comes back to the Word of God. God has brought great conviction to his heart. He’s shaken to the core.

I’m praying that through this message today there are some dads who will have an awakening. Sir, why don’t you assess where you are? Why don’t you look at your family? Why don’t you ask this question: When I get to where I’m headed, where will I be? Ask yourself this question: If my family is going to change, who’s going to change it? Sir, it is you. God knows how to discipline you, and God will discipline you. God knows how to shake you. Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 31: “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

Now, friend, old Jacob is disciplined, and he comes back to God, and God speaks to him the word of faith. He realized he’d been trying to override the will of God. Old Isaac was blind. Here was a man who loved God in his youth, who got away from God, who messed up his family, and then came back to God. I learned two lessons here. Number one: Never forsake the moment for the man. This, what we saw here with Isaac trying to bless the wrong son, was not the true Isaac. The true Isaac was the one we read about over there in Hebrews chapter 11. And when God came to write about his life, God did not write about his life all of his failures. Aren’t you glad that God remembers our iniquities against us no more? Aren’t you glad that God does not mistake the moment for the man? God knew Isaac, that Isaac loved Him, and here is Isaac who comes back to God. And I’m telling you, mister, that you can be a man of God, and get away from God, and mess up your family, but I’m telling you also that you can come back to the will of God.

III. The Forecast of a Determined Future

Now, here’s the third and the final thing I want you to see. I want you to see the forecast of a determined future—the forecast of a determined future. “And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him—this is 28, verses 1 to 4—You’ll not take a wife from these people around here. You go back and get a wife from your

kinfolk.” And then, verse 4: “And I will give the blessing of Abraham to thee—I will give the blessing of Abraham to thee—and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.” And then, we get back over there in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 20, which says very clearly, “And by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”

Now, here’s the whole point, and I want us to get this point. By faith—by faith—Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, both of his sons, concerning things to come. Now, listen to me very carefully because we’re in deep water right now. Here are two boys—twins, but not identical twins. Here is a father who’d gotten away from God, but he gets his heart right back with God again. And now, he says, “Look, there’s a future, and in the name of God, on the authority of the Word of God, I am going to bless you boys. And, Jacob, the godly line is going to come through you.”

Do you want to understand and believe that the Bible is the Word of God? You just look at what God has done. God called Abraham. God brought Isaac. God ordained Jacob. Then God gave Jacob twelve sons, the twelve sons of Israel, and out of these twelve sons there’s a dominant tribe named Judah. And out of Judah comes the household of Jesse. Out of Jesse there comes young David. Out of David there comes Mary and Joseph. Out of Mary and Joseph, and Mary a virgin, comes the Messiah.

Now, here is Isaac, backslidden. Here is Rebekah, scheming. Here is Jacob, a con artist. Here is Esau, a materialist. Do they stop what God is doing? Not at all. Man proposes; God disposes. Where man rules, God overrules.

Have you ever been on a great airplane going overseas? I have many times. You get on, say, a 747. Did you know that you can sit here, or you can sit there; you can get up, you can sit down; you can have a pillow, you don’t want a pillow; you can have a meal—when the stewardess says, “Do you want a meal?” I say, “What are my choices?” She says, “Yes or no”—you can do whatever you want; but the whole time you’re making those decisions on that airplane, that airplane is headed toward a destination.

Now, friend, you can make decisions. You can do what you want. Isaac can do what he wants. Jacob can do what he wants. Esau can do what he wants. Rebekah can do what she wants. But it is God who is moving history to a conclusion, and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. And the Bible says that he blessed them concerning things to come. God is in control. These are treacherous days in which we’re living, but I want to tell you God is in control.

Conclusion

Now, I told you I’m going to give you some lessons from a dysfunctional family. Lesson number one: If your family is a dysfunctional family, you’re doing great harm to your

children. Does that move your heart? Number two: If your family is a dysfunctional family, the father is primarily at fault—the father is primarily at fault. Not always, but primarily. I've been pastoring long enough to observe some things. I have never, never, never seen a family where from the get-go the father loved God and served God with consistency whose wife and children did not follow. I can't give you chapter and verse for that, but friend, I can tell you from experience, and I can look in the Word of God, that God made the husband to be the head of the family. And you, sir, have an awesome responsibility not to be a carnal man, not to be a sensual man, but to be a spiritual man, a man of God. I'll tell you something else. We, as parents, have an awesome power to bless or to curse our children. But blessing is more than you may think. Blessings are powerful. Before I came out here this morning to preach, my precious wife came in the office, laid her hands upon my head, and said, "Adrian, I bless you in the name of Jesus." I received that blessing. I bless my children. You can bless. Oh, the power of a blessing—are you a blessing to your children? I'll tell you another lesson that we learn. If your children turn out good, you can't take all the credit, and if they turn out bad, you can't take all the blame. I've heard people say, "Well, the Bible says, train up a child in the way that he shall go, and when he's old he'll not depart from it. That's a promise." That is not a promise; that's a proverb. If you take the proverbs and try to turn them into promises, you'll lose your faith. That's a proverb. A proverb is a principle generally applied that brings general results. But don't forget that God gives children choices.

Here are two boys. They were born at the same time, the same parents, and they turned out different. You study the Bible, and you're going to find out that there's a principle. The first two in the first family, who were they? Cain and Abel. They had the same two parents. One became a murderer. You say, "Well, maybe the parents didn't do so good." All right, what happened to Adam and Eve? Who created them? Who was their parent? Almighty God in the Garden of Eden. God gives man a choice. Sure, you ought to train up a child in the way that he should go. Sure, you ought to bless them. That's the reason why I said, if you have a dysfunctional family, you're harming your children. That's the reason I'm saying there's the awesome power of a blessing. But I've seen parents put themselves under because of a wayward child. You might as well admit it: children have their own choices that they make, and you cannot force your children to be good. You cannot choose for your children. You can only choose for yourself. Never have goals for your children. Have desires for your children; have goals for yourself. I desire godly children. That's my desire. My goal is I will be a godly dad. I can't control my children. I can pray for them. I can rear them in a functional family. I can have faith for them. I can bless them. But I cannot control them, and I'm glad I cannot. I'd rather have them in God's hands than in mine. Now, folks, the need of this

hour is for faith.

Friend, the wisest thing, the smartest thing, the best thing, that any father could do would be to give his heart to Jesus. The best thing that any mother could do would be to trust her children to Jesus and quit scheming. The best thing that any child could do would be to stand on the promises of God, our birthright, the One who has blessed us with all heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus.

Bow your heads in prayer.

Lessons from a Dysfunctional Family

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 9, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:20

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.”

HEBREWS 11:20

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s precious Word, and find the Book of Hebrews chapter 11. In a moment, we’re going to look at verse 20. We’re talking about champions of faith, and the champion that we’re talking about today is Isaac. When we first see him, however, he doesn’t seem much like a champion. He seems like a failure of a father who is leading a dysfunctional family.

Now, the title of the message today is “Lessons from a Dysfunctional Family.” You say, “Pastor, how did you know about my family?” Well, there are a lot of dysfunctional families. The family is meant to be the seminary of heaven, but I’m afraid for many it is an incubator of hell. There is a war on the family, and Satan is systemically trying to dismantle the family.

A student at the University of Memphis handed me some notes that were handed out in a Sociology class by the professor, and I want you to listen to what was printed on this piece of material. It concerns the family. Here’s what this material said in part: “The basic thesis for these two sheets is that that family is an important social institution.” Well, I would say amen to that. “And it is an active participant in the creation,

maintenance, and perpetuation of society.” I would say amen to that. But now, listen to the next paragraph: “Equally important, however—that is, important to the last statement—is the realization that the family is also a product of any given society at a particular time in history—that is, the family had no origin in God. It has just grown out of the matrix of history. It has come up from sociological circumstances. And then it goes on to say—“As the social structure of society changes, so too must the form or structure of families and the function and role that families play in society.” Now, the import of all of that is just simply this: that the family happened to be, the families we have today are the result of sociological influences, and, one day, it may migrate into something else, and we adapt to that. That is, the family is not an institution whose source is fixed in God; it came up out of the primordial ooze of evolution, and is itself evolving. Now, I want to say, with all respect to the professor, whomever he or she may have been, what you’ve written is absolutely false—false.

The family is not the product of sociology. The first institution that God ever created was the family, and He did that in the Garden of Eden to meet the deepest spiritual, psychological, emotion, and physical needs of mankind. It is an institution of God, and God formed the family before God formed the government, before God formed education, before God formed the church, or anything else. The basic unit of society is the family. And it is little wonder that there is a war on the family. And, today, friend, there are so many dysfunctional families.

Twice in history has civilization come to the place where the idea of the family totally disintegrated. One of those times was 300 years B.C. with the Greek civilization, and the second was in 33 A.D. with the Romans. Both times when the family disintegrated, the institution of family was done away with in the hearts and minds of people, both times, the community, the culture disintegrated, because the family itself disintegrated. Now, there are some wars against the family. And you say, “Yes, tell me about it. I know because it is against our family.”

How many of you know who Murphy was? Murphy was a man, I think he was the quintessential pessimist. Murphy had some laws called Murphy’s laws. Let me mention Murphy’s laws to you. Here are some of them. Number one: if anything can go wrong, it will. Nothing is ever as simple as it seems. Everything takes longer than you expect. If there’s a possibility of several things going wrong, the one that will go wrong first is the one that will do the most damage. Well, those are Murphy’s laws, and I believe that the devil uses Murphy’s laws against the family, don’t you? It just seems that there is a war on the home. But there is hope.

Now, look here, if you will, in chapter 11 and verse 20, and our Hebrews verse is only one verse today: “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” Now, that’s just one verse in the New Testament, but it relates back to an

incredible amount of material in the Old Testament. So put your bookmark there in Hebrews chapter 11, and go backward with me to Genesis chapter 25. Now, Genesis, the first book in the Bible, that's easy to find. And when you found it, we're going to find an amazing story of a dysfunctional family, but we're going to see that there was amazing grace for this family, and there can be for yours.

Genesis chapter 25. I want to begin reading in verse 24, and I want to read 10 verses to you. It's a background for all that we're going to say. Now, there was a man named Isaac who was miraculously born. We talked about him the last time we were together. Isaac had a precious wife named Rebekah. And Rebekah prayed, and Isaac prayed that they might have children. God answered the prayer, and opened Rebekah's womb, and she had twins. And now we're going to break in, in Genesis 25, verse 24: "And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red all over like a hairy garment"—that's an amazing thing, for a child to have red hair. In many places, babies don't have hair—"and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel"—now, twins are being born. The first one is red and hairy. The second one comes out, and we're going to find out later he's very smooth-skinned, but the little guy's holding on to his twin's heel, and his name was called Jacob—"and Isaac was threescore years old when she bear them"—Isaac, now 60, is having his twins—"and the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man—that literally means a smooth man, a smooth-skinned man—dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Jacob because he did eat of his venison: and Rebekah loved Jacob." Two boys, twins, but, friend, I'm here to tell you they were not identical twins, and already we're going to find out there there's trouble brewing in the family because there is preferential treatment, and favorites. The father has for his favorite of these twins, Esau. The father looks to Esau. And the mother has for her favorite, Jacob, and Jacob became mother's pet. Now, notice in verse 29: "And Jacob sod pottage"—plain English, he cooked a stew—"and Esau came from the field, and was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swear unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: And Esau despised his birthright."

Now, you've got to get the picture. Jacob, a homebody, a mother's pet; he learns to cook. Esau, a hairy, red hunter; he was a man's man with hair on his chest. He loved to go out and shoot things. One man's instinct was to kill; the other man's instinct was to protect. And these brothers are going divergent ways. And Esau has been out in the

field. He's been hunting. And he comes home. He is bone weary and he is hungry. To say he's hungry is an understatement. He's worse than hungry; he's hongry. Have you ever been hongry? He's hungry, and he wants something to eat. And about that time, something comes to his nostrils, the whiff of a glorious stew. And old Jacob has cooked that stew. Whether he did it on purpose to entice Esau, I don't know, but I can imagine it has a base of lentils, but doubtless, there's some potatoes, and there's some onions, and there's some garlic, and there's some oregano in this, and it's just simmering there on the pot. And Esau says, "Jake. Hey, buddy, share your stew with me, will you, please? I'm hungry." He says, "No, this is not for you; this is for me." "Hey, look, man, I am about to die. I want some of that—he called it red; that's what he called it, red—some of that stew." Evidently, it looked red. It was red. He said, "No, this is not for you; this is for me." He said, "Look, look, guy, you don't understand. I am hungry, and I want that stew." He said, "Oh, you really do? All right, I'll tell you what. You just give me your birthright and you can have the stew." The Bible says that Esau traded that over, in the Book of Hebrews: "For one morsel of meat he despised his birthright."

Well, what was the birthright? In these days, there was something called the birthright, and it normally belonged to the elder son, and Esau was the elder son because he was born before his twin. But God had said the birthright was to be to the younger son in this instance, because God is overruling that tradition, and the birthright was going to be to the younger son. So the birthright was already Jacob's, but Esau evidently thinks it is his. And so Jacob says to Esau, "Esau, you want some of my stew? Then we'll make a deal. We're going to shake. I get the birthright; you get the stew. We both get what we want." And Esau, he would have given almost anything for that stew, so he just says, "Yes, fine," and he sat down and ate the stew and some bread, and that was the deal.

Now, what was the birthright? The birthright was the blessing of Abraham. Remember that God called Abraham, and God said, "Abraham, I'm going to make you a blessing to all the nations of the world, and that blessing is going to come through your descendants." And so, the first descendant was Isaac. We talked about that last week. And now, the next descendant is going to be Jacob. And then, from Jacob is going to come his sons, the twelve tribes of Israel, and on and on, until you come to Messiah. This is the blessing of Abraham. It involved protection. It involved prominence. It involved prophecy. It involved all of the things that were wrapped up in this blessing called the birthright.

Now, here the stage is set, and so these two brothers have gone through this deal. Now, the irony of this thing, the irony of this whole deal, is the birthright already belonged to Jacob. But Jacob, by nature, as we're going to see and learn again next week, is what we would call a schemer, a con artist. Now, the stage is set for our story

today, as we're going to be talking about lessons from a dysfunctional family. Are you ready?

I. The Failure of a Dysfunctional Family

The first thing I want you to see is what I'm going to call the failure of a dysfunctional family. If there was ever a family that could be described as a dysfunctional family, it had to be this family. Now, begin reading in Genesis 27, verse 1, this time: "And it came to pass that, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I. And he said, Behold now, I am old, and I know not the day of my death. Now take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison—that is, 'Esau, son, go out and kill a deer for me'—and make me savory meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die. And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau, his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it."

Now, a drama is about to unfold. The stage is set. And on center stage are four of the most incredibly unspiritual individuals who've ever seen. They make the corps of this dysfunctional family. I want you to look at them.

A. A Sensual Father

First of all, enter the sensual father. The sensual father is Isaac. Isaac says, "Esau, go and kill some venison, and bring it to me, savory meat, that I may eat, and then I'm going to bless you." Now, he's going to bless the wrong son, and he's going to bless the wrong son for the wrong reason. And, if you read this passage of Scripture, the words savory, or meat, or venison, appear about 20 times. Here was a man given over to his appetite, to his senses, is what we would call a sensual man. And he does not have his eyes on the things of God. As a matter of fact, he's trying to override the things of God to satisfy his own appetite. Now, you father, listen to me. This is not just history. Here's a lesson for you. There are so many fathers today in America who are doing exactly the same thing. They care not for the things of God. And they have a plan for their children, but they've never sought the will of God for their children. And these men are mastered by their appetites, by alcohol, by sports, by business, by pleasure, by sex, or whatever it is. These are sensual fathers who are heading up dysfunctional families, and they're bringing all kinds of damage to the family. It may be you. Here was Isaac, a man who had been a spiritual man, who in his old age became a carnal man. What a warning that ought to be! He represents the flesh, that old, sensual nature that's in us, a sensual father. Now, if you are a sensual father, if you're living for the things of this world, and many dads, some of this auditorium—you know, sir, who you are—the day may come when all of those things that you thought were so important will not seem important. You

would give this world, if you had it, to have your son sober again, to have your daughter come back home again, to have your marriage resurrected from the dead. But here is Isaac. He is a sensual father. That's the first person in this drama.

B. A Scheming Mother

Now, enter the second person, and that is not the sensual father, but the scheming mother. Rebekah, now, has been eavesdropping. She's in on the deal, and so she decides that she's going to contravene what Isaac has done. She's not submissive to her husband, and she's outside of the will of God, because she's trying, this time, to do a right thing the wrong way. Genesis 27, now, begin in verse 6: "And Rebekah spake unto Jacob, her son—now remember, Jacob was her pet—saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau, thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savory meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the Lord, before my death. But now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats—that is, 'you go get two real tender little goats'—and I will make them savory meat for thy father, such as he loveth." She's saying, "Look, son, go out there and get two little goats. We'll kill them. I know how to fix them. I can fool your father. He will think it is venison when I get finished with it. I know how to do it." Evidently, she was quite a culinary expert. She could take those tender little goats, and mix them with some carrots and some onions and potatoes, and some oregano and some spices and some garlic and some cloves, and stew all of that together, and serve it to him, and he would think it was the best venison he ever had. And so, "Thou shalt bring it—verse 10—to thy father, that he may eat, and he may bless thee before his death. And Jacob said to Rebekah, his mother, Behold, Esau, my brother, is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing. And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son. Only obey my voice, and go fetch them."

Now, Jacob was not the last son to ever be hurt by a scheming mother. Now, the birthright already belonged to Jacob. Rebekah was trying to do a right thing, but she's trying to do a right thing the wrong way. She's become dishonest. If the devil can't keep you from doing a wrong thing, he'll try to get you to do a right thing a wrong way. And here is this mother who is scheming. She's trying to protect her son. You listen to me. Listen, mom. She lost the very son that she was trying to protect. As you read this episode, it is not soon until Jacob is driven from home, and Esau is on his trail, ready to kill him, ready to murder her pet son that she loved. And he is driven from her. She will never in this lifetime see him again. She will never hold him. She'll never hug him. She'll never kiss her grandchildren. She loses, by scheming, the very thing that she is trying to get, the thing that she is trying to keep and protect. Mother, the best way you can do to

keep your child—the best thing you can do to keep your child—is to give him away to God, and to trust him to God, and not to your scheming.

C. A Shady Son

So you have a sensual father. Now, you have a scheming mother. Now, here's the third participant who comes into this drama, and it's what I want to call a shady son. Now, if there ever was a guy that was shady, it was old Jacob. Now, was Jacob good or bad? Well, Esau despised his birthright; Jacob wanted it. Jacob wanted the right thing. He had a heart for God. But he couldn't trust God for it. The blessing was already his, and by trying rather than trusting, he begins to get into all of these deals where he trades stew for the birthright that was already his, and now he tries to deceive his old father to get what was already his. And he's like so many Christians today, who are scheming and trying, when they ought to be trusting God, and putting things into the hands of God. You see, God has blessed us. We have a birthright. Ephesians 1 and verse 3 says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." But there are many Christians, and many in this building today, who are very much like old Jacob, trying to get the right thing the wrong way. The birthright was his already. He was fighting a battle already lost rather than enjoying a victory already won. Many in this building don't understand the victory that God has given you in the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. A Sorry Brother

Now, a sensual father, a scheming mother, a shady son, and now a sorry brother. Enter the last one, and this is old Esau himself. Genesis 27, verse 30: "And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone from the presence of his father, that Esau, his brother, came in from his hunting. And he also had made savory meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac, his father, said unto him, Who are you? Who art thou? And he said, I am thy son, thy first-born Esau. And Isaac—underscore this—trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceedingly bitter cry and he said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtlety, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is he not rightly named Jacob—the name Jacob literally means supplanter or conniver—for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord and all of his

brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.”

Now, here was a man who lived for the things of this world. He cared not for the birthright. Now, as I said, Jacob at least had a heart for spiritual things. At least he wanted the birthright. At least he cared for it. Esau despised it. Now, he’s weeping. He’s not weeping because he lost the birthright; he’s weeping because he lost the influence and the possessions and the power that might go with it. His sorrow is the sorrow of remorse, not true repentance. What a messed up family this family is, and yet God was at work in this family, and God did something for this family, and I want you to see that God can do something for you. So what we’re talking about, first of all, is the failure of a dysfunctional family.

II. The Faith of a Disciplined Father

Now, look at the faith of a disciplined father. By the way, if the family is wrong, most likely, the father is wrong. Now, notice that, when Isaac really realized what has happened, he comes in here. He eats the venison. He thinks it’s wonderful. He smells the clothes that are on Jacob because Rebekah put Jacob’s coat on Isaac, and Isaac holds him and says, “Yeah, there’s the smell of the field. He’s a man, the outdoors. There’s a woody smell on his clothes.” And then, he feels Jacob’s hands. And Rebekah had taken the goatskins of that goat, and had put those goatskins on the back of Jacob’s smooth hands and on the nape of his neck. And old Isaac, now, is listening and feeling and touching and smelling, and all of his senses are deceiving him, and he has blessed the wrong son. But then it dawns on him what he has done, and the Bible says that he trembles exceedingly. That is, he is shaken to the core. God, now, has shown him what a fool he has been. He is tremendously under conviction, because God has chastised him, and he realizes how carnally, willfully, deliberately he has tried to override the will of God, and for his own selfish, carnal reasons to bless the wrong son, and God brings him to repentance and faith. Now, that tells me something right now—that Isaac in his heart really loved the Lord. Isaac was a great man. Isaac was the one who typified Christ. Remember last week, Isaac was the one who allowed his hands and feet to be bound, and laid on the altar in obedience to Abraham. He was the one who saw a ram slain in his stead. But now, in his old age, in his dotage, he’s getting away from God. Some of you in this auditorium used to love God with a bright, burning, flaming passion, and now you’re old and carnal. All you’re doing is thinking about your retirement, thinking about your last days, trying to have as much fun as you can have, and you’ve forgotten the things of God. I tell you, my dear friend, you ought to go out

with the torch blazing, and with a burst at the finish, and not get like old Isaac did here, and become a carnal man, and get away from God. But thank God, God brought Isaac back. Don't mistake the moment for the man, either. This episode, this terrible episode, of trying to bless the wrong son was an incident. But Isaac comes back to his senses, and now he has been disciplined, and he realizes how his senses had deceived him.

Now, you listen. You want to know the will of God? You better walk in the Spirit, because if you don't, your senses will, indeed, deceive you. Let me tell you how he was deceived, that he thought he was going to die. He lived for 40 more years. He thought that goat meat was venison. He thought that Jacob's hands were Esau's hands. Even a sense of smell had deceived him. But God has not stopped working, "And where sin has abounded, grace does much more abound." Now, thank God that God is the God of a second chance.

III. The Forecast of a Determined Future

Now, here's the third and final thing I want you to see. First thing we saw was the failure of a family that was completely in ruins, a dysfunctional family. The second thing we saw was the faith of a disciplined man. God disciplined the father in this family, and thank God that He did. And God may be ready to discipline you. God loves you too much to let you go on, sir, ruining your family. The Bible says, "If we judge ourselves, we'd not be judged, that we should be condemned with the world." But when we're chastened, we're chastened of the Lord. God chastened old Jacob. God chastened old Isaac, and He may chasten you. Now, here's the third and final thing. It's what I want to call the forecast of a determined future. Now, remember our text? Remember our text back in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 20? The Bible says, "By faith—by faith." Here was a man who blessed Jacob and Esau, "concerning things to come." A future here is forecast. Look, if you will, in Genesis 28:1 to 4: "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him—skip on down to verse 4: I will give the blessing of Abraham to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave to Abraham."

Now, here's the point—here's the point. God is never out of business. In spite of all that Jacob and Esau could do, Jacob got the blessing anyway. In spite of all that Isaac and Rebekah could do, Jacob got the blessing anyway. Now, here's the point. Man may rule, but God will overrule. Here is the sovereignty of God. Let me give you two verses here. Proverbs 19, verse 21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord—nevertheless the counsel of the Lord—that shall stand." And then again, in Psalm 33 and verse 10: "The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect." Now, this is a strange thing. Were these people responsible for what they did? Absolutely! Were they

culpable? Absolutely. Was Isaac wrong to be sensual? Yes. Was Rebekah wrong to scheme? Yes. Was Jacob wrong to connive? Yes. Was Esau wrong to despise the birthright? Yes. But yet, over it all is Almighty God. God is working, and God is wooing. Now, how does that apply to us?

God made a promise to Abraham. God said to Abraham, “Abraham, in you, all the nations of the world will be blessed.” And I’m telling you, what God has said all hell cannot annul.

Now, what is going to happen is this: God gave the blessing to Abraham. Abraham has given the blessing to Isaac. Isaac is giving the blessing to Jacob. Jacob is giving the blessing to his sons to Judah. Out of Judah is going to come the house of Jesse. Out of Jesse is going to come David. Out of David is going to come the lineage of Mary and Joseph. And out of the lineage of Mary and Joseph is going to come the Lord Jesus Christ. And God is at work, and all hell cannot stop it, and will not stop it.

Have you ever gone on a giant airplane overseas, say, a 747? You get on that airplane, and while you’re on that airplane, you can make all kinds of decisions. You can get up, you can sit down, you can recline, you can sleep, you can read, you can watch a movie, you can eat or not eat. She comes to you, and says, “Would you like a meal?” You say, “What are my choices?” “Yes or no.” You can eat or not eat. You have all these choices. But while you are making all of your decisions internally in that airplane, that airplane is headed toward one goal.

Now, friend, God has history on one goal. God is going to crown the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus shall reign where the sun doeth his successive journeys run. His kingdoms spread from shore to shore till moons shall wax and wane no more. All hell cannot stop it. And what I see is this: The Bible says, “By faith—by faith—Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” And those things are coming, and they will come.

Now, I said there are some lessons from a dysfunctional family. I’m going to give you five lessons. I’m just going to tick them off, and I want you to learn them, and I want you to learn them well.

Number one: Dysfunctional families produce dysfunctional kids.

Number two: A father’s priorities often determine the family’s function. Sir, if your family is wrong, most likely, you’re wrong. I’ve been preaching long enough to see this. I have never yet known a family when in the beginning the husband loved and served God whose wife and children did not come along and follow. Now, there may be such. I have never known it. I will say this: that it is the father’s priorities that determine the family’s function.

Number three: Parents have great power to bless or to curse. If you only understood the incredible power you have to bless your children, there’s not a day that goes by that

I know of that Joyce and I, when we're together, do not bless our children in prayer. I believe in the power of the blessing. Before I came out this morning, Joyce came through the office. I bowed my head. She laid her hands on my head, and said, "Adrian, I bless you in the name of Jesus Christ." I can be blessed by my wife. She can be blessed by me. Our children can be blessed. We have great power to bless.

Next, we cannot always choose for our children. Don't get the idea that you can determine which way your children are going to go. I wish you could, but you cannot. You cannot. God has given your children a will. Sometimes parents take credit for good children when they shouldn't. Sometimes parents take blame for bad children when they should not. You say, "Well, Pastor, what about the proverb that says, 'Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he's old he'll not depart from it.'" Friend, that's a proverb, not a promise. If you take the proverbs and try to turn them into promises, you'll lose your faith. Just read the Book of Proverbs and see some of the promises. The Bible says, if a man till the ground, he'll have plenty to eat. Well, what if there comes a flood? What if some other thing happens? No, that's a proverb. A proverb is a principle generally applied that brings a general result. We have proverbs. Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise. Well, that's generally true, unless he gets hit by a truck. It's a proverb. It's a proverb. I've seen parents put themselves under because they have a child that will go wrong, and they say, "What did I do?" I remind you that these two boys were born at the same time of the same parents, and they turned out as different as night and day, Jacob and Esau. Cain and Abel—same parents: one of them, one of the children, turned out to be a murderer. God Almighty had some children in the Garden of Eden. They didn't turn out too swift. Was the problem the environment, or the father? Of course not! They were in the Garden of Eden. God gave your child a will, and you cannot take credit if your child turns out to serve God, and you can't take blame if your child doesn't. You do the best you can. I've already said that dysfunctional families tend to produce dysfunctional children. I've already said that a father of faith can set the standard for the family. All of these things are true. I'm not giving you an excuse not to be a godly parent, but I'm saying there has to come a time when we understand that God allows children to have a will of their own. And I'm glad that He does, because had He not, I could have no more fellowship with my children than I could have with that pen. God did not make us robots. God gives us all a will. And we must love our children and pray for our children, and thank God when they turn out good. Yes, proverbs are true as a proverb, if you train up a child when he's young, when he's old, he'll not depart from it, but don't try to turn that to an ironclad promise. If you do, you lose your faith. Just look at some of the rest of the proverbs, and see what I'm talking about.

Now, friend, here's the next lesson and the thing that I want you to learn. I want you

to learn this: that no matter what happens in this world, no matter how society may disintegrate, no matter how families may fail and unravel, I am telling you—you listen to your pastor today—man’s failure cannot nullify God’s sovereignty. God is sovereign. “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” And what are those things to come? I’ll tell you what things to come are—that Jesus is going to reign here on this earth, that Isaac prophesied of coming Messiah. Isaac prophesied the godly line. Isaac prophesied the birthright.

Conclusion

Years ago, men used to go out West on covered wagons, and many of them were slaughtered by the red man. And men dreamt of a time when they would not have those Conestoga wagons to travel in, but they would be able to travel by train. And men thought that perhaps one day we could connect the East and the West by a railroad called the Transcontinental Railroad. And so they got a plan, and they began to lay the tracks for that Transcontinental Railroad. And a ribbon of steel began in the East, and a ribbon of steel began in the West, and closer and closer they got. But out there in the West, when they were both about to meet, they brought locomotives from each side there, and the people were there, the governors of the states were there, and they were laying the last ties, and the last rails, and the last spikes were being driven. They had one final spike, a golden spike. It was to be driven in with a silver hammer. And this was to connect the East and the West. And there came a time when the governor took that silver hammer, and that golden spike, and drove it in, and those locomotives began to blow with the steam, and the people shouted, and the people applauded, because now East and West were brought together.

Friend, man has been divided from Almighty God, and there is a chasm of sin. But the Lord Jesus Christ hung on a cross. And when they drove that last spike—not a golden spike, but a rusty nail—into His hand, that warm, red blood began to flow down, and drip off His elbows, down across His ribcage, from His feet, and down to the ground, and Jesus said, “It is finished.” Nobody cheered. The demons of hell mocked. But Jesus brought together my sin-sick soul and the fellowship of the Father, and on His cross He reconciled God and man. Did you know that’s what Hebrews 11, verse 20, is talking about? By faith—by faith—Isaac blessed these boys of things to come. The Bible is a wonderful book. Now, are you willing, by faith, to receive, by faith, what Isaac saw by faith? Are you?

Would you bow your heads in prayer.

Learning to Lean

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 4, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:21

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”

HEBREWS 11:21

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take God's word and turn please to Hebrew chapter 11. There's a very interesting verse in Hebrew chapter 11. We're going to look at it in just a moment. But before we do, I want to ask this question: Have you ever heard anybody accuse those of us who are Christians in this way: "You use your religion as a crutch?" Have you ever heard anything like that? Sure. Now if anybody ever says that to you, just say, "Amen. That is really true." That is true. Our religion is, indeed, a crutch. And God has intended it to be that way. Hebrews 11:21: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." Or we could put it this way: He worshipped leaning on a crutch, because that's exactly what his staff was. Because at this particular time he was crippled. And he worshipped by faith leaning on the top of his staff. Now I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: "Learning to Lean. Learning to Lean." Now Jacob is a very interesting man. One of the strange things in the Bible is God's choice of Jacob and God's love for Jacob, because in Isaiah 41:14 God calls him a "worm." "Thou worm Jacob..." But later on, God calls him a prince. Now God doesn't turn frogs into princes. He does better than that. He

turns worms into princes. Now let's find out how God, by the kiss of grace, turned a worm to a prince, because later on the man that He calls a worm He calls a prince. But Jacob had to learn something. He had to learn to lean. And you're going to have to learn the same thing. It was so important that he learn to lean that when God summed up his life and put it in a pithy sentence, the Bible says he died worshipping and leaning. Okay now. Several things about Jacob I want you to learn.

I. Jacob, the Wretched Man

First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call Jacob, the wretched man. If there was ever a man that was a wretched man it was this man.

A. The Family That Formed Him

You think of the family that formed him. For example, his daddy was who? Isaac. And Isaac was a carnal old man when he got to be an old man. As a matter of fact, all he could think about was his belly. His god was his belly. He was mastered by his appetite. And you know the story of how Isaac sent one of the boys out to fetch venison that he might bless him, and so forth. I won't go into that old story, but I'll just sum it up, that Isaac's favorite son was not Jacob, but Esau. And the Bible says Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his venison. Now isn't that a fine reason to love a boy? He just loved him because he was a hunter, went out in the woods and brought him some deer. And then, not only did he have a sensual father, but he had a scheming mother. His mother's name was Rebekeh. And Rebekeh, you know, was the one who taught Jacob to be a cheat, a liar, and a schemer. I don't have time to tell you the story tonight, but I want you to go back and begin about Genesis 32 and read this story. You're going to find out that she was a very poor mother. As a matter of fact, she had this boy, Jacob, tied to her apron strings. She didn't even let him have a date till he was 70. And she kept him in the kitchen and he sort of a momma's boy. Now, on top of the fact that he had a sensual father and a scheming mother, he had a sorry brother. His brother's name was Esau. And Esau was the epitome of carnality. He was a self-sufficient man who despised spiritual things. The Bible called him a profane man.

B. The Faults That Fettered Him

Now, on top of this family that formed him, there were some faults that fettered him. What I mean by that is this: That Jake himself wasn't so hot. As a matter of fact, if you do a character study on Jacob, you'll find out that pri, predominantly he was a con artist. He was a liar. He was a crook. He was a cheater. Even his name Jacob means twister, liar, crook, surplanter. That's what his name meant. And, mister, he lived up to it.

C. The Failure That Followed Him

Now, not only do you see the, the family that formed him and the faults that fettered

him, but you see the failure that followed him. I mean, he failed at everything he did. Everything seemed to be against him. Environment was against him. Heredity was against him. Age was against him. And as you study this man, Jacob, from the Bible, he moves from one colossal failure to another. He's like that little fellow that used to be in "Lil Abner." I don't whether you remember "Lil Abner" or not. There was a guy with a black cloud that's over his head everywhere he went. You couldn't pronounce his name because it had no vowels. It was Joe Btfsplk. That was his name. And there's always a dark cloud over the head of this guy. Any of old even to remember that bird? Yeah, okay, a few of you educated. The rest of you don't know what I'm talking about. But that's a picture of Jacob. Everywhere he went this, this dark cloud was over his head. And yet God chose all of this. God chose this background to be the black velvet on which God could display the diamond of His grace in the life of Jacob. Now the Bible says that God chose Jacob and refused Esau. Now had you been choosing, even though Esau wasn't so hot, you would have chosen Esau, and so would I. At least Esau was a man's man. At least he knew how, how to go out in the woods and, and kill and deer. And he was a hairy, red-chest, ah, hairy, red hunter with a hairy chest, and, and, ah, had hair all over his body, as a matter of fact. The Bible says that Jacob was a smooth man. He's like a peeled banana and a momma's boy. Here's old Esau. Here's little Jacob. And, and Jacob, little cheater, a little snit. You wouldn't have liked him. And yet, God chose him. Now I want you to learn something. There was one different between Jacob and Esau that made all the difference. You know what it was? When you just peeled back the layers and get to the core of Jacob, you know what was there? A hunger for God. He had a heart for God. In spite of all of his faults, he wanted God. Now he went about to get the birthright the wrong way, but at least he wanted it. Esau didn't even want it. I mean, Esau didn't even have a desire for it. You see, listen. There was one redeeming factor in Jacob, and I pray God it'll be in you – a hunger for God. Why did God love Jacob? God didn't love Jacob for what he was, but God loved Jacob for what He knew He could make out of him. Because God saw one redeeming factor in this boy, and that was he had a heart hunger for God. And I want to tell you something. You know what I look for when I try to choose people to help me, to be on this staff, or to do anything? There's one thing I try to pull back everything else – all of their accouterments, all of their abilities, all of their education, all of their skills – and I say, "God, I want to see does that man, that woman have a heart for God?" A heart for God. A love for God. Is there a God-hunger in that heart? There was in the heart and the life of Jacob. And God loved Jacob because of what He saw He could make out of him. And I want to remind you what I told you in another message. Hey, folks, God does not change us so He can love us; He loves us so He can change us. And here was a man that God loved, and He loved him so that He could change him.

II. Jacob, the Wrestling Man

So, first of all, we see Jacob, the wretched man. But now I want you to see Jacob, the wrestling man. Turn, if you will, to Genesis with me, chapter 32 and I want you to see an episode in the life of this man Jacob. Genesis 32. And, ah, there's a wrestling match that takes place. And I read, I begin reading here in about, ah, well, let's see, where would be a good place? Ah, Genesis 32. Let's start in verse 24. Now, folks, you won't believe this. I kept looking down and didn't look right. I was in Exodus. If I'll get in the right book, it'll look right. All right. Genesis 32:24: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh..." That is, when the man that was wrestling with Jacob saw that he could not pin Jacob, he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh. "...and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said (that is, the man that was wrestling with Jacob said), Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said (Jacob said), I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him (that is, the man who was wrestling with Jacob), What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said (the man doing the wrestling with Jacob), Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel..." Now the name Israel means prince. "...for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh." That is, he limped upon his thigh. "Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank." Now let me give you the background for this. And I want you to stay here because there's a tremendous blessing now. Remember, the Bible says that Jacob worshipped leaning upon his staff? The reason that he worshipped leaning upon his staff, he was a crippled man. He had been crippled in this wrestling match and this was the only way that he could stand up was with a crutch. God had given him a crutch, and God had seen to it that he had to have a crutch. Now, what was God doing? Now remember, Jacob was a cheat, a con artist, a conniver, a liar, but he had a heart for, for God. And God saw that.

A. God Brought Jacob to a Place of Isolation

And so, the first thing that God did was to bring Jacob to a place of isolation. Look again, if you will, in verse 24 and you're going to see where God brought this man. The Bible says, "And Jacob was left alone..." Now up until this time Jacob had always surrounded himself with an entourage. I suppose the man that Jacob hated to look at in

the mirror most of all was Jacob. He knew what he was. He had his faults. His faults broke his heart, but he didn't know what to do with them. And so he always liked to be around other people, that he'd not have to look himself in the face. The flesh really doesn't like to be left alone, did you know that? That's one reason it's so hard to have a quiet time. That's one reason we want to always constantly have the radio on, the television on. That's one reason that we don't like to be left alone. We, we want to have friends, and so forth. But God says it's good, you know, to get alone every now and then. I talked about that this past Wednesday night. We have a generation that just thinks it has to be amused constantly. Do you know what the word amuse means? Ah, the prefix a means no. The word muse means think. To be amused is not to think, not to think. A museum is a place where you go to think. But to be amused means that you don't think. We have a generation that is amusing itself into hell. We just don't want to think.

B. God Brought Jacob to a Place of Confrontation

But here God did something for Jacob. First of all, he was left alone. And God engineered that. Here's Jacob out here by himself, and God brings him to a place of isolation. Why does God bring him to a place of isolation? Because God wants to bring him to a place of confrontation. Notice in verse 24 again: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Now you're going to see in a moment that the man who wrestled with Jacob was Jesus. Jesus wrestled with Jacob. What happened here was that there was an angel of the Lord, the messenger of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ. The theologians call these appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament, theophanies. And here was Christ, even before He was born of a virgin, leaving heaven and coming down and wrestling with a man. That's the reason Jacob, when he understood who this man was, said, "I've seen the Lord face to face." Here was Jacob wrestling with the Lord. Now, ah, look at it again in verse 24: "...and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Now we say that Jacob was wrestling with a man, but the Bible says the man was wrestling with Jacob.

C. God Brought Jacob to a Place of Desperation

Now why was God wrestling with Jacob? Why was Jesus wrestling with Jacob? Well, as we're going to see in a moment, He wanted to wound him. He wanted to break him. He wanted to cripple him. God brought him to a place of isolation, and then God brought him to a place of confrontation. And then God brought him to a place of desperation. You see, God now is ready for the final stroke. Now, again, you're, you're going to have to go back to the Bible and get all of this background, but Jacob is in trouble. I mean, as the Mississippi highway patrolman says, "A heap of trouble." He was in a heap of trouble. He had, he had, first of all, had cheated his Uncle Laban, and his Uncle Laban

is after him. By the way, his uncle was quite a cheat himself. And it's really humorous, because there in that story you have cheat cheating cheat. And, ah, you need to go back and read that story. And Laban realizes that Jacob has, has cheated him, and, and, ah, Laban is after him. And then Jacob had cheated his brother and tricked his brother Esau out of the birthright. And at this particular point, I don't need to tell you all of that story, except to tell you that Jacob had really pulled a fast one on Esau. And Esau was a man, and I mean, he was a burly, tough, outdoors woodsman, and he's coming after Jacob with, ah, blood in his eye. Now Jacob, he begins to figure everything out, always thinking, always figuring. So he, by this time, he's quite a wealthy guy because he's used his noodle to make money. He's worked from the neck up most of his life. And, and he, he knows how to make money. And he's got it all, you know. But he says, 'Now wait a minute.' He says, 'Jacob, ah, Esau is going to take this from me.' He said, 'I, I know what I'd better do,' he said. 'I, ah,' he said, 'I'll tell you what.' He said, 'You folks, you all go over there.' Now he says, 'You folks,' he says, 'you go over here.' He said, 'Put part of the wealth over here, put part of the wealth over there, and, and spread things out. So if, if, if Esau attacks over here, then we'll get away over here.' I mean, he's always figuring the bottom line. And then he gets a present, a real nice present, and he sends a messenger on ahead to soften up, ah, Esau with a present. I mean, just thinking. Got a good mind. But no, no faith, not much faith in God, but a good mind. And so, now he's saying, 'Well, if, if, if Esau comes, maybe this present will, will, ah, ah, ah, pacify him a little bit.' And what, he's doing all of this thinking. He's getting all of his ducks in a row, getting everything just right. And then, you see, he still is thinking. He has one more thing in his bag of tricks. He has one secret weapon. If nothing else works, he's got one other thing he can depend on. I'll tell you what it is. It's his legs. He can pick them up and put them down. I mean, he can get out of there. I mean, he can run, and he's got to be able to run. And now the wrestling match begins. He's left alone in that place of isolation. He comes to a place of confrontation. And then he comes to a place of desperation. Now here's a man wrestling with Jesus. Can you imagine that? I mean, a man wrestling with the angel of Jehovah. Even if you don't believe He's Jesus, he's a mighty angel. I believe it was Jesus. But he's wrestling. Well, don't you think that an angel could overcome a man, much less the Lord Himself? Why did they wrestle all night long? What, what's the problem? You see, the angel of the Lord didn't want to win. That fight was fixed. He's not trying to win. He could win just like that. He could have pinned him just like that. But, you see, all night long they are wrestling. And the angel is saying, 'Let me alone. Let me go. Let me alone.' And Jacob just keeps clinging to him. Now when the angel says, 'Let me alone,' in his heart he's saying, 'Boy, I hope he doesn't.' It's an interesting thing about God. God will act like He's trying to get away from you when He doesn't want to get away from you. God makes you seek after Him

because God is seeking after you. And you'll find that all through the Bible. And, and, and so, ah, the angel of the Lord is saying, "Leave me alone. Let me go." Why, he could have gotten loose any time he wanted to. But, ah, Jacob just keeps wrestling. And then the angel of the Lord reaches down and with a very special move he touches the hollow of Jacob's thigh. Now your thigh, you know if you're a wrestler, when your thighs are gone, you're no longer a wrestler. This is where the strength is right here. And he touches the hollow of Jacob's thigh and Jacob now...his, his, his, his thigh shrivels. It's, it's out of joint. And now he can't stand anymore. And now he's, he's, ah, he's completely, ah, debilitated, and he holds on to the angel all the more. He's recognizing now that he's not wrestling with a mere mortal. And the angel says to him, "Let me alone." And I want you to see what Jacob says here in verse 26. "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said (in verse 26) I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Now here's something very, very wonderful I want you to learn. Why did God bring Jacob to this point of desperation? For two reasons. Number one: To break him, to break him. He had never, ever been broken. He was a man who constantly depended upon his own ability, his own agility, his own mind, his own conniving. He was too smart for God to use him, and he had to come to the place that the apostle Paul came to in Philippians 3:3 when he said, "We have no confidence in the flesh." Do you know why God can't use some of us? Not because we're too weak. He can't use some of us because we're not weak enough. We still have confidence in the flesh. I don't know where your thigh is. I don't know where your confidence is. I don't know where your strength is. Maybe it's in your wealth. Maybe it's in your mind. Maybe it's in your body. Maybe it's in your personality. Maybe it's in your business ability. Maybe it's in your charm. But, dear friend, God just may love you enough to touch the hollow of your thigh. God may love you enough that He will break you. Now why does He want to break you? He wants to break you that He might bless you. Look again in verse 26: "And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me..." Now learn this lesson about God: God is not all that interested in your being healthy. God is interested in your being holy. And it just may be that God will break you to bless you. It just may be that God will cripple you to crown you.

III. Jacob, the Worshipping Man

Now here God brings this man to a place of isolation and a place of confrontation and a place of desperation. Now I want you to see. We've seen the Jacob, the wretched man. And now we see Jacob, the wrestling man. And now I want you to see Jacob, the worshipping man. Now look, as we continue to read, in verse 27: "And the angel said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob." Now that just reads just kind of normal, but actually let's read it this way: "And he said unto him, What is your name?"

And he said, Cheater.” That’s actually what he said, because that’s what the name means. Surplanter. Conniver. Con artist. Twister. I believe that Jehovah, the angel of Jehovah said to himself, “I’ve been waiting for you to call yourself by your own name and now I’m going to change it.” Notice verse 28: “...And thy name shall be called no more Cheat, Con artist, but Israel, prince, for as a prince thou hast power with God and with me, and hast prevailed. You have won the wrestling match. You have prevailed with God.” He has been crippled that he might be crowned. He has been broken. He has been beaten that he might be blessed. Learn this: There can be no blessedness without brokenness. The Bible says, “A proud and a haughty spirit God despises.” We sit in our churches many times, haughty, unbent, unbroken and wonder why God doesn’t bless us. Now man casts away broken things, but God never uses anything, in my opinion, until He first breaks it. You can read in Jeremiah 4:3 where God says, “Break up your fallow ground, that there might be a crop.” Before God can give you a crop He has to put the plow in. We read there in Judges 7 where Gideon had those pitchers, and inside was that lamp. But the lamp did not shine. The light did not radiate until the pitcher was broken. And maybe that your light will not shine until that outer vessel is broken. We read there in the Gospel of Matthew 14 where Jesus took the bread, a little boy’s lunch, and He broke it and then blessed it and then fed the multitude. It may be that your ministry, young preacher, will never amount to anything, and you will never feed the multitudes the bread of life until, first of all, you have been broken. I read where there was a woman who took an alabaster box of ointment, very precious indeed, but there was no perfume in that room until, first of all, that alabaster box was broken. And then, when it was broken, the sweet perfume not only pervaded that room, but pervades this room, because that story is still told to this day. You see, God broke him that He might bless him. Now let’s go back to Genesis, ah, excuse me, to Hebrews 11 for just a moment and let’s see if it doesn’t make more sense now. Hebrews 11:21. Look at it again. “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” From this time on Jacob, everywhere he went, had a crutch. He hobbled everywhere he went. But I tell you that crutch to him was precious because it was that crutch that was the symbol of his dependency upon Almighty God. Jacob....Are you listening? Jacob was stronger leaning than he was standing on his own two feet. Would you learn that tonight? Jacob was stronger leaning than standing on his own two feet. Self-sufficiency is not a virtue. Now I trust God that every one of us tonight will learn to lean. May I just give you three or four lessons and I’ll be finished with my message. Lesson number one: Failure need not be final. Am I talking to a worm tonight? Am I talking to someone who has failed over and over and over again? The kiss of grace can turn you to a prince. Failure is not final. God is still in the business of turning worms to princes. Another lesson: Why don’t

you be wise and save yourself a wrestling match? You know, the Bible says if we judge ourselves, we'd not be judged. Now there, there's no need for you to go through everything that Jacob went through. I mean, if you want to, you can just do it yourself. Say, "Never mind, Lord, I'll do it myself." Ah, I mean, "I don't want to go through this, Lord. I will humble myself before You, and I will cease my dependency upon my flesh." If we'll judge ourselves, we'll not be judged. Why not, just tonight, just go home and just make a full surrender? I mean, just do it, just do it. Third thing: If, and when, suffering does come, let it teach you to learn to lean and to worship. Don't become bitter. If you're going through a time of wrestling and a time of brokenness, may I give you this suggestion: Would you reach out and get hold of Jesus. And no matter what happens, you just tell Him, "Lord, I will not let You go, except You bless me." He wants you to do that, even when it seems like He's trying to get away from you. He wants you to say, "Lord, I will not let You go, except You bless me." And then one last lesson I would give you: Remember this: No matter how much your failure, no matter how much your pain, no matter how long it takes, the most important thing is that you come to the end of your life worshipping God. That's it. I mean, here's the bottom line. There's a lot of things that happened to this man, but I want you to notice how God sums up his life. "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." While he's dying, he's worshipping. I've been in the hospital many times with dying people. I'll tell you, it's a thrill to be in a hospital with a person who dies worshipping, dies worshipping. I think of one particular man. He was a lot like old Jake. He lived a rough life. And he was in the hospital and he made peace with God. And I remember as he looked up at me with those languid eyes. Before he stepped over into the next world in just a very brief time, he said to me, "Pastor, my sins are under the blood." And I thought, how wonderful. Here's a man, as it were, learning to lean on the Lord, trusting the Lord, dying worshipping the Lord. And, ah, you don't have to be a, a conniver or a cheat to die worshipping the Lord either. I remember being at Dr. R. G. Lee's bedside just a few, ah, hours before he stepped over into glory. I took Billy Graham over to see Dr. Lee. And Billy Graham and I stood there in the hospital room with Tommy Lane. And Dr. Lee was expecting Billy to come. And they put some brand new pajamas on him, had him all ready to receive Billy Graham. And we got there. Hildred Philipps, his adopted daughter, came out and said, "I can't rouse him. I think he's dying." They called the old doctor over who treated, ah, Dr. Lee. Many of you know the dear gentleman who loved God. That doctor came in there. He's one of these doctors with a bald pate and a horseshoe haircut, an old man himself. He came in there and went into that back room, and said, "Yes, he's dying. He's dying." I thought, *now isn't that strange, that Dr. Lee would die when Billy Graham is here.* And, ah, I thought to myself, *well, what shall we do? If Dr. Lee is dying, shall we just stand here while he*

dies? I thought, no, let's just worship the Lord. So we got around the bed. And I said, "Let's sing him on into heaven." So we joined hands – the doctor who loved Jesus and Billy Graham and Cliff Barrows who was there, and Tommy Lane, myself. And, ah, Tommy said, ah, "Dr. Lee's favorite song was "Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned Upon the Savior's Brow." And so we held hands around the bed and sang that song. Dr. Lee there with his white hair on the pillow. And then Cliff Barrows sang an old, old song many of you know, "Come thou, angel band, come, and around me stand. Bear me up to my heavenly home on thy snowy wings." And we sang that song, "Bear me up on thy snowy wings to my eternal home." And that was sung. And at that time Dr. Lee just opened his eyes; clear, piercing blue eyes, and came out of that coma. And Hildred said, "Papa, Billy Graham's here. He wants to see you." And Dr. Lee, who'd lost most of his eyesight, recognized the presence of Billy Graham, reached up and put his arms around Billy's neck and pulled him down and kissed him. I didn't know whether Dr. Lee was going to heaven. I thought I would about that time. And just, it's just so sweet, so precious, as then Dr. Lee and Billy shared a little bit about the wonder of Jesus and the glory of Jesus and said goodbye for the last time on this earth. A little bit after that, Dr. Lee had a vision of heaven. He said, "Hildred, I see heaven." She said, "Tell me about it." He said, "Well," he said, "I can't do it justice." You know, I think Dr. Lee's greatest sermon was "The Place Called Heaven." Not "Pay Day Some Day," though I wouldn't take anything from that. You read that sermon sometime, "The Place Called Heaven." He said, "I see heaven, but," he said, "Hildred, I, I never was able to describe it." Then he said, "I see my mother." And then he said, "I see Jesus." Well, you say he was hallucinating. Well, I hope God gives me one just like it. When he was dying, he worshipped.

Conclusion

Now, friend, that's the bottom line. You're going to be here just a few more hours and then you're going home. And, you see, God is interested in one thing, that when you come to the end of your life, you'll be like Jacob. You'll die worshipping.

Learning to Lean

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 16, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:21

“By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.”

HEBREWS 11:21

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Will Protect You, but He Will Not Pamper You
- II. God Will Hurt You, but He Will Not Harm You
- III. God Will Break You, but He Desires to Bless You

Conclusion

Introduction

Find the Book of Hebrews. Find chapter 11. Let your eye go down to verse 21. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21. The title of the message: “Learning to Lean.”

I heard that one time Muhammad Ali was on an airplane, and the stewardess came through and said, “Sir, buckle your seatbelt. We’re getting ready to take off.” He said, “Superman don’t need no seatbelt.” She said, “Yes, and Superman don’t need no airplane either.”

Many of us think that self-sufficiency is a virtue, and soon, in high school graduations, there will be speakers telling young people to learn to be self-sufficient. The truth of the matter is that self-sufficiency is not a virtue; spiritually, it is a vice.

Look at our scripture here, Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21: “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff”—worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

Now, last time together we were talking about Jacob, and we talked about Jacob, and we talked about how he was a man who was a conniver. He was a man who was always trying to rig things, to work things to make things work together. Our modern-day equivalency of Jacob, by his natural nature, would have been con artist. But God is working on Jacob to make him what He wants him to be. And God is working on me that way. And God is working on you. God is working on us and will not be finished with us until our total, complete dependency is not on self, but on Him. And many of us are like that old cowboy who said, “I ain’t what I used to be, and I ain’t what I ought to be, but

thank God for what I'm going to be." And we're going to be something in the Lord Jesus Christ, for Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, says: "Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Now, Jacob had deceived his father and gotten the birthright that God already wanted to give him, but he couldn't trust God for what God had promised. And he had tricked his brother Esau into giving him the birthright when it was already Jacob's, and he didn't need to trick Esau. But he got Esau to trade what Esau thought was the birthright for a bowl of pottage, stew, or chili, or whatever you want to call it. You remember all of that story. If you don't, I want you to go back and review it.

But now, Jacob has had to flee, because Esau has blood in his eye. Esau, Jacob's twin brother, who was actually born first, wants to kill Jacob, and Jacob, as we would say today, is on the lamb. He is running. He is fleeing from his brother, Esau. Now, he's been out there in the wilderness. He's had a rock for a pillow, and he's seen a ladder ascending and descending from heaven. He's had an experience with God, and God has spoken to him. A lot of wonderful things have happened to him. But still, for 20 years, he has been in the school of hard knocks. And now, he's got to get right with Esau, because he cannot really be right with God until he's right with Esau, his brother, the brother that he has connived against, the brother than he has tricked, the brother that he has cheated. He knows he's got to get right with Esau. And, furthermore, he hears that Esau is coming to meet him. And so, that's the situation that we have it right now. And God is going to use all of this situation to cause Jacob to grow, and to cease to depend upon himself.

Now, you say, "Pastor, what does that have to do with me?" Friend, it has so much to do with you it is incredible, so I beg you not to tune me out. I want you to listen to how you can learn to cease from your self-sufficiency and depend upon God. For the three things that happened to Jacob so long ago are going to have their correspondence in your life today, and in my life. And this very message that I prepared has challenged my own heart.

By the way, I want you to go back and get the Old Testament story. Turn to Genesis chapter 32. Just go all the way back now from Hebrews to Genesis chapter 32, and we're going to find the story there fleshed out.

You know, it's an interesting thing. Why would God say that Jacob worshiped leaning upon his staff? Why did He put that phrase in there—he's leaning upon his staff? Now, the Holy Spirit has a great economy of words. He's not wasting any words. Well, we're going to learn three principles, and I hope that you're ready for them.

I. God Will Protect You, but He Will Not Pamper You

The principle number one is this: God will protect you, but He will not pamper you. Now,

Genesis 32, beginning in verse 1: “And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host—that is, God’s army—and he called the name of that place Mahanaim, which means two hosts.” Jacob is fleeing, and suddenly he sees some angels. He realizes that for these 20 years out there in the wilderness and various places, he has had an angel escort. The angels of God had been encamping round about him to protect him. Now, remember, he’s not totally right with God, but the angels are watching him; the angels are protecting him. Now, he was immature, he was out of fellowship with God, and yet God was protecting him. And I want to say to every mother’s child in this building this morning, thank God for the angels that encamp around about you, that protect you when you don’t deserve it. I know that I know that God’s angel escort has protected me through life. Had I time this morning, I could tell you time after time when I believe that God literally, by His angels, has protected and delivered me. The Bible teaches these angels are ministering spirits. And so, here is a man really out of fellowship with God, and yet God is protecting him, and God is guarding him, and, finally, God lets him see these angels. He says, “Look there. Why, there are two hosts. There are the host of people that are with me, and then there’s the heavenly host encamping all about me.” We all have angels watching over us. But yet—listen to me—even though God was protecting him, God did not pamper him. God let him go through great need and want and difficulty.

Now, what has happened is this: that Esau is coming. Esau is coming with blood in his eye. Esau is coming with an army of 400 strong men. Could God have kept Esau from coming against Jacob? Listen to me. God engineered it. God is bringing trouble to this man.

Put in your margin Genesis 31, verse 24. Now, Jacob had a father-in-law whose name was Laban. And Laban wanted to know, how do I deal with Jacob? And, in this verse, “And God came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.” Don’t hurt him, and don’t help him. Don’t hurt him; don’t help him. Just let him go. You see, here’s the point. God will let you have your way until you come to the end of yourself. Here is a man out of fellowship with God, here is a man in danger, and God is protecting him with angels, but God is not pampering him. God is not removing him from difficulty.

Now, Jacob is learning that Esau is coming. Esau is coming with 400 armed men. And Jacob is out there in the wilderness, and now, listen. Jacob’s mind begins to work. Jacob begins to plan. He begins to scheme. You can see his self-sufficiency.

Now, in Genesis chapter 32, beginning in verse 3: “And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau, his brother, into the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord, Esau...”—can you imagine him calling Esau his lord?—“my lord, Esau: Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I

have sojourned with Laban, and have stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, and flocks, and menservants, and womenservants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.” Can you hear his flattering tongue? Can you imagine him calling this brother, that he had scorned and cheated and connived against, my lord, would you please show me some grace? No wonder he says that. He’s coming with 400 armed men.

And then, I want you to notice what else he does. Watch his mind now as it begins to work. Watch his self-sufficiency. Look, if you will, in verses 6 through 8: “And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and he cometh to meet thee, and 400 men with him. Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.” Can you see this? He’s trying to cut his losses right now. He’s dividing things up. He says, “If Esau gets this group, then this group will be spared. If Esau gets this group, then this group will be spared.” Now, he’s working. First of all, flattery; now, strategy; now, after all of this, he begins to pray. Notice what he does first. He rigs things. He arranges things. And after he does that he begins to pray. Look now in chapter 32, verse 9: “And Jacob said, O God, my father Abraham, and God of my father, Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will dwell, and I will deal well with thee; I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over Jordan; and now I am become two bands”—that is, part of my company is on one side and part’s on the other. “Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.” Now, he’s quoting the promises of God. God said He was going to bless him and protect him. But now he’s saying, “O God, take care of me. I’m in trouble.” It’s not wrong for Jacob to pray. He should have prayed. But prayer was not his first thought. Prayer was his last resort.

I heard of a woman who had a husband who was kind of a ne’er-do-well, and somebody said, “Where did you meet him?” She said, “I met him in a travel agency. He was the last resort.” Prayer was this man’s last resort.

First of all, he begins to flatter Esau. Secondly, he begins to divide his flocks and herds and his people. And now, he turns to the Lord. And then, he goes back to public relations. Look, if you will now, in verses 13 through 16: “And he lodged that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau, his brother; 200 she-goats, and 20 he-goats, 200 ewes, and 20 rams, 30 milk camels with their colts, 40 kine—

that's cows—and 10 bulls, 20 she-asses, and 10 foals. And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said to his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt—or between—drove and drove.”

Now, what he does, in shorthand, he takes 580 valuable animals, and he divided them up into lots of five, and he says, “Watch this. Go out there. And when Esau comes with these 400 men...” Now, remember, he's got some over here, he's got some over here, he's been using flattery. He's been saying, “My lord, Esau, show me grace, ta-da, ta-da,” and now he starts sending these gifts. Here's a bundle of five. And then said, “Put a space. As he comes further—give him another bundle of five gifts. As he comes further—send him some more. As he comes further—give him some more.” Do you see the mind of this guy? I mean, he's smart. He knows how to rig things. He knows how to make things happen. What he's trying to do now is to appease his brother because he is in hot water. Now, what he is saying is this: “Lord, I trust you, but...” Have you ever done that? “Lord, I trust you, but, Lord, I don't trust You completely. And now, Lord, You help me out. But Father, You know, I've got to rig this thing.” So Genesis 32, verse 20: “And ye say moreover, Behold, thy servant, Jacob, is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventures he will accept me.” Appeasement. Strategy. Flattery. Appeasement. All of these things his mind is working. Now, God lets him stew in his own juice. The angels are there. Did you get the first point? God wants you to grow. God wants to deliver you from self-sufficiency. So here it is. God will protect you, but He will not pamper you. He will not. Now, God loves too much to let you go. Thank God, He protects me. But He will not pamper you.

II. God Will Hurt You, but He Will Not Harm You

Now, here's the second thing I want you to learn if you're going to lean on the Lord. God will hurt you, but He will not harm you. You say, “God will hurt me?” You'd better believe He will hurt you. God will hurt you, but He will not harm you. Now, in this passage of Scripture, he's done all of this stuff, everyone here and there. And, finally, old Jake is alone. And look, if you will, in verse 24—we're in chapter 32: “And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.” Now, God engineered that Jacob was left alone. The flesh doesn't want to be left alone. We have a generation of people who cannot stand solitude, to be alone with God. That's the reason that people, when they walk into a hotel room or a home, they just turn on the television automatically. They're listening to the radio. They always want to be with friends. We don't want to be alone with God, because we cannot look God in the face, and we cannot look ourselves in the face. All of us need solitude, to be left alone, to reflect, to really think. I have an idea that if little David had a battery-powered transistor radio, we

wouldn't have had the 23rd Psalm. We need to be alone.

Now, when he's alone, he has a confrontation with God Himself. Look again in verse 24: "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." Now, he's done all of his figuring. Now, he's by himself. He's alone in the dark, and someone pounces him. Somebody jumps on him, and he finds himself in a wrestling match. A man out there jumps him. Who was this? It was the pre-incarnate Christ. Jesus Christ came to wrestle with Jacob. This was before Jesus was born of a virgin, what we call a theophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of our Lord. And so many of us think that Jacob was wrestling with the angel, but that's not the point. The angel started the fight. The angel is wrestling with Jacob. You see, God is trying to do something with Jacob. God wants to deliver Jacob from his self-sufficiency, and so the Lord gets him in a wrestling match, and they wrestle. All night long, they're wrestling. Wrestling back and forth, back and forth, a mortal man with Almighty God in a wrestling match. And now, when the day is about to break, the angel now does something that's very significant. Genesis chapter 32, beginning in verse 25: "And when he—the angel—saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, and he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go; for the day breaketh..."—the angel, that is, saying to Jacob—"Let me go. It's morning time. Let me go; for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." They're wrestling, Jacob and the angel, Jacob and the angel, back and forth, one throwing one, one throwing the other, one getting up, down, back and forth. Folks, don't you think that the angel could have thrown Jacob any time he wanted to? I like what Ron Dunn says about this. He said, "That fight was fixed." I mean, here's a mere mortal man wrestling. Had it just been an ordinary angel, it would be no wrestling match, but he's wrestling with the pre-incarnate Christ. All night long, he's wrestling. And, finally, it's as if the Lord says, "I hate to do this to you, Jake," but He reaches under the hollow of his thigh and shrivels it up, and Jacob can't wrestle anymore.

Have you ever watched wrestlers? My eldest son was a wrestler. I have two grandsons who are wrestlers. Have you ever watched wrestlers wrestle? Now, they're not the kind that Brother Mark likes to watch, you know. Do you know what muscle is most important to a wrestler? His thighs. His legs. That's where his strength is. If you take away his leg, he can't begin to wrestle. And so, the angel of the Lord reaches under here and cripples it, and now, how's he going to wrestle any more? And the angel says, "Let me go." Jacob says, "I'm not letting you go, not until you bless me. I'll not let you go." Now, if this was the Lord, why did the Lord say, "Let me go?" Because the Lord didn't want him to let go. You say, "That doesn't make sense." Oh, yes, it does.

You study the Bible, and you'll find out that many times God will act as if He wants to get away from us, when He wants us to pursue Him with all of our heart. Do you

remember on the Road to Emmaus when two disciples were going there after the resurrection, and Jesus appeared in His resurrection body? And He's walking with them, and their hearts are burning within them. And the Bible says that Jesus made as if He would go further, and they said, "Oh, no, no, don't. Spend the night with us here," and He did.

Do you remember the Syrophenician woman who had a demon-possessed daughter? And she came to Jesus and she said, "Jesus, if You can do something, heal my daughter." Jesus said to this Gentile, Syrophenician, "I'm not going to take the children's bread and give it to dogs." Can you imagine Jesus saying something like that? "I'm not going to take the children's bread and give it to dogs." She said, "Lord, even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from under the table." He says, "Woman, great is your faith," and He did exactly what she asked Him to do. But He acted like He wanted to get away from her, that He's not going to do this thing for her. If you read in the Bible, you'll find out that all through the Bible God sometimes acts like He wants you to let Him alone. But He wants you to pursue Him with all of your heart.

So the angel says, "Let me go; the day is breaking." Jacob says, now, listen, folks. He's come to the end of himself. I mean, he's even lost his secret weapon. What was his secret weapon? Well, "If my flattery doesn't help old Esau, and if I divided my people up, and if he kills all my people on either side, and I've sent him these gifts and they don't soften him up, and if he finally comes, at least I can run. I can pick them up and put them down. I can't even run now. I don't have any hope except You, O God, and I will not let You go."

God has brought this man to the place where he realizes that his only hope is God, not his scheming, but his surrendering; not his bargaining, but his begging. God hurt him, but God didn't harm him. Do you like that idea? Maybe you don't like that idea. You say, "I don't like the idea of God hurting me." God loves you too much to leave you self-sufficient. God will protect you, but He will not pamper you. God will hurt you, but He will not harm you. My dad hurt me. Your dad ever hurt you? My dad knew how to apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge, but he didn't harm me. I had a doctor one time, can you believe, Dr. David Dunavant, Sr.—he's in heaven now—that man took a knife and cut me. Can you imagine that? I mean, he sliced me. He hurt me, but he didn't harm me. He helped me, because I had a rock collection down there called a gallstone.

Now, listen. What I'm trying to say is this: that God will protect you. He never takes His eye off of you, but He will not pamper you. He's not going to coddle you. And God will hurt you. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens." But God will not harm you. You can trust Him, friend. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."

III. God Will Break You, but He Desires to Bless You

Now, here's the third and final thing I want you to see. God will break you, but He desires to bless you. God will break you, but He desires to bless you. What was this wrestling match all about? Well, look now in verse 27: "And he said unto him—that is, the angel says to Jacob—What is thy name? And he said, Jacob." Now, the word Jacob itself means supplanter, conniver. The very name means, in modern English, con artist. Sometimes I preach this, and I've heard people say, "Oh, Pastor, you ought not to say that. Our son's name is Jacob." We have a lot of boys in this church whose name is Jacob. The name Jacob has been transformed. If your name is Jacob now, it's an honorable name, because we're going to see what God has done. "And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." The word Israel means prince. And so, he says, "You used to be named con artist, but now your name is prince, because you have power with God and with men, because you prevailed." "And Jacob asked him, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there." That is, "You ought to know who I am. And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel; for I have seen God face to face—now you know who is was that was wrestling with Jacob—and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh."

Now, he's had this encounter with God. Now, it's the sunrise. But now he still has this limp. He's halting upon his thigh. What is it? God has broken him, because He wants to bless him. Now, no longer is he Jacob. Now, he is Israel. Now, he is a prince. Now, the Lord asked him, "What is your name?" Do you think God didn't know what his name was? No. God wanted him to admit it. "What is your name?" "Con artist, conniver, schemer." "Well, Jacob, I'm glad to hear you admit it."

Did you know that God is going to ask you the same thing today? God is going to engineer you one of these days, if you're not there yet, to a place where He's going to say, "What is your name?" And you're going to have to say, "My name is lazy," or, "my name is lustful," or, "my name is doubter," or, "my name is liar," or, "my name is selfishness," whatever it is.

You see, get the whole point now. Here's the point. Jacob is crippled that he might be crowned. He is broken that he might be blessed. And so, now he goes from a name of shame to the Hall of Fame. The rest of his life he has to walk with a staff. The rest of his life he is leaning upon a staff. And when he comes to die, go back to our scripture now over there in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 21: "and he worshiped, leaning upon his staff." Learning to lean, learning to lean, learning to trust in Jesus. You see, he was broken that he might be blessed. God desires to break you, that He might bless you.

Did you know that God likes broken things? Men throw broken things away, but God never really ever uses anything until He first breaks it. David said, in the Psalms, “A broken and a contrite spirit thou wilt not despise, O God.” Most of us are not being used of God because we’ve never been broken. One of these days, if God breaks you and you become broken bread and poured out wine, God can use you. God took a little lad’s lunch, and broke it, and fed the multitudes. Mary, as we heard in the song today, took an alabaster box of ointment, and she broke it, and lavished her love upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet Jeremiah said, “Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among the thorns.” You’ll never have the crop you ought to until you put the plow in, until the old clods are broken. Even the Lord Jesus Christ took that matzah there, that Last Supper, and did this, and said, “This is my body which is broken for you.” Men throw broken things away. God never ever uses anything or anybody until they’re first broken.

Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, I don’t want to be broken.” Well, there’s a sense in which you don’t have to be, if you’ll break yourself. The Bible says, “If we will judge ourselves, we would not be judged.” That is, if we will come to our Lord in absolute humility and brokenness, and cease our self-sufficiency, and cease our conniving and our planning, and stop trying and start trusting, and stand on the Word of God, then God can move in, and God can use us in a way that He never could before.

Now, go back to our text. Leave the Old Testament, and come back again to the New Testament—Hebrews 11 and verse 24. Now, see if it doesn’t make a lot more sense to you: “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning upon his staff.”

Now, all of his life—Jacob now is an old man and he’s dying, but he is leaning upon his staff. All of his life, he’s limping. All of his life, he has to have that staff. Even when he’s dying, he’s worshiping God, leaning upon his staff. He was stronger crippled and leaning upon a staff than he ever would have been standing upon his own two feet.

Conclusion

Now, may I give you a few little things to apply to your heart right now in conclusion? The first thing I want to tell you is that failure doesn’t need to be final. Here was a man who was a failure, but God took His man Jacob and God used him. And if you’ve been a Jacob running from God, conniving, self-sufficient, there is hope for you.

Number two: If you’re wise, you’ll save yourself a wrestling match and make a full surrender now. If you’ll judge yourself, you won’t have to be judged.

Number three: If there’s suffering in your life, let it teach you to lean on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Number four: Remember this—when it is all done and it is all settled, it’s your

worship by faith that really matters.

How does God sum up this man's life? I mean, there are so many episodes in this man's life, but God just puts it in a pithy little sentence—when he died, he worshiped, leaning upon his staff. Now, Jacob was 147 years old when he died. He was weak and he was weary. But he spent his last moments worshipping the Lord. What a way to go!

An old hermit, wanting to get right with God, thought maybe he could get right with God if he would be a hermit, go off and live in a cave. And so somebody came to see the old hermit, and said to him, "Are you still wrestling with the devil?" He said, "Not any longer." He said, "Now, I'm wrestling with God." The man said, "You are? You don't hope to win, do you?" He said, "No, I hope to lose—I hope to lose."

That's what I hope for all of us: that we will bow before Him and say, "I will not let You go, unless you bless me."

Listen to me. For some of you—I've been preaching long enough to know this: this message went right past you. You have no interest, none whatsoever, because you've been taught all of your life to be sufficient, self-sufficient. God loves you too much to let you stay that way—I mean, if you really know God. Now, if you don't know God, this won't apply to you. But Jacob loved God, and he had to be delivered from his self-sufficiency. Learning to lean, learning to lean, learning to lean on Jesus. And old Jacob died, "leaning on his staff," leaning on the Lord.

Bow your heads in prayer.

The Blessing in a Box of Bones

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 23, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:22

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”

HEBREWS 11:22

Outline

Introduction

- I. Faith Remembers the Unbreakable Promises of God
- II. Faith Relies on the Unshakeable Power of God
- III. Faith Results in the Unmistakable Peace of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, that’s just super, just super.

Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 11, and in a moment we’re going to read verse 22. This is a story of another champion of faith, whose name is Joseph. Now, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, Joseph was a great man. He lived as a great man, but he also died as a great man. Here’s the delineation of his life of faith that’s found here in verse 22: “By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel—now, watch this—and gave command concerning his bones.” That’s it. I mean, of all of the life that Joseph lived, so much in the Old Testament, and then just this one verse—and a very short, pithy verse. Joseph is dying. He’s the Prime Minister of Egypt. He has incredible wealth and power. And he says, “We’re leaving here, and I want to tell you what to do with my bones.” The title of the message today: “The Blessing in a Box of Bones.” We’re going to be talking about bones today.

You know, man is the only creature who knows he’s going to die, and he’s trying desperately to forget it. If you don’t believe that, look at the woman with too much makeup, the man who has already passed middle age, making a fool of himself in a sports car, and trying to dress like a teenager with a gold chain around his neck. We just don’t like to think about death. If you mention death, people will look at you like you have smallpox. In society today, we don’t talk much about death. You go to a funeral, and in the funeral we do all we can do to camouflage the fact of death. Our cemeteries

look like memorial parks. And we just change the subject of death like we switch channels in a television set. Why is that? Well, there is a fear of death, and the Bible teaches that the devil keeps people in bondage through the fear of death. Hebrews 2, verses 14 and 15—it talks of Jesus dying, and it says, “that through death He might—Jesus might—destroy him that has the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime in bondage.”

Anybody who’s afraid of death is in bondage. Are you afraid of death? Then Satan has done a job on you, and you have failed to understand what Jesus Christ has done for you. And I want to say clearly and plainly, no one is ready to live until he’s no longer afraid to die. Jesus has come to deliver us from the fear, and, correspondingly, the bondage, of death.

We ought to be really delighted to die. I heard of a woman in her late 90s who lived many, many years, and it was obvious she was dying. Her children and grandchildren came to stand around her bed, and they were weeping. She said, “Look. Don’t worry about me. I am tickled to death to die.” “I am tickled to death to die.” She is looking forward to going to heaven.

Now, our story today is about Joseph. Only one incident in his life, this champion of faith who did so very much. Now, look at the verse again—Hebrews 11, verse 22: “By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”

What was the commandment concerning his bones? He said, “Look, you’re going to leave Egypt. We’re down here in Egypt. We have it good. We have it made in Egypt right now, but we’re going to leave Egypt, and I’ll be there. But God’s going to bring you out. You’re going. And when you go, take me with you. Put my bones in a box, and take them with you. I wouldn’t be caught dead here.” And so, he’s wanting to go. He’s going with them. He’s saying, “Don’t you leave me behind.”

Now, there’s a great blessing in this box of bones that we’re going to study about today, because it will teach you, number one, how to live confidently; and, number two, how to die expectantly, and to no longer fear death. Three thoughts I lay on your heart and on your mind that come out of this simple verse. And we’re going to go back, if you will, to the story that is referred to here in the New Testament, go back to the first book of the Bible, Genesis, and go back to chapter 50, if you will. And, in Genesis chapter 50, you’ll find what the writer of Hebrews was talking about.

I. Faith Remembers the Unbreakable Promises of God

Now, here’s the first proposition that faith does to help you to live confidently and to die expectantly: faith remembers the unbreakable promises of God—faith remembers the unbreakable promises of God. Now, Joseph had said, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 22,

that, “God is going to bring you out.” And now, look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 50, verses 22 through 26: “And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father’s house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation—that is, he saw his great grandchildren; there they are upon his knees—and the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph’s knees. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swear to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence—that is, from this place. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt”—a coffin in Egypt. Now, the key to all of this is in verse 24. And in verse 24, “Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swear to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

Now, here’s the point. They were down there in Egypt. They were down there by the protecting hand of God, but God was going to bring them out of Egypt into the land of Canaan. Now, how did Joseph know this? How did Joseph know that they were coming out? Why was Joseph so sure that the Jews would not stay in Egypt? Because God had made a promise.

I’ll read a promise to you, and you put it down in your margin. In Genesis 15, God is speaking to Abraham about 300 years prior to this, and He’s making a promise to Abraham: “And he said unto Abram...”—that was his name at that time; not Abraham, but Abram. He said to Abraham—“Know of a surety that thy seed—that is, your children, Abraham—shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs—that’s Egypt—and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years. And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.” Now, there’s a clear promise. God said, “Abraham, you’re going to have some descendants. Your descendants are going to go into a strange land. They’re going to stay there for 400 years. They’re going to be afflicted. But after 400 years, I’m going to bring them out, and they’re going to have great wealth.” Now, that is a clear promise in the Word of God. Is it any wonder then that after 300 years Joseph could say to his brothers, “Look, I’m going to die. After I die, you are coming out of here, and take me with you. Don’t leave my bones here.” Now, get the point. We’re talking about Joseph’s faith. What was the root of his faith? He had a promise from Almighty God. It is so evident that Joseph had saturated and marinated his heart, his mind, his soul, his will, in the Word of God.

Now, there’s one phrase that will come through these studies over and over again, and that is Romans 10, verse 17: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” Ladies and gentlemen, do you want faith? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. What is faith? It’s not positive thinking. It’s not following a hunch.

It's not hoping for the best. It's not a feeling of optimism. It's not self-confidence. It's not wishing upon a star and crossing your fingers. Faith is getting a promise from the Word of God.

Remember we're in Hebrews chapter 11. And right now you're in Genesis chapter 50, but in Hebrews chapter 11, this great chapter on faith, it begins in verse 1— Hebrews 11, verse 1, that says, "Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for," that word hope I've told you does not mean a fond desire. It means a glorious assurance based on the Word of God. The word hope in the Bible does not mean what we use when we use the word hope. A girl wants to get married. She puts some nice things in a chest, and calls it a hope chest. She just hopes one day she'll get married. That isn't what the word hope means in the Bible. The Second Coming of Jesus is called the blessed hope. How do we know that Jesus is coming again? We have God's promise. The Lord Jesus said, "If I go away, I will come again. I will!" All right. Therefore, we have this hope like an anchor. You don't put an anchor in a cloudbank. You see, the Bible calls hope the anchor of the soul.

Now, how did Joseph know this? How did Joseph know, after centuries, we're coming out? His faith was rooted in the Word of God. I cannot say this emphatically enough. Listen to your pastor. Your faith is not going to exceed your love, your knowledge, your understanding of the Word of God.

There was a great evangelist of yesteryear. He was the Billy Graham of his day. His name was Dwight L. Moody. If you've studied church history, you've found the name Dwight L. Moody. He was not a literate man. He was basically uneducated. But his biographer said that he took two continents and shook them for God, a former shoe clerk. Moody felt that he needed faith. I need faith. You need faith. And Moody said he kept praying for faith, and praying for faith, and praying for faith, and faith didn't seem to come. And then he read our scripture there in the Book of Romans 10:17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," and Moody stopped praying for faith and began to saturate himself in the Bible. There was the faith. Faith is the by-product of hearing from God. You can't have faith if you're merely guessing at the will of God. You can't have faith if you're just following a hunch, but when you say, "God said it, God said it, I believe it."

You see, Joseph said, "You're surely coming out." How did he know this? Listen. His faith is resting in the unbreakable promises of God.

II. Faith Relies on the Unshakeable Power of God

Now, not only does faith rest in the unbreakable promises of God, but, secondly— listen—faith relies on the unshakeable power of God. Why can you have faith? On the

one hand, God says He can do it, will do it. On the other hand, we know that God is able to do it. Now, look again in Genesis chapter 50, verse 24: “And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swear to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob.” Now, he believes in the unshakeable power of God. Now, his faith was there, contrary to evidence—contrary to evidence; I mean, human evidence. When Joseph said this, there was no reason they should leave. I mean, after all, they’d already left Canaan because of a famine. Now, they’re in Egypt. They have it made. They are in a place of favor. They are in comfortable circumstances. Outwardly, there was no reason that they should leave. Now, what they might have done had they been like some moderns, they may have said, “Well, we’d better re-examine the promises in the light of present-day circumstances.” Have you ever done that? Have you ever taken a promise of God and paraded it past the judgment bar of human reason? Looked at circumstances and said, “Well, perhaps it won’t happen”? No, the unshakeable power of God overcomes circumstances.

Also, listen. Joseph’s faith was not shaken because of fickle emotions. Do you sometimes say, “Well, I just don’t feel God is going to do this. I just don’t feel it’s going to be that way?” Well, really, Joseph’s emotions didn’t have anything to do with it. Feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. Don’t base your faith on how you feel about it.

Martin Luther, who led the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther, in 1517, had a dramatic experience. He was saved. He saw the Word of God, and the Bible says, “The just shall live by faith,” and he understood it, that salvation is a gift that you receive by faith, and he received Christ. He was born again, even though he had been a priest. One day, he had a bout with the devil, and the devil said to him, “Oh, you say you’re a Christian. Do you feel your sin is forgiven?” Luther said, “No, I know my sin is forgiven because the Bible says so.” Now, you better get out of the realm of emotion and get your faith not only in the unbreakable promises of God, but in the unshakeable power of God.

Years ago, I heard of a youngster, a boy, who was saved in a revival crusade. The preacher preached from John 5:24, one of the great soul-winning promises in all the Bible, where Jesus is speaking. And Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life”—a great verse. The boy believed it. He passed from death unto life. He was saved and born again. He was happy going home with that verse in his mind. But he said on his way home from the revival meeting—this was his own testimony—he said, it seemed as though Satan was perched right there on his shoulder, whispering in his ear, and saying, “You’re not

saved. You're not good enough. You don't understand enough. You don't have the right feelings. You don't have the right emotions. You're not saved." And the devil just came after him. And, friend, if you've never met the devil, it's because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. You turn around and you'll have a head-on collision. That's what this boy did. The boy went into the house. He sat down there on the couch, beginning to deal with the doubts. So he opened his Bible again to John 5:24, and began to read it. "Verily, verily"—that means truly, truly—"I say unto you"—he said, Jesus is speaking—"he that heareth my word"—he said, I've heard it—"and believeth on him that sent me"—he said, I believe in the God that sent Jesus Christ—"hath everlasting life"—he said, I have everlasting life—"and shall not come into condemnation"—I will not come into condemnation—"but is passed from death unto life"—I have passed from death unto life. The boy said, "As I sat there on the couch, it seemed like the devil was right under the couch, saying, 'you're not saved.'" He said, "I took my Bible and put it under the couch. I said, 'There, read it for yourself.'" The next time, friend, the devil gets on your case, you get the Word of God, and don't argue with the devil; make him argue with God. Make him argue with the promises of God, the unbreakable promises of God.

Joseph's faith was not stampeded by circumstances. Joseph's faith was not challenged by his emotions. Nor was Joseph's faith eroded by long delay. Now, friend, it had been a long time since God made that promise—300 years have passed, three solid centuries, and there was more time yet to come. Notice, Joseph said, "Take my bones with you." He didn't say, "Take my body with you." Joseph knew that his body would be turned to mold and dust. The only thing that would be left was a box of bones. But he says, "Take my bones with you." Joseph knew that time must pass, there was going to arise a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, and yet, Joseph is standing on the Word of God. Listen to your pastor now. Don't you let circumstances, don't you let emotions, don't you let seeming delay, keep you from believing the Word of God. Joseph was a man of faith, and Joseph said, "Take my bones with you." The centuries cannot erode away the promises of God.

Let me give you some ancillary verses. Habakkuk chapter 2, and verse 3—God said to Habakkuk, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and will not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." "Now, Habakkuk, if you don't see it, remember God has an appointed time. Wait, I say, wait for it."

Let me give you another illustration of how God fulfills His promises through time. This is taken from the Book of Ezekiel. There was an ancient, wicked city named Tyre down on the seacoast of the Mediterranean. The way they lived was an affront to the nostrils of God, a stench in the nostrils of God, and an affront of the ways of God. And God prophesied that He was going to destroy Tyre, through the prophet Ezekiel. Put

this verse down—Ezekiel chapter 26, and verse 3: “Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and I will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.” Now, this was a seacoast city—“so just as the waves come up against your shores, many nations are going to come up against you.” And then, Ezekiel chapter 26, beginning in verse 12: “And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses—now, watch this, verse 12—and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee—watch this—like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord.”

Now, when God gave this promise, Tyre was one of the mightiest city-states on earth, and God said, “You’re going to be destroyed. I’m going to tear down your walls. I’m going to tear down your houses. The timber, the dust—all of it is going to be cast into the sea. What used to be a city will be like the top of a bald rock where a fisherman can spread his nets.”

The years passed. 550 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian came and he made siege of ancient Tyre and decimated it. The people of Tyre knew that Nebuchadnezzar was coming, and they slipped out of the city-state of Tyre, and made their way to an island a half mile offshore, and there they felt that they were safe from Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar decimated the city, but he left the walls, he left the houses, he left the timber. And the people had moved half a mile offshore, and they rebuilt their city out there. But God said that the stones, the wall, the timbers, even the dust, is going to be cast into the sea. But there it stood. 215 B.C., over 300 more years, Alexander the Great was coming through the land, marching through in conquest. He asked the people of Tyre to help him. They didn’t see any need to help him. Alexander had an army, but he didn’t have a navy. Tyre, now out there in the ocean, had a very strong navy. So they said to Alexander, “We’re not going to help you.” Alexander the Great was infuriated. He gave a command to his generals. He said, “Build a causeway out to that island.” It was a half-mile out through the sea. He said, “Build a causeway.” They said, “What are we going to build it with?” He said, “Take these walls, take these timbers, take these ruins, and build a causeway.” And they built a causeway out to ancient Tyre. And, in order to do it, they scraped the former place like a bald rock, not a stone, not a timber left, all of it thrown into the sea so Alexander the Great could march his armies out against Tyre.

What did God say? God said, “Look. The stones are going to be cast into the sea. The timber is going to be cast into the sea. The dust is going to be cast into the sea. It’s going to be a place where fishermen will now dry their nets.” You see, somebody said,

“The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine.” The promises are not eroded away by time, not by emotion, and not by circumstances.

Are you following? I said that Joseph’s faith, number one, was rooted in the unbreakable promises of God. And then, I said, number two, that Joseph’s faith relies on the unshakeable power of God. “God will surely bring you out.” Do you believe that God has the power to do what He says He will do? I hope you do. I hope you do. And I hope that you don’t let your emotions and circumstances and time erode away the promises.

Now, let me tell you, friend, that when God says something, He’s going to do it. I’m glad that Joseph did not try to allegorize or explain away these promises, like some do in the Bible today. I like what that little girl said: “If God didn’t mean what He said, why didn’t He say what He meant.”

Now, some of us are wondering, is Jesus coming again? Well, you say, “It’s been so long.” The Bible prophesies there’s going to be people like that. Second Peter chapter 3 and verse 4—they’re going to be saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Ah, but he says, in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 8: “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Now, God doesn’t punch a time clock when He goes to work. God doesn’t wear a wristwatch. God is not concerned with time. God will do what He says He will do! Joseph said, “God will surely bring you out.” He had the promise; he knew the power.

III. Faith Results in the Unmistakable Peace of God

Now, let’s come to the third and final thing of this study today. Faith that believes the unbreakable promise of God, that relies on the unshakeable power of God, that results in the unmistakable peace of God—the unmistakable peace of God. Now, look again in Genesis chapter 50, verse 24. Joseph said, “Look. I die, and God will surely visit you, and he’s going to bring you out.” Now, here’s a man dying in peace. Do you know how he’s dying? Here’s old Joseph. He’s there. They’re bringing his grandchildren in to him, and he’s dangling his grandchildren there, and his great grandchildren, upon his knees. There’s not a hint of panic here. Here’s a man who is stepping into glory in perfect peace. He said, “Look. Take my bones with you.” Now, did this happen? Let me give you some verses:

Exodus chapter 13, now—just put it in your margin. You don’t have time to turn to it. I’ve copied it out for you—Exodus 13, verses 18 and 19: “But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt—now, watch this, verse 19—and Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God

will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones from thence, from hence with you.” And so, when they got ready to go, they said, “Get old Joe’s bones. Here we go.” Moses said to the man, “You carry the bones. Let’s go on through the wilderness.” Now, Moses led them all the way to Canaan, but, you know, Moses didn’t get to go into Canaan. It was Joshua that led them into Canaan. So read now in Joshua chapter 24, verse 32: “And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.” Now, just as Joseph believed and prophesied, Moses carried the bones across the burning sands of the Sinai. And then, Joshua carried his bones across Jordan and into Canaan. Big question: Why all of this fuss about his bones, anyway? What difference did it make to Joseph? Why did Joseph say, “Take my bones with you?” Now, have you been to Egypt?

I’ve been to Egypt on a number of occasions. I’ve seen the pyramids. I’ve been inside the Great Pyramid. I’ve been in the Egyptian Museum. I’ve seen the sarcophagus of old King Tut and all of the immense accoutrements that were surrounding his death and burial. Joseph could have done that. Joseph could have built himself a monument there in Egypt. Joseph could have had himself embalmed and enshrined there with great glory and circumstance and pomp. Why did he not do that himself? He had the power to do it, and he had the wealth to do it. I’ll tell you why. Joseph is saying, “I want to be a part of what God is doing.” Joseph knew. He took the long look. He knew that success and wealth and power and everything else this world has to offer is so temporary. I believe that’s the reason God could trust him with such wealth and with such power. Now, had he built a magnificent tomb, doubtless, it would have been plundered. All of those tombs have been plundered. They’re looking for more of them so they can plunder them. I’ve been to the British Museum. You need to go sometime, and go into that room where they keep the mummies. I’m so glad Joseph is not there. When you could say, “Well, this is the mummy of old Joseph.” No, it’s not there. Joseph—you don’t find him in any of this. Joseph is buried in an obscure grave somewhere in the land of Canaan called Shechem. Why did he do this? He is wanting not a monument to pride, but a monument of faith, that he believed God; he’s identifying with what God is doing. You see, Joseph knew that, when he died and they put his bones in a coffin, God was not finished with those bones. And I’m going to die. And you’re going to die, if Jesus tarries. And, if we wait long enough, our bodies are going to turn to dust, and our bones will be about the only thing left. But notice what the Bible says, in Daniel chapter 12, verse 2: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Or, listen to what Jesus said in the New Testament—John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29: “Marvel not at this: for

the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and they shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” I’m telling you everybody here is going to be raised from the dead—everybody. Don’t get the idea that just Christians are going to be raised from the dead. Everybody’s going to be raised—the saved and the lost. You can’t crawl up in the grave, and pull the dirt over your face, and hide from God. There is coming a resurrection, and none less than Jesus said, “all that sleep in the earth shall hear the voice of the Son of man.” They’re going to come forth. They are going to come forth, either of the resurrection, they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life.

Now, here’s a box of bones, and old Joseph, I don’t know how much of this he knew, but it is certainly true—there’s a great getting’ up morning coming. Can you imagine those bones talking to one another? They might have laughed a little bit. You might have heard a chuckle from a knuckle, and seen a grin from a shin, and a little glee from a knee, and a lot of ribbing going on, because those bones are going to lie down for a while in the grave. And the old spiritual says what? Dem bones, dem bones, are gonna walk around. There is coming a gettin’ up day. There is coming a resurrection. This is not fantasy. This is not make-believe. The great prophet Daniel said it would happen. Jesus said it would happen. You, my friend, are going to rise from the dead, either to be swept into the arms of the Lord Jesus Christ, or to meet in the judgment a God that you do not know. But there’s a resurrection coming, and I wonder, are you ready for that resurrection? We, too, are going to have an exodus. Put these scriptures down—Philippians 3, verses 20 and 21: “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working thereof, whereby, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”

Do you know what that scripture says? All right, I’ll step out here where you see me. Take a look. You see this old body. The Bible calls it a vile body. I’m going to be like Jesus. You say, “You arrogant rascal.” Well, then, go look in the mirror, and say that about yourself. I’m going to be like Jesus. We’re looking for Jesus. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior. Jim, thank you for singing, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.” Can you imagine being transformed into the likeness of our Lord? I submit to you, either that’s true, or it’s not true. How many of you believe it’s true? Lift your hand. Now, friend, it’s truth. We’re dealing with truth here. First Corinthians chapter 15, verses 54 through 58: “So when this corruptible...—that means, that which decays—when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal—that means, that which dies—shall put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” And then, here’s old Paul as he

taunts death: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in van in the Lord.” I don’t know how much of this old Joseph knew, but I know that he, by faith, gave commandment concerning his bones.

Conclusion

Death is a fact, my friend. You say, “You’re trying to frighten me?” No, I’m trying to comfort you. I’m trying to take away the fear of death. One of these days, death will lay his icy hands on you. One of these days, death will blow his cold breath on you. One of these days, your feet will touch the chilly waters of Jordan. You may die as a child, and let go of your little toys. You may die as a young mother, and kiss your helpless babies goodbye. You may die as an educated doctor, and write your last prescription. You may die suddenly in an automobile accident on the way home from church, or you may put on your pajamas and die peacefully. But it’s appointed unto man once to die. But I’m not afraid of death. I’ll tell you why. I have a Savior. His name is Jesus. I have no fear of death. You say, “You’re lying.” I am not. God is my witness. No fear of death—none. I don’t look forward to the act of dying—to be very frank, I don’t; but I have no fear of death—no fear of death, none.

There was a time when death laid his bony hands on the Lord Jesus Christ, drug Him into a dungeon, put Him on a cold slab. Jesus was bound with the chains of death. One day passed. Two days passed. Three days passed. And death, that old monarch of terrors, laughed his hoarse laugh, and clapped his bony hands, and says, “I have Him.” On the third day, He broke those chains, rose up. A look of fear is on the face of the sinister minister of fear, death himself. Jesus reaches up, pulls death from his throne, and throws him to the dungeon floor. The crown rolls off death’s head. Jesus reaches in, and pulls the sting out of death, puts His heel on the neck of death, puts the crown on His head, and walks out of that tomb, risen, living, victorious as Savior. And because He lives, we live with Him. We no longer fear death. We no longer fear death because we have a Savior, a dear, loving Savior. Faith—faith—relies on the unbreakable promises of God. Faith recognizes the unshakeable power of God. And faith rests in the unmistakable peace of God. Aren’t you glad that we have such a Savior?

Why don’t folks get saved? Why would people refuse Jesus? Can’t you see the sinfulness of the human heart that people would refuse such a Savior? Don’t you want to receive Him? “As many as receive Him, to them give ye the power to become the sons of God.”

Would you bow your heads in prayer.

The Blessing in a Box of Bones

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 23, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:22

“By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”

HEBREWS 11:22

Outline

Introduction

- I. Faith Remembers the Unbreakable Promises of God
- II. Faith Relies on the Unshakeable Power of God
- III. Faith Results in the Unmistakable Peace of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen. What a blessing.

Find Hebrews chapter 11, and in a moment we're going to look in verse 22. We're talking about champions of faith. One thing I desire for my life is faith, and, along with it, wisdom. And I know that your Christian life is going to be in direct proportion to your faith, for Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you." Now, you may not be a champion singer, or athlete, musician, businessperson, politician, but yes, you can be a champion of faith. That's why this 11th chapter of Hebrews has been written: to encourage us. And we've been talking about champions of faith, and, today, we come to the life of a man named Joseph. Joseph lived as a great man, and, as proof of it, he died a great man. He lived by faith, and he died by faith. Look, if you will, in verse 22: "By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel."

Let me give you the background there. The children of Israel—that's the Jewish people—were in the land of Egypt, and they were living high, wide, and handsome. They had it made. Joseph was the Prime Minister of Egypt, but he says, "You're going to be leaving here." He "made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave command concerning his bones." Now, friend, of all of the things that Joseph did, the story is magnificent and it takes verse after verse after verse in the Old Testament, but here God just chooses one little segment of the life of Joseph, the commandment he gave concerning his bones. And what was the commandment concerning his bones? As we're going to see, Joseph said, "You're going to be leaving here. And, when you die,

take my bones with you. I wouldn't be caught dead here. I want you to take me out, when you go. You're going on to Canaan. You're going to the Promised Land. And I'll be dead. My body will smolder and turn to dust. My bones will remain. And when you go, take my bones with you." Now, what on earth does that mean? And, what does that say to us today? Well, I want to talk to you today about The Blessings in a Box of Bones—The Blessings in a Box of Bones. You see, Joseph knew that he was going to die. It didn't bother him one scintilla of an iota. He's not bothered at all. He's ready to die.

Are you ready to die? The Bible tells us, in the Book of Hebrews, that one of Satan's ways to keep people in bondage is through the fear of death. And the Bible tells us, in that same passage, that Jesus, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. That is, if you're still afraid to die, it means two things: you're afraid of the power of death and the devil; and, number two, that you don't really understand what Jesus Christ did for you.

Friend, look up here and let me tell you something. You're not ready to live until you're no longer afraid to die. Now, I'm not afraid to die—not at all, not at all. Now, I can tell you that I may be afraid of the act of dying, but I'm not afraid to die. I'm not afraid of the consequences of death. Neither was Joseph. But a lot of people are. Man is the only creature that knows he's going to die, and he's trying desperately to forget it. If you don't believe that, look around and see the elderly woman with too much makeup. Look at the man way past middle age driving a sports car with a gold chain around his neck, trying to look like a teenager. And when people die, the funeral place is festooned with flowers, and the cemetery is made to look like a memorial park. Few people go to funerals. Few people watch people die. We don't like to think of death. And, if you talk about death, they'll change the subject like switching channels on the television set. And, if you continue, they'll look at you like you have smallpox. They don't want to talk about death. But death, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, is not an enemy, but a friend that will usher you into the presence of Jesus Christ.

Now, here's Joseph. Joseph was wise enough to know that he's going to die. He's still alive. He's 110 years of age, and he knows that he doesn't have much time, and so he has made a commandment concerning his bones, and he said, "God's going to take you out of Egypt. God's going to bring you into the land of Canaan. And, when He does, you take my bones with you." And the writer of the Book of Hebrews chose that to illustrate the great, magnificent faith that Joseph had.

Now, what is the blessing in a box of bones? May I give you a skeleton outline. All right now, I want us to think about three major points, as we think about the bones of Joseph.

I. Faith Remembers the Unbreakable Promises of God

Number one: Why this great faith? And, by the way, be finding Genesis chapter 50, because Genesis chapter 50 tells us about the episode that Hebrews writes of. Number one: Faith remembers the unbreakable promises of God—faith remembers the unbreakable promises of God. Now, Joseph said what he said because he was standing on an unbreakable promise of God. Now, I'm reading Genesis chapter 50, verses 22 through 26: "And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation—he's seeing his great grandchildren—the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph's knees." So there's Joseph, 110 years of age, dangling his grandkids on his knees, and his great grandchildren. "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you—now, if you don't mind marking your Bibles, underscore the phrase, God will surely visit you—and bring you out of this land unto the land—now, watch this—which he swear to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt." Well, how did Joseph know these things? Why was he so certain? Why was he so adamant about it? Well, obviously, he knew the Word of God.

You see, God had made a promise to Abraham 300 years before this. You can put this down in your margin. I'll read it for you, in Genesis chapter 15, verses 13 through 14. Here's what God said to the first Hebrew, to Abraham. His name was Abram at this time. "And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety—there's our word again, a surety; that is, a certainty—that thy seed—that is, Abram, your children—shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs—he's talking of Egypt—and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them 400 years—think of it now, four centuries—and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance." Now, that's what God said. How did Joseph know, therefore, that they were going to leave? You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out. God said it; Joseph believed it. Now, that tells us something about faith. You have to have the Word of God in order to have faith. The Bible tells us, in Romans 10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Now, you're not going to have faith apart from hearing God. Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not following a hunch. Faith is not merely hoping for the best. Faith is not a feeling of optimism. Faith is not self-confidence, wishing upon a star, crossing your fingers. Faith is believing what God has said, and acting upon it. God will speak through His Word, and then God will speak in your heart, and you have this faith. And so, here is Joseph's faith being displayed now. He remembers the unbreakable promises of God.

Faith is acting as if it is so, because He said it is so, even when it does not seem so, so it can be so. You don't claim it and name it. God names it, and then you claim it.

Now, that brings up a real question. Is your faith weak or strong? Well, I would say that your faith is probably measured by your knowledge and your love of the Word of God. Many are only dabbling in Bible study, and, therefore, they are spiritual midgets when they ought to be spiritual giants. Faith comes by hearing. Do you really love the Word of God? Do you study it? It's very obvious that Joseph had marinated himself in the Word of God, that he had saturated himself with the Word of God.

There was a great evangelist who was the counterpart of our Billy Graham. This man's name was Dwight L. Moody. If you read Christian history, you'll read about Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody did not have a seminary education, but his biographer said that he took two continents and shook them for Jesus Christ, America and Europe. An ordinary man, a former shoe clerk, but God used him mightily. Moody was a man of great faith. Let me tell you how he got his faith. He said, "I knew I needed faith. I would pray and pray and pray, and ask God for faith, and I did not seem to have the faith that I needed. Then," he said, "I discovered the Word of God that says, in Romans 10:17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." He said, "I began then to study the Bible, to read the Bible, to feed on the Bible, to assimilate the Bible, and I found this great faith just growing in my heart and in my life."

You see, why was Joseph so certain? Well, he had the Word of God. He had the promises of God. So, let me say, first of all, that faith remembers the unbreakable promises of God. The promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ, and God will never, no never, no never, ever, ever break a promise. Do you believe that? I hope you do, because you're not going to have great faith if you don't believe it.

II. Faith Relies on the Unshakeable Power of God

Now, number two—number two: Faith relies on the unshakeable power of God. You see, when you have the promise, then you need someone who has the power to fulfill the promise. Now, look again in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 24: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land"—who's going to do it? God is going to do it—"unto the land which he swear to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob." Now, this was the God who turned the Red Sea into a 48-lane super highway. This is the God who judged the Egyptians. This is the God who did the miracles. This is God who has this unshakeable power.

Now, let me tell you something about faith. Don't let your faith be stultified and diminished by circumstances, by appearances. When Joseph gave this prophecy, when Joseph gave this commandment, there was no reason that they should leave Egypt. They had it made. They were in a place of favor. They were in a place of high position.

They had an inside track to the throne, Joseph, the Prime Minister, and yet he says, “You’re coming out.” Now, today, we may take some of the promises of God, and we may look at them, and we say, “How on earth is that possible?” Maybe we better re-examine the Bible in the light of today’s society, and in the light of the circumstances around us. Don’t you do it! You, friend, remember that, no matter what it seems, God’s Word is reliable. Joseph has the unshakeable power of God in his mind.

Now, also, don’t you let your feelings keep you from believing the Word of God. Feelings are fickle. Feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. The Bible is the Word of God. Nothing else is worth believing. Don’t put your faith in your feelings. Don’t say, “Well, I feel it’s this way,” or, “I feel it’s that way.” Very frankly, your feelings do not change the Word of God. The devil wants to get you over into the realm of emotions and away from trusting the Lord.

Martin Luther, who was the father of the Protestant Reformation back in 1517, was on some stairs in Rome, trying to be right with God by doing penance and by doing good works, and he’s climbing these stairs, the Santa Scala, the holy stairs there, praying on each stair. But he’d been studying the Book of Romans, and a verse from the Book of Romans began to reverberate through his soul: “The just shall live by faith”—“The just shall live by faith.” And he saw it! He saw it! “O God, I’m not saved by my good deeds, by my works, by my toiling, by my task, by my trying, but by trusting. It is by faith.” And he repented of his sin, trusted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, and was born again there living by faith. Now, the devil doesn’t like that. If you do that, the devil will come against you. The devil counterattacks. By the way, if you’ve never met the devil, it’s because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. The devil will counterattack. And so, the devil came to Martin Luther and tried to get him off into the realm, the arena, of his feelings. And Satan one time said, “Martin, do you feel your sin is forgiven?” He said, “No, I know my sin is forgiven because of the Word of God.

I heard of a youngster, a young man, who went to a revival crusade, and the preacher was preaching from John chapter 5 and verse 24: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” That’s John 5:24, the words of Jesus. That was the text for that night. The boy heard it, believed it, received it, was saved. Rejoicing in the Lord with his Bible in his hand, was going home when he met the same devil that came against Martin Luther. This boy later gave his testimony and said, “It seemed as if Satan was perched on my shoulder whispering in my ear. He said, ‘You’re not saved. You’re not good enough. You don’t understand enough. You don’t feel just right. You’re not saved. You’ll never make it.’” The boy said he went home and sat on the couch, and he said, it seemed that the devil was under the

couch just whispering to him, 'You're not saved, you're not saved,' so he said, 'I'm going to read that verse again. He took the Bible, and opened it to John 5:24, that the evangelist had said is your spiritual birth certificate, and he read it again. "Verily, verily"—that means truly, truly—"I say unto you"—he said, Jesus is speaking—"he that heareth my word"—he said, I've heard it—"and believeth on him that sent me"—he said, I believe in the God that sent Jesus Christ—"hath everlasting life"—he said, "I have everlasting life. There, devil, read it for yourself," and put it under the couch. That's not altogether foolish. The next time the devil comes to you and tries to get you to doubt, don't get in an argument with him. He's not worth it. Point him to the Word of God. Let the argument be between him and the Word of God. You step out of that argument, and guess who's going to win? God is going to win.

What I'm trying to say is this: that Joseph had faith. It was unshakeable faith because it rested in the power of God, not in circumstances, not in emotion. I'll tell you something else. Delay did not shake Joseph's faith. Now, it had been 300 years since the promise was made, three centuries. And there was to be another one. Joseph is not speaking of his body; he's speaking of his bones. He knew it was a long time coming. His body would molder and decay. But he said, "We're coming out of here." Now, a lot of things had to transpire. There had to arise another Joseph, another Pharaoh, who knew not Joseph, but Joseph said, "We're coming out." Now, friend, listen to me. Time cannot erode away the promises. God gave Habakkuk a vision, and God said to Habakkuk, in chapter 2, "the promise is for an appointed time...though it tarry, wait for it; wait for it." God may seem slow to you, but God is always on time; never ahead of time, never behind time, always right on time. The Bible says that Jesus came in the fulness of time. Peter said, "In the last days there are going to come scoffers, walking after their own lusts." And, by the way, every time you see a scoffer, you'll find someone walking after his own lust. You show me somebody who makes fun of the Word of God, and I'll show you somebody with the devil's initials carved on their hearts. Show me a woman that makes fun of the Word of God, and I'll show you someone covered with the slimy fingerprints of sin. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." What they're saying is, "Oh, you preachers, always preaching about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Where is it? How come it's been so long?" Peter said, "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." God doesn't punch a time clock when He goes to work. He doesn't wear a wristwatch. God is not concerned with time. The fact that it had been centuries prior when God made this promise, and it would be decades yet before the promise would be fulfilled, did not stampede Joseph. Joseph knew that the promise was going to be

fulfilled. Why? Because it rests not in circumstances, not in emotion, not in chronology; it rests in God. There is the unbreakable promise of God. There is the unshakeable power of God. That's what we've got to remember, if we want to have a strong faith. That's why God took this one episode in the life of Joseph, and used it as a cameo to teach us faith.

III. Faith Results in the Unmistakable Peace of God

Now, here's the third thing I want us to see in this particular passage of Scripture, and that is, friend, I want you to see that faith results in the unmistakable peace of God. Why did Joseph have such peace? There's no hint of panic here. He's about to die, and he's playing with his grandbabies. He's speaking with a ring of certainty and victory in his heart. Where does he get this peace? Well, the peace comes, again, from the first two things. He remembers the promises of God. He relies on the power of God. And, therefore, he is resting in the unmistakable peace of God. There's no panic here in all of this. Now, was his faith rewarded? Let me give you some Scripture here.

Exodus chapter 13, verses 18 and 19, talking about the children of Israel coming out of Egypt and going to the Promised Land—and this is what it says: “But God led the people about—that is, in circles, round and around—through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea; and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.” Now, that's exactly what Joseph said would happen. They went up out of the land of Egypt. “And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones from thence, from hence with you.” Now, Moses said, “All right. Load 'em up, head 'em out, let's go! Get Joe's bones. Hey, you, pick up that coffin, you fellers. Carry it with you. Let's go.” Here they go out of Egypt. Here they go through the Red Sea. Here they go to the brink of Jordan. And what do they have with them? A box of bones. Ha, 400 years, God says, “You're coming out.” And they came out. Now, Moses couldn't go all the way into the Promised Land, and so a man named Joshua had to bring them into the Promised Land. Read now in the Book of Joshua chapter 24, verse 32: “And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor.” Now, here in the Book of Joshua, Joshua takes the bones, the bones that were in Egypt, the bones that Moses carried across the burning sands of the Sinai, and the bones now that come across the River Jordan, and the bones that come to that place of Shechem, and he is buried there. Now, it was as Joseph believed: Moses carried his bones, and Joshua carried his bones, and it's always going to be just as God said it would be.

Now, that brings up an interesting question. Where we see the promise of God, we see the power of God; we see the peace of God. But why is it wrapped up in these

bones? What is the blessing in a box of bones? Why did Joseph say, “Take my bones with you?” Why couldn’t he just be buried there in Egypt and leave well enough alone? I’ll tell you why. Because Joseph wanted to be a part of what God was up to. He wanted to be linked with the people of God. I want to be a part of that. You see, look. Joseph was a mighty man in Egypt. You cannot understand the power that Joseph had. Egypt, the mightiest nation on the face of the earth, and he is the Prime Minister. He’s the one who is running everything for old Pharaoh.

Back in this day, when an Egyptian would die, of great wealth, pomp, and circumstance, he would build a great monument. Have you seen the pyramids, the Great Pyramid? I’ve been to it, been inside of it. It was an antiquity in the time of Christ, an engineering marvel. I watched the other night on television on the History Channel the construction of the Great Pyramid. Have you seen those things? All of those tombs, those monuments, that’s what the rich Pharaohs and the high muckety mucks of Egypt were able to do. I’m glad Joseph didn’t build one for himself. You know why? It would have been plundered. All of those have been plundered. They’re looking for more to plunder. It would have been robbed. It would have been desecrated. Had they found the sarcophagus of Joseph, had they found his mummy, he may have been in the London Museum. Have you ever been in the London Museum? Go to the section where they have the mummies. I’m glad there’s not a glass case with old Joseph lying up there. I’m glad that Joseph did not try to build a monument to himself. Do you know what Joseph did? Joseph said, “Take my bones. Bury them in the Promised Land.” What Joseph built for himself was a monument of faith by believing God.

What do you want to be remembered for? You know, all of the things that we think are so important—our wealth, prestige, our awards, all this—do you think that impresses heaven? And it probably won’t impress people after you’re gone. Joseph could lie down in the grave and rest because he knew that he was a part of God’s plan. I’ll tell you something else. Joseph knew that there’s a great getting up day coming. Do you believe that? Do you believe there’s a resurrection? Daniel believed it. Listen to Daniel chapter 12, verse 2: “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Look up here. If you die before Jesus comes, you go down the grave, you’re going to be raised. Now, don’t think that the resurrection is just for Christians. All are going to be raised, saved, and lost. You say, “That’s Old Testament.” All right, let me give you something New Testament. Put down John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29. This time Jesus is speaking. Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice—that is, the voice of Jesus—and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Everybody here is going to be raised. You die.

They put your bones in the ground. They may stay there for centuries, but there's coming a time when all that are in the graves will hear the voice of the Son of God. Just as He said, "Lazarus, come forth," going to come forth, either to the resurrection of life or the resurrection of damnation.

Won't it be great to be raised and see Jesus face to face? The Psalmist said, "I shall be satisfied when I arise in your likeness." Won't it be great? Would it not be fearful to rise in the judgment and face a God that you do not know, face a Savior who died for you, who bled for you, who invited you, someone that you said no to? What will you say when you see Him? Oh, you're going to face Him. You're going to meet Him. He is inescapable. He is unavoidable. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God"—God has given Jesus a name—"that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." You're going to meet Him. You can't crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. You are going to meet Jesus Christ. There is coming a resurrection.

I don't know how much of this that Joseph knew, but he's living by faith. He's probably the most Christ-like character in all of the Old Testament. He knew that death was not the end of it all. He didn't understand all that we understand this side of Calvary, but I believe if you could listen to that box of bones, if those bones could talk one to another, they might have been having a little party. You might have heard a chuckle from a knuckle. Maybe there would be a grin from a shin, and a little glee from a knee. Maybe there would be a lot of ribbing going on, because they knew that there is a great gettin' up morning coming. Dem bones, dem bones are going to walk around. Jesus said, you're coming out of the grave. That's the reason Paul said, "Our behavior, our citizenship, is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior who shall change our vile body and make it like unto His glorious body." Think of it. Sir, you're going to be like Jesus. I'm going to be like Jesus. You're going to be like Jesus. You're going to be like Jesus. You're going to be like Jesus. I submit to you, either that's true or it's not true. How many of you believe it's true? See, it's true. I believe it is true. Oh, Jim, thank you for singing that song, "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus." Think to rise, in the resurrection, in that glorious dawn, and meet our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—what a day that will be!

You see, the apostle Paul pointed toward that day, and he said, "There's coming a time when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God." There's coming a time, though we die and lay down in the grave. Old Paul gets a little sarcastic; he gives a challenge. He calls death an enemy, and he says, "O Death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" He says, "the sting of death is sin"—you see, it's sin that puts the sting into death—"and the strength of sin is the law." It's the law that says that sin must be punished. But, thank God, to those who are saved we're not under the law,

but under grace. And Jesus has taken the sting out of death, the pain out of parting, the gloom out of the grave, and has given us a hope that is steadfast and sure, because death, that old monarch of terrors, laid his bony hands on Jesus and brought Jesus down to the dungeon, and Jesus lay there, bound in the iron-cold chains of death. One day. Two days. Three days. On the third day, He broke the chains of death, rose up off that marble slab, and old death had been sitting there on the throne, clapping his bony hands, and shrieking his hoarse laugh. But he stops laughing. Jesus reaches up and pulls death from the throne and throws him on the dungeon floor. The crown rolls from the head of death. Jesus puts His heel on the neck of death, reaches down and pulls the sting out of death, puts the crown on His own head, and walks out of that grave a risen Savior. Glory to God! And Jesus said, “Because I live, you’ll live.” If in this world only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.

Thank God, Joseph was not living to have a pyramid built in Egypt, but a palace in glory. Are you saved? You see, Paul ends this passage of Scripture saying, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Be steadfast—that’s constancy. Abounding in the work of the Lord—that’s fervency. For you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord—that’s expectancy. That’s the way we’re to live: not afraid to die, not worried about our bones. God is going to take care of that. There’s coming a resurrection. What a glorious, wonderful time that will be.

Conclusion

Now, what is the blessing in a box of bones? Can you imagine them having that box of bones the whole time they were in Egypt? And, if there was a time of slavery and adversity and misery, they look at that box of bones, and say, “This is not forever. We’re leaving here.” If there was a time of prosperity and ease, they’d look at that box of bones, and say, “Don’t settle down. We are leaving here.” And whether it was prosperity or adversity—and we all know both, don’t we?—that box of bones reminded them of the brevity of life and the length of eternity. The brevity of life. Hold your hand up and breathe on it. What is your life, but a vapor that appears for a little while? Put your hand up there. Can you find that heartbeat? I don’t think, yes, it’s there. There’s an old heartbeat. That’s all there is between you and eternity. That’s not much. You’re gone. You’re gone. Folks, are you ready? No man is ready to live until he’s not longer afraid to die. And how can you be ready to die?

Remember the unbreakable promises of God. Rest in the unshakeable power of God. And just lean back on the unmistakable peace of God. That’s the blessing in a box of bones.

Bow your heads in prayer.

The Bones of Belief

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 28, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:22

Outline

Introduction

I. The Roots of Faith

II. The Rest of Faith

III. The Reward of Faith

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, we're in a series of messages on God's hall of fame. We're talking about the heroes of the faith. And, I would like for you, please, to be finding Hebrews chapter 11, and I want us to look at verse 22, an unusual verse. It's about Joseph and his faith. The title our message this morning—"The Bones of Belief." The Bible says here in Hebrews 11, verse 22: *"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones"* (Hebrews 11:22). That's all that verse says, and that's what the Holy Spirit chose to remind us of when it talked about the life of Joseph and the great faith of this Old Testament patriarch, Joseph. Somehow, Joseph was very concerned about his bones. He wanted the Lord to have all there was of him.

I had a Baptist pastor down in Florida who was telling me that he was talking to a lady. She was bragging about being a Baptist. "Oh," she said, "I am a Baptist." She said, "Every inch of me is a Baptist." And, she meant to say, "I am a Baptist from the top of head to the sole of my feet," but this is what she said she said: "I am a Baptist from the bottom of my head the top of my feet." You know, we've got a lot who are just that kind of Baptists. I mean, the Lord certainly doesn't have their mind, and He certainly doesn't have their feet. They're not going out witnessing or anything, but they're Baptists from the bottom of their head to the top of their feet. You can't get them to think, and you can't get them to visit; but they're Baptists. Well, I want you to be a Baptist from the top of your head to the sole of your feet. Better than that—I'd rather you be a Christian, because, you know, you can be a Baptist without being a Christian. And, I want you to be saved. And, all of you, and every part of you the Lord is interested in, even your bones.

Well, Joseph, when he was dying, made mention... Or, actually, the marginal reading is “[remembered] the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones” (Hebrews 11:22). Well, what commandment was this concerning his bones? Well, you know that the New Testament is the commentary on the Old Testament. So, God is talking here about an Old Testament story concerning the patriarch Joseph.

Turn to Genesis chapter 50 with me for a moment, and let’s find out what the writer of the Book of Hebrews was talking about. Here in Genesis chapter 50, I want you to notice what Joseph said when he was dying. I begin reading here in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 24—Genesis chapter 50 and verse 24: “*And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land*”—now, they were in the land of Egypt when this was taking place. And so, he’s saying, “I’m going to die. God is surely going to visit you and bring you out of the land of Egypt”—“*unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*”—that is, to the Promised Land, the land of Canaan—“*And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt*” (Genesis 50:24–26). But, Joseph said, “Now men, I know that one of these days you’re going to leave Egypt. I know that you’re going to the Promised Land; and when you go, even though I’m dead, I want you to take my bones with you.”

Now, what he was saying is, “I wouldn’t be caught dead here. When you go, I want you to take my bones with you all the way to Canaan.” And, that’s the story. That’s the story that God used as an illustration of the faith of Joseph, and the message that we’re calling today “The Bones of Belief”... Now, what Joseph was saying really was this: “If you get to the bottom line, God is going to keep His Word; and when He does, I want to be a part of it. When God brings you out of this place, take me with you. God’s going to keep His Word. And, when He does, I want to be a part of it.” Now, as we talk about the bones of belief today, I have a little skeleton outline of three points I want you to remember, and I’ll see if you can follow along with me.

I. The Roots of Faith

First of all, I want you to notice the roots of belief—the roots of belief. What caused Joseph to say this? Where did Joseph get his faith? What were the roots of his faith—the roots of Joseph’s faith?

Well, his faith was rooted in the Word of God. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I’ve been preaching on faith for a number of Sundays; and if you haven’t learned anything else, I hope you’ll learn this—that faith is rooted in the Word of God. You see, don’t just decide

to believe something and then believe it and call that *biblical faith*. God must speak before you can have faith. Did you hear that? God must speak before you can have faith. The Bible says in Romans chapter 10, verse 17—listen to it; it’s a key verse: *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). In plain English, faith comes by hearing the Word of God. You cannot have faith until God, first of all, speaks concerning a matter.

A dear lady was talking to me yesterday on the telephone, and she said, “I have a certain malady, a certain illness. I’m going to the doctor at thus-and-such a time. And, when I go, he’s not going to find one trace of this illness.” I said, “How do you know that?” She said, “I’ve got faith!” I said, “Did God tell you there would be no trace of that illness when you got there? Now, if God told you there would be and then you believe it, that’s faith. But, you may just have positive thinking. There’s a difference—there’s a difference. You can’t just say, ‘I’m going to believe something and make it so.’ You don’t make it so because you believe it; you believe it because it is so—God has already said it.” Faith is the evidence of things not seen, but those things are there because God has said that they’re. And so, ladies and gentlemen, learn this now: faith is not just positive thinking. Wishing doesn’t make it so. Deciding doesn’t make it so. Saying that you believe doesn’t make it so. Is it so because God says so God says so! And, faith is your response to the Word of God.

And, Joseph knew that the Israelites, the Hebrews, were going to leave the land of Egypt because God had already said so. Where did God say so? All right. Turn to Genesis chapter 15. Notice we’re in Genesis chapter 50 right now, so just go to Genesis chapter 15. And, look, if you will, in verse 13—Genesis chapter 15 and verse 13: God is speaking to Abram, who later became Abraham: *“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety”*—now, just underscore that. No *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about it—*“that thy seed”*—that is, “thy descendants”—*“shall be a stranger in the land that is not theirs”*—that is, “Your descendants, Abraham, are going to be strangers in the land of Egypt. That’s not their land”—*“and shall serve them”*—that is, “You’re going to be slaves down there”—*“and they shall afflict them four hundred years”*—that is, “The Jews are going to be captives in Egypt for 400 years”—now, notice also in verse 14—*“And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge”*—and God did—*“and afterward shall they come out with great substance”* (Genesis 15:13–14).

Now, God says, “I’m going to judge them, and you’re coming out. You’re not going to stay here in Egypt.” That’s the reason Joseph knew that he was leaving with them. I mean, that’s the reason he knew they were leaving, and that’s the reason he asked to have his bones taken with him. Where did he get this faith? It was in response to a clear—crystal clear—statement in the Word of God. Now, ladies and gentlemen, that is

faith: acting on the Word of God, believing the Word of God, getting a report from God and then acting on it.

And, you see, faith doesn't depend upon appearances. It didn't seem like they were going to leave. Now, when Joseph said, "Take my bones with you when you go," there was no reason for them to go. They were in a place of favor. I mean, Joseph was the Prime Minister. They lived in the choicest piece of real estate. They lived in the land of Goshen. They weren't slaves at this time. Nobody was mistreating them at this time. As a matter of fact, they had left the land of Canaan because there was a famine down there. Why would you want to go back to a bad land when you've got it made? I'm trying to say, from appearances, there was no reason that they should go. And, after all, so much time had transpired since God had said, "You're leaving." But still, Joseph is clinging to the Word of God. Learn this about faith—learn it now!—when God speaks, appearances don't make any difference and time doesn't diminish His promise. Now, just learn that. You see, if you want to live by appearances and be a slave to hours, and weeks, and months, your faith is going to waver.

I told some of you a story, when I first came to be your pastor, of an episode that happened to me. When I was down in Florida, I was preaching at a revival meeting, and God just really blessed that revival meeting. It was on a Saturday night, and I was coming back, driving through the South Florida swamps on an asphalt back out in what we would call down there the *boon docks*. And, I was coming back, and I had a little Volkswagen automobile at that time. It had an auxiliary tank. If you run out of gasoline in the first tank, you switch a lever and you go to the second tank. It didn't have a gas gage. I was already on the second tank, and I'd forgotten it. And so, it was about 10:30 at night. I was so happy. Oh, my soul was afire with revival spirit! I was just glowing, so happy, praising the Lord. And, I ran out of gasoline on that lonely road. I mean, out there, there wasn't anybody coming by—or, very few people coming by. And, I was by an old swamp—an old bullfrog pond—frogs out there, just singing to themselves. I thought to myself, "How anti-climactic can you get? Here I am—right out of a revival meeting, and now I'm sitting by a swamp in a car out of gas." And, on top of that, it started to rain. And so, I said, "Well now, Lord, what do You want me to do? Surely, You've got some purpose in this. What do You want me to do?"

And, incidentally, there are two ways that God can speak to you: God can speak directly by His Word; God can speak to us through the Holy Spirit. Or, God can speak both ways—through the Word and confirm it with the Spirit. I felt the Spirit of God saying to me, "Adrian, you pray that an automobile will come and pick you up, and you pray that the first car that comes will pick you up." I checked that out and prayed about it a little bit, and I said, "All right, Lord. I'm going to pray like I feel urged and led in my heart

to pray that the first automobile that comes along will pick me up.” And, I said, “Furthermore, Lord, if the second car, or the third car, or the fourth car picks me up, it will not be an answer to prayer because I feel led to pray that the first car that stops will pick me up.” And, I checked that out some more and felt good about it. As a matter of fact, I just felt faith in my heart. Have you ever felt faith? I mean, you just know it’s there. You just know that you have what you desire. You know, *pray, believe, you’ll receive—pray and doubt, you do without*. I just believed that I knew it. And, I said, “Thank You, God. Thank You. I just know this. I just thank You.” And, God’s Spirit was telling me. That’s so!

And so, I saw the first car coming, and I rolled down the window, and leaned my head out, and smiled a little to help the Lord. And, he came along, and he just slowed down and got just parallel to my automobile there in the rain. And then, he just, as the kids say, put the pedal to the metal. And, he just took off. And, I watched as two taillights disappeared in the darkness—and the exhaust fumes in my nose. I was frustrated because I had believed God, and I just knew that that car was going to stop and pick me up. I said something I know sounds sacrilegious. I said, “Never mind, Lord. I’ll get the next one myself.” And, the next car came. I stuck out my thumb. Zoom! He went past. And, the next one, and the next one—they just weren’t stopping for a guy like me on a night like that. I said, “Well, I’ll have to walk!” And, I got out of the car, in the rain, started to walk. I only had one fresh pressed suit. I was going to wear that the next day. It was Saturday night. I was going to wear that the next day to preach in, and I was in the rain.

And, an automobile came from the direction in which I was walking, shined his headlights on me, came to a complete stop, and said, “You need a ride, don’t you?” I said, “Yes, sir. I do.” He said, “I came to get you.” I said, “You what?” He said, “I came to get you.” I looked real carefully at that car. You know which one it was, don’t you? That’s right! The first car—the first car! I said, “I want to ask you a question: What made you come to get me?” And, do you know what he said? He said, “It beats me.” He said, “I stopped by here before.” I said, “Yeah, I saw you. But,” he said, “I was afraid to pick you up. But,” he said, “I got down to the crossroads, and I stopped. And, something told me I should come back and get you.” Of course, it wasn’t something; it was Someone. I almost shouted, but the only thing that kept me from shouting—I thought, “Adrian, what a fool you are to get out and get your head wet.” You know, I felt like kicking myself in the seat of the pants for that.

Now, what I’m trying to say is this: look, folks, appearances will fool you, won’t they? Sometimes your eyes, your ears, your nose—everything will tell you God hasn’t heard your prayers and that you can’t live by faith. It’s awfully hard to live in this world, when

we live by the five senses, to live one more step in the sixth sense of faith.

And, here was Joseph, however. Listen, appearances didn't diminish his faith. He didn't say, "If you go." He said, "When you go, take me." Time and circumstances seemed to be against it, but the Word of God stood fast. Oh, dear ladies and gentlemen, what a marvelous book of fulfilled prophecy we have. God had spoken hundreds of years before it took place. He said, "You're going to be down there 400 years, and then you're coming out." And, God fulfilled that prophecy to the letter.

Think with me just a little bit about fulfilled prophecy. Look, if you will, please, in Deuteronomy chapter 28—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Turn to Deuteronomy, chapter 28. I just want to spend a little time here today looking at fulfilled prophecy as a basis of our faith. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 28, begin in verse 64, and I want you to see God's...another prophecy that God gives concerning the Jew and what God said He was going to do. God says here in Deuteronomy 28, verse 64: *"And the LORD shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the LORD shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life"* (Deuteronomy 28:64–66).

Has this scripture been fulfilled? Read Milman's *History of the Jews*. See how they have fled, been scattered among the nations, just as God has said, and have suffered persecution and unspeakable atrocities under Pharaoh, and under Nebuchadnezzar, and under Alexander the Great, and under Nero, and under the Turks, and under Hitler, and now under Russia, and, God help us, even under the name of some who have called themselves Christians but are not true Christians. They have suffered—they have suffered. Look—go on and read here in verse 68: *"And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again"*—not the first time, but again. Notice—*"with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you"* (Deuteronomy 28:68).

Was this scripture literally fulfilled? Why, ladies and gentlemen, indeed, it was! Were the Jews ever taken to Egypt in ships? Josephus and Deadoris, both of them historians, tells us that when Titus came against Jerusalem in 70 A.D., thousands and thousands Jews were slain. The Temple was destroyed. Titus took those who were left living, all of them who were 18 years above, male and female, loaded them on ships, and took them down to Egypt, just as the Bible said would happen. When they got down there, they

were put to work in the mines of Egypt. But, there were so many slaves brought to Egypt; there was a glut on the market, and people would refuse to buy a Hebrew slave. This scripture, ladies and gentlemen, was fulfilled to the very letter.

Let me just give you another example of what I'm talking about. We're talking about Joseph's faith, which was in the Word of God—Joseph's faith was in the Word of God. That was the root of his faith. Look, if you will, for just a moment, in Isaiah chapter 13. Let me give you another example of what we're talking about. We're talking about fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah chapter 13, and here is what God said was going to happen to ancient Babylon. I begin reading in verse 19—Isaiah 13 and verse 19:

“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited”—that is, God says, “I'm going to overthrow Babylon. Now, watch it. It will never be rebuilt—“neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation”—people are not going to live there—“neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there”—the Arabs are not going to put their tents there—“neither shall the shepherds make their fold there”—the shepherds are not going to bring their sheep to the ruins of ancient Babylon—“But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures”—that means, “weird creatures”—“and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there”—what does this word satyr mean? Actually, I believe it's a reference to the demon spirits—“And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons”—or, “serpents”—“in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged” (Isaiah 13:19–22). Now, God said Babylon is going to be destroyed; and once Babylon is destroyed, it will never again be inhabited. The Arabs won't even pitch their tents there. The shepherds won't take their sheep there. Wild animals are going to prowl through the ruins thereof.

A Turkish colonel was talking to a college professor, and they were talking about the Bible, and they were questioning whether or not the Bible was true. This college professor, who was a great Christian, asked this Turkish colonel, “Have you ever been to the ruins of ancient Babylon?” He said, “I have. I went there on a hunting expedition.” And, this is what the colonel said to the college professor—and I quote the colonel: “I hired a rich sheik, and his men to take me there to hunt. We found that all manner of wild animals, owls and birds, were dwelling among the ruins. So, we had the best hunting of our lives. It was so good that we were annoyed when the Arabs told us they must go miles away to pitch their tents.” Remember what the prophecy said? “And, we tried to bribe them to camp right there for the night, but they refused, saying that no Arab had ever been known to camp there because it was haunted after dark by all manner of evil spirits who would surely kill them or bring great evil upon them.” Can you

imagine the astonishment of this Turkish colonel when the college professor read to him this specific prophecy that I've just read to you? I want to ask you a question: Why if Babylon was such a great site for a city in ancient times, has it never been rebuilt? Why are just wild animals there? Why, to this day, are the Arabs afraid to even camp there and will not pitch their tent there? Well, the Word of God has been so literally, fulfilled.

Let me give you another while we're here in Isaiah. Look in Isaiah chapter 31 and verse 5. Let me give you another interesting prophecy. I'm just talking about Joseph's faith. Now, I'm saying that Joseph's faith was rooted in the Word of God. Joseph knew that God was going to keep His Word, and he wanted to be a part of it. I want you to see here in Isaiah chapter 31 and verse 5 a remarkable prophecy. Listen to it—Isaiah 31:5: *“As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it”*—number one, He's going to defend it; number two, He's going to deliver it—*“and passing over he will preserve it.”* Three things are going to happen: defend Jerusalem, deliver Jerusalem, and preserve Jerusalem.

Allenby, the British general, fighting to take the Holy Land back from the Turks, fought inch by inch 'till they came to this place, where it was time to take Jerusalem. Allenby, the general, who himself was a great believer, believed that he had the fire power to take Jerusalem, but he did not want to bomb the Holy City and he did not want to shell the city because of the sacred sites that were there. He went to God in prayer and said, “God, what would You have me to do?” He felt led by the Holy Spirit in prayer to have his airplanes to fly over Jerusalem, hoping that perhaps that show of force would frighten the Turks into surrendering. So, he took his airplanes that were moderately unknown in that particular time and had them swoop down low like birds flying—to come back and forth, back and forth. They flew over the city of Jerusalem. When the Turks saw that, they were so in consternation and so in fear, they surrendered the city of Jerusalem without one shot being fired, and the city was preserved. Now, I want you to listen to Isaiah 31, verse 5 again: *“As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it”* (Isaiah 31:5). What a wonderful fulfillment of prophecy!

I want to show you something else. Turn to Isaiah chapter 45 for just a moment. Joseph was no fool when he believed the Word of God. Isaiah chapter 45 and verse 1: *“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved”*—L-E-A-V-E-D, the two-leaved—*“gates; and the gates shall not be shut”* (Isaiah 45:1). Now, what does this refer to? And, who on earth is Cyrus? Well, here God is talking again about the destruction of ancient Babylon. Babylon was a great, great city of antiquity. It was great in antiquity, great in enormity, and great in iniquity. And, God

had made up His mind, as He'd already said and already prophesied, that Babylon was going to be destroyed, never again to be rebuilt.

Well, Cyrus came on the scene, and incidentally, this prophecy was given 100 years before Cyrus was born. And, God called him by name—a hundred years before he ever came on the scene! He was a Persian general. He came against Babylon, and he found that the walls around Babylon were 300-feet-high and 50-feet-wide. Can you imagine walls like that? Can you imagine a 30-story building? Well, just think of here are walls 300-feet-high, 50-feet-wide, and they are impregnable. There's no way that Cyrus could take ancient Babylon; and yet, God had decreed the destruction of ancient Babylon. The Euphrates River flowed beneath the city walls, through the city and out on the other side. And, there were great pillars that went down into the river to support the wall that went over the river. And then, they had gates that could be closed with iron bars so the water could flow through. You see, the hanging gardens of Babylon were there on the inside—beautiful they were, as they drooped down over the river and other places. It was a beautiful thing—beautiful situation was ancient Babylon. But, it was impregnable.

Except Cyrus had a plan. Cyrus went some distance—way back up to the River Euphrates from the direction in which the river was flowing. He found there an old channel where the Euphrates used to flow. And, he put thousands of his men, slave laborers and soldiers, to building a dam way up the river. And, when the time was right, he had his soldiers to withdraw from the siege of Babylon. When Cyrus's soldiers withdrew, Belshazzar, the king on the inside, thought that he'd won the victory and called for a feast with a thousand of his lords and ladies. Daniel tells us about that. But, not only does Daniel tell us about that, the great historian Herodotus tells us the same thing. And so, he just simply withdrew his army, and Belshazzar was having a feast. But, Cyrus knew what he was doing. Just at the right moment, he closed his dam, diverted the course of the Euphrates River, and left the riverbed dry. Then, he called his soldiers back, and they marched through under the walls of the city on the dry riverbed. And, that night mighty Babylon fell.

Now, I want you to notice what God said in the Book of Isaiah, chapter 45, and verse 1: *“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus”—now remember, this was 100 years before Cyrus was born—“whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings”—the word “loose the loins” means “I’ll make them careless.” They’re going to leave the gates open—“I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut” (Isaiah 45:1). A remarkable prophecy—and fulfilled to the letter! Isn’t it wonderful, ladies and gentlemen, how Herodotus and Daniel confirm what Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years before it came to pass?*

Now, let me give you another example of what we're talking about. Turn to the Book of Ezekiel, chapter 26, for a moment. And, just go on to the right just a little bit. You're in Isaiah. Ezekiel is in the same neighborhood. Just go on there to Ezekiel chapter 26, and look, if you will, in verse 12. I want to give you another prophecy. Now, this is a prophecy—not concerning Babylon, not concerning Israel, but it's a prophecy concerning ancient Tyre—T-Y-R-E. It is clear that it concerns Tyre. Notice chapter 26, verse 3: *"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus"* (Ezekiel 26:3). That means "Tyre" or "city of Tyre." Well, what is God going to do to the ancient city of Tyre? Well, I want you to read here in Ezekiel chapter 26 and verse 12. Here's what God says He's going to do to Tyre: *"And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses"*—and notice this, and just put a star by it—*"and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee like the top of a rock"*—underscore that—*"[and] thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; [and] thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD"* (Ezekiel 26:12–14).

Now, this prophecy was made. Tyre was one of the earth's mightiest cities. It was down there on the seacoast of the Mediterranean, where the ancient Phoenicians used to live. And, God said, "Now, these certain things are going to happen to the city of Tyre. First of all," He said, "the nations are going to come up against you" in verse 3 (Ezekiel 26:3). And, He says in verse 12: "They're going to loot you, and they're going to take your riches and your merchandise" (Ezekiel 26:12). Well, did that happen? It certainly did. Ole' Nebuchadnezzar took Tyre about 550 years before the Lord Jesus came into this world. He laid siege against it. He went in, and looted the city, and hauled away all the booty, and all of the riches, and all of the silver, and the gold, and the brass, and the iron. He took it with him. But, he just simply ransacked and pillaged the houses. He left the walls, and the houses, and the timbers standing there. But, God said all of those things were going to be cast into the sea. God says that *"they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water"* (Ezekiel 26:12). And then, again in verse 14: "You're going to become like the top of a rock" (Ezekiel 26:14).

Well, many, many years passed, and Ezekiel's prophecy is still completely unfulfilled because the stones are still there, the dust is still there, the rocks are still there, the timber is still there. But, wait a minute—Alexander the Great now is on the throne. Alexander the Conqueror, who conquered the world and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer—Alexander, who died at the age of 33, the same age our Lord was when He died—came that way. He was on his conquest. Well, let me tell you what

had happened prior to this and back up a little bit. When Nebuchadnezzar came against Tyre, who were a seafaring people, they got in their boats and they went to an island one-half mile off the shore. And, they'd had enough of Nebuchadnezzar and other people. And so, they rebuilt their city out there on the island. And, they had a half a mile of water between them and any land invader, and they felt now they were safe. And, they built one of the mightiest navies known to the ancient world, and they felt pretty safe.

Well, Alexander the Great came along now in 315 B.C., a couple hundred years later. And, Alexander the Great asked some favors from the people of Tyre, and they wouldn't grant those favors. They figured they didn't have to be afraid of Alexander. After all, Alexander didn't have a navy! Why should they be afraid of Alexander? Alexander was furious, and Alexander made up his mind that he was going to destroy them. But, he had no boats—how was he going to get out there to that island? Alexander said to his engineers and to his slaves, "I want you to build a causeway. I want you to build a bridge right out to that city." And, they took the stones, they took the rocks, they took the timbers, they took the foundation, they took all of the rubble they could take, and they began to shove it into the sea—into the sea, into the sea. And, they built a land bridge. They built, going out to that island, just a peninsula. And then, Alexander, with his soldiers, went out there and obliterated the people of ancient Tyre. And, in order for him to build that causeway, he, ladies and gentlemen, took the site of ancient Tyre and wiped it clean. He even took the dust and threw the dust into the sea.

Notice again what God says in the last part of verse 12: *"and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water"* (Ezekiel 26:12). Notice verse 14: *"And I will make thee like the top of a rock: [and you] shalt be a place to spread nets upon"* (Ezekiel 26:14). You can visit the ruins of ancient Tyre right now and see the fishermen drying the nets on that bald place where there used to be a city. That city that has never been rebuilt. Joseph was no fool when he said, "When you go, take my bones with you." He knew God keeps His Word—God keeps His Word.

Let's just go on, and let me show you another one while we are in Ezekiel. Turn to Ezekiel chapter 12 and verse 13—Ezekiel chapter 12 and verse 13. Here's a prophecy concerning a man named Zedekiah. I want you to notice what God said to him. God says, *"My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there"* (Ezekiel 12:13). That sounds like a riddle, doesn't it? God says "I'm going to put him in My net. I'm going to bring him to Babylon. He'll be kept there a captive. He's going to die there, but he's not going to see Babylon."

Well, how on earth could King Zedekiah go to Babylon, and live there, and die there

without seeing it? Well, if you want to see what happened, if you want to see the fulfillment of this prophecy, turn to 2 Kings chapter 25 and verse 7—2 Kings chapter 25, verse 7: *“And they slew thy sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of [bronze], and carried him to Babylon”* (2 Kings 25:7). Isn’t that amazing? Yes, he went to Babylon, but he was blinded before he went. Isn’t it amazing how God’s Word is fulfilled?

Now, someone would say, “Well, that’s impossible for this scripture to be fulfilled. At least, appearances don’t seem that he could go to Babylon, and live there, and die there without seeing it.” But, you see, God knew he was going to be blinded. Joseph said, “When you go,” not, “If you go”—“When you go.” I don’t care what appearances say. I don’t care what circumstances are like. I don’t care how much time has lapsed. God has said the Jews are coming out.” “And, when you go,” he says, “take me with you, fellows—take me with you.” You see, the root of his faith was the Word of God. He knew God had said it—he knew that God said it would surely come to pass, and it did come to pass.

Let’s go to the New Testament for just a moment. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 19. I want you to notice some of the prophecies of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke chapter 19, the Lord Jesus here is prophesying concerning Jerusalem—and I read in Luke 19, verse 41: *“And when he was come near, he beheld the city”—that is, the city of Jerusalem—“and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things [that] belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes”—* Jesus is speaking to Jerusalem—*“For the days shall come upon thee”—* Jerusalem—*“that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee”—* that is, “the Israelites”—*“and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation”* (Luke 19:41–44).

Now, Jesus Christ, when Jerusalem was in a time of tranquility, the Roman peace, Jesus said, “Jerusalem is going to be encircled with armies.” Jesus said, “There’s going to be a trench. You won’t be able to get in; you won’t be able to get out. And,” He said, “then, they’re going to come in, and you’re going to perish. Your children are going to die within the gate.” But then, I want you to notice what else Jesus said. It seems contradictory. Turn here to Luke chapter 21 for a moment, and notice in verse 20: *“And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies”—* He’s already said it’s going to happen. Now, He says, “When you see it”—*“then know that the desolation thereof is nigh”—* that is, “It’s near, but it’s not yet. It’s just nigh”—*“Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it”—* in the middle of the city—*“depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these*

be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20–22). Now, notice—"Everything that's written is going to be fulfilled" (Luke 21:22).

Now, this is contradictory. The Lord Jesus said, "Jerusalem is going to be surrounded." Now, the way they took an ancient city, in these days, would, many times, just be try to starve the people out. And so, for a conqueror slave labor was cheap. There was no such thing as a minimal wage. They had slaves—many slaves, all the slaves they wanted. And so, they would take slaves and soldiers, take the city they wanted to, conquer, and they would surround it. They would dig a trench; and with the dirt out of the trench, they would make a wall. And, they would just simply wait there upon that wall. Nobody could get out without going over that wall, through that ditch. And, they'd be slain. Now, the fields, and the crops, and everything were outside. So, it's just a matter of time until the people inside would starve to death and surrender. Now, Jesus said this is what's going to happen.

But, notice what he said here in chapter 21: he said, "When you see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then flee to the hill country" (Luke 21:20–21). Now, I want to ask you a question: How are they going to flee to the hill country if Jerusalem is surrounded? It seems contradictory. But, let me tell you what happened—let me tell you what happened: you see, the soldier who first came, the general who came in 69 A.D., did exactly as Jesus said. He surrounded the city. He dug a trench. He put up his battlements. He set there to wait the Jews out. In 69 A.D., Nero died in Rome. Vespasian, the general, was called back to Rome to be crowned Emperor. And so, he and his armies withdrew. It was during that interval when they withdrew that God's children, His Christian people, remembered the words of the Lord Jesus. They fled. History records not one Christian dying in the siege of Jerusalem. One year later, Vespasian sent Titus, his son, back to finish the job that father had started. And, Titus came and surrounded the city of Jerusalem. There was a slaughter, and Josephus tells us 1,300,000 Jews were slain. And, blood ran through the streets of Jerusalem like water after a heavy rain. The vultures so gorged themselves on human flesh that their wings were not even able to lift them from the ground. But, Jesus said, "When you see Jerusalem surrounded, you flee." And, they did—they got out.

Titus, in his fury, was so infuriated at the resistance of the Jews that he leveled the buildings. He said, "Spare the temple." But, Jesus said of the temple, "Not one stone upon another will be left" (Mark 13:2). Someone shot a flaming arrow into the temple. The great timbers began to burn. When they burned, the gold melted, ran down between the cracks. And, those people, in their greed for gold, got their mighty crowbars and their engines of mechanics, and they started to pry those stones apart—not one stone was left upon another. They were looking for some secret chamber where there

might be treasure. The city was leveled. The fields were sown with salt and plowed under—just as Jesus said. But, isn't it remarkable—isn't it remarkable—how Jesus said, "The city is going to be surrounded, and you flee"? Isn't that remarkable? You say, "Well, it couldn't happen that way." But, it did happen that way, for God knew some things that man does not know. All I'm trying to say, ladies and gentlemen, is this—that Joseph's faith was rooted in the Word of God. Say, where is yours? Do you know when we ask ourselves questions about the Bible, we're not just interested in studying Joseph. I mean, look—look! You see, there are three questions you have to ask: What did it mean then? What does it mean now? And, what does it mean to me personally? See, that's the way to understand the Bible.

Now, we see what it meant then. Joseph had a promise from the Word of God, and he acted on it. He said, "God's going to do it. I want to be a part of it." Now, what does it mean now? Ladies and gentlemen, God is still keeping His Word. And, the prophecies concerning the destruction of this world and the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ are still just as true. They're not diminished by circumstances, and they're not diminished by time. That's what I'm saying. And, faith is finding out what God has said He's going to do and saying, "I want to be a part of it." Have you done that? That's what Joseph did. Joseph found out what God was going to do; and because he believed the Word of God, he said, "I want to get in on it. When you go, fellows, take me with you. Even though I may be in a coffin, take me with you! I know God is going to keep His Word." Faith is rooted in the Word of God. "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). That's one point, and I've got three. So, I'm going to really make the last two a skeleton outline. Okay. Faith is rooted in the Word of God—the root of faith.

II. The Rest of Faith

The second thing is the rest of faith—the rest of faith. Joseph is not perturbed. He's saying, "Take my bones with you." You say, "Well, why is he concerned about his bones? I mean, after all, he's dead! Why's he concerned about his bones?" It's kind of like the hippie who put on his tombstone, "Don't dig me. I'm really gone." Joseph was gone. Why should he be concerned about his bones?

Well, you see, Joseph was looking forward to that great getting up morning. He just wanted to be in the Promised Land when he got up. That's all! He knows there's more to come, and he's just resting in the Lord. He's not all uptight about dying. Say, folks, look—let me tell you something: you're going to die. You say, "That's morbid." Well, not if you know the Lord. It's not so bad. "*[It's] appointed unto men once to die*" (Hebrews 9:27). You're going to die; I'm going to die unless Jesus comes first. But, you see, dear

friend, death doesn't end it all for the Christian. Joseph knew that. He said, "When you go, take my bones with you." He's looking forward to that great getting up morning, and he's just resting in the Lord. He knew the best is yet to come.

Now, Joseph had some hard times, and he had some good times. But, let me tell you something that Joseph knew—and I want you to learn this. If you're not a Christian, I want you to learn this. Are you listening? The devil gives the best first; Jesus saves the best to the last. The devil gives the best first. You serve the devil—friend, get all the fun you can 'cause it's all the fun you're ever going to have. Let me just tell you that now. If you made up your mind that you're not going to be a Christian—you're not going to serve God—then live it up. Hear? Because all of the happiness, all of the joy, all of the peace, all of the thrill, all of the excitement you'll ever know, you'll know now. But, if you're a Christian, let me tell you something, friend: the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. You see, let me show you what I'm talking about. The Bible says, "*[The] bread of deceit is sweet...but afterwards [a man's] mouth [will] be filled with gravel*" (Proverbs 20:17). You break God's laws; you live high, wide and handsome; you say, "Oh, this is fun!"—well, later, afterward, "*[a man's] mouth [will] be filled with gravel*" (Proverbs 20:17). Oh, the bitter dregs of sin!

But, do you remember when Jesus was there at the wedding in Cana of Galilee? Do you remember that? And, the refreshments ran out, and Jesus turned water into wine, and the master of ceremonies said, "I don't understand this. When anybody has a party, he always serves the best refreshments first. But, you've saved the best to last." Our Lord always does that. I want to tell you something about Jesus: it keeps getting sweeter and sweeter. And friend, come on and go to Heaven with me. The best is yet to be—it really is! Oh, it pays to serve Jesus! Joseph knew this; and so, here's Joseph's rest of faith. He knows, dear friend, that it's going to get better. He knows, one of these days, he's going to rise and shake the dust from his shroud, and he's going to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom! What a faith!

III. The Reward of Faith

All right. The final thing I want you to notice is the reward of faith. Oh, ladies and gentlemen, I just don't even have a scintilla of time to develop this point except to say this—that God rewards faith. He did in Joseph's life; he has in mine. He will in yours. But, without faith, it is impossible to please Him.

Conclusion

Now, Jesus is coming, and don't you let time or circumstances tell you He's not coming,

because He is. And, the same God who's kept these other prophecies will still keep His prophecies today.

Faith for the Family

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 4, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23

Outline

Introduction

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II. Faith's Venture

III. Faith's Valor

IV. Faith's Victory

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, please, to Hebrews chapter 11, and our verse this morning is verse 23, as we continue our series on God's hall of fame. And, of course, the way to be in God's hall of fame is to exercise faith in Him, for the Bible says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him*" (Hebrews 11:6). And, Hebrews chapter 11 is a listing of the heroes of the faith, and today we come to two that you may not know. How many of you know who Amram is—and Jochebed? Now, if you don't know who Amram and Jochebed are, get ready, because you're going to learn about them. They were the parents of Moses. But, their claim to fame was not that they were the parents of Moses—their claim to fame was not that they were the parents of a famous man. Their claim to fame was that they believed God! It was their faith that pleased God. And, by the way, dear friend, if you want to please God, you'd better learn how to believe God, for "*without faith it is impossible to please him*" (Hebrews 11:6).

Now, when we greet one another around the church, we frequently say, "Say, how are you feeling?" But, I think the more important question is, "How are you faithing?" For it's not according to your feeling, but "*according to your faith be it unto you*" (Matthew 9:29)—not according to your friends, but "*according to your faith be it unto you*" (Matthew 9:29); not according to your fame, but "*according to your faith be it unto you*" (Matthew 9:29); not according to your fortune, but "*according unto your faith be it unto you*" (Matthew 9:29). Without faith it is impossible to please God. And today, we're going to study the faith of Amram and Jochebed, and the title of the message is "Faith for the Family"—"Faith for the Family." And, I'm reading here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 23: "*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents,*

because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment" (Hebrews 11:23). Now, here are two slaves, Amram and Jochebed, who somehow got in touch with Almighty God by faith, and they did something so marvelous and so wonderful that it is recorded forever in the annals of God's Word and in God's hall of fame.

Now, you remember the story. You remember that the Hebrews were being held as slaves down in the land of Egypt and no longer was Joseph in favor. There arose another Pharaoh who knew not Joseph. And, the Jews now have been made slaves, and Pharaoh is a cruel, hard taskmaster. But, there seems to be a population explosion among the Hebrews, and they're growing in strength, and virility, and number. Pharaoh was apprehensive, and so he sends out a decree that all the little male babies—all the little boy babies—are to be cast into the River Nile and they're to be drowned. Amram and Jochebed, through prayer, were led of the Lord to do something unusual. They took their little baby boy, and they kept him for three months. And, they could keep him no longer because little babies have a way of crying, and they could hide him no longer. And then, led of the Holy Spirit, they made a little boat, a little ark of bulrushes. They waterproofed it, took it down by the River Nile, and set it there in the bulrushes. And, you remember the story—that the princess came by that day. The daughter of Pharaoh heard the baby crying. Her heart was moved with compassion. She took the baby into her home and had the baby raised by Moses's own mother. She became a nursemaid to that little baby. And then, Moses became mighty Moses, who delivered the Hebrews from the land of bondage. You know the story. You've heard the story.

But now, as Paul Harvey said, you're going to hear the rest of the story. You're going to find out why these people became the people that God listed in His hall of fame. You see, this is not about Moses; this is about Moses's parents. We're not talking about the faith of Moses here; we're talking about the faith of Amram and Jochebed—and their faith. Just common ordinary slaves, but they had faith in God. Four things we'll notice about their faith:

I. Faith's Vision

First of all, I want you to notice the vision of their faith—the vision of their faith. I want you to notice faith's vision. The Bible says here in Hebrews chapter 11 that *"they saw [that] he was a proper child"* (Hebrews 11:23). Oh, they had an insight that somehow, someway, this child was a very special child. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 23: *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw [that] he was a proper child"* (Hebrews 11:23).

Now, some translations give this that "he was a beautiful child." Others give it that

“he was a fair child” or whatever. But, I believe that the King James here is best—that “*he was a proper child*” (Hebrews 11:23). He was a unique child. You see, God had made a promise that the Israelites, or the Hebrews, were going to stay in the land of bondage—in the land of Egypt—for 400 years. God had already said that very clearly in Exodus chapter 15 (Exodus 15). And, after 400 years, God said, “They’re coming out.”

Now, Amram and Jochebed were praying people, and they were a people attuned to the Word of God. And, they knew that the time was getting short. It was now time for God to keep His Word, for almost 400 years had transpired. And, the time is coming close. And, they were in contact with God through the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit said, “This is the right child. This child is the proper child to get the job done.” And, say, aren’t you glad that by the providence of God the life of little Moses was spared? You know, we have a lot of little babies who never have a chance today. People think it’s so mean, so hard, so cruel that ole’ Pharaoh put all those little babies to death. Have you ever thought about what’s happening in America today? Have you ever thought about the millions of little unborn babies who never have a chance, who never get a chance to be what they could be, what they ought to be, what God intended for them to be?

Dr. Agnew—Dr. Eli Agnew of UCLA Medical School—asked his students a question. He said, “I want to give you a case, and I want you to decide what ought to be done with certain people. Here is the family history.” Now, this is what the professor is saying to his students: “here is the family history: the father has syphilis; the mother has tuberculosis. They already have had four children: the first one is blind; the second one died; the third is deaf; the fourth has tuberculosis. The mother is pregnant with her fifth child. The parents are willing to have an abortion, if you decide they should. What do you think?” Most of the students in that class at UCLA voted that the parents should have an abortion. Then, Dr. Agnew said, “Congratulations. You have just murdered Beethoven,” because that was the situation and the home into which Beethoven was born.

Oh, let me tell you something, sirs: you have no right to take a human life, whether it is born or unborn. You have no right to be a Pharaoh—to move in and say, “The innocent should be slaughtered!” You have no right to be a Herod. We live in a strange day. An abortionist who destroys an eagle’s egg can be fined 500 dollars, and the same man who destroys an embryo child will be paid that much or perhaps more. What a strange world we live in—what a strange world we live in! These parents set about to see to it that little Moses had a chance to be big Moses, that he had an opportunity to be God’s man. And, they had a vision from the Lord.

Now, they could not have faith until God spoke. Remember there is a divine principle. Now, if you don’t understand anything else that I’m saying in this series of

messages on faith, understand this—that you cannot have faith until, first of all, God speaks. *“Faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). And, God must speak to you either from the Bible or by the Holy Spirit—and most likely, a combination of the two. But, you must hear God speak. Faith is not just simply deciding you want something and then believing for it. Faith is not simply positive thinking; faith is not wistful thinking. Faith is a response to the revealed will of God. You see, *“faith is...the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1), but those things are there; and we have evidence that they’re there because we have faith in our heart. And, that faith is placed in our heart so the thing that God wants done will be done. And, it is God who is the author and the finisher of our faith. He puts the object of our faith out there, and then He puts the faith in our heart to believe for the object. And so, you see, here were parents who were in tune with God.

The natural eye sees natural facts and reacts naturally; the spiritual eye sees spiritual facts and reacts supernaturally. Have you learned with faith’s vision to walk by the sixth sense of faith? The Bible says it was by faith that they saw that Moses was a proper child (Hebrews 11:23). It wasn’t because he was a beautiful little baby. What mother doesn’t think their baby is a beautiful baby? Huh? That isn’t what it’s talking about. No, they saw, by faith, that he was a proper child (Hebrews 11:23)—that God was speaking. And, God said, “I have a special plan for this little baby.” And, they exercised faith in spite of all of the difficulty, in spite of all of the circumstances that seemed to be to the contrary. They did not have their eye upon natural facts; they had their spiritual eye upon supernatural facts. That is faith, and it doesn’t care about circumstances or appearances.

When I was in school, we used to sing a little song—when I was in the Intermediate Department in Sunday School. I believe, when we used to sing it:

Have you any rivers
That seem [to be] uncrossable?
And have you any mountain
That you cannot tunnel through?

God specializes
In things [that seem] impossible (Lizz Wright).

And, He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you. Faith—mighty faith—the promises and looks to God alone laughs at impossibilities and cries, “It shall be done.” Have you seen the promise? Faith—mighty faith—the promises, and looks to God alone, laughs at impossibilities, and cries, “It shall be done.”

Here were parents, somehow, who had heard the Word of God, seemingly hapless,

hopeless, helpless slaves. But, they believed the Word of God. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). You say to me, “Brother Rogers, how can you know where whether what you feel in your heart is the prompting of the Holy Spirit or your mere human desire? How can you tell whether you’re just wishing for something or whether God is wanting you to believe for something?” That’s a good question— isn’t it?—whether it’s really your wants or the Spirit’s desire. Well friend, I cannot explain it to you where you can know; you have to experience it. Let me tell you something about praying in the Spirit: praying in the Spirit is not an explanation; it is an experience. It is non-transferable. But, you’re going to have to walk so close to God and get into the Word of God, to abide in Christ and let Him abide in you, until the Holy Spirit is saying, “This is the way; walk in it. This is the promise; believe it. This is My will; receive it. And, do it!” But, always remember this: there must be—there must be—the vision of faith. Here was faith’s vision. *“They saw [that] he was a proper child”* (Hebrews 11:23).

II. Faith’s Venture

Now, the second thing I want you to notice—not only faith’s vision, but I want you to notice faith’s venture. They did something about it. You see, real faith is belief with legs on it. They didn’t just say, “Oh, well, God’s going to take care of little Moses. That’s that!” Oh, no—no! The Bible says—look at the text again: *“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents”* (Hebrews 11:23). They put their faith into action. They didn’t just sit around and say, “Oh, well, I’m trusting God.” James tells us clearly and plainly that when we believe God, then we do something about it. James chapter 2, verse 17, says this: *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone”* (James 2:17). And, I want to say Moses would have been dead, too, had these parents not put some works with their faith.

Now, I’m not trying to tell you that works save us. Works don’t save us; they don’t help save us. But, I’m trying to tell you that the faith that does save us is a faith that will be seen in your life. It will change your life. And, *if your religion hasn’t changed your life, you’d better change your religion*, because you don’t have the kind that saves. “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:17). And, when they believed God, they did something about it.

Now, they didn’t just practice fatalism. They didn’t say, “What will be, will be, whether it ever be’s or not.” They didn’t just sit around. That’s fatalism; that’s not faith. And, on the other hand, they didn’t practice fanaticism. The opposite of fatalism is fanaticism. They didn’t take little Moses, and throw him to the crocodiles, and say, “Let’s see if he can swim. He’s three months old.” They didn’t do that either. They didn’t say, “Well, we’ll

just trust God to take care of him,” and do something stupid. There are some people today trying to prove their faith by handling snakes. That’s not faith; that’s foolishness—by drinking poison! There are some people who get sick. They say, “Well, I’m going to show God my faith. I’m not going to take any medicine. I’m not going to go to the doctor.” Well, if God tells you not to, that’s one thing. But, ladies and gentlemen, that may be just sheer fanaticism. Or, for example, someone says, “Well, I’m trusting God to give me today my daily bread, so I’m not going to work for it.” Well, the Bible says, dear friend, we’re to trust God for our daily bread. But, it also says, *“If [a man won’t] work, neither should he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10)—E-A-T—period. *“Neither should he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10). You say, “Well, I’m trusting God for it.” Well, trust God until you starve. Now, if you cannot work, it is the duty of society and the duty of loving people to take care of you. But, if you can work and refuse to work, the Bible says you shouldn’t eat. You say, “Well, I’m going to trust God to feed me.” Well, you just go on trusting Him till you shrivel. Now, let me tell you something, friend: faith does something; faith acts. *“By faith Moses...was hid”* (Hebrews 11:23). And, it was their faith that got them into action.

Some of you want your children to be delivered from the Pharaohs of this world; some of you want your children to be spared. Some of you want your children to grow up to be mighty men of God and mighty pure, holy women! Then you’d better get busy. Let me ask you something: Does your faith have legs on it? Are you praying? Are you witnessing? Are you working? Are you training? Are you a member of a Bible-believing church? Those of you on television, do you belong to a church that believes the Bible is the Word of God? Do you have your children under the care and the teaching of a born-again Sunday School teacher who really cares for their soul? You say, “Well, I’m trusting God to take care of them.” Well, if you are, you’re going to do something about it, because true faith—Bible faith—gets busy. It does something about it. It does not just sit around and twiddle its thumbs. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6: *“Train up a child in the way [that] he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). That’s what God’s Word says.

So many people are not training their child whatsoever. Oh, they train them, but they train them the wrong way. Let me tell you how they train them. The Houston Police Department has given a list of 12 rules for raising a juvenile delinquent. Would you like to have them in case you want to raise one, one day? All right, number one: begin with infancy to give the child everything he wants. In this way, he will grow up to believe that the world owes him a living. Number two: when he picks up bad words, laugh at him. This will make him think he’s cute. It will also encourage him to pick up cuter phrases that one day will blow the top of your head off. Number three: don’t give him any

spiritual training. Wait until he's 21 and let him decide for himself. Number four: avoid the use of the word *wrong*; it may develop a guilt complex. This will condition him to believe later, when he is arrested for stealing a car, that society is against him and he's being persecuted. Number five: pick up everything he leaves around: books, shoes, clothing. Do everything for him so he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility onto others. Number six: let him read any printed matter he can get his hands on. Be careful that the silverware and drinking glasses are sterilized, but let his mind feast on garbage. Seven: quarrel frequently in the presence of your children; and in this way, they'll not be too shocked when the home is broken up later. Eight: give your child all the spending money he wants. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you have them? Number nine: satisfy his every craving for food, drink, and comfort. See that every sensual desire is gratified. After all, denial may lead to harmful frustration. Ten: take his part against neighbors, teachers, and policemen. After all, they're all prejudiced against your child. Number eleven: when he gets into real trouble, apologize for yourself by saying, "Well, I never could do anything with him." Number twelve: prepare for a life of grief. You're apt to have it.

Now, in distinction to that, the Bible says, "*Train up a child in the way [that] he [shall] go: and...he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6). Now, it doesn't say, "Teach a child the way that he should go." It says, "Train up a child in the way that he should go" There's a difference in teaching a child what is right and training a child. Anything you teach him somebody else can teach him something different. And, he may decide to believe what they teach rather than what you teach. The Bible says when you train a child, when you train him up in the way that he should go, when he's old he'll not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6). What does it mean to train? The dictionary gives the meaning of training as this: to prepare for a contest—have you ever seen people train for a football game, a basketball game, a track meet?—to prepare for a contest; to instruct by exercise; to drill; to form to a proper shape; to discipline for use. Train your children. "Train them up in the way that they should go, and when they're old, they'll not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

You say, "Well, I'm giving him a good education." I'm not talking about that. Theodore Roosevelt said, "When you educate a man in mind and not in morals, you create a menace to society." Max Rafferty, who was the Superintendent of Public Instruction in California, said, "'This is a neglected and rejected generation,' they say. Yet never has there been so much hot chocolate, vitamin pills, Barbie dolls, and free college scholarships as today lavished on them. Never so many parents have knocked themselves out leading scout troops, umpiring Little League games, patronizing family counselors, and staffing community recreation programs." But, this is not the answer.

The answer, dear friend, is this: *“train up a child in the way [that] he should go: and when he is old, [he’ll] not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). What are you doing? Are you rearing those children to know the Lord? Moses’s parents did all they could. They believed God. Yes, they believed God—but by faith! After they had faith’s vision, there was faith’s venture. They saw that he was a proper child—that was the vision. They hid him—they did something. That, ladies and gentlemen, was the venture.

III. Faith’s Valor

Now, the third thing I want you to notice is faith’s valor—V-A-L-O-R—that is, faith’s courage. Notice also in chapter 11 and verse 23: the Bible says, *“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw [that] he was a proper child”*—now, watch this phrase—*“and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment”* (Hebrews 11:23). What was the king’s commandment? Exodus chapter 1 and verse 22: *“And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive”* (Exodus 1:22). The king’s commandment was all the little boy babies were to be slain. But, Amram and Jochebed were not afraid.

Those were dark days. Can you imagine being helpless slaves? Can you imagine a tyrant on the throne, and here is a command, a decree, and yet they feared not that king because they knew the King of kings? Dark days they were. And, I tell you, if I didn’t know the Lord, I’d be afraid for myself and for my children. These are dark days in which we’re living. I don’t know whether you really realize just how dark our hour is. I pray for our President. I thank God for him. He’s my President. In many ways, I’m proud of him. And, it’s my duty to be respectful for him. And, what I’m about to say, I don’t mean to be disrespectful. And, I think that we’re always to pray for our President. But, I want you to look, if you will, please, in 2 Kings chapter 20 for a moment. And, I want you to see something that distresses me. I’m talking on the subject of dark days. I’m talking about how we are going to have to have faith when there are things that are happening on a higher level that seem to be out of our control and we’re trying to raise our children to know God and to serve God. And yet, the powers that be seem to have a different philosophy. This deals with King Hezekiah, and King Hezekiah was a believer in the God of Israel. But, I want you to notice what happened in 2 Kings chapter 20—in verse 12: *“[And] at that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick”* (2 Kings 20:12).

Now, there had been a Cold War between Israel and godless, pagan Babylon. And now, the Babylonians have decided that they’re going to soften things up. And so, they

let down their Babylonian curtain, and they send a little envoy to King Hezekiah to soften him up: *“And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour”*—he even let him ride in his simulated space shuttle—*“and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures”*—he showed him his factories, and he showed him all of the things that he had. And—*“there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah”*—the good, godly king—*“said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: and there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs”*—or slaves—*“in the palace of the king of Babylon”* (2 Kings 20:13–18).

Now, what do you think Hezekiah said when the man of God warned him about this? Well, here’s what the naive king said. Oh, he’s very religious. Listen to him: *“Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?”* (2 Kings 20:19). In other words, “If I can just have a prosperous regime, it doesn’t matter what happens later—just if peace and truth be in my days! And, we will sacrifice the permanent upon the altar of the immediate; and no matter what happens on down the road, we would like to make a good show as long as we’re king, as long as we’re President.” Oh, I tell you, it’s a frightening thing what’s happening. These are dark days, when godless preachers, and cutthroats, and murderers are entertained as royalty in our nation. Dark days—dark days for your children! And, you’d better learn how to get hold of God in faith—faith’s valor. In spite of all of this, they were not afraid of the king’s commandment because they knew the King of kings.

IV. Faith’s Victory

Now, let’s go on and notice, finally, faith’s victory—faith’s victory, because God honored their faith. Go back to Hebrews chapter 11, and begin in verse 24: and the Bible says, concerning this little baby whose life was spared, *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;*

Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than [all] the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. [And] by faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:24–27). How did little Moses get all of this faith? Where did it come from? He got it from Amram! He got it from Jochebed!

I want you to see the marvelous story. Go back, if you will, in the Old Testament, to Exodus chapter 2 for a moment—Exodus chapter 2. And, let’s read the story. I begin reading in verse 1: *“And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi”—*now, the man was Amram; the wife was Jochebed—*“And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes”—*that means “a little boat,” but it was a battleship. It was about to sink Pharaoh’s kingdom—*“and took an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags”—*that is, “the bulrushes”—*“by the river’s brink. And his sister stood afar off”—*that was Miriam, Moses’s sister—*“to wit what [should] be done to him”—*to see what was going to be done—*“And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river’s side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh’s daughter, Shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child’s mother”—*Jochebed! Miriam, said, “Mama, come quick!”—*“And Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her”—*Jochebed—*“Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it” (Exodus 2:1–9).*

Oh, listen—faith honors God; and, therefore, God honors faith. And, here God begins to move Heaven and Earth to honor the faith of these two helpless slaves. Can you imagine a royal princess bathing in the dirty Nile? She had her marbled, lavish tubs and perfumed soaps. But, going along with her entourage, doubtless she remembered the old swimming hole where she used to play as a little girl and said, “Turn in here.” And then, one of the servants just wandered down there—and you think by chance? No, by the providence of God—and there was that little ark, and said, “Look what I found,” fetched it out, and just at the right time, little Moses cried. Do you think he was stuck with a pin? He was pinched by an angel, let me tell you, right at that right moment! You know how a baby cries. And, even Pharaoh’s daughter’s heart melted within her. Who could resist that little bundle of joy? And, Miriam steps forth and says, “Say, would you

like me to go get one of the Hebrews to nurse it for you?” Can you imagine a royal princess taking a suggestion from a slave girl? She said, “That’s a good idea.” And so, here comes Jochebed.

Now, notice this—I like this: and she says, “Would you take this child and raise it for me? And, I’ll pay you for it.” Now, you think she haggled over wages and minimum wage? Oh, she said, “All right. I’ll just be happy to do that.” And, here was little Moses, had everything that he needed, even got a scholarship to the University of Egypt. Ole’ Pharaoh paid for it. It’s just amazing what happened here. His room, his board, his lodging, his education! This wasn’t chance! This was the providence of God. But now, pay attention—God saw to it that Jochebed had that baby, because God wants mothers to raise their own children. God saw to it that Jochebed had that baby, and Jochebed put something in that baby’s heart that no Egyptian university could take out! The Bible tells us in Acts chapter 7 and verse 22 that *“Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and [he] was mighty in words and...deed”* (Acts 7:22). Moses received a PhD from the University of Egypt, but still he came out clinging to the faith once for all delivered to the saints, because Mama had trained him up in the way that he should go.

I want to tell you something, mothers. Are you listening to me? You’d better get your child in the formative years, and you’d better pray over that child, and love that child, and teach that child, and train that child, and put something into that child that no pagan university can take out of him! And *“Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”* (Hebrews 11:24). He forsook Egypt. He cared not for the treasures of Egypt. He said, “I’m going to be a man of God.” Why—why? A mother and a daddy who had faith in God.

Conclusion

Faith’s vision—they saw the will of God. Faith’s venture—they did the will of God. Faith’s valor—they were not afraid of the king. Faith’s victory—they raised the child that delivered a nation. Faith for the family—these are days when we desperately need it. You say, “Brother Rogers, I don’t have children. I don’t have a family.” No, but you’ve got needs; and whatever your needs are, they’re going to be met by faith. *“According to your faith be it unto you”* (Matthew 9:29).

You say, “Brother Rogers, where shall I place my faith?” You need to begin by placing your faith where God places your sins—on the Lord Jesus Christ. Put your faith there. That’s the starting place. Receive Christ into your heart as your Lord and as your Savior. And, the Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1).

I'd like heads bowed and eyes closed.

Beware the Kidnapper

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 20, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23–27

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”

HEBREWS 11:23

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 11. In just a few moments we're going to begin reading verse 23, Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 23. This is the second in a series of messages entitled, The Home on the Rock. Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 23. Startling statistic: every year in America one and one half million children are reported missing. One and one half million are lost, strayed, stolen, kidnapped, snatched, sodomized, murdered, abused, or sold. Only God knows what has happened to one and one half million children. The title of the message today is Beware the Kidnapper.

The great kidnapper is Satan himself who while your child still lives in your home may snatch away that child's mind, allegiance, love, and even his soul. And, I'm going to be speaking to you about some dangers today that we as parents must face if we're to keep the devil from getting our kids. I want to introduce you today to two heroes. Now, these heroes are people that you may not know at all. If you're not a very good Bible student you're probably not aware of who Amram is. You may not even know who Jochebed is. But, Amram and Jochebed were the parents of Moses. Now, they were slaves. I take it to be that they were only ordinary people. They were slaves. They were poor people enslaved by Pharaoh. And, yet they shook the world and have impacted your life and my life. Why? Because they raised a child for God. They raised a child for God whose name was Moses. Amram and Jochebed were the parents of little Moses.

Now, there were forces that were snatching at Moses. There were wicked forces that wanted to murder him and wanted to somehow pervert him and to change him. But, Amram and Jochebed said, "It shall not be done. We're going to raise this child for God. We're not going to let the child snatcher get him." Notice in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 23. *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment"* (Hebrews 11:23). The king said all the little boy babies were to be murdered. By faith they were not afraid. Fear knocked at the door, faith answered, no one was there. *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible"* (Hebrews 11:24-27). Faith was in the heart of Moses because it was in the heart of his parents and he had an unmistakable and unshakeable faith in Almighty God when he got past his teenage years.

Now, the Bible says that Moses' parents raised him up by faith. But, theirs was not an ordinary faith it was an extraordinary faith. It was a faith that worked. By faith they did something, by faith they hid little Moses. For the Bible says, *"...faith without works is dead..."* (James 2:26). I don't know whether or not they knew this Proverb, but I know they practiced this proverb found in Proverbs chapter 22 which says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6). You say, "Well Pastor, I tried that and it didn't work for me." Well, I want to remind you that the Bible does not say teach a child in the way that he should go and when he's old he'll not depart from it. The scripture says, *"train up a child in the way that he should go"* (Proverbs 22:6). It doesn't say he'll get away and come back to it. It says he will not depart from it. That is, from his childhood right on he's going to continue in the way that he should go. Now, if you simply teach a child the way he should go somebody else may come along and teach him something else. And, he may like their teaching more than he likes your teaching. And, therefore he'll turn from your teaching to their teaching. But, if you train the child, you're going to do something different.

Do you know what the word train means? The dictionary gives this meaning of training. Number one, to prepare for a contest. Number two, to instruct by exercise. Number three, to drill. Number four, to form to a proper shape. Number five, to discipline for use. Not just teach but to get in there and work with that child so as to skillfully train him, prepare him and discipline him to make that child skillful in living right.

Do you know this word train up a child in the way that he should go actually comes from a Hebrew root? I am told that the word comes from what the midwives used to do

when the little Hebrew babies were born. They would take their index finger and dip it in olive oil. And, then take that index finger and dip it in crushed dates. Then they would take the little newborn baby and they would slip the finger inside their mouth and touch the pallet of that baby. What that would do was to begin the sucking instinct, the nursing instinct. It was to create a desire in the heart of that child to take nourishment. As a matter of fact, don't do it now, but if you'll take your finger and just rub it right back over the roof of your mouth you'll find instinctively you want to swallow. And, that was the root of this word which means to train up and it literally means to create a desire.

Oh, if parents today could create a desire for God in the hearts of their children. That's the idea, create a desire in the heart of your child for God and when he's old he will not depart from it. That's what Amram did. That's what Jochebed did. And, please God help me to lay it upon your heart so that is what you will do. Train up your child. Because I want to tell you there's some viscous forces today that are vying for the heart and the mind of your child. And, I want to warn you about four of these today.

I. Beware of Liberalism in the Church

I'd like you to take your notes and first of all write down beware. Beware of liberalism in the church. If you're going to raise your child for Jesus, if you're going to train up a child and not let the forces of Satan get your child, if you are going to save your child for Jesus Christ then number one, you had better see that your child is in a Christ-honoring, Bible-believing, soul-winning, Spirit-filled, and separated-living Christian church. Get your child in church.

Liberalism is a deadly and a dangerous thing. The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20 verses 28 through 30, *"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood"* (Acts 20:28). And then Paul said this, *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:29-30). Now, the apostle Paul talked to these who would deny the faith, these who would teach liberal teachings in the church as wolves who would not spare the flock. And, there are wolves today who would pounce on your land and you need protection.

We have a generation today who hardly knows in what direction it is going and I lay at the root of all of this liberalism. Back in the 1950s our young people lost their innocence. They were liberated by their parents, music, films, automobiles, money, education, and all of these things. They lost their freedom and at that time they were given a sense of guilt, a guilt that young people in America had not known before. And, then in the sixties—after they lost their innocence—they lost their sources of authority.

You remember the sixties. They rebelled against everything. They rebelled against their teachers, parents, church, government, and religion. They were left with nothing to believe, no authority. In the seventies—after they lost their innocence and after they lost their authorities—they lost their love. The seventies were the “me” generation and these young people who had a deep need for love tried to substitute sex for love. They settled for sex and failed to understand the meaning of love. And, now we live in the eighties—having lost their innocence, source of authority and love—now they are losing hope and now we’re having an epidemic of teenage suicide. The foundations have been washed away and we have one billion young people who have lost any hope for the future.

I tell you the only way that hope can be restored is in this book, The Word of God. I tell you I would drive all the way across any city to have my children in a church that preaches and teaches The Word of God. I have been impressed that there are parents who will send their children all the way across the continent to get a good liberal education but will not drive across town to get their children in a good Bible—preaching and Bible—believing church. We here at Bellevue Baptist Church are committed to our young people. We try to have the very best program for our young people that we can have. But, parents we need your cooperation. You need to see to it that your children are in Sunday School and you need to go to Sunday School yourself and set the example. You need to see to it that these young people do this Bible memory that we’re trying to teach them to do. And, you need to see to it that the young people are in the choir and you need to see to it that the young people go to the youth camp and you need to see to it that they’re at the church socials and you need to work alongside and to volunteer and you parents need to band together.

II. Beware of Humanism in the School

The devil has destroyed the hearts and minds of so many young people by number one, liberalism in the church. But, there’s another thing that I want to warn you about. Not only liberalism in the church but there’s another grave danger today. There is another tool the kidnapper uses and that is humanism in the school. Now I want to say at the outset—lest I am misunderstood—I thank God for our public school teachers who are members of this church. I thank God for Christian educators. I thank God for those in the public school system who are doing the best they can under the situation and we need to help them. But, I would tell you this, there has been an infusion, an infection—if you will—of secular humanism that has infiltrated public education.

Well, you say, “Pastor, what is humanism? That doesn’t sound so bad to me.” Indeed it doesn’t sound so bad because you see humanism sounds very much like humanitarianism. It sounds so much like humanity. But, let me give you a synonym for humanism. A synonym for humanism is atheism. Well, you say, “why don’t they call it

atheism?” Because atheism is an ugly word. Humanism is a high-sounding word and so the names have been changed to protect the guilty. Well, you say, “what is humanism?” Let me give you what the humanists themselves say. Let me quote to you from the humanist manifesto. I want to remind you that the manifesto that I’m going to quote from is a public document that you may pick up in almost any bookstore or public library. This document is a carefully thought out philosophy and it has been signed by a great number of United States congressmen. It has been signed by a great number of educators of prestigious colleges and universities. It has been signed by many who are in the feminist movement. It has been signed by not a few clergy, believe it or not.

Article One of the humanist manifesto says, I quote, *“Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.”* That is we do not believe that God created the world. Article Seven says, *“The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.”* That is there’s nothing sacred. Everything is secular. Article Ten says, *“It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.”* They do not believe in a supernatural God. It goes on to say, *“We believe however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to human species ... No deity will save us; we must save ourselves. Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.”* That is to teach that there’s a Heaven to gain and a Hell to shun not only is an illusion but it is definitely harmful.

Now, what is the result? Well, do you remember what the problems were in school back in the forties? Some of you. How many of you were in school, back in the 1940s? Let me see your hands, boy, you make me feel old, my goodness. I’m talking about grade school at least, my goodness. Do you remember what the problems were in the forties? I’ll tell you what they were. Truancy—you know—skipping class; running in the halls, talking in class; unfinished homework, and loafing after school. Here’s a biggie, unreturned library books; chewing gum in class and another one they used to get on to us about was talking in study hall and broken windows. Now, with the exception to one or two, I plead guilty to every one. Those were the problems in the public schools.

Do you know what the problems today are in the eighties? The problems are violence, stealing, rape, gang war, deadly weapons on campus, teacher abuse, and rebellion. What has happened in America? How could these things happen in America? Why is it that in our schools today during the lunchtime you can have ear-splitting rock music with suggestive lyrics blaring all over the lunchroom but in that lunchroom you could not get on the P.A. system and have a student thank God for the food? What has happened in America?

Now, many sincere teachers are passing on humanist philosophies and ideas

unwittingly as one would pass on a counterfeit bill because they have not been schooled and skilled to see what has infiltrated public education. But, let me tell you what the humanist educators are saying about your children. Listen to this, I quote: *"Every child in America entering school at the age of five is mentally ill because he comes to school with certain allegiances to our Founding Fathers, toward our elected officials, toward his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural being, and toward the sovereignty of this nation as a separate entity."* He's sick if he's proud of America. He's sick if he has a love for his parents and an allegiance to his parents. He's sick if he believes in a supernatural God. And, then this quote continues to say, *"It's up to you as teachers to make all these sick children well - by creating the international child of the future"* (Pierce, Chester 1973). Well, you say, "surely some unimportant, uneducated, off-the-wall person said that." No, my friend, that was said by a Harvard professor of educational psychiatry as he was lecturing to a childhood education seminar in 1973. Now, that's what they think about your children, they are mentally ill and they are going to make them well.

Here's what they're planning to do for your children. I want to quote a religion for new age, taken from the Humanist Magazine, January/February edition 1983, and I quote: *"... the battle for humankind's future must be waged and won in the public school classrooms by teachers who correctly perceive their role as proselytizers of a new faith..."* The proselytizers. Do you know what a proselytizer is? That's somebody who gets somebody from one faith and puts him in another faith. And, then this quote says, *"The classroom must and will become and arena of conflict between the old and the new – the rotting corpse of Christianity, together with all its adjacent evils and misery, and the new faith of humanism..."* Now, friend, it is happening.

Let me give you a code word. The code word is values clarification. What is values clarification? Well, it's a little psychological game that is played. It's played with sensitivity training and group therapy. Peer-pressure brainwashing is what it is. A child is given a question that deals with an adult social dilemma and the child is made to answer what is right or wrong or what would you do under this situation. What would you do, for example, if you knew that your daddy was doing something wrong? Would you report it to the police, would you tell your mother, would you talk to your daddy or would you do nothing? What would you do if the person next to you is cheating? Would you say it's none of my business? Would you help the person to cheat? Would you tell the teacher? Would you—what would you do? Write down what you would do and remember, there are no right or wrong answers. You see, the child is to form his own values. That's why they call it values clarification. Why do they believe that way? Because they don't believe in God and if they don't believe in God they don't believe in the Bible and if they don't believe in the Bible they do not believe in an absolute

standard of right or wrong. And, so the child is supposed to think for himself.

A preacher friend of mine, a very close friend, told me that he went out visiting and as he was visiting in a home where there was a little boy and he was just talking to the child and he said, "Now remember, son, the Bible says you are to obey your parents." He got a look of defiance on his face and said with arrogance in his voice, "I don't have to obey my parents, my teacher told me that I need to think for myself and I can do what I want to do." That is humanism coming down to the bottom line and friend, it is there and you need to watch. You need to understand that it is coming very subtly into the educational system to move your system away from the standards and the values of The Word of God.

The chief building block of this philosophy is evolution and evolutionary thought. They tell us that if we want to teach that God created the world and if we want to teach scientific creationism that is interjecting religion into education and such a thing can never be done. But, they're quite free to tell us that no God did it and that it all happened. And, they're quite free to teach an anti-religion and they expect us to foot the bill for this monkey mythology. Now, dear friend it is a strange thing that is happening when the official religion of the United States is secular humanism and the Sunday school classes are the educational classes across the nation.

It's all capped off with what they call sex education, an amoral form of sexual education. Now, I believe that our young people need to be instructed but they need to be more than instructed about the physiological aspects of sex. They need to be instructed about the emotional, spiritual and the moral aspects. And, sex education without moral values is a menace. Well, they say, "Pastor, they're gonna do this, I mean, you're not going to stop them, so you might as well show them how to do it safely." They're gonna steal cars also so we ought to have Chop Shop 101. And, they're also going to take drugs and alcohol so maybe we can spice up the chemistry class a little bit and show them how to do this thing just right. Have more folks in chemistry, wouldn't we? I mean, let's teach them how to drink. And, listen dear friends that may seem laughable but in some schools they've already started education to teach the children how to drink. To teach the children how to drink. I mean, they say how to handle this alcohol. It won't be long they'll be teaching them how to use drugs if we don't get off this track that we're already in.

I have a preacher friend who got all incensed because his son was asked to read something salacious and filthy in the school literature. He got that book so full of dirty words and filth, took it down to the principal's office and walked in and he said, "I want to talk with you." The principal said, "Have a seat." He said, "I can say what I want to say standing up." He said, "You see this book?" He said, "My son's not gonna read this and furthermore, you're not gonna mark him down on his grade for not reading it." He

said, “Now, sir, you stay here and they brought in the curriculum consultant.” He stood in and wanted to talk to this preacher and he said to this preacher, “Now, sir, your child is not gonna read anything in this book that he won't read on the restroom walls.” This preacher said, “And when you make the restroom walls required reading we're gonna have another session, amen?” It's time that we had some parents with some backbone who will stand up and found out what it is that our children are being taught.

III. Beware of Paganism in Society

I am telling you there are forces that will systematically seduce your children. One is liberalism in the churches. Number two, humanism in the schools. Number three, paganism in society. What a pagan society we live in. One of the marks of the paganism in our society is the beverage alcohol. Last night I went out to eat. I passed a liquor store and looked in. You'd expect in a liquor store to find some pot bellied balding old man with a cigar selling liquor in brown bags. I looked in there and the kids who were behind the counter looked to me like they were just out of high school. The kids in there buying that stuff on a Saturday night looked like maybe they were freshmen in college. Of course I realize I'm getting older and anybody under thirty looks like a teenager but anyway it broke my heart. Listen, the alcohol people are doing a job on your kids. A recent survey showed that ninety five percent of college students drink beer, ninety five percent. Thirty two gallons of beer per person per year in America per capita, thirty-two gallons. That means that somebody drank sixty four because I didn't drink any of mine. Thirty two gallons per capita in the United States.

Oh, listen, they want to tell you that's the way to happiness. That's the way to fulfillment. That's the way to joy. You've seen the old Milwaukee ads that say, “it doesn't get any better than this.” These guys out in the bass boat and they catch about a nine pound bass. And, then they pop the top on that embalming fluid and they hold it up and one of them looks at another—they're all good-looking guys—and one of them says, “Man, it doesn't get any better than this,” and he's right. Most of the time it never even gets that good but it doesn't get any better. It always gets worse and worse and worse. They don't tell you that one out of every fifteen that begin to drink will become an alcoholic. You ever dealt with an alcoholic? You ever seen a home that is ruined?

Listen, what can you do? Number one, you better become a teetotaler yourself if you don't want your kids to drink. You establish a non-drinking tradition in your home. You get all that stuff, I mean what you use at Christmas and the rest of it. Get it out of your house, all of it. Establish a tradition in your house, we don't drink. Our family doesn't drink. And, you be up when your kids come home at night. I mean, you welcome them. I don't care what time they're in, you be awake. You say, “Well I'd lose some sleep.” It'd be better to lose some sleep than to lose a son or lose a daughter. I'll tell you, when

they come in you give them a big hug, amen? I'll tell you what you better do, you'd better do something to counteract this advertising because it's not the way they picture it. That's a dirty, rotten lie, the way they picture it.

You get your son. You know the Bible says, "*Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware*" (Proverbs 19:25). That means that a young person with a pliable mind, when he sees somebody else suffer, the blow that strikes one will strike two. What you need to do is, Dad, you need to invest a little time and get your boy and go and ride around skid row a little bit with him. Not only that but you need to get him down here at one of these hospitals on Saturday night in the emergency room and just let him see the people come in sliced up. And, when there's an automobile wreck and a good one you need to take him out to see it. And, when you read about some teenagers who were killed in an automobile accident—even though they're not friends of the family—you go to the funeral, make him walk up there and look in that casket. Take him down to the morgue. Take him into the divorce court. Take him in there and let him see that stuff. I'll tell you there's another side to it. They would seduce your children.

Same thing is true about the movies and the television. Most dangerous thing on television in my estimation today is the situational comedy, called the sitcom. You know what they're doing? They're getting you to laugh at sin. And, what you laugh at you can never take seriously again. A Christian television and film writer attended a writer's briefing given at a major network to stimulate scripts for the coming TV season, and this is what he was told. This coming season the hot shows will feature the occult and more explicit sex. These are the kind of shows we're looking for. Again, a Christian producer attended a producer's workshop being addressed by one of TV's most successful producers of sitcoms. In his address he stated his sincere conviction that the characters in any TV script that is to result in a commercially successful production must violate at least three of the Ten Commandments. That is, that's the only way it can be successful, they say, is to do this. You need to get some channels off your television set altogether. I mean, there's some things that ought not even to come in. I mean, period. You ought to just pull the plug. The rest of it, you need to sit down and watch with your children, especially if they're young. Monitor their viewing and discuss what they see.

The same thing is about rock music. This pornographic rock music. My heart was broken when I read the other day that the present goddess of rock music is a woman named Madonna. She recently appeared on the cover of Playboy magazine—I understand—with five crucifixes around her neck, five crucifixes. Someone asked her, "What is this obsession you have with the crucifix." "Oh," she said, "it's very sexy. After all there's a naked man on it." These are the heroes and the heroines of today's young people and they have today taken pornography and rock music and wed them together and called it MTV. And, Papa you pay for it and want your child to sit down and watch it.

You'd better wake up. They're out and they're after your child.

You say, "What can I do about this rock music?" I'll tell you one thing you can do. You can go home and get it all out of your house. Oh, you say, "I can't do that, they'd pitch a fit." You pitch a bigger one, just out fit them. You say, "They'd rebel." You just pitch a bigger rebellion. But, I tell you what you should do, really, honestly. Do more than rebel. You get that music and get those lyrics and sit down and listen to it and go over it with them with The Word of God in their hand. Show them what's wrong with it, and then you be honest enough to let them listen to your country/western music. While rock glorifies pre-marital sex, country/western glorifies adultery. While rock glorifies drugs, country/western glorifies alcohol, and you know it is true. You think it's acceptable but it's not. And, these kids can see through the double standard. You need to get all of that junk out of your house and put in some good and godly music.

IV. Beware of Materialism in the Home

I'm telling you, there's paganism in society that is out after your child. But, let me say dear friend, I must close this message by saying there's something else that is even a bigger danger than liberalism in the church. There's something else that is even a bigger danger than humanism in the schools. There is something else that is even a bigger danger than paganism in society. You want me to tell you what it is? It is materialism in the home. Materialism in the home.

Now go back to this passage of scripture that we began with, in Hebrews chapter 11 and look in verse 23. *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter—He'd rather be a son of Heaven's king than a grandson of Pharaoh—Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Hebrews 11:23-25). He said I'd rather suffer with God's people than to have all of the luxuries of a royal court. Notice verse 26, *"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt..."* Have you ever seen the treasures in Egypt displayed around the tomb of old king Tut? *"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt—watch it now—for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward"* (Hebrews 11:26). Listen, he had something in his heart. Look in verse 27, *"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible"* (Hebrews 11:27). Little Moses made it. I mean, little Moses came to years. Moses grew up. Amram and Jochebed did something for Moses. They put something in the heart of Moses and Moses made it. He faced every temptation that a young man could face and he made it.

I want you to see how he did it and I'm going to be finished. I want you to look very

carefully. Look in verse 24: *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused—just draw a circle around the word refused, he—refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”* (Hebrews 11:24). Now come to verse 25, *“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God”* (Hebrews 11:25). Draw a circle around the word choosing. Now, come to verse 26, *“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt...”* (Hebrews 11:26). Draw a circle around the word esteeming, it literally means reckoning, figuring out. Now let me tell you how Moses made it. All right, now look. First of all, he refused something, verse 24. Well, why did he refuse something? Because he had chosen something in verse 25. Well, why did he choose something? Because he had figured something out in verse 26. He had esteemed something, he had reckoned something in verse 26.

Here’s how it works. I’ve told you before it’s the meat bone principle. You ever try to take a bone away from a dog? It’s a good way to get bit, amen? I mean, when he’s got a bone in his mouth, it’s hard to take it away. But, I’ll tell you the easy way to take a bone away from a dog. Get a big steak, put it down on the ground and the dog’s got a bone in his mouth. Now, what do you think’s gonna happen? He’s gonna look and first of all he’s gonna do some esteeming. He’s gonna taste his nasty old bone, he’s gonna look at that big juicy steak and he’s gonna say, “That is better than this.” Then when he does some esteeming, he’s gonna do some choosing. He will say, “I want that rather than this.” And, when he has done some esteeming and some choosing then he’s gonna do some refusing, right? To esteem, to choose, to refuse. That’s the way it goes.

Do you know what’s wrong with so many homes today? We try to say, “You can’t do this, you can’t do that, you must do this.” We try to cram it down their throats and they’re not buying it. You can’t take that bone out of his mouth, but brother, when you show him who Jesus Christ really is and you live the life in front of him then he’s gonna esteem the riches of Christ greater riches. He’s going to choose to go that way and he’s gonna refuse the devil’s dirty bone.

Conclusion

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. You beware the kidnapper. You beware of liberalism in the church. You beware of humanism in the schools. You beware of paganism in society. But, above all beware of materialism in the home. Amram and Jochebed were people of faith. They showed little Moses the beauty of Jesus and you can’t do it without doing that.

Let’s bow our heads together in prayer.

Faith for the Family

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 30, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23–27

Outline

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I. Faith's Vision

II. Faith's Valor

III. Faith's Venture

IV. Faith's Victory

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's precious Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 11, please, and we're going to begin reading in verse 23, as we make our way through this Hall of Fame, and the champions of faith. Today, we come to verse 23: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

I submit to you that the most powerful and influential people on earth are not kings and presidents and cabinet members. The most powerful and influential people on earth are parents of faith, and in their hands is the destiny of the world.

Now, I want to introduce to you today two almost forgotten heroes, champions of faith. The man's name is Amram. His wife's name is Jochebed. And, indeed, they have earned a place in God's Hall of Fame, because of their son, Moses, who himself was a great champion of faith. I cannot, if I had the tongue of an angel, overemphasize the importance of family. The Bible says that God has set the solitary in families, in Psalm 68 and verse 6. Family is indisputably important, and faith is the vital ingredient in any family's success.

Now, you're a member of a family, some kind of a family. That's the way you got here. And most of us live in a family, or hope to have a family. So I want us to learn four

things about faith and the family today, as we look at the life of Amram and Jochebed.

I. Faith's Vision

And the first is what I want to call faith's vision—faith's vision. Look, if you will, again here in verse 23: “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw...—underscore this—they saw that he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.” Now, this man and his wife had a vision. They saw something. They looked at the baby boy that God had given them, that little, laughing baby boy, and they said, “This child is an unusual child.” As a matter of fact, Taylor's translation gives it this way: that God had given them an unusual child. As they looked at the crying or smiling face of that little baby boy, whichever it was, they said, “This one is special.” Now, how did they know that he was special? How did they know that God had such a destiny for him? Well, first of all, they were students of the Word of God. Both of them were born into the tribe of Levi, the priestly tribe. They had the Word of God. And God had prophesied, as we told you last week, that the Jews were going to be in Egypt for 400 years and then God was going to bring them out, and they had been counting the years. They knew that there had to be a leader, someone. And by a combination of the Word of God, the *logos*, and the Word of God spoken to them, the *rhema*, they looked at this child, and God's Spirit bore witness with them, “This is a special child. This is a child chosen of God. God has a plan for this child.” Now, you say, “What does that have to do with me, Adrian?” Well, if you have a child, or when you have a child, I can tell you that God has a plan for your child. God has a plan, not merely for the Moseses of this world, but God has a plan for every child.

I remember when our first son came. His name is Stephen. Stephen and I are working together in ministry today, and I thank God for Steve, who is a godly man and a man of faith. But when I went to the Fish Memorial Hospital in Deland, Florida, and saw that little boy as they wheeled him out, something changed in my heart, something turned over in my heart, and I thought, O God, I am a daddy—I am a daddy and I've got a son to raise! Joyce and I were going through college, and we were living in a little 25-foot house trailer. And it didn't have a bath; it just had a path. And we were just eking out a living. But Joyce was still there in the hospital. I went home and got on that flowered couch in that little house trailer, got on my knees, and I said, “O God, if I never do anything else, if I never have any kind of success in life, never have any of this world's goods, and never have any influence, O God, I want to be a godly daddy. And God, I give You my son, and I give You myself, both to God,” and I have claimed this promises many times. As a matter of fact, it's one of my life verses, if you would like to know it—Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2: “Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man who

feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed—that means his children—shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed.” Is not that what you want for your children? Is not that what you want for your children? Don’t you want your children to be mighty upon this earth, mighty for God? Don’t you want your generation to be blessed? I’m telling you, it is a joy, a privilege, and a responsibility to raise your children for God, and you must have this vision.

Now, Moses wasn’t born a great man. He was born a baby. A man went into a particular small town, and he asked this question: “Any great men born in this village?” The old timer said, “No, just babies.” They’re not born great men; they become great men.

Now, you say, “Pastor, isn’t it up to my child, whatever he’s going to do? What part do I have? Can I believe God on his behalf?” The Bible says it was by faith that Amram and Jochebed saw that Moses was a proper child, and it was faith that guided them. I remember reading in the New Testament about a man who had a child who was beleaguered by the devil, and the child needed help, special help from the Lord. And that man came to Jesus, and he said, “Lord, if You can do anything for my child, Lord, please do it.” And Jesus said, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” And that man bowed his head, and said, “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.” Have you ever been there? “Lord, I believe, but I know my faith is weak.” But God starts with us where we are, does He not? “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.” And God did! Not only can we, but must we have faith for our children. The Bible says it is by faith that they saw that this man was a proper child. Faith sees every child as special.

Now, Proverbs 22, verse 6—it may be on your refrigerator door—here’s what it says: “Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” That word, way—“Train up a child in the way that he shall go”—is a Hebrew word that has the idea of a bend in a bow or in a piece of wood, and it literally means raise up a child according to the natural bent that he has. Every child is different. Every child is special. Every child is unique. Children do not come in standard packages. You have to read the label. God has a way for every child. Don’t see your child like a piece of marble or granite there and you have a hammer and a chisel and you’re going to make out of that child what you want. That will be a great mistake.

God had a plan for Moses. God has a plan for the children of Adrian and Joyce. And parents who are perceptive can see that special child. Neither a teacher, nor a pastor, nor a Sunday School teacher, nor a coach can see what God has given you the ability to see in your own special child.

We sit under these electric lights. They are the invention of a brilliant man, a genius, Thomas Alva Edison. Did you know that when Edison was in school, his teacher said to

his mother, “He is unteachable. He doesn’t have enough intelligence to be in this class. I suggest that you take him out of school. He doesn’t have it up here.” The mother said, Thomas Alva Edison’s mother said, “You don’t understand my child. My child is not stupid. My child is brilliant. I’ll teach him myself.” And she did! You see, parents can see sometimes what others cannot see. Here was a man that was absolutely brilliant. You need to see your child as special.

I have a child who today is in Spain as a missionary. When he was a little boy, tears come now to my eyes when I think of it, a little boy, sitting there, poring over the maps of the world, thinking about far-away places. If I wanted to know how to get somewhere, I would say, “David, tell me how do I get from here to there?” Why, that child not only knew the map; he knew the zip codes. I don’t understand it. But God has used him to travel the world.

I have another son who is a musician. He has his father’s gift. Somebody got it! But I can remember. Jim, you may not know this, but I have the ability to play the piano by ear a little bit. I can. I really can. I can hear melodies on the piano and pick it out, and I sat little Steve down and taught him, as a four-year old child, some finger melodies, and immediately his mind went to that. Now, he’s a graduate of the University of Memphis with a degree in Commercial Music and is a songwriter with published hymns and songs, because that’s the bent. These two children are different, but yet they have unique and special gifts. And so does your child. And you need to see your child as special.

Amram and Jochebed saw this baby, and they said, “He is special.” And when you look at your child, you can say, “Thank God for this bundle of potentiality that God has created,” no matter what. You say, “Well, our little child is a Down’s Syndrome child.” Very special! These children have been used to bless God and bless the world in a very special way. Every child is special, a gift from God.

II. Faith’s Valor

Now, here’s the second thing: not only were these parents champions because of faith’s vision, what they saw, but faith’s valor, what they were not afraid of. Look, if you will, again in verse 23: “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child—now, listen to this—and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment”—not afraid. This is their valor that they had. Now, from an outward viewpoint, there was every earthly reason to be afraid. Put in your margin Exodus chapter 1, verse 22: “And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born shall ye cast into the river, and every daughter shall ye save alive.” Old Pharaoh, it said, drowned the little boy babies, and they knew the king’s

commandment. And yet, the Bible said, “they were not afraid.” Why? How could this be? Because they understood the nature of the battle. They understood that they were not in a battle with some earthly king; they were really in a battle with the power behind his throne; that is, the dark, devilish power of Satan himself. The apostle Paul explained it over there in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12, when he says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places.” They knew that they were in a spiritual battle that went far beyond the physical governmental battle. In a strange way, that encouraged their faith, because they knew that God has given us incredible power over all the power of the enemy.

Now, these are dangerous days in which we live. I look at my children, and my grandchildren, and I wonder what will the world be like 20 years from now, if Jesus tarries. Do you ever wonder that? These are dangerous days. Well, that’s a fulfillment of prophecy. Second Timothy chapter 3, verse 1: “This know, also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” We’re living in perilous times. Let me just mention some ways:

First of all, liberalism in the churches. You have to raise your children today, even in the United States of America, so-called God-blessed America, that is full of churches that do not stand on the authority of the Word of God, and the absolute Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ. A liberal church is empty, futile, and dangerous. And I’m amazed that sometimes people will send their children across the nation for an education, and will not drive across town for a Bible-believing church. Now, that, my friend, is a tragedy. You say, “Well, our church used to be conservative and believe the Bible. I know it’s changed now, but Grandma’s buried in the backyard.” Well, Grandma would get up and leave, if she could. You better get your children in a Bible-preaching, Bible-believing church.

But not only do we have liberalism in churches. Then it’s compounded by the humanism in the schools. Now, what is humanism? Humanism is a philosophy that makes man the sum and the substance, the center and the circumference, of all. It is not, “Our Father, which art in heaven,” but, “Our brothers upon the earth, hallowed be our name.” Humanism sounds so good, because it sounds so much like humanitarian. But all humanism is, is a camouflage name for atheism. The name has been changed to protect the guilty. The humanists do not believe in a personal God, a deity, as we do. And modern education is based primarily upon this. Evolution is the chief building block in humanist education. Now, they say we cannot teach creation because that’s teaching religion in the public schools. Well, humanism is anti-religion. It is a negative form of religion. It’s an attempt to explain everything apart from God. And so, our children sit in

school, and they're taught this monkey mythology. If you believe that, you ought to know your kinfolks better than I do. And all of this is capped off by something called sex education. Sex education in public schools will never work unless it is conjoined and accompanied by strict, biblical, moral truth. Other than that, it's just a way of teaching young people how to practice sex without catching a disease or getting pregnant. That's basically what it is. And it is an implicit approval of immorality apart from a high moral standard. And, by the way, I thank God for our public school teachers. I have a son-in-law who is a public school teacher. He does a wonderful job. I thank God for our private schools, and all is not well in any private school. But I'm telling you that education in America today, as a whole, is based not on Bible truth, but on humanism.

You've got liberalism in churches, you've got humanism in education, and then heathenism in society. Think, for example, about beverage alcohol. I tried to watch a little basketball yesterday, but I was wounded and grieved when I saw some of the advertisements that came on. Today, friend, even the advertisements are X-rated. And the beverage alcohol industry is spending millions of dollars advertising. They want to seduce your children, and they've done a good job, for 95% of college students drink beer according to the statistic that I've read. Well, you say, "What's so wrong with drinking beer?" Out of all who begin to drink any alcoholic beverages, 1 out of 15 will become an alcoholic. Some say, 2 out of 15 will become alcoholics. We'll say, 1 or 2. Then, the other 3 will become problem drinkers, of all who start to drink—of all. That means, 1 out of 3. Would you keep a dog in your house that bites 1 out of every 3 visitors? The alcohol people have seduced your children. Now, what can you do as a parent? What I'm trying to say is that in Moses' days, they were dangerous days; in our days, these are dangerous days. These are days for faith. And, by the way, let me tell you something on how to deal with your kids concerning this alcohol.

Number one: Absolutely no beverage alcohol in your home—none, none!

Number two: You be up when they get home at night, and give them a big hug. Better so you can smell what's on their breath, that's what I'm talking about. Better that you lose some sleep than lose your child.

Number three: You establish a non-drinking tradition in your family. When I'm in a restaurant and that waitress or waiter comes and says, "Would you like a cocktail? Would you like this?" especially if my little young 'uns are sitting around, my grandchildren, I just put a smile on my face, and say, "No, thank you. We do not drink."

And say it boldly. Let them hear it. Don't just say, "No, thank you," like I might, but not some other day. No. Just no, thank you.

And next: You need to take your children sometime on an excursion. It would be worth it. Take a Saturday night, and take your child down to the emergency room, and

just hang around there and watch. Maybe they'll shoo you out after a while when they find you have no business there. Or, maybe if you have someone, that will let you do it, take them into the morgue, or take them to the funeral home, and let them see a body that has gone through a windshield and been sliced up. All they see are these beautiful ads, these college kids, hoisting a foamy one and having a big time. Do you know what the Bible says? Proverbs 21, verse 11: "When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise." Do you know what the word simple means? It means naïve. That's what a teen is today: naïve. The alcohol people are so clever. They're so clever. In the movies, in the films, alcohol is served 10 to 1 over any other beverage—10 to 1.

Not only beverage alcohol, but we're up against the entertainment industry. What is modern entertainment based on today? Adultery, fornication, homosexuality—88% of sexual encounters shown on television are illicit, immoral—88%. You don't see a monogamous marriage, a happy marriage, portrayed on television. No, it's always illicit sex. Think of it. Alcohol served 10 to 1; illicit sex, 88%. And the television is running constantly in our home, and so much of it is in the situational comedy. The devil knows if he can get you to laugh at sin, you cannot take it seriously again. MTV is ruining a generation. It is pornography set to music.

Now, I'm just using those things as a few examples: liberalism in churches, humanism in schools, heathenism in society. Now, you think that Moses' parents lived in dangerous days? Look up here. I'm going to tell you something. You are living in dangerous days! But here's the good thing. They were not afraid of the king's commandment.

Now, it takes a lot of faith today to say I'm going to raise children in these treacherous days. How are you going to do it? Well, only by faith. You cannot be dominated by a spirit of fear, and you cannot afford to be lazy. You cannot afford to be selfish. But don't you let the devil intimidate you where you throw up your hands. To the contrary, say with the apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." And don't you feel that the king is so powerful, and the battlefield is so vast, that you just roll over and play dead. Pessimism is tragic.

Now, listen. Why were these parents so great? Number one: faith's vision. They saw something for their child. Number two: faith's valor. They were not afraid. And the only way that you could not be afraid in today's society is faith.

III. Faith's Venture

Number three: I want you to see something else. I want you to see faith's venture. Faith did something. Look again in verse 23: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child, and they

were not afraid of the king's commandment." Now, true faith has corresponding action. Now, I want you to notice their faith. It was not fatalism; it was faith. We have a lot of parents today who are living, sort of, lives of fatalism. They say, "Well, what will be will be," whether there are bees or not. What will be will be. And so they just sort of throw up their hands, and say, "I'm going to let him choose for himself." You can't do that. If you have a garden, and you leave it alone, it's going to turn to weeds. We have this humanistic psychology today that teaches your little child he's a little rosebud—just let the rosebud unfold, He'll unfold or blacken your eye. That's fatalism. But it cannot be fanaticism. On the other hand, Amram and Jochebed could have taken little Moses down and thrown him in the river for the crocodiles, and said, "Well, if God wants to deliver him, God will deliver him." No. Real faith is not fatalism. It is not fanaticism. Real faith acts. It does something. Real faith is belief with legs on it. James tells us, in James 2, verses 17 and 18: "Faith without works is dead." You're going to raise your child in today's society? Look up here. You better get to work! You better get to work!

Now, they knew that they had to do something. They only had a few months, and they were only able to hide the baby so long. So they built a little ark out of bulrushes. They did as best they could do.

Faith works. There's too much political correctness in today's society and not enough faith. Political correctness says, "Don't spank your child; that's child abuse." God says—Proverbs 22, verse 15: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Political correctness says, "Teach your daughter to use birth control pills." God says, "Teach your daughter character." Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Political correctness says, "Government is the partner of the parent." God says, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Hillary said, "It takes a village to raise a child." May I submit, it takes a mom and dad to raise a child. And it takes a child and a family to make a village. And that's the only way we're going to have a right village. Political correctness says, "Let your child choose his own sexual preference." The Word of God says, Leviticus 18:22: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." Black print, white paper. Political correctness says, "Let your schools teach sex education." God's Word says, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he's old he'll not depart from it." If you want your children to be mighty for God, you're going to have to learn to train them.

Jochebed trained Moses. God gave little Moses to her to train. And what does the word train mean? It doesn't mean merely to teach. The dictionary definition of train is this: to prepare for a contest, to instruct by exercise, to drill, to form to a proper shape,

to discipline for use. Are you training your child? You say, “I’m teaching my child.” No, are you training your child?

I played the game of football. But you don’t learn to play football by reading a book about football. It takes training. Have you ever watched a man train a dog for hunting? It’s amazing. I watch some daddies train their dogs, or have seen daddies who trained their dogs, that don’t train the children. And then they tie up the dog at night, and let the kids run wild. To train—that means day after day after day. You see, if somebody teaches your child one thing, somebody else can come along and teach them something else. But when they’re trained, that’s a difference.

You remember the story of a little boy who was riding his tricycle round and round the block. Somebody asked him, said, “What are you doing?” He said, “I’m running away from home. I’m mad at Mommy.” He said, “Why are you going around the block?” He said, “Mommy won’t let me cross the street.” That’s training.

The other day, Joyce was away, and I’m taking care of myself for a couple of days. That’s awful. And I get out of bed, and I say to myself, now nobody’s going to be in the house. Why should I make up the bed? Nobody’s going to be here. I’m going right back in the same bed, the same spot. Why should I make it up? Joyce would make it up. I make it up. And then, what do I do? I put two pillows on. Then, what do I do? I get three more pillows, and I put on there. And then, what do I do? Another pillow on top of that. Why? And then, on top of that, a teddy bear. And I’m all by myself. I’ve been trained.

We need to train our children. The point is that faith’s vision and faith’s valor turns to faith’s venture. They did something. They did all that they could do. God gave them an ingenious plan. They made that little ark of bulrushes and put it there in the dirty Nile, and God goes to work. Do you remember the story? It’s the most amazing story. Here’s the little baby Moses there in that basket. He was a basket case. He’s in that basket. And along comes the princess, Pharaoh’s daughter. And, Mark, she’s going to bathe in the Nile. Now, she’s got marble tubs. Maybe she just remembers the old swimming hole when she was a little girl. She’s going to bathe in the Nile. She goes down just to the one spot there in all of the Nile where there is the little baby Moses. And she sees him, and she picks him up, and at that moment the baby cries. An angel just pinches the baby, and the baby cries. Not a pin. This time it was an angel that tweaked that little baby, I believe. And the baby cries. Something happens in Pharaoh’s daughter’s heart, and she’s moved with compassion. She said, “This is one of the Hebrews’ children.” And, about that time, Moses’ sister, who is standing by, says, “Look, if you need somebody to take care of this baby, I know a lady who’d like to do it. She’ll take care of the baby for you.” The princess says, “Well, you go fetch her.” Miriam goes off and gets Moses’ very own mother. And Pharaoh’s daughter says, “Take care of this child for me.”

“Well,” she says, “let me think about it.” No, she takes this baby and raises this baby. It wasn’t that the baby lived with Pharaoh’s daughter. The baby lived with Jochebed. For how long we don’t know; perhaps till he was a virile young man. And he’s brought back to Pharaoh’s daughter, and she presents him there. But day after day after day, and night after night after night, she’s been teaching and training and praying and pleading, and putting the Word of God in the heart of this baby boy. Can you see the hand of God in all of that?

Now, what is the point? What is faith’s venture? You do what you can do, and God will do what He can do. You roll away the stone; God will take Lazarus out of the grave. You provide the few fish and loaves, and God will feed the multitudes. They did it by faith. They did it by faith. It is a spiritual battle.

IV. Faith’s Victory

Last of all, and I must close. The fourth thing that I’m so glad to tell you about is faith’s victory—faith’s victory. Look in verse 24: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ...—oh, what she must have taught him—esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” Now, folks, that was a victory. This boy is heir to the throne. This boy is supposed to be the king of the mightiest nation on earth. He had possessions, position, pleasure—all that an oriental court could bring. He refused it all. He refused it all. He said, “I choose affliction, I choose reproach, but, with it, I choose Jesus.” He looked this way, and saw where it would end, and he looked this way, and saw where it would end. He said, “I’m going that way.”

Now, let me tell you something about your life. Your child’s life is a combination of the choices that he will make. That’s it. So you have to teach him how to choose. Life is just a combination of the choices. We’re free to choose. We’re not free not to choose. We must choose something. And we’re not free to choose the consequences of our choice. Moses chose. Now, why did Moses choose? Very quickly, listen to me.

First of all, there was an estimation. He esteemed the riches of Christ greater treasure than the treasures of Egypt. He had been doing some figuring. This word esteemed is a bookkeeping term. He’s doing an analysis. He is saying, “This is this, and this is this.” And he’s looking at values. Do your children have any values? Have you taught them values? Have you taught them who Jesus is? How do you think they’re going to give up the world, if they don’t understand what they have in Jesus? Moses

understood the riches of Christ, and he's making an estimation.

After he evaluates, then he discriminates. Is discrimination a good thing? You better believe it is. We're told not to discriminate. Friend, don't discriminate against people, but you'd better discriminate against right and wrong. You know, we're taught today that tolerance is a chief virtue, that we're supposed to be tolerant of Egypt and all of its vices. No! That kind of tolerance is of hell. Children have to be able to discriminate, but your children are not going to discriminate between right and wrong until their values are set. They have to see the riches in Christ. If they don't see that, then it's six of one, half a dozen of another.

Watch this. Values are set. Discrimination follows. And then, Egypt is refused—Egypt is refused. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter—an absolute refusal. Are you asking your child to give up pornography, to give up alcohol? Are you asking your child to give up sleeping around, and you've not shown him the beauty of Jesus? You've not given him the tools to discriminate with? He's not going to give it up. You try to take a bone away from a dog; you'll get bit. But if you'll put a piece of steak on the ground, he'll drop the bone to get the steak. Moses said, "I don't want Pharaoh's nasty bone; I've got something better: the riches of Jesus Christ."

Conclusion

Don't you think Amram and Jochebed did a good job? They're people of faith. Faith's vision—they saw he was a proper child. Faith's valor—they're not afraid of the king. Faith's venture—they did what they could do. And faith's victory—God gave them a child that changed this old world. God, give us more people of faith. And may God help you to be a man, a woman, of faith to raise your child.

Father God, burn the message to our hearts, I pray, in the strong name of Jesus.

Faith for the Family

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 30, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23–27

Outline

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Introduction

Praise the Lord. Tonight, we will get to meet this man and his family in another way, and how we thank God for him.

We're talking about champions of faith. Open your Bible to Hebrews chapter 11. Speaking of champions, we have a champion in our fellowship this morning. Somebody told me that Bill Cook is here. When I first came to Memphis over 30 years ago, one of the things that attracted me so much about this city was Tiger basketball. And one of the absolute, all time, outstanding champions of Tiger basketball was a young man named Bill Cook. Bill, are you here anywhere? Would you stand. Where is Bill Cook? There he is right there. Bill, God bless you young man, and my daughter, Janice, she had a crush on you, and all I could hear was Bill Cook. Those were good times back there, and we thank God for Tiger basketball as it was played in those days, and it looks like it's being played again now, so we're grateful for that. All right, back to the text. All right.

Hebrews chapter 11. Let's look, if we can, in verse 23. We're talking today about two champions. Perhaps you've never even heard their names before: Amram and Jochebed. Their claim to fame was that they were the parents of a boy named Moses. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he

forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

Beyond the shadow of any doubt, the most powerful and influential people on earth do not occupy the houses of elected office, or run the machinery of industry, or handle the business of Wall Street. The most powerful and influential people on earth are parents of faith. And that’s why we’re speaking today about Amram and Jochebed. Their claim to fame is that they raised a child whose name was Moses, who literally—literally—beyond a shadow of any doubt, changed the world. I cannot overestimate the importance of family. Now, we’ve been told that it takes a village to raise a child. That’s backward. It takes a family to raise a child, and to make a family, and families change the village. It begins with parents. And family is the primary classroom. The Bible says, in Psalm 68 and verse 6, that God sets the solitary in families. And you can understand why the devil has unleashed all of the artillery of hell against the family. But going against the tide were Amram and Jochebed. And I want us to learn four things about faith for the family today, okay?

I. Faith’s Vision

The title: Faith for the Family. And the very first thing I want you to see is what I’m going to call faith’s vision—faith’s vision. Look, if you will now, in verse 23: “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” Now, the phrase in this verse that I’m picking out is “they saw.” They saw something. They saw that Moses was a proper child. Now, what does that mean—a proper child? Some translations give it a beautiful child. Taylor translates it they saw that he was an unusual child. Now, I believe that Amram and Jochebed were people of great faith. Obviously, they were, because the Bible says that they were. They were people of great faith. But, you see, they were students of the Word of God. They were both born of the tribe of Levi. They both were raised, as we could say, PKs—preacher’s kids—almost. And they had been studying the Scriptures, and they knew that God had prophesied that the children of Israel were going to come out of Egypt after 400 years. The clock had been ticking, the pages torn from the calendar. And now 400 years had transpired. It was time to come out. A leader was needed. And they looked, and here’s a child, an unusual child. I believe that what engendered and inculcated the faith in the lives of Amram and Jochebed was two-fold. Number one, they had the written Word; and number two, the Spirit of God had spoken to their heart and said this child is the proper child. This is an unusual child. Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, how about my child? Is my child special?” Absolutely. You better believe that your child is special. Every child is special, and

parents need to see every child as a special child.

I remember when our first son was born. His name is Steve, named after that preaching deacon in the New Testament, Stephen. And I remember looking at that face, that little red face, of that baby, and I thought to myself, I am a daddy. I am a daddy. Joyce and I were working our way through college. We were living in a little house trailer 25-feet long. It had running water, but it didn't have any restroom facilities, no bath or anything. We had a path, but not a bath. That was a place over there, the community hall or something, and that's where we bathed, and so forth. But I went home. Joyce was still at the Fish Memorial Hospital. I went home to that little house trailer where we were living, got down on my knees by that flowered couch, and I prayed, and I said, "O God, if I never have any other kind of achievement, if I never have any material goods, if I never get to pastor a worthy church, never preach a good sermon, O God, I want you to make of me a good daddy." And I believe that the greatest joy, and the greatest privilege, and the greatest responsibility, is to be a parent. I have taken as one of my life's verses, if you want to know what it is, it's Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2: "Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed—that means, his children—shall be mighty upon the earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed."

Now, you say, "Pastor Rogers, do you think that you can control the destiny of your children?" No, but I can certainly influence the destiny of my children. Can we believe God on behalf of our children? Not only can we, but must we. There was a boy that needed help, and his father came to Jesus, and said, "Master, if you can, do something for my son." Jesus said to the father, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The man said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." I think we've all prayed a prayer like that: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." And the Lord saw that germ of faith, and God did for this boy what his father believed for. And so we can, we must, we ought to, believe for our children. Now, the Bible says, in Proverbs 22 and verse 6, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." One of the keys to understanding that verse is the word way. It's a Hebrew word that means something like a bend in a bow, that every child has a particular bent. They're not warped; they're bent to a particular thing. And what it is our duty and joy to do is to discover that bent. Don't see your child like a block of unsculptured granite, and you have a hammer and a chisel, going to make out of him what you will. Try to determine, if you will, what gifts God has put in that individual, unique person. You see, children don't come in standard packages. You have to read the label. You have to see what God has put into them.

I was reading about Thomas Alva Edison, the great inventor, who's given us so

many things. We sit under these incandescent lights, invented by Edison. When Edison was a little boy in school, his teacher said, “He is a dunce; he cannot learn,” and she suggested to the mother that the boy be taken out of school because he was too stupid to learn anything. Edison’s mother said, “My boy is not stupid. You don’t understand my boy. I will teach him myself.” She home-schooled him. She said, “My son is brilliant. He’s not stupid. You just don’t understand him.” She was able to see a bent in her son that no schoolteacher can see. And, friend, there are things that no pastor, no Sunday School teacher, no coach, no school teacher, can see that moms and dads can see, if they pray over that child and see that that child is special.

Joyce and I have a son who is a missionary. He’s in Spain right now. I can remember when little David, just as a child, just, at five and six, would get down maps of the world and pore over those maps, study the states in the United States, even memorizing—for whatever reason I’ll never know—the zip codes. But here was a boy who had the world on his heart. Now, that dear boy is serving Jesus as a missionary.

I remember our son, Steve. I sat down to teach him—Jim Whitmire will never believe this—but a little bit of music on the piano. I can play a piano—you won’t believe this, but it is true—by ear a little bit. I can hear the intervals, and so forth, and I can do that. And I sat him down as a four-year-old child, and to teach him a few finger melodies, and I noticed immediately his heart began to reverberate toward music, and today he is an accomplished musician, and a songwriter, and an arranger, with a degree, in Commercial Music, because he had that particular bent. You may say, “Pastor, I didn’t know you had a gift in music.” I don’t have a gift. Well, I had a gift; somebody got it. And Steve has that gift. But we have to see every child as special.

Now, listen. I have some precious parents who have children who have Down’s Syndrome. Are those children special? You better believe it. You would be surprised how many lives have been transformed, how many people have been encouraged, by these precious children. You just take that child, whoever that child is, whatever it is, and say, “My child is a gift from God,” and say, “O God, give me the faith that Amram and Jochebed had to see a destiny for my child.” This is faith’s vision.

II. Faith’s Valor

But now, let’s move on and think, not only of faith’s vision, but to get more serious, faith’s valor. Look again, if you will, in verse 23: “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child and they were not afraid...—underscore that phrase in your own Bible—they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” Now, they had every reason to be afraid because the king, old Pharaoh—and you can read about it in Exodus 1:22—had commanded that all the

little boy babies be drowned in the Nile. But they were not afraid.

Now, it was a dangerous time for them. But the reason they were not afraid is they realized that their battle was not primarily with Pharaoh. Their battle was a spiritual battle. That's what the apostle teaches us in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world; against spiritual wickedness in high places." Now, you may think that the enemy is the pornographer, the drug pusher. You may think that the enemy is the rapist, or you may think that the enemy is the warmonger. No, friend. The enemy is the devil. He always has been, always will be, and when we understand that our battle is not with flesh and blood, that ought to, in a sense, encourage us, because we know that it is a spiritual battle, and the battle can be fought and won by faith.

Now, they were dark days for Amram and Jochebed, but the Bible says they were not afraid. And I want to say to all of you parents who are here today, put the fear out of your life, and say, "By faith we're going to raise this child in these dangerous days for Jesus." The Bible says, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 1: "This know, also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come." And these are perilous times. You think about what dangerous days these are. There's liberalism in churches. There's nothing more deadening, more stultifying, more devil-pleasing, than a liberal church that does not accept the true Lordship of Jesus Christ, and the true inerrancy and infallibility of the Word of God. And if you are visiting here today, and you're a member of a church like that, get out of it—get out of it. You say, "Well, that's our family church." Get out of it. You say, "Grandma's buried in the backyard." She'd leave, if she could. Get out of it. I'm amazed—I'm amazed—that people will send their children across the United States to get a college education, and will not drive across town to get in a Bible-believing church. There's liberalism in churches. It's dangerous.

There is humanism in education. Now, I'm not here to pick on the educators. My son-in-law is a public school teacher, and I thank God for the public schools who are doing the best they can, under the circumstances. I thank God for our private schools, and I'm the first to confess that everything is not perfect in the private schools. But overall, the education in America has been given over to humanism, and humanism is just a polite way of saying atheism. The names have been changed to protect the guilty. But humanism is something that takes God from His throne, enthrones man in all of his nuclear glory, and makes man the sum and the substance, the center and the circumference, of everything. And we begin to sing, "Our brothers, who art on earth, hallowed be our name; our kingdom come; our will be done on earth, because there is no heaven." The chief building block of humanism is evolution, which is religion. They

say we can't teach creation, because that's teaching religion in the public schools. Humanism is religion; evolution is religion. It's an attempt to explain everything apart from God. It is a negative religion. It, in itself, is a faith, because evolution has never been proven. It is monkey mythology, but yet, our kids, in these dangerous days, are going to have that coming through the pores of their skin.

Take not only the liberalism in the churches, and take not only the humanism in the schools, but compound that by the heathenism in society. We have a society that is given over completely, almost totally, to sensualism. I tried to watch some basketball yesterday just a little bit, but I was so put off by the advertisements, the beer advertisements, for college sports. The beer barons have gone about to seduce your young people, and they've done a good job. The last statistic that I read said that 95% of college students drink beer. That's frightening to me—95% drink beer. You say, "Well, a little beer never hurt anybody." Out of every 15 people who begin to drink beverage alcohol of any kind, be it beer, wine, or liquor, out of every 15, 1 will become an alcoholic—1 out of 15. Some say 2 out of 15. The other 3 or 4 will become problem drinkers. That is, actually, out of 15, 5 will be problem drinkers; 1 or 2 will become alcoholics. That's 1 out of 3, basically. What kind of fools would we be to keep a dog in our house that would bite and maim 1 out of every 3 visitors? Yet we have beverage alcohol in our homes. Listen. If you are wise parents, if you're wise, you'll have no alcohol in your home—none, none. Number two: You will establish a no drinking tradition in your home. Don't drink it, and just don't make it a tradition. When I go out to a restaurant, especially if my grandchildren are there, and the waitress or waiter comes up and says, "Would you like an alcoholic drink of some kind, or something," I don't just say, "No thank you"; I say, "No thank you. We don't drink alcohol." And just say it clearly and plainly, not boastfully, not like a Pharisee, but let your children hear you say, "We don't drink alcohol." Let them hear you say that. And, when they go out at night and come in, you be up when they get in, so you can give them a big hug and smell their breath. It'd be better for you to lose some sleep than to lose a child. But alcohol is served on television 10 to 1 over any other beverage. It's heathenism in society. And speaking of television, 88% of all sexual encounters on television are illicit, that deal with homosexuality, adultery, or fornication. I said 88%. Because you see, Satan is systematically seducing your children. It's a dangerous situation. We've got heathenism in society. MTV is nothing but pornography set to music, and kids are feasting on that. Well, these are dangerous days. And in these dangerous days you have got to raise your children.

But the Bible says they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Do you know why they were not afraid? Because they knew the King of kings. They were not afraid

because of faith. Now, today, you're not going to be successful raising your children as you ought, unless you have the kind of faith that Amram and Jochebed had—faith's vision, and faith's valor. They were not afraid. Don't you throw up your hands. Don't throw in the towel. Don't say there's no hope. Don't give up the battle. But have, friend, the vision and the valor to be the parents that God wants you to be.

III. Faith's Venture

Now, number three: I want you to see also faith's venture—faith's venture. Look again in verse 23: "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months his parents, of his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." They did something. They hid their child from Pharaoh's henchmen. And, later on, we're going to see that they built an ark that was used to deliver this little baby boy. The point is that they did not just sit around, saying, "Well, we're going to trust God." Faith without works is dead. When you have the vision, and you have the valor, then you've got to have the venture. James says, in James 2, verse 17: "Faith without works is dead." True faith is belief with legs on it. It does something.

Now, these parents did not have fatalism. They didn't say, "Whatever will be will be. Just let it happen." You take a garden, and leave it alone; it's going to turn into weeds. It wasn't fatalism. It wasn't fanaticism. They didn't say, "Well, we'll just throw him in the Nile and let God take care of him." They didn't do that. They did something. If you believe God for a house, say amen with a hammer and saw. Sir, if you believe in God for a wife, use a little cologne, something she'd be attracted to, like Essence of Wal-Mart. Say amen with work. The Bible says, if a man won't work, neither should he eat. You do your part, and God is going to do His part. Remember our scripture that says, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he's old, he'll not depart from it." Well, then, that is your duty to train him up. Now, political correctness is against that today. They think that you're interfering with a little child's life. Political correctness says, don't spank the child; that's child abuse. God's Word says, in Proverbs 22, verse 15, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Political correctness today says, well, give your children your daughter's birth control pills. The Word of God says, in Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled; but adulterers and whoremongers God will judge." Political correctness says that the government is the partners with the parents, but the Bible says, in Proverbs 27, verse 3: "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Political correctness says, you let your children choose their own sexual preference, but the Bible says, in Leviticus 18:22: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as

with womankind: it is abomination.” That’s what God’s Word says. Now, political correctness says, let your schools teach sex education. The Bible says, “Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he’s old he’ll not depart from it.” Listen. When you do what God would have you to do, then God will move in and do His part. Faith’s vision and faith’s valor led to faith’s work, this faith’s venture.

Are you training your children? The word train in the dictionary says this: to prepare for a contest, to instruct by exercise, to drill, to form to a proper shape, to discipline for use. Bill Cook did not learn how to play basketball by reading a book. He was trained. He was coached. You have to train and to coach your children. You have to pray. You have to teach. You have to plead. You have to show by example. Again, go back. Do you have your children in a Bible-believing church? Do you have them in Bible class, Sunday School, under a born-again teacher? Are you training in the home by precept, and by example? People spend more time, sometimes, training dogs than they do children. See these men who have champion bird dogs. Watch them, and see how they train a dog. Then go to the home, and see how he trains his children. He spends more time with the dog than the child. Then he ties the dog up at night, and lets the kid run wild. We’re to train. You see, if you teach a child, and that’s all you do, you’ll teach him one thing, somebody else can come along and teach him something else. But when you train him, he gets something through the pores of his skin into his very psyche, when a child is trained. There’s a difference between teaching and training.

Perhaps you’ve read the story of a little boy who was on his tricycle running around and around and around the block. Somebody said, “Son, what are you doing?” He said, “I’m mad at Mommy. I’m running away from home.” “So, why are you going around and around the block?” He said, “Mommy won’t let me cross the street.” The child had been trained.

The other day, Joyce was gone, and I had to take care of myself, which is always pathetic, but I had to take of myself. I had to pour my own cornflakes and everything. And, when I got out of bed, I looked back at that bed, and I thought, well now, if Joyce were here, the bed would be made. But nobody else is going be at this house but me, and I’m not going to have any guests in the bedroom. I’m going to get right back in that same bed tonight. It doesn’t make any sense to make up that bed. But I said, Joyce would make up the bed, and she would expect me to make up the bed. And I found myself making up that bed. And then, on top of that, I put the two pillows there, covered them up, and then I put one, two, three more pillows on there—for whatever purpose, I have no idea. And then, on top of those other three pillows, and in front of them, I sat a teddy bear. Nobody’s going to see that but me. And it dawned on me, Adrian, you have been trained. You’ve been trained. That’s training. That’s what you have to put in the

hearts and minds and lives of your children, and wives, in the hearts and minds of your husbands, to know how to train them.

Now, this is faith's venture. Now, faith honors God, and God honors faith, and it is amazing what God begins to do now for these parents, because the Bible tells us also over there in the Book of Exodus that after they could no longer hide the baby, they made a little boat, a little ark, out of bulrushes and went down and put it in the River Nile. And you remember the story. It's one of the favorite Bible stories of all times.

The princess, Pharaoh's daughter, came down there to bathe. Now, what is a princess doing bathing in the dirty Nile? She has her palace, her lavish baths, her marble tubs. Maybe she remembers the time as a little girl she used to play in the old swimming hole. I don't know. But she goes to that exact spot where that little baby is floating there in that basket, and she sees him there among the reeds there in the side of the muddy Nile, and picks him up, and says, "Why, this is one of the Hebrew children." At that exact moment, the baby cries—the baby cries. I don't think it was a diaper pin; I think an angel reached down and pinched that little baby, and her heart, her maternal heart, was melted at the cry of that little baby. And, about that time, Moses' sister, Miriam, steps up and says, "If it please the princess, I can get one of the Hebrew women to come and nurse this child for you." She said, "Do it." Miriam said, "Guess what, Mama—guess what. You're going to get little Moses back, and you are going to nurse him. You're going to be able to train him." And she trained this little child. Oh, how she must have poured her heart, her life, her mind, her prayers, into the heart of little Moses. Isn't God great? And here Moses now is being trained by his own mother, and she's getting paid for it! And besides that, he has his tuition paid to the University of Egypt, and he's going there, getting the finest education that money could buy. And the Bible tells us, in Acts chapter 7 and verse 22: "And Moses was learned in all of the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." Oh, what a mighty thing God began to do when they did their part. When you obey God, and when you follow God, God is going to move in and do something very wonderful.

IV. Faith's Victory

Now, let's move to the last and final point, because it's the most exciting of all, and that's faith's victory, because, you see, friend, faith is the victory that overcometh the world. Look again, if you will, beginning in verse 24: "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches—underscore that—than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he—Moses—

forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king—his parents were not afraid; neither was he—for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.” That is, he had caught a glimpse of Jesus and he endures. Now, Moses is faced with tremendous temptation. He’s already been through a secular education. But Jochebed has put in Moses’ heart something that a secular university could not take away. She had pled with him, prayed with him, taught him, and trained him, and now he is being offered a choice. On the one hand is everything that royalty could provide. He would have pleasures. He would have treasures. He would have power. He would have position. He would have it all. But, if he turned his back on it, the king would be angry with him. He would face the wrath of the king. He would face reproach, deprivation, and struggle, but yet he would have the treasures of Jesus, the riches of Jesus. So he is faced with a decision.

Now, here’s where the victory comes in. Here’s what I want for my children. Here’s what you want for your children. How did Moses make this decision? This is the crux of the whole matter, so I want to give you three words.

First of all, there was an evaluation—there was an evaluation. Moses evaluated. Look in verse 29: “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.” On the one hand is the reproach of Christ; on the other hand, the treasures of Egypt, and he is evaluating which is greater. Now, Moses, through the teaching of his parents, came to see that the riches of Christ, the treasures of Christ, were greater than the riches of Egypt. Now, the word here is, “He esteemed.” Do you see the word esteemed there in verse 26? That is a bookkeeping term. That is, he’s balancing the ledger. What he is seeing is this: that the glories of the future would outweigh the pleasures of the present. He saw that to be a child of God was greater than to be a grandchild of Pharaoh. He saw that it was better to have favor with the King of kings than with the King of Egypt. Now, what I’m trying to say is this: that Moses is getting his values straight. That is so important for your children—to teach your children how to evaluate, because, if you don’t do that, you will never do the rest of it. So, step number one is evaluation.

Then, step number two is determination. Look, if you will, in verse 25: “he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” He chose. Now, he chose on the basis of an evaluation. The determination came from the evaluation. Your child is not going to be determined to live for God without the proper values in his or her heart. Moses had to choose. Your child’s life is measured by his choices. So is yours. Our lives are a sum total of our choices. We’re free to choose. We’re not free not to choose. We’re not free to choose the consequences of our choice. We choose, and then the choice chooses for us.

Moses chose on the basis of an evaluation. An evaluation led to a determination.

And that determination led to an elimination. Look, if you will, in verse 24: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Look in verse 27: “By faith, he forsook Egypt.” Now, get it straight. First an evaluation, then a determination, then an elimination. What most parents are trying to do is to get their kids not to do this, and not to do that, and not to do that. They’re saying, “Come out of Egypt. Don’t play footsy with the king, and all of this,” but they don’t have reason for doing it. You’ve got to get into their heart values. Once they see value, then they determine, and once they determine, then they eliminate.

I’ve often used this illustration. If you try to take a nasty bone away from a dog, you just might get bit. But if you’ll put some steak on the ground, the dog will drop the bone to get the steak.

Now, what did Moses’ parents put into his heart? Some steak—the riches of Jesus Christ. And, if your kids don’t see that, if they don’t learn that, if there’s no evaluation, there will be no determination; and no determination, there’ll be no elimination, and Egypt will have them. But you can be parents of faith.

Conclusion

Faith’s vision, faith’s valor, faith’s venture will lead to faith’s victory.

Some years ago, scientists created something called a bathosphere, a big globe that man could get inside of made of steel many inches thick, and they began to lower it into the ocean, deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper, deeper than a man had ever descended. They got down to 37,000 feet below the surface of the sea. The pressure of that water was enormous. Had that thing not been built out of steel, it would have been crushed like an aluminum can. They had a small window they could look out, and they saw something they never expected to see: fish swimming along. Fish, with supple skin, swimming under enormous pressure, pressure that would have crushed that bathosphere, and they said, “Why? How is this?” And science answered. Those fish had pressure inside of them that equaled the pressure on the outside and allowed them to live.

Now, folks, there are a lot of pressures on our kids today, and you’d better be certain they have something on the inside. And that’s up to parents to do it.

Now, bow our heads in prayer.

Family Faith, Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 10, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23–27

Outline

Introduction

- I. Faith Sees Every Child as Special
- II. Faith Sees Every Conflict as Spiritual
 - A. What We're Facing in Today's World
 1. Liberalism in Religion
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- III. Faith Sees Every Challenge as Solvable
- IV. Faith Sees Every Choice as Significant
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Conclusion

Introduction

Now, take God's Word and find Hebrews chapter 11. And, in a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 23, and we're going to read some verses about faith for the family. You know, we have been hearing from the First Lady that it takes a village to raise a child. In all due respect, that is wrong. It takes a family to raise a child. And, not only does it take a family to raise a child, it takes families to make a village. And, the society is no better than the families, and the child is no better than the families. And, there has been a war on the family, and it's high time that the people of God realized it, woke up, and began to counter attack.

I was here last night in our church for a wedding between Chris Williams and Jill Jones—two wonderful young people. I love and esteem them very much. I was so impressed with the marriage ceremony, how God was honored, but I was particularly impressed with the words of these young people, as they wrote on the back of the program for those who were in attendance these words. And, I want you to listen to them and see if you're not blessed by this. Now, just listen to these words by Chris and Jill. Here's what they said: "We want to thank each of you for coming to celebrate our wedding with us today. Today is much more than a wedding ceremony for us; it is a

worship service. Jesus has been so good to us. First and foremost, He has saved both of us. This is where it all begins. Even the most eloquent statement of the love of Christ could not adequately describe the difference He makes in a person's life once they understand the poverty to which they are bound apart from Him. We want you to worship with us today. His name is above all names. He is the One who is most honored today. If you are here today and have never trusted Christ for salvation, please consider the testimony He has given us. Finally, we want to tell our parents how much we love them. They've been so good to us. They listened to us, counseled us, had fun with us. They are truly a blessing. Most of all, we are so glad to be able to say that they have not just approved of our relationship—they have encouraged it. The Lord has given us direction through them, and we know that we are in His will. Pray for us that we may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Marriage is a blessing because of Jesus."

Isn't that wonderful? I just praise God for that and I thought, "To be parents of these young people, who say, 'Lord Jesus, thank You for the change that You've made in our lives,' and then for those young people to say to their parents, 'Thank you for loving us, for teaching us, for encouraging us, for approving of the relationship that we have.'" And, I thought, "Well, I couldn't do anything any better than to just simply share that with you because, very frankly, folks, that's the bottom line of all that we're trying to do and say—is that there may be in this world and in this nation a godly seed.

Now, let's take the Word of God and begin to read in Hebrews chapter 11, beginning in verse 23—we're talking about faith for the family: *"By faith"—"By faith"—"Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible"* (Hebrews 11:23–27).

Now folks, listen to your pastor today: God wants the home to be the primary classroom to raise boys and girls. And, it must be done—it must be done—by faith. The Bible says, *"According to your faith be it unto you"* (Matthew 9:29). Today, we're going to look a little bit into the lives of two forgotten heroes in the Bible. Many of you have probably never even heard their names. One is Amram, and the other is Jochebed. These are not really familiar names, but they were powerful people because they were

the mother and father of Moses. They were just powerless slaves, so to speak. They were under the tormenting chains of Egyptian bondage. There seemed to be very little they could do, and yet they did the thing that every mother, father, ought to do: they raised a child by faith. Parents, listen to me today: the most powerful and influential people on the earth are mothers and fathers of faith. And, we're talking, today, about the family faith—"Faith for the Family." Now, from the passage of scripture that we have before us today, I want us to write four things upon your heart about raising children by faith, and I pray God that not only will they be written upon the tablets of your heart—they will also be riveted into your mind.

I. Faith Sees Every Child as Special

And, here's the first thought I want to give you: faith sees every child as special—faith sees every child as special. Look in verse 23: "*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents*"—now, watch this—"because they saw [that] he was a proper child" (Hebrews 11:23). Now, different translations give that different ways. Taylor's translation is that "they saw that God had given them an unusual child." Some translations give it that "he was a beautiful baby." Well, all of this just simply says that God had a plan for Moses—Moses was special. But now, listen, every baby on earth is special. Now, don't miss this: every baby on earth is special. God has a plan for every child that is born on Planet Earth. And, what you need to do is to do what Amram and Jochebed did—wait before God until God gives you a dream, a vision, for your child—wait before God until you can see that your child is a special child.

I remember when my firstborn came into this world. Joyce and I had a little boy. We named him Steve—Steven—which means "crowned one." He was named after the first Christian martyr, and I'll never forget that ordeal, as Joyce told me in the middle of the night—I don't know why these guys are always born in the middle of the night. But, she gave me that elbow, and she said—"Adrian, something's happening. I believe that it's time." Well, as a youngster in college—and we were in college—I remember we were living in a little house trailer, and I remember getting up out of that little house trailer—we had no telephone in the house trailer—going out into the dark and trying to get into the little community there where there was a phone, and it was all locked up so tight. My heart was about to jump out of my throat, and I was petrified. You know, fathers ought never have to go through all of this. I couldn't get in to call the doctor and tell him that we were coming; and so, I had to jimmy a window open so I could dive in, and I marked my shins going over the windowsill there, going in there. Then, when I got in there, I found out it was a pay phone, and I had to go back out and into the house trailer to get a dime to make that phone call—to call the doctor at the Fish Memorial Hospital there in

Deland, Florida.

Finally, Steven was born, and the doctor let me see him—that little boy. And, I remember that little fleck of blood right there on his cheek, and his little old hair was dark and kind of all over his head. And, I looked at him, and I thought, “Boy, he’s ugly.” I thought I would have a better looking son than that. I mean, he improved, but I’m telling you, folks, when they... But, I was so happy; I was so thrilled. I remember kissing Joyce and praising her, going home and getting on my knees, and I prayed one of the most sincere prayers I’ve ever prayed. I said, “O God, if I never do anything good, if I never succeed in anything else, dear God, I want to be a good dad.” I meant that with all of my heart. And, other than my love for the Lord Jesus Christ and my love for my wife is this priority in my life—to see my children (our children) as special. They are a gift from God, and it is our joy to take these children, and to raise them by faith, and to nurture them up according to a vision that God gives us for our children.

One of my life's verses—would you jot it down in your margin?—is this—Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2: *“Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed”*—now, that simply means “his children”—*“shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed”* (Psalm 112:1–2). I want to raise up mighty children. Now, Amram and Jochebed raised mighty children. I want my children to be mighty children. This is not merely a promise to some; it’s a promise to all who fear the Lord in this world.

Now, you see, God gives us these little children to mold and to make. A man came into a village one time—he’d never been there—and he said to somebody living in that village, “Any great men born here?” And, the old man said, “No, just babies.” Great men are not born; great men are made—they are nurtured. Moses was just a little baby, but you see, the Bible says it was by faith that they even saw that he was a special child (Hebrews 11:23).

Did you know that not only can we believe God for our children—we *must* believe God for our children? There was a man I preached about last Sunday who had a boy who was demon-possessed and tormented. And, he came to Jesus, and he said to Jesus, “Lord, if You can do something for my child, do it.” And, the Lord Jesus said, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes.” That is, God did not put the burden upon the child to believe; God put the burden upon the parent to believe. We can believe for our children. That boy was not in a position to believe at that particular time. He needed somebody to have faith for him. I have decided to have faith for my children. My children are special; your children are special. Faith sees every child as special.

You remember that classic verse in Proverbs 22, verse 6: *“Train up a child in the*

way [that] he should go—“*in the way [that] he should go*”—“*and...he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6). Now, every child is different. The word *way* in that passage of scripture is the idea of a bend in a bow. That is, every child has his or her special bent. Sometimes I thought some of mine were not only bent but warped, but they all have a special bent—they have a special way. Joyce and I have four children on earth. We have a little boy in Heaven, but sometimes when I look at the idiosyncrasies and the different talents, desires, and proclivities in our children, I wonder if we are the parents of all four of them. I mean, they are so different, and yet they are so much the same. I’ve watched the proclivities.

From his earliest years our eldest son Steven has been interested in music. I sat down, Brother Jim, and taught him a little finger melody when he was just I think four years old on the piano. And, from that time on he could not get himself away from the piano—just playing the piano, listening, writing music. He had little songs he wrote even before he started going to school because music was just simply something that was in the heart of that child. Now, I didn’t try to say, “Now Son, forget the music. I want you to be an engineer or whatever.” No, because that’s not his bent.

And then, along came little David, our missionary son. Our son Steven is an ordained minister of music, but we have another son, David. And, I noticed that David had a certain proclivity—he had a certain bent. David would look at maps and study maps. David would memorize zip codes. Why would a boy memorize zip codes of different places? One day, before we were going to take a trip from one side of this nation to another, and I was... David had not yet...well, he was just a, a child—maybe in the second grade. I can’t remember what age. But, we were trying to figure out what route we would take. And, David said, “Well, I would go through Florida, and then Alabama, and then I would go through Mississippi.” And, he had a route all the way picked out, and he had everything in sequence, exactly right. And, I thought, “How does he know that?” He had memorized—he knew all the states; he knew all the directions. He knows the maps of the world; and now, he’s a world traveler. As a matter of fact, he just left yesterday for Spain. God’s called him to be a missionary. That’s just simply his bent.

I noticed our daughter Gayle—she’s a fierce competitor—fierce competitor. Unless you’re excellent, don’t ever play her in table tennis. She makes table tennis balls look like an aspirin when it comes over there. And, if one of them hits you, it’ll leave a hole in your chest. And, she’s just a fierce competitor. She’s got an organizational mind, and she has an entrepreneurial spirit about her. And, Gayle has an insight into people’s problems. She’s a wonderful counselor, and that’s what she’s doing now—she’s helping other people in businesses and so forth, as she works along with Mike in their home

business. And, that's just her bent. She's so unlike Steve, and she's so unlike David; and they're unlike Gayle.

And then, along comes Janice—Janice, the girl who is the romanticist. She loves songs. She loves music. She loves scripture memorization. She has such a nurturing spirit, such a kindness, such a gentleness, such a tender heart. Now, in some ways, Gayle and Janice are so different—Gayle the aggressor, Janice the nurturer. But, you know one thing about it? They all love Jesus, and they all love Mom and Dad. That's wonderful—that's wonderful. You see, they're so different—they're so different. But, they are so much the same because they love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your child has a bent—your child has a proclivity. Friend, I want to tell you, they don't come in standard packages, and you'd better read the label—you'd better read the label—and find out how God made those particular children. Listen, faith sees every child as special—faith sees every child as special. You look at your little child, and you say, "This child is a special child." You see that by faith. The Bible says, *"By faith...they saw [that] he was a proper child"* (Hebrews 11:23). Now, do you have that? All right. Now, let's move on to the next point.

II. Faith Sees Every Conflict as Spiritual

Not only does faith see every child as special—faith sees every conflict as spiritual—faith sees every conflict as spiritual. Now, notice—look in verse 23: *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw [that] he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment"* (Hebrews 11:23). Well, what was the king's commandment? Put down there "Exodus 1, verse 22": *"And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born [you] shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive"* (Exodus 1:22). The king's commandment was to kill all the little boy babies. This was a conflict, but you see, Amram and Jochebed saw that this conflict was a spiritual conflict. It was not a conflict between Jews and Egyptians. It was not a conflict between parents and a potentate. It was a conflict between light and dark, between the Spirit of God and the spirit of wickedness.

Now parents, you need to understand this. Write down "Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12": *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood"—now, old Pharaoh was flesh and blood—"we wrestle not against flesh...but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness"—"against spiritual wickedness"* (Ephesians 6:12). Faith sees every conflict as spiritual. Now, Amram and Jochebed, living back there as slaves in Egypt, were helpless. They were disenfranchised; they had no rights. What despair they must have had and could have had apart from the courage that faith gave them! When they realized that this was really

a spiritual conflict, they took courage and they were not afraid of the king's commandment (Hebrews 11:23).

Now, let's see how we can apply that today. They were living in dangerous days, but they saw that the conflict was spiritual. We are living in dangerous days, and we must see that the conflict is spiritual. Second Timothy 3, verse 1 says, "*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come*" (2 Timothy 3:1). They're here, and I'm telling you, if you're a parent, you're walking through a mine field and you're not going to get through unless you use faith to understand that you are in a spiritual battle. Your wit and wisdom, your money and your good looks, are not going to get you through.

A. **What We're Facing in Today's World**

Let me tell you what we know Moses faced; let me tell you what you're facing.

1. **Liberalism in Religion**

Number one: You're facing liberalism in religion—liberalism in religion. I'm telling you, it is a tragedy when children are raised in churches that do not accept the authority of the Word of God and when the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is not made manifest. It would be better for them not to attend church than to attend a Bible-doubting, empty, futile, and liberal church. I believe that with all of my heart, and I'm amazed at the kind of churches that some people will put their children in. And, you know why they do it? Why, it's the neighborhood church. They will drive across the nation to find a good college for higher education and won't drive across town to get their children in a good church. Now, I'm not saying that Bellevue is the only church. God knows that there are many wonderful churches. And, I'm not saying that Bellevue's a perfect church. God knows that we have faults and flaws. But, I am telling you this—that I would not allow my child to be raised in a Bible-doubting church. It is disastrous—disastrous. But, they're dangerous days.

2. **Humanism in Education**

And, not only do we have liberalism in religion—we have humanism in education. Now, I thank God for good, godly school teachers in public education, and we have many wonderful administrators—godly administrators—in public education, as well as in private schools. I also recognize that the private schools are not perfect. They have their faults. But, humanism is so pervasive; it has camouflaged itself. It is really... Humanism is camouflaged atheism. Humanism sounds so good because it sounds so much like humanitarianism, but there's a difference between humanitarianism and humanism. Humanism, when you let all the air out of it, does not believe in a personal God. Man is the sum and the substance, the center and the circumference, of his existence—and that's why they call it *humanism*. And, the chief building block of humanistic education is

evolution. You say, “Adrian, aren’t you an educated man?” Yes, I’ve had some education. “Well then, don’t you believe in evolution?” Indeed, I don’t. I reject that monkey mythology with every ounce in my heart. It’s foolish. They call scientific creationism—they call that *religion*, but I want to tell you, evolution is religion in reverse. It is an attempt to explain everything apart from God.

Now, all of this has been capped off. I’m telling you, we’re talking now about education—humanism in education. The prime building block is evolution, but it is capped off by sex education in the schools. “Now, what is wrong with sex education in the schools?” Everything, if it is not built on a fixed standard of right and wrong—everything, if it’s not fixed. Sex education will never work for good—it will always work for harm—unless it is accompanied by genuine moral values. Do you know what most sex education is today? It is training and teaching boys and girls how to have sexual intercourse without catching a disease or without having a baby. Bottom line—that’s what it is: how to have sexual intercourse without catching a diseases or having a baby. Now friend, when you take sex education and divorce it from moral principles, then it is totally bankrupt and it is implicitly approval for immorality.

3. Hedonism in Society

But, not only are they facing that, they’re facing hedonism in society. We have a society—I’m just talking about the dangers in today’s society—we have a society today that has been soaked, for example, in beverage alcohol. And, the alcohol industry, the beer barons who sponsor now the college games, the Olympics, the Super Bowl, and everything else, are coming after your children. They want to seduce your children, and they are doing a good job. Ninety-five percent of college students drink beer—95%. “Well,” you say, “what’s wrong with that?” I’ll tell you what’s wrong with that: out of every 15 people who begin to drink, one will become an alcoholic. The other four will become problem drinkers. That is one out of three of all who begin to drink, and that includes your kids. **Would you keep a dog in your house that would bite one out of every three visitors? Think about it!** And, you say, “Well, we need to teach our children to drink responsibly.” Everybody believes he’s going to drink responsibly when he begins. *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise”* (Proverbs 20:1).

What should you do as parents? Number one: Have absolutely no beverage alcohol in your home—none, none. Number two: When they go out, you be home when they get up. It’s better to lose your sleep than to lose your children. And, when that boy comes in, you get up close, and give him a big hug, and smell what’s on his breath. Number three: Take that child sometime to the emergency room on Friday night, on Saturday night, and let him see those people come in sliced and diced after they’ve gone through

a windshield. Let him understand what is happening. Take them down to the places—the slums—and sometimes, places where the up and out gather, as well, and let them see the old drunk in the gutter covered with flies and vomit. Let them see something besides the glitter of these advertisements. You know, the Bible says, “*When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise*” (Proverbs 21:11). The word *simple* means “naive.” They don’t understand all they see is what is coming on television. Did you know—did you know—that alcohol is served ten to one above any other thing that is served as a beverage on television? Not lemonade, not milk, not water—ten to one it is alcohol.

And then, what about—we’re talking about hedonism in society—what about the entertainment that our kids are watching? Satan is so clever. You know, the situational comedy—we call it the *sitcom*. When children are taught to laugh at sin, which is the basic theme of all sitcoms—not all of them, but most of them—when they’re taught to laugh at sin, they can’t take it seriously again. That’s the reason the Bible says, “*Fools make a mock at sin*” (Proverbs 14:9). Eighty-eight percent of sexual contact that is shown on television—I said 88%—is immoral, illicit sex.

And, the television’s become the babysitter. Suppose next door to there was a man and a woman not married, practicing immorality and illicit sex. Would you say to your little child, “Mommy is going off today. Here’s your entertainment, child. Here’s a soap box. You get up there on the window, and look in the window, and watch all of that. That’ll be your entertainment”? The only difference is, you just brought it on into the living room—you don’t need a soap box; you don’t need to open the window. This is what you’re letting those children watch, and some of you parents ought to be ashamed of what you watch in front of the children. I’m telling you, these kids are up against it today. They’re watching MTV—that’s just pornography set to music.

Now, in spite of all of this, they had victory because they saw the conflict—listen to me—the conflict as spiritual. You need to understand that behind the alcohol industry, behind the entertainment industry, behind the educational system, and behind all of these other things, there is a mastermind. They saw the conflict as spiritual, and the only answer to a spiritual conflict is faith—is faith. So, the Bible says, “*They were not afraid of the king’s commandment*” (Hebrews 11:23). Why? By faith they saw beyond the king to the King of kings.

III. Faith Sees Every Challenge as Solvable

Here’s the third thing I want to lay on your heart: faith sees every challenge as solvable—faith sees every challenge as solvable. Look again in verse 23: “*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he*

was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Hebrews 11:23–24). They had a problem, and they solved that problem. They were not intimidated by the King of Egypt, nor were they intimidated by the sinister minister of fear, who is Satan himself. And, the Bible says, "*They were not afraid*" (Hebrews 11:23). They did something. They refused to give in to the spirit of fear. And, Satan wants to seduce and destroy your children. They refused to be lazy. They refused to be passive. They refused to be intimidated. They refused to be selfish. They refused to be cowardly. The Apostle Paul said in the New Testament, in Philippians 4, verse 13: "*I can do all things through Christ which [strengthens] me*" (Philippians 4:13). Now folks, parents, you're up against it, but you listen to me: every one of these problems that I mentioned is not a problem that cannot be overcome by faith. Faith sees every conflict—every challenge—as solvable.

Now, I want you to notice what they did: they took the little baby and put him in a little boat—a little ark made of bulrushes—and daubed with slime on the inside to keep the water out. You know the story—how they put him down there in the river Nile by the bulrushes. Now, I want you to notice what this was. This was not fatalism. They didn't just say, "Oh well, nothing we can do. What will be, will be." Friend, no—if you fail to do something, if you have a garden, soon it will become a garden of weeds. I'll tell you what else it wasn't: it wasn't fanaticism. They didn't take little Moses and just throw him in the river without building a little boat for him and saying, "We'll just trust God to deliver him." It wasn't fatalism; it wasn't fanaticism. It was faith. And, how do I know it was faith? Because they did something. Now, listen to me—the Bible says in James chapter 2, verses 17 and 18 that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). They saw every problem, every concern, every challenge as solvable.

Now again, go back to that passage of scripture in Proverbs 22, verse 6, where it says, "*Train up a child in the way [that] he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6). Now, look at the word this time—not the word *way* but the word *train*. What does the word *train* mean? Well, look it up in the dictionary. It doesn't mean "to teach"; it means "to prepare for a contest, to instruct by exercise, to drill, to form to a proper shape, to discipline for use." You've got to do something with these boys and girls. Are you praying? Are you training? Are you teaching? Are you pleading? Are you acting? Are you instructing these children?

Well, let me ask you a very practical question: Do you have them in a Bible-believing church? Those of you who are listening by television, do you have them in a Bible-believing church? Do you have them in a Sunday School class? Do you know who their friends are? Do you know where they're going? Are you living in front of them by

precept and example? You see, training is more than teaching. Have you ever watched a man train a bird dog? We spend more time (some men) training their dogs than they do their children, and then they tie the dogs up at night and let the kids run wild—doesn't make sense to me. *Real faith is belief with legs on it.*

You say, "Well Pastor, I send them to school." Teddy Roosevelt said, "When you educate a man in mind and not in morals, you are creating a menace to society." There are a lot of parents in this congregation who are—you're just knocking yourself out, wearing yourself out, Scout troops, umpiring Little League games, family counselors, community recreational programs, but that is not family training. Nobody can do that but you. There's a difference between training and teaching. You may teach one thing; you may give him something to read. Somebody else will teach him something else, and he may decide to believe that other teaching. When you train children, you put something in them, that no matter how rebellious they may want to be, there's something in them that restrains them.

A little boy said he was going to run away from home—got angry at his Mama. So, he got on his tricycle to run away from home. And, he asked... A man saw him and said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm running away from home." He said, "Well, why are you just going around and around the block?" He said, "Mama won't let me cross the street." See, that's training—that is training. There is something in a child's heart that's coming...

You see, Jochebed got this child, and she trained this child. Now, how did she get her child back? Well, you know the story. There's little Moses hidden in the bulrushes. Pharaoh's daughter comes down there. Now, I want to ask you a question: What was Pharaoh's daughter going down bathing in the Nile? Why would she do that? That's ridiculous! I mean, she's got marble tubs, lavish baths. This is the richest nation on earth, and there's the old dirty Nile. Have you seen the Nile? I've seen the Nile—it's dirty. Why would she be down there in the bulrushes? I don't know, except the providence of God. Maybe she remembered the old swimming hole when she was a little girl—I don't know. But, she's down there; and while she's down there, the baby cries. Do you think it was a diaper pin? No, an angel went down there and went, "Psst," and pinched that baby. And, the baby cries, and her mother's heart, or her feminine heart, was moved by the cry of that little baby. And, Pharaoh's daughter picks up little baby Moses, and her heart goes out. And, Miriam stands over there—she'd been standing over there watching the whole thing—says, "Miss, pardon me, but if you like, I know somebody who'd be glad to nurse that baby for you." Of course, it was Moses' mother. Listen, when you read this, you can't help but see the providence of God. And so, Jochebed has the privilege of nursing, and teaching, and training her child; and

when he gets old enough for a college education, old Pharaoh has to pay the tuition. Jochebed is paid for taking care of what she would give her life for. And, she nurses this child, and raises this child, and teaches this child, and trains this child. It's a wonderful story.

Now, here's the thing—listen to me; listen to me: by faith they built this little boat. They did what they could do when that was all they could do. When you do what you can do, do all you can do. God will do the rest—God will do the rest. Here is the providence of God. I know you're up against it. I know there are situations you can't control. But, when you act by faith, when you do what you can do, then you turn these little guys and gals over to God and God will move Heaven and Earth for your child when you believe God. It wasn't by chance but by the providence of God. Faith sees every challenge as solvable. Don't you let the devil make you negative or pessimistic concerning your child. You listen to me: there is a way for your children. Faith sees every—every—challenge as solvable.

IV. Faith Sees Every Choice as Significant

Now, here's the fourth and final thing: faith sees every choice as significant—faith sees every choice as significant. Look in verse 24 now: *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter”—that is, “Pharaoh’s grandson”—“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11:24–27). Now, Moses had tremendous temptations. He had before him all of the pleasures and treasures of Egypt—worldly position, worldly pleasure, worldly possessions. It was all at this fingertips, but Moses had a value system. Now, look—faith sees every choice as significant. I want you to see how it works:

A. The Value Established

First of all, there was value established. Notice, if you will, why he turned from Egypt—verse 26: *“[He esteemed] the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt”* (Hebrews 11:26). Just write down “value established”—“value established.” He saw the reproaches of Christ; he saw the treasures of Egypt. Now, who would have ever had thought that the reproaches of Christ would be of greater value to Moses than the treasures of Egypt? Well, the word *esteemed* simply means “accounted.” He's been doing some figuring, and he saw that the glories of the future outweighed the pleasures

of the present. And, he saw that to be a child of God was greater riches than to be a grandson of Pharaoh, and he saw that it was better to be right with the King of kings than with the King of Egypt. So, he made a choice. Parents, listen to me—it is foolish to expect your children to make right choices until they see proper values. Somehow, he had learned of the reproaches of Christ. Who put that in his heart? Do you think Pharaoh put it there? Who put it there? Jochebed, Amram, put it there.

B. The Virtue Chosen

Now, when value was established, then virtue was chosen. Notice what it says here: “[He chose]”—in verse 25—“*rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*” (Hebrews 11:25). Faith sees every choice as significant. You see, what is my job? It is to teach my children to choose. You see, we must choose—everyone must choose; all must choose. We can’t escape choices. Even if we choose not to choose, that’s a choice. Had Moses said, “I’ll not make a choice,” he would’ve stayed right where he was. So, he choose, and faith says that every choice is significant. We can choose, but we cannot choose the consequences of our choice. When your child makes a choice, then the choice chooses for your child.

C. The Vice Rejected

So, there was virtue established. There was—I mean, value established—a virtue that was chosen, and then there was a vice that was rejected, just like that. Here’s Moses. Moses says, “Well, let me see—I’m here at a choice, at a crossroads. If I go that way, maybe I’ll sit on the throne of Egypt. I’ll have pleasure. I’ll have possessions. I’ll have popularity and power. Let’s see where that will end. Now, if I go this way, what will I have? Reproach, suffering, with the people of God. Let’s see where that will end. I’m going that way—I’m going that way.” Friend, everything in this world is generated to make your kids go that way. Don’t you want your kids to make the right choices? Aren’t you blessed by what Chris and Jill said in their wedding ceremony? “We have chosen Jesus,” and they said, “We thank our parents”—“we thank our parents”—“for leading us in the right way.”

Now, don’t miss it, folks—don’t miss it; don’t miss it: all of this is by faith. That’s why it’s put there: “*By faith*” (Hebrews 11:23)—“*by faith*” (Hebrews 11:24). What we’re going to be doing is teaching you more and more how to believe God for your children—and not just for your children, but for every area of life.

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Would you pray—would you pray—that God would increase your faith? Now, as parents, more than

anything else, you need faith—you need faith. And, without faith, it's impossible to please God. And, I would say, without faith, you'll be a failure as a parent. I don't know any other way to say it. Without faith, you'll be a failure as a parent and as a grandparent. Would you say, "Lord, increase my faith. Teach me to trust You"? Father God, we pray that many today will be opening themselves up to faith for their families. In Jesus's name. Amen.

Family Faith, Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 10, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23–27

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”

HEBREWS 11:23

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and find Hebrews chapter 11, and while you’re finding it, then I want you to look up here at me and listen for just a moment before we look into the Word of God. We are beginning a series of Bible messages on the family. You know that there is an all-out war on the family, and Satan is bombarding and attacking the family like never before. But, it is a winnable war, and we have decided that we’re going to do something about this attack: we’re going to counterattack with the Word of God—and with special emphasis here in our church. So, we’re calling this year—the last year in this century

and in this millennium—"The Year of the Family."

We're going to be putting an emphasis on the family. We're going to be talking about family finances, and we're going to have some seminars to teach you how to get out of debt and to have financial freedom. We're going to be talking about family fitness; we're going to be talking about how to get in shape physically. And, a lot of us need to do that, don't we? Say "amen." All right, we're going to be talking about family faithfulness—how to be faithful to the things that really, really matter; how to be faithful to one another; how to be faithful to our parents, to our children, to our church; how to be faithful to this wonderful land in which we live that we're called to be citizens in. We're going to be talking about family faithfulness. We're going to be talking about family fun—how to have fun as a family; what kind of recreation, what kind of enjoyment, what kind of vacations, what kind of things can we do to just put some fire in the family, rather than having our families in the fire. What can we do in all of these things? But, all of these that I've mentioned have to be permeated with the thing we're going to be talking about today, and that is the family faith—the family faith.

You see, we have been told by the First Lady of our country that it takes a village to raise a child—it takes a village to raise a child. Well, I want to say, in all due respect, that is not true—that is not true. It takes a family to raise a child, and it takes families to make up that village; and if you don't start with families, you're not going to have much of a village to raise anybody's child with to begin with. It takes a family to raise a child. The Bible says, "God hath set the solitary in families" (Psalm 68:6). And, the devil knows that the family is the basic unit of society; and so, he wants society to come apart. Where would he start? Obviously, he would start with the family—to destroy the family. And, he does that by deception so that he might dominate the world. So, we're talking about the family. It takes a family to raise a child, and it takes faith to make a family.

Now, that's the reason we're starting where we are. Now, with that in mind, I want us to read a story that you know from childhood. It's the story of Moses in the bulrushes, and it's found here in Hebrews chapter 11. And, let's look at it as we read the Word of God—verse 23: *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he hath respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he"*—that is, "Moses"—*"forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured"*—Moses endured—*"as seeing him who is invisible"* (Hebrews 11:23–27)—that is, "Almighty God." Now, God being my helper, I want to write four

things upon your heart this morning that will help you to be a mother of faith, a father of faith, a husband, a wife, a grandparent of faith, to bring up children—to bring a family up—that will have children that will glorify and honor God. Are you ready for these? All right. Now, I want you to listen to these four principles.

And, by the way, we're going to be introduced, before I get into these principles, to two wonderful people. They are perhaps forgotten heroes in the Bible. One's name is Amram, and the other is Jochebed. Now, they're not famous names, but they're very, very important names, because they are the mother and the father of Moses—the great Moses that led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Amram, Jochebed—don't forget them. You'll meet them in Heaven, and they are found here in Hebrews chapter 11, in God's hall of fame, which is really a hall of faith. And, it tells what they did. Now, here are four principles we're going to learn from Amram and Jochebed; here are four things we're going to learn about how to bring children up by faith that is absolutely indispensable, if you would have the kind of the family in these days that God wants you to have. Are you ready for them?

I. Faith Sees Every Child as Special

Now, first of all, principle number one—I want you to see this: faith sees every child as special—faith sees every child as special. Notice verse 23: *“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw [that] he was a proper child”* (Hebrews 11:23). Some translate this that “they saw he was a special child”—others, that “he was a beautiful child.” Others translate that “he was a fitting child.” They all mean basically the same thing—that they looked at little baby Moses, and they saw that he was extraordinary. Now, I want to say this: there's not a parent on earth who hadn't done exactly the same thing—said, “Now, that baby is a special baby.” Every child is a special child. Every child is the handiwork of Almighty God, and it's not just some children—it is all children—that are special to God. And, you have to see this by faith.

Ethel Waters, that great gospel singer—a person with such a wonderful, warm spirit—talked about herself as she was born in dire circumstances, and out of wedlock, and some other things. But, some said, “How does that make you feel?” She said, “I'm special. God don't make no junk”—“God don't make no junk.” God sees every child as special; and therefore, every parent should see every child as special. I can remember when our first son, Steve, was born. Joyce and I were in college. We planned to have children while we were in college, and God allowed us to do so. And, I can remember that night. I don't know why so often they come in the middle of the night. But, she gave me the elbow, and she said, “Adrian, I believe it is time.” My heart just jumped out of my throat. And, you know, it's an awful, painful thing for a man to go through—all this

childbirth. And, we were supposed to call the doctor. Dr. Valentine was his name. And, she said, “Adrian, call the doctor, and tell him we’re coming to the hospital in the middle of the night.” Well, we were living in a little house trailer; we didn’t have a telephone in there. And, to be very honest with you, we didn’t have a bathroom in there. We had a community place where we went over to shower and to shave, and there was a little community center with a telephone in it. And, I went over to get in. It was the middle of the night. It was locked. “Oh,” I thought, “maybe she’s had the baby by the time I get back to the trailer.” I went opened my car trunk, and got a tire tool out, and jimmed a window in the middle of the night.

So, here I am in the middle of the night, and I thought, “I’m going to get arrested.” So, I went in the window, and I banged my shins going in, fell on the floor, ran over to the phone. It was a pay phone; I had no money—back out, over to the house, searching through everything trying to find just one dime, back in to through the window again to call the doctor and tell him what was happening. I said, “Doctor, it is important. You get here immediately,” and all of this. Got down to the hospital, and little Steve was born. I remember seeing him for the first time, as he was there—Joyce holding him in her arms, had a little fleck of blood there on his cheek, hair all messed up. He was ugly—all scrunched up and wrinkled up. But, to me he was pretty—he was pretty. I kissed Joyce and kissed Steve, went home to that little trailer, got on my knees, and I prayed and I said, “God, if I never do anything good—never have any kind of so-called success in this world—I want to be a godly dad. I want to raise that child for You because he is special.” I knew just looking at him that he was special. Every child is special.

They saw that he was a proper child, a beautiful child, a special child. Faith has to see this. And, you have to see your child as a special child. And, God made your child absolutely, totally, wonderfully unique. You know, one of my life verses is this—it’s Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2: “*Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed*”—that literally means “his children”—“*shall be mighty upon [the] earth*” (Psalm 112:1–2). I want to raise up mighty children.

Now, one way to do that is just to get into the instruction book, which is the Word of God. And, Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6 says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6). Now, you know that the word *way* is a special word here. It doesn’t simply mean “in the direction he should go,” but it means “to be the kind of a child that God wants him to be and God made him specially to be.” The idea of *way* here is the idea of a bend in a bow, like an archer’s bow. That is, every child has his own particular bent. Sometimes I thought mine were also warped. But, they had a particular bent, and they are different. And, what you have to do is to look at your child by faith and to say, “This child is a special child.”

Now, Joyce and I have five children. We have a little boy in Heaven, but we have four who are here on this earth—and four very wonderful children. But, I want to tell you that the four who are here are so very different one from another. Our first son, Steven, as I've already told you, has a bent for music, and we discovered this before he ever went to school. I taught him a little finger melody on the piano, and he's been at the piano ever since, loving music, writing music, producing music, and he is an ordained minister of music. He just has that bent for music; and so, we would be very foolish to try to derail him or move him in any other direction, because that's the way that he should go. Our second son, David—he has a bent for geography and the world. When he was a little boy, he was pouring over maps and zip codes. And, one time when he was just a little tike, we were talking about taking a trip to the West Coast and talking about what route we should take, and David said, "Well, I'd go through Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas," and he had the whole thing routed out. I didn't even know he knew those states existed, but he'd memorized them in sequence, in order, and he's just been a man who's had the world on his heart. And, he's now, as a matter of fact, he's gone back to Spain yesterday to do some work over there on the mission field, where David is a missionary. That's the way of his heart. He knows geography; he knows the world. He is a world citizen. And, it's been our joy to pray for him and to encourage him in that way.

And then, along came Gayle. Gayle, born in the storm—we named her Gayle because of that, and we named her rightly. Gayle is the one who is fiercely competitive. She has a mind like a computer. Don't ever try to outsmart her; don't ever try to get ahead of her. Gayle is an entrepreneurial spirit. She's a leader. She's a counselor. She has incredible insight into the ways that things work, and it makes her a great encourager of people and a great leader of folks. That's the bent that God put in this girl. And, it's... Sometimes I stand in awe as I watch her, how her mind works. And then, God gave us Janice. Janice is my romanticist. She's sweet and gentle. She loves music. She loves poetry. She loves mountains. She loves flowers. She loves children. She has a nurturing spirit and a very gentle spirit. Four children who are so very different—sometimes I wonder if I really sired all four of them. I know I did, but they're all so different. But, one thing about them—they all love Jesus, and they all love mom and dad. Praise God for that—praise God for that! You just have to find a way that they should go, and then you encourage them in that way.

But now, put it down big, plain, and straight: faith sees every child as a special child. They don't come in standard packages, and you'd better carefully read the label. Just look at them over, and over, and over again. That's the first thing that I want you to understand. Look at your child and say, "God, help me to understand the way that he should go—the way that she should go." Faith sees every child as a special child. Got

that?

II. Faith Sees Every Conflict as a Spiritual Conflict

Then, let's move to a second point: faith sees every child as a special child, and faith sees every conflict as a spiritual conflict. Faith sees every conflict as spiritual. Now, look in verse 23 again: the Bible says, *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months"* (Hebrews 11:23). Well, why did they hide him? Well, it's very obvious. The king had commanded that the little boy babies be killed. Read in Exodus chapter 1, verse 22: *"And Pharaoh charged all [the] people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river"* (Exodus 1:22). Now, they worshipped the Nile River, so this was making the little boy babies a sacrifice to the Nile River: "Take the little boy babies when they're born and cast them into the river." Well, where was this conflict? Was this a conflict between Israel and Egypt? No. Was this a conflict between the parents of Moses and Pharaoh? No. What this was, was a conflict between the gods of Egypt and Almighty God. What this literally was, was a conflict between light and dark. What this was, was a spiritual conflict.

Now, you have to understand that in raising children, folks, it takes more than wit, and wisdom, and nutrition, and good intentions, and your talents. You are in a spiritual battle when you're raising children. Do you know that? That's the reason that it takes faith—that's the reason it takes faith. For the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12: *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and]...powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12). You see, the battle here was a battle against spiritual and demonic forces, and you're up against that as parents today. Now, if you don't see the battle as spiritual, what you're going to use is intelligence and good intentions rather than faith. But, if you see the battle as spiritual, you're going to use faith as your major weapon. The Bible says it was by faith that they were not afraid of the king's commandment (Hebrews 11:23). Now, without faith, they should've been afraid. I mean, they're disenfranchised, helpless slaves, little unknowns—Amram and Jochebed. I mean, they had every reason to be afraid, if the battle was a physical, material battle. But, faith sees every conflict as spiritual.

A. The Trials Parents and Grandparents are Facing

Now, if you don't see that, folks, I'm going to tell you, you're going to strike out as parents. Those were treacherous days in which they lived, and these are treacherous days in which we live. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, *"In the last days perilous times [will] come"* (2 Timothy 3:1)—2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 1—and these are perilous times. Let me tell you what you're facing if you're a parent, a grandparent—what you're facing.

1. Liberalism in Religion

You're facing liberalism in religion. There's nothing more damning, debilitating, more stultifying than liberalism in religion, because we have today churches that use the same religious language that we use, but they don't mean what the Bible means. They use our words and their dictionary, and that is very, very dangerous. Now, I don't know of anything that would be more harmful or hurtful to your child than to have your child in a liberal, Bible-doubting church. I would rather my child not go to any church than go to a liberal, Bible-doubting church. You just need to get away from those churches. They're dangerous. They're empty; they are futile. Now, it's an amazement to me that some people will not make the effort to get their child in a Bible-preaching, Bible-teaching church and Sunday School. They will send their children across the nation to get a college education and will not drive across town to get them in a good church. I don't think this church is a perfect church, and I think there are other churches that are as good or better than Bellevue Baptist Church; but God has a special church for you. But, if it is a good church, it will be a Bible-preaching, Bible/Christ-honoring church. Now, take those children and realize that liberalism in religion is a very dangerous thing.

2. Humanism in Education

And then, that is compounded by humanism in education. Now, what is humanism? Humanism is a system of thought that honors man rather than God. Man is the center, and the circumference, and the sum total of everything. And, it sounds so good because humanism... Who could be against humanism? It sounds so much like humanitarianism, but it is really atheism that is disguised. They call it *humanism*.

a. Evolution

And, the chief building block of humanism is evolution. Our children have been taught and are taught in public schools... By the way, let me say this: I thank God for good and godly public school teachers and administrators, and there are many of them—many of them. And, I will say also that everything is not perfect in the private schools and the Christian schools. I'm not here throwing rocks, but I'm saying that education today, taken as a whole—public education and some private education—is based on humanism. And, these children have been taught they are an accident—not an incident, but it just happened that they came up out of some primordial ooze. And, because of that, there is no fixed standard of right and wrong. You say, “Well, wait a minute, Pastor, aren't you an educated man? Are you telling me that you fly in the face of science and you don't believe in evolution?” Friend, I reject evolution totally, 100%, period. I do not believe in that monkey mythology. It is not based on fact, regardless of what they will tell you. It is a theory; it is the next-best guess of a mind that will not accept the Word of God—that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. There are many wonderful books, many of them in our library and bookstore, if you want to delve into

this further.

b. Sex Education

But now, watch—the chief building block in humanism is evolution. Built upon evolution is sex education—sex education. Again, I want to say that one of the most dangerous things in America today is sex education in public schools without a moral standard, a fixed standard of right and wrong. What our children are being taught, if you let all the air out of it—I'm going to cut through the rhetoric—they're being taught how to have sexual intercourse without catching a disease or getting pregnant. That's what it's about. I'm just letting all the air out of it. That's blunt, and that's what it is. They are not taught that there is a fixed standard of right and wrong. They are not clearly taught abstinence according to the fixed standard of God that says, "*Flee fornication*" (1 Corinthians 6:18) and that speaks of adultery as an incredible crime against themselves and against God. And, it can do nothing but damage unless it comes with a fixed moral base.

3. Hedonism in Society

The kids are facing, friend, let me tell you—they're facing humanism in education; and then, they're facing hedonism in society—in society. We live in a sex-saturated, alcohol-soaked society. Your children are being looked upon as fodder for the liquor dealers, the beer barons, and all of these. And, it is an incredible thing that I have to admit that they are winning the battle. What are the best advertisements that your kids watch? The beer advertisements. I mean, give the devil his due. They're good, aren't they? Those lizards and those frogs—those things are good, and they're winning the battle. What do they support? Where are these commercials found? Well, they're found in sports events, the Super Bowl; they're found in college playoff games and all of this. And, the kids are being told to drink it—"everybody drinks it." Did you know that they've done such a good job that according to a statistic that I read, 95%—listen to me—95% of college students drink beer—95%.

You say, "What's wrong with that—a little beer?" Statistics also tell us that one out of every 15 people who begin to drink will become an alcoholic. Others say, "No, it's not one out of 15; it's two out of 15." Either one is dangerous. The other four out of 15 will become problem drinkers. That's one out of three of all who start. You say, "But oh, we're going to teach them to drink in moderation." Come up close—I'm going to tell you something: that's the way every drinker begins; that's the way everybody begins. Nobody ever starts to drink to be a drunkard. They all begin—that they're going to drink in moderation or whatever, if they think it's a harmless thing. The Japanese have a proverb: "first the man takes a drink; then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man." What kind of a...one out of three. Would you have a dog that would bite one out of every three visitors comes into your house? "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink*

is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

c. Get the Alcohol Out of Your House

I’ll tell you what you ought to do—just let me say here parenthetically, parents: get the alcohol out of your house—beverage alcohol, all of it—totally, period, out, out. “All my little alcohol?” Yeah, out.

d. Be Up When Your Kids Come Home

Number two: You stay up when your kids go out, and be awake when they come. It’s better for you to lose your sleep than to lose your child. When that big old boy comes in, get up real close and give him a hug so you can smell his breath. That’s right.

e. Let Your Kids See that You Have a Home

Number three: Let him see that you have a home. We’re going to talk about family fun, but you don’t have to get drunk in order to have a good time. Let him see the joy of the Lord in your house, in your heart, in your home. So, what I’m saying is they’re facing this thing—this hedonism in society. It’s the same thing. Everything in the movies, in the films, in the situational comedies—they’re all based primarily upon the breaking of God’s commandments and laughing about it. That’s the danger of a situational comedy that these kids watch: what they laugh at they can never take seriously again. And again, 88% of all sexual relations that’s shown on Hollywood, on television, all of it—88% of it, at least, is illicit sex. “Well,” you say, “Well, that’s just our way. We get entertained by that.”

Many of you are using the television as a babysitter. Now, if living next door to you there happened to be a man and a woman who are not married, and they’re in the house next door and they are cohabitating and having an illicit affair, when you go off shopping, would you say, “Now Johnny, I want you to get a soapbox, and I want you to stand on that soapbox; and I want you to look in the window, and watch those people, and see what they’re doing. I want you to be entertained. This is the way I’m going to babysit you.” You say, “Well, of course I wouldn’t do that.” Well, you’re letting them watch something like that right in the television, right in the living room.

You see, these are what the kids are facing: they are facing liberalism in religion; they’re facing humanism in education; they’re facing hedonism in society. They’re up against it. Now, if I did not know the Lord, I would be absolutely petrified to raise children in this world in which we live, but there is a way—there is a way. Notice the Bible says, “*They were not afraid*” (Hebrews 11:23). Faith, faith—listen to me now, friend—faith sees every conflict as spiritual. If you think that you’re going to outwit this world, you’re wrong. You’re in a spiritual battle; and therefore, you have to have faith.

III. Faith Sees Every Challenge as Solvable

Number three—let’s go to number three: Faith sees every challenge as solvable. Faith

doesn't throw in the towel. Faith is not intimidated by the sinister minister of fear. There is a King greater than the king of Egypt, and He is the King of kings. When you see every conflict as spiritual, then you know you have the victory, because *"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). And, you don't have to give in to the spirit of fear. There are parents today who are petrified; they're throwing up their hands. They're saying, "I don't know what to do," so they do nothing. You cannot afford to be lazy. You cannot afford to be selfish, and you certainly cannot afford to be cowardly. The Bible says that *"they were not afraid of the king's commandment"* (Hebrews 11:23). The Apostle Paul said in the New Testament, in Philippians chapter 4, verse 13: *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:13). Pessimism is tragic. Be done with it. Faith sees every challenge as solvable.

Now, what they did, therefore, was put their faith into action. The Bible says in verse 23 that Moses was hidden (Hebrews 11:23). You remember the story? They made a little ark of bulrushes and put little Moses and in that ark and put him down there in the River Nile. Now, what impelled them to do that, I believe, was God. God had spoken to them and said do that. You say, "How do you know God told them to do that?" Because they did it by faith, and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. I mean, they couldn't have done it by faith unless they'd been impelled by the Holy Spirit of God to do it. And, they just simply obeyed what God told them to do, and the Bible says that it was by faith that he was hid (Hebrews 11:23).

Now, listen to me very carefully, folks: the Bible says that *"faith without works is dead"* (James 2:26). They did something. Now, they had three options. One option could've been fatalism. They could've said, "Well, whatever will be will be. We just won't do anything." **Take your garden, and do nothing with it, and see what happens to it. Fatalism is horrible.** Or, on the other hand, they could've done fanaticism. Fanaticism meant they could've just chunked the little baby in the river and said, "Let's see how God will deliver him." That's the kind of fanaticism some people have when they're sick: they won't go to a doctor; or, when they need food, they won't work. They just say, "Well, we're just trusting God." That's fanaticism. The Bible says, *"Without faith it is impossible to please him"* (Hebrews 11:6). But, faith works. *"Faith without works is dead"* (Hebrews 11:6). They did something; and when they did all they could do, all they knew to do, they did as much as they could do, then God moved in. Now, that's the reason faith sees every challenge as solvable.

You remember what happened? The little baby there is floating in that little ark, there in the bulrushes. And, along comes the King of Egypt's daughter. She stops her royal entourage and goes down to the river to bathe in the Nile. Now, question: Why would the Princess of Egypt be bathing in the Nile? She has lavish baths, marble baths, perfumed soap, soft towels. Why would she be bathing in the Nile? I don't know, except

that God just told her to do it. Maybe she remembered the old swimming hole when she's a little girl. She went down there to the Nile; and then, just at the right moment, the baby cried. Do you think that was a diaper pin, or do you think maybe an angel pinched that little child? The baby cried just at that moment. And, her mother's instincts were raised, and she picked up the little baby and loved it. And, there's Miriam, Moses's sister, standing off and says, "Pardon me, ma'am. But, I know somebody who'd be happy to take care of that little baby for you if you want to keep that little baby." She said, "You do? Go get her." And, Miriam went and got her mother. Jochebed said, "Yes, I'll be happy to raise and nurse that child for you, and the child is placed back now in his mother's arms with Pharaoh's protection. And, Jochebed and Amram have that child to raise, and to teach, and to train. Oh, how wonderful it is that they put all of these things into little Moses's heart!

Folks, pay attention to me now—pay attention to me. Faith—mighty faith—sees every problem, every conflict, as spiritual; and therefore, it sees it as solvable, because "*greater is he that is in [us], than he that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4). You have to do it by faith. You see, faith sees every challenge, every challenge, every challenge as a solvable challenge. Don't ever give in to the spirit of pessimism with your children. You do all that you can do; and when you do all that you can do, God will move Heaven and Earth for your child. That's what God did for these parents—these seemingly helpless parents. And, don't fail to do all that you can do.

Now, let's go back for just a moment before we leave this point. Remember what the Bible says over there in Proverbs chapter 22? "*Train up a child in the way that he should go*" (Proverbs 22:6). Now, it doesn't just say "teach." You can teach a child, and somebody else can teach them something else. But, the word *train* means "to discipline for a contest." *Those of us who've played football know what training is. We're put, in the springtime, in what they call spring training. And, I'll tell you, when you go to spring training, they don't give you a book on football. They don't just tell you some football facts and figures. They don't just tell you who the great champions of the past were. You put on those things and get out on that field, and that coach is watching over you. And, he's disciplining you, and he's training you; and he says, "You did this wrong; you did this right. Now, the next time you get down, Rogers, when you begin to catch that ball, don't just start out in this direction. First, put this foot out there, because that man's watching your feet, and then go in this direction."* "Thank you, Coach, I see that." "All right. Now, get over there and do that. Get over there. Kick him some balls. This, that, this, that, this, that," until it becomes a second sense with you. You see, anything that you just simply teach them about, somebody else can teach them something else. We have parents here who are knocking yourselves out coaching little league things, going to seminars, paying for high-priced tuition, all of these other things. They're all fine, and

well, and good, but there's nothing that's going to take the place of just some training.

Have you ever watched a man train a hunting dog? I saw a man the other day in a store. He had a hunting dog. He had a little bird on a pole, and he would put that little bird there somewhere and just drop it down. This dog would point. And, he took the dog with him, training the dog. I thought, "I wonder if he has a little boy. Nothing wrong with training a dog like that, but I wonder if he spent that much time teaching his little boy." Men spend all of their time training their dogs, but they don't train the children—then tie the dog up at night and let the kids run wild. That doesn't make sense to me. Train that child. That's what Jochebed did; that's what Moses did. They trained that little child in the way that he should go. That's what the Bible says: "*and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Proverbs 22:6).

IV. Faith Sees Every Choice as Significant

Now, here's the fourth and final thing. Are you ready for this? Faith sees every choice as significant—faith sees every choice as significant. Now, notice what happened in verse 24: "*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach...greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the fear of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible*" (Hebrews 11:24–27). Three words I want you to look at: verse 25—*choosing* (Hebrews 11:25); verse 26—*esteeming* (Hebrews 11:26); verse 27—*forsaking* (Hebrews 11:27).

A. The Values Established

Now folks, here's the value system—here's the value system that's in little Moses. Faith sees every choice—every choice—as significant. Moses had to make some choices. Your children are going to be faced today with some choices. Let me tell you something: you know two things you're going to have to teach your children?

4. Teach Your Kids to Discriminate

Number one: You're going to have to teach them to discriminate. "Oh, no, no, no—we're not supposed to teach discrimination." Yes, you are.

5. Teach Your Kids to be Intolerant

And, number two: You're going to have to teach them to be intolerant. "Pastor, no—that's against everything I'm told." I'm telling you, my friend, you are going to have to teach your child to discriminate and not to tolerate some things.

Now, we're told today, "No discrimination about anything and tolerate everything." That is not biblical; that is dangerous. That is the death knell to your child. Moses

realized he had a choice to make, and it had to be a discriminating choice. So, the Bible says there was a value established. He “[esteemed] the reproach of Christ greater riches than [all the riches] of Egypt” (Hebrews 11:26). He had at his fingertips pleasure, possessions, and popularity. And, over here is the reproach of Christ. And, Moses had to make a choice. Now friend, we’re free to choose. We’re not free not to choose, and we’re not free to choose the consequences of our choice, because after we make a choice, the choice chooses for us.

And, Moses made a choice because there was a value established. And, the word *esteemed* speaks of “evaluation.” He was evaluating; he had learned something about Jesus Christ. Where’d he learn it? He learned it from his mother. He certainly didn’t learn it in the Hebrew University. He learned it from his mother. And so, it’s absolutely foolish to expect your children to make the right choices if they don’t have the right value system. And, you better teach them, folks, to tolerate that which is supposed to be tolerated and to be intolerant about sin, and about vice, and about wickedness, and about lewdness, and about sex before marriage, and about drunkenness, and about drugs, and about blasphemy. And, you’d better teach them that those things are things that you don’t tolerate. And, you discriminate between the good and the evil, the right and the wrong. Don’t discriminate against some individual. Don’t discriminate against some person. Don’t discriminate against somebody because of the color of their skin. But, you’d better learn to discriminate about that which is right and that which is wrong.

B. The Virtue Embraced

He esteemed, and then when he had his values—the values—then he chose some virtues, because then he said, “All right, here are the riches of Egypt, and here’s the reproach of Christ.” And so, he has a choice, now, that he’s going to make. He looks over here, and he sees pleasures, possessions, power. “Let’s see, oh, that looks so great. That looks so wonderful—the pleasures of sin. Let’s see where it ends. Oh, no—oh, no. Over here is the reproach of Christ. It looks hard; it looks difficult. Moses, look at it. Let’s see where it ends.” I like that. You see, he saw the pleasures of the moment, and that which is eternal, and that which is real, and that which counts forever and ever and ever. He said, “I’m going that way—I’m going that way.” Where did he get that? I’ll tell you where he got it: Jochebed, Amram, put it in his heart.

C. The Vice Rejected

First of all, there were the values established. Then, there was the virtue embraced; and then, there was the vice rejected. He refused—he refused—to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He said, “No, no—I’ll not go that way.” Thank God—thank God—for children who are raised that way.

I want to read you something. Let me go back up here. I was at a wedding last night.

And, Paul Williams's son Chris got married—and married sweet Jill Jones. And, on the back of their wedding ceremony program, they wrote these words. I want you parents to listen to them. I'll tell you there were four happy parents here last night because of what these two kids wrote themselves. Listen to it: "We want to thank each of you for coming to celebrate our wedding with us today. Today is much more than a wedding ceremony for us; it is a worship service. Jesus has been so good to us. First and foremost, He has saved both of us. This is where it all begins. Even the most eloquent statement of the love of Christ could not adequately describe the difference He makes in a person's life once they understand the poverty to which they are bound apart from Him. We want you to worship with us today. His name is above all names. He is the One who is most honored today. If you are here today and have never trusted Christ for salvation, please consider the testimony He has given us. Finally, we want to tell our parents how much we love them. They've been so good to us. They listen to us, counsel us, have fun with us. They are truly a blessing. Most of all, we are so glad to be able to say that they have not just approved of our relationship, but they have encouraged it. The Lord has given us direction through them, and we know that we are in His will."

I'll tell you, there are some parents sitting out there saying, "Thank You, Jesus—thank You, Jesus." But, that did not just happen. Here's a boy, a girl, raised up from youth to love God; and now, they love one another. And now, they're coming together in holy matrimony, and they're saying, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24:15). "*Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD*" (Psalm 112:1). "The generation of the upright shall be blessed, and his seed shall be mighty upon the earth" (Psalm 112:2).

Folks, I'm telling you, now, there's a battle out there, and only faith will win the battle. It's by faith that they did this.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to pray that God will increase your faith. Don't pray that God will increase the faith of your children. You may pray that if you want, but that's not what I'm asking you to pray right now. Just pray that God will increase your faith; that God will help you to be a mother, a father, of faith; that you, friend, will see every conflict as spiritual, every challenge, as solvable—every choice as significant. Father God, teach me as a granddaddy and as a father to be a dad of faith like Amram was. Bless our mothers and grandmothers, that they might be mothers and grandmothers of faith like Jochebed. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. ¶

The Victory of a Mother's Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 12, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23–27

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”

HEBREWS 11:23

Outline

Introduction

- I. Faith's Vision
- II. Faith's Venture
- III. Faith's Valor
- IV. Faith's Victory
- V. Faith's Values

Conclusion

Introduction

Thank you, Joyce. God bless you for that. Would you be finding Hebrews chapter 11? And if you did not bring a Bible with you this morning, there may be one there in the rack before you. Hebrews chapter 11—we're talking today about The Victory of a Mother's Faith.

People are wondering what are we going to do with this generation? How are we going to rescue this generation? I read this in the Commercial Appeal, on Thursday morning, May 9th. It says this: The Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency has spent more than one billion over the last two years—one billion, that is, dollars. Not million, but billion—over the last two decades on programs to try to keep kids from turning to crime. And this article says, basically, it's just not working. And then, our Senator, Fred Thompson, had to say this—and I quote him. “Despite all the years and all the money, we seem to know little more about preventing youth violence today than we did in 1974, and unless we try some new approaches that we know will make a difference, we will hit, in only a few years, with a youth crime wave that will make today's environment be called nostalgia.” He said, if we don't do something in a few years, there is coming a tidal wave that will cause us to look back on these days as the good days. Think about it. And he says we've got to find something new. He's wrong. We've got to go back to something old. We've got to go right back to the Word of God,

and to the truth of God's Word, in all due respect to that wonderful senator.

I want you to read this scripture—Hebrews chapter 11, beginning, now, in verse 23. “By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment. By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith, he—that is, Moses—forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

Look up here, and let me tell you what I have to say today in one sentence. The most powerful and influential force on earth today is the faith of a godly mother. The most powerful and influential force on earth today is the faith of a godly mother. And I want you to get that in your heart and in your soul, as we think about the Victory of a Mother’s Faith.

In Hebrews chapter 11, God lists all the heroes of the faith, and in that list is a woman whose name is Jochabed. Now, you don’t read it here; she’s just called the mother of Moses. Her name is Jochabed. It literally means, I looked up the name. It means Jehovah is glorious, and what a beautiful name and what a wonderful woman was the mother of Moses. Now, in the eyes of the world, she was just a hopeless, helpless, Hebrew slave down in Egypt, but her claim to fame is that she raised up a son who shook the world. Her son’s name was Moses, and the Bible says she did it by faith. Look at it again: “By faith,” the Bible says, “Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a proper child.” When God has a big job to do, faith gets the order. God says in His Word, “According to your faith, be it unto you.” Not according to your fame, not according to your feelings, not according to your fortune, not according to your friends, but according to your faith, be it unto you. And if you’re a mother here today, I want you to listen with all of your heart, and I want the prayer to God to rise up from your heart this way. O God, O God, make me, above all things, a mother of faith. Again, the most powerful and influential people on earth are mothers of faith. Five things I want you to see in the scripture that we have this morning.

I. Faith’s Vision

And the very first thing I want you to see is what I’m going to call Faith’s Vision that sees a promise in the Word of God—Faith’s vision that sees a promise in the Word of God. Now, the Word of God is full of promises to mothers. The Bible says, in verse 23, that Moses’ parents saw that he was a goodly child. Now, some translate that a beautiful child, a fair child, a proper child. It all means that he was a very fitting and a very special

child, and, when they looked at their child, they did not see him with ordinary eyes. Every mother thinks her baby is beautiful, but this goes beyond that. Taylor's translation—that God had given them an unusual child. That is, they saw their child through the eye of faith, and through the Word of God. Now, nobody can have faith apart from the Word of God, because the Bible says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And so, somehow, as they saw Moses, and as they took the Word of God, God put these things together in the crucible of His love, and the mystery of His will, and God said, this child is special. You know, the Bible had prophesied that they would be in the land of Egypt for 400 years, and then God would raise up a leader to lead them out. I believe, when they saw this little baby, the Holy Spirit of God took the Word of God, and said, he is the one—he's the one. He's special. He is a beautiful child, a proper child, a special child.

But now, let me say this about your child. Every child of God is special. Every child of God has a very wonderful plan laid out by the will and the purpose of God. Not just Moses, but every child. I was a special child. You are a special child. There are no children that are not the object of God's love, but what God has that child in the very center of His plan.

I can remember when my first son was born, whose name is Steve. I can remember going home to the little house trailer where Joyce and I were living when I was going to college, getting down on my knees, and dedicating that child to Jesus, even before I had a chance to do it with Joyce, though we have done it together, before the baby was born. But praying by myself, and saying, "O God, I give You my son, Steve, and I give You myself anew and afresh, to be a man of God, and Lord, to set an example for my son." And I've done that with all of our children, as has my precious wife.

Every child of God is special. Let me give you mothers a verse that means much to Joyce and myself. It's Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2: "Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man who feareth the Lord, who delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed—that is, his children, his descendents—shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed." I want to be upright so that my children will be blessed. Joyce is a godly mother, and her children are blessed. And, what we have to do when God gives us these little children, is to look at those children, and say, "God, they are beautiful, they are wonderful, they are a gift from God." Sometimes, they are exasperating.

A father and his son were having an argument, and the son said to the father, "Well, I didn't ask to be born in this family." And the dad said, "If you had, the answer would have been no!"

Well, sometimes we feel that way. But, folks, they are a gift from God, and we need to look at them as a great bundle of potentiality. That's what Moses' mother and father

did. They saw he was a goodly child, a proper child. But they have to be developed.

You know, there's an old story of a man who came to a little village. He drove up and found one of the villagers there, and he said, "This is a beautiful little village. Any great men born here?" The man said, "No, just babies." Nobody is born a great man; he has to be made a great man by mama's prayers and daddy's faith and instruction. So the very first thing, mothers, I want you to see is what we're going to call Faith's Vision—Faith's Vision that gets a promise from the Word of God, and there are many in the Word of God for your child.

II. Faith's Venture

Here's the second thing I want you to see: not only Faith's Vision—they saw that he was a goodly child, a proper child—but Faith's Venture that turns the promise into action. This is so very important. It's not just enough for you to say, "Well, I'm going to trust my child to Jesus, and I'm just going to pray a prayer over my baby, and then all will be all right."

Look at the Scripture—verse 23: "By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents..." Now, I'm going to tell you a little more of the background of that in just a moment, but look at the verb "he was hid." That is, when they had faith, they did something about that faith. True faith—true faith—listen carefully—must have action in it, or it is not faith at all. Now, Pharaoh had said that all of the little boy babies that were born were to be cast into the River Nile and drowned, because the little Jewish children were populating so much, and Pharaoh was getting afraid of them, so there went out an edict for the death of all little boy babies, and, when Jochabed and Amram had little Moses, they got a word from God, and rather than letting the authorities know that this boy baby had been born, they hid the baby, and they hid the baby for three months.

Now, we're going to say something more about that, but the point is this: that, because they had faith, they did all that they could have done to spare the life of this little baby. Now, there are three things that they might have done. They might have just had fatalism. They would say, "Well, you know, what will be, will be. We'll just trust God, and God, if You want him spared, You'll spare him. If You want him to die, God, let him die. We're just trusting Your will." Folks, that's not faith; that's fatalism. That's the same thing as saying, "Well, I'm sick. If God wants to heal me, He can heal me. I'm not going to the doctor." You ought to go to the doctor, unless God tells you not to. Jesus said, those who are sick need a doctor. That's what Jesus said. Not the well people—sick people need a doctor. You say, "Well, I'm just going to trust God to feed me." Well, fine. Pray every day; "Give me today my daily bread." But the same Bible says, "If a man won't work, neither should he eat." That's what the Bible says. And, you say, "I'm going

to trust my child to Jesus. I'm just going to give my child to God." That is fine, but if you don't do something, if you don't put that faith into action, it is not really faith at all. Put this verse in your margin—James chapter 2, verses 17 and 18: "Even so, faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works..." Then James says, "...show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." If you want your children to be mighty for God, you had better get to work. Fatalism is not the answer, and fanaticism is not the answer.

I'll tell you what else they might have done. They might have said, "Well, let's just show God how much we trust Him. Let's just take little baby Moses and throw him in the Nile, and see if the crocodiles get him, see if he drowns. God, here he goes. Lord, take care of him. You see our faith." That's not faith; that's fanaticism. That's like these people who pick up snakes and handle snakes to show God how much faith they have. It is not fatalism. It is not fanaticism. It is faith that works. If you want your child to be mighty for God, you had better go to work.

Moses' mother and father did something about little Moses. Let me give you a verse—Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6: "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and, when he is old, he will not depart from it." If you were to look up training in the dictionary, you would find it to be described as something like this: Training is to prepare for a contest, to instruct by exercise, to drill, to form to a proper shape, to discipline for use. Now, that's what God wants us to do with our children. We train them.

John Bramlett is sitting up here in the front this morning, one of the greatest athletes to ever be born in the Mid-South, a mighty man of God, a mighty man on the football field. I'll guarantee you that John Bramlett did not learn about football by hearing somebody talk about football, or somebody teaching him about football. He had to be trained, no matter how much natural ability he had. He had to be trained.

And the Bible does not say, teach your children, though you ought to. It says to train them. Are you training your children? Are you teaching, pleading, acting? Do you have your child in a Bible-preaching church? Those of you who are listening through television—is your child in a Bible-preaching church? Is your child enrolled in Sunday School? Are you, by example and by precept, in your home, training your child? I watch people train their hunting dogs, and it's occurred to me that they spend more time, some dads, training their dogs than they do their kids. Then, they tie up the dog at night and let the kids run wild, and they wonder what's gone wrong. You need to train a child. Real faith is belief with legs on it.

There's a difference between training and teaching. Listen. You can teach your children what is right, but if you neglect to train your children, somebody else will come alone and teach them something else. A child, who is taught the way he should go, can hear other teaching, and he'll depart. And that's what happens a lot of times.

People say, “Well, I don’t understand what’s wrong. We’ve told them right and wrong. We’ve had them in Sunday School. We taught them in our home. And then they went off to the university, and they just seemed to rebel against everything.” You know what is wrong with you? You taught them, but you did not train them. When they are trained, when this becomes a part of their life—train them in the way that they should go, and when they are old—they are old—they’ll not depart from it.

I heard about a little kid was on his tricycle, riding round and round and round the block. A man stopped him, and said, “Son, where are you going in such a hurry?” He said, “I’m running away from home.” But he was just going round and round and round the block where his house was. He said, “Well,” he said, “you’re just going in a circle.” He said, “Well, I know it,” but he said, “mama won’t let me cross the street.” Even in his rebellion, there is the restraining nature of a mother’s love and a mother’s training.

III. Faith’s Valor

Now, here’s the third thing. First of all, there is Faith’s Vision. It gets a word from God. It gets a promise from God. It sees the child as a gift from God. It stands on the Word of God that says, “the generation of the upright shall be blessed.” And then, that vision is turned to a Venture. You do something about it. You put that faith into action, moms and dads. And then, I love this: Faith’s Vision and Faith’s Venture results in Faith’s Valor.

They were not afraid. Look at it. Look at it in verse 23: “By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child, and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” Now, the king said these little babies were to be killed, but they were not afraid of his commandment.

You know, that’s a wonderful thing. I have people today say to me, “Pastor Rogers, these are such fearful and awful days. Do you think we ought to be having children?” Yes! Yes! The people who ought to be having children, above all, are godly people. We ought to be raising up, in this day, and in this age, a godly seed, a godly generation, to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. And moms and dads, listen to your pastor. Do not be afraid. Take a position of faith for your boys and girls. Now, you cannot imagine. You say, “But, Pastor, these are such desperate days in which we live.” What do you think the days were like when little Moses was born? They were slaves down in Egypt. Pharaoh had said, all the little boy babies are going to be killed. They were seemingly helpless slaves. Those were dangerous days, and these are dangerous days.

Let me just talk to you a little bit about these days. You know, the Bible says, in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 1, “in the last days, perilous times shall come.” That word perilous is only used but one other time in the New Testament, and it’s translated, exceedingly fierce. These are exceedingly fierce days. I pick up the newspaper and read, and I’m going to tell you the truth, the honest truth before God: If I did not know

the Lord, I would be a first-class pessimist. I would. Look around at the situation. You see liberalism in so many churches, and many children today, and my heart breaks for them, have mothers and dads that attend liberal churches. The church is empty of faith, futile in purpose, and dangerous to be around. It would be far better for a child not to go to church at all than to go to a Bible-doubting, Christ-denying, so-called Christian church. They ought not to even go.

And I'm amazed at some parents who don't even want their children in a Bible-preaching, Christ-honoring, conservative—and I'm not talking about politically conservative, I'm talking about biblically conservative—church that takes a stand for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. There are parents who will send their children across the nation to get a good education, and will not drive across town to get them in a good church. There are wonderful churches. This is one, but only one. You find a good church, and get in it. And, friend, if you're in a liberal church, get out of it—just get out of it. You say, "Well, Grandma went when it was a good church, and Grandma is buried in the backyard." Well, she'd get up and get out, if she could! I'm telling you the truth. If a pastor does not believe the Bible is the Word of God, if he does not believe that Jesus Christ is the virgin-born Son of God, if he does not believe in the blood atonement, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, don't put your children in that kind of a church. It's dangerous.

And not only do we have liberalism in churches; we have humanism in the schools. Now, I'm so grateful for godly Christian school teachers, many of them in the public system. They are fighting a battle, but many of them are good and godly people. And I know that everything is not right in all the private schools, I know that; but I know that humanism has infiltrated our schools, and humanism is just a camouflaged way of saying atheism. The name has been changed to protect the guilty. Look at what's happening.

I want to ask you a question. Why is it permissible today to have ear-splitting rock music played during the lunch hour in the cafeteria, but students are not even allowed to bow their head voluntarily and thank God over the P.A. for the food? Why is it that evolution can be taught while creationism cannot even be taught in our schools? Well, they say creationism is religion. Well, I want to tell you that evolution is religion in reverse. It is trying to explain everything apart from God.

Why is it that amoral sex education can be taught in schools? Let me tell you this. I believe in sex education, if it is taught with biblical values, but sex education, apart from biblical values, will only and always work for harm and not for good. What happens is this. Teenagers are taught, and it's assumed that they are going to be sexually active, so they are taught how to have a sexual relationship without getting infected by disease or having a baby. And, that gives implicit approval for these things, unless it is taught by

values, that God's Word says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." God's Word says, "Flee fornication."

And then, you look in society. I'm talking about these dangerous days in which we live. Our society is pleasure-mad. Look at what the beverage alcohol industry is doing. You just have to back off, and take off your hat, and give the devil his due. They're doing a wonderful job of seducing our children. They spend millions of dollars every year advertising, and that advertising, though they deny it, is aimed at the youth, especially at the college-age student.

I read something that broke my heart recently. Ninety-five percent of college students drink beer—95%. And you know what the beer baron says? "Well, that's okay. Teach them to drink in moderation." They say, "It's like overeating. You ought not to overeat, and you ought not to drink too much." Well, that sounds good, and you certainly ought not to overeat; but have you ever heard of anybody arrested for driving fat? Shakespeare said, "What fools men are to put that in their mouths that which steals their brains away."

My heart was broken as I read the newspaper this morning about an airliner that went down in Miami, where, presumably, 109 souls went down. I want to ask you a question. What would happen if one out of every 15 airliners crashed that took off? What would the FAA do, if one out of every 15 crashed? Did you know that one out of every 15 people who begins to drink will be a problem drinker, an alcoholic—one out of every 15.

What fools we are! Can we teach our children that the industry has designs upon their lives? What they are is money-grabbers. They don't care for your boys and your girls. And then, look at what they're facing on television today. To me, the most dangerous thing on television is a situational comedy, the situational comedy that laughs at drunkenness, that laughs at sexual perversion, because the devil knows what you laugh at you cannot take seriously again.

And, in the movies, do you know what beverage is served more than any other beverage? Ten to one is alcohol—10 to 1! And 88% of the sexual activity that is shown on television is illicit sexual activity, outside of marriage. Only 12% of sexual activity alluded to is within the bounds of monogamous marriage.

And kids are listening to this thing called rock music, especially on MTV, which is a double jeopardy, where it's rock music set to a video—people like a woman who has the audacity to take the name of the mother of Jesus, or a name that symbolizes her mother, his mother—Madonna. Madonna was shown not so long ago on the front page of a magazine with five crucifixes around her neck—five. Somebody said, "Why do you have those crucifixes around your neck?" She said, "It's sexy. There's a naked man on them." Now, this woman is the idol of so many of our kids. Porn rock—the message that

she and others give out is one of sexual promiscuity and bisexuality and fatalism and drugs and alcohol and rebellion. It's frightening for our kids out there. It's dangerous.

But here's the thing. Moses' parents looked past the king of Egypt to the King of Kings, and the Bible said, "and they were not afraid of the king's commandment." There were perilous times in Moses' day. These are perilous times, but thank God for mothers and fathers of faith. Faith's Vision gets a promise from God; Faith's Venture begins to act upon that. Faith is belief with legs on it. Faith's Valor—they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

IV. Faith's Victory

Now, I want you to see Faith's Victory. Look, if you will, beginning in verse 24: "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Well, who was Pharaoh's daughter, and what happened? Well, you remember that little Moses was hidden in the bulrushes, and they made a little ark. After three months, they couldn't hide the little baby anymore, and so they did the next best thing. They took those reeds that grow by the River Nile and they made a little ark, and they put mud on the outside, and on the inside they daubed it to make it waterproof. And Jochabed kissed that little baby, and said, "God, this is all I can do now." And they put the little baby there, floating there in the River Nile, in the bulrushes, and Moses' big sister, Miriam, was standing off to the side. You know the story. It's a wonderful story. About that time, Pharaoh's daughter is stopped with her entourage, and says, "I want to go down to the River Nile to bathe."

Now, folks, they have excavated the palaces of Egypt. The most lavish baths you have ever seen are in the palaces of Egypt. Why would a princess be bathing in the dirty Nile? It's incredible when you think about it. Maybe she just remembered the old swimming hole where she used to play as a little girl. But you can see the hand of God there. And just when she gets down there, the baby cries. It wasn't a safety pin. An angel just tweaked that little baby. And the baby cries, and Pharaoh's daughter sees the little baby Moses, and picks it up, and there's that bonding there. God performed a miracle to put that bonding there.

And then, Moses' sister says, "If you want to keep that baby, I know somebody who'd be glad to nurse it for you. I know a mother who is ready to nurse the baby." Pharaoh's daughter says, "Well, you go find her." Can you imagine the daughter of the King of Egypt taking a suggestion from a little girl, a little slave girl? But she did. And so, when Jochabed comes to Pharaoh's daughter, she said, "If I paid you, would you take care of this baby for me?" Jochabed says, "Yes, I'll do that, if you'll pay me." And so, she is paid for taking care of her own little baby. And she takes that child from three months, and begins to sing songs to that child, and to put into that child the love of God,

and the value system that she had.

God gave a victory. God is so wonderful. That's the reason we don't have to be afraid of the devil and his crowd—listen to me, folks—when we pray, when we believe God. God took a little ark, and made a battleship out of it to sink old Pharaoh's kingdom. Isn't God wonderful? It's faith, though. She was a woman of faith. That's the reason she's listed here. By faith, she did that; by faith she did that, folks. Oh, mamas, believe God. Trust God. Be mothers of faith. Day after day, here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept, she is teaching and training that little boy.

V. Faith's Values

Now, what was the result of that? Here's the last thing, and our time is gone. We've talked about Faith's Victory. I want you to see Faith's Values that endure when the parents have departed.

Now, notice in verse 24: "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." That would have made him the grandson of Pharaoh, next in line for the kingdom. The Bible says he choose, "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king..."

Now, pay attention, because this is the climax of the whole thing. There's a great battle going on today over values—over values. Moses had an incredible value system. Now, he could have been the king of all Egypt—Little Moses. When he came to years, he was standing in line to be the next Pharaoh. But the Bible says, he refused it. He refused power, possessions, and position. Why? Because he chose to suffer affliction with the children of God. Why did he do that? Because he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all the treasures of Egypt.

Now, here's how his value system worked. Now, listen very carefully. First of all, he did some esteeming. He said, "Over here—over here—is the treasure of Egypt. Over here, the glories of Jesus." He saw this, and he knew this. He said, "If I go this way, I'll have power, I'll have possessions, I'll have prestige. If I go this way, I'll have Jesus." He esteemed. He said, "I like this. I'll go this way."

Now, it's foolish to try to get your children to make a decision, unless they have something to decide, unless you have shown them the riches of Jesus. When he saw this, first of all, he esteemed, and then he chose. He said, "I'll go this way." But, in order to go this way, he had to leave that way; so he refused in order to choose. There must be an esteeming, then a choosing, and then a refusing.

Now, folks, let me tell you something. Little Moses had gone to the University of

Egypt, and the Bible tells us, in Acts chapter 7, that he was learned, he was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Now, listen to me. His mama put something in his heart that all his professors could not take away. Listen to me. Why? Why? Because she taught him. She was a mama of faith, and he esteemed, he chose, and he refused. You know what's wrong with a lot of parents today? You're saying, "Now, son, don't drink; daughter, don't fornicate, don't use dope, don't do this, don't do that." What have you given them that's better? What have you shown them? You try and take a nasty bone away from a dog, you'll get bit; but you lay a steak down on the ground, and he'll drop that bone, won't he? What we have to do is show them the beauty of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

I clipped this from the paper this week. It really blessed me—just a small, little article: "Gator's Quarterback Nixes Playboy Team" Did you see that, John Bramlett? Where's John? Didn't you like that? "Florida quarterback, Danny Wuerffel"—and, by the way, he's a great athlete—"turned down a spot on Playboy Magazine's All America College Pre-Season Football Team. Wuerffel, a Christian, and the son of an Air Force minister, declined an invitation to be the magazine's National Scholar Athlete of the Year." And, here's the part I like. He said, "It didn't take any thought at all." Hallelujah! I don't want to be in your filthy magazine. Moses said, "I don't want Egypt. I'm going God's way." Faith's Values that will last when parents are gone. And I'll tell you they're a couple of glad parents, if they're still living, who have a son, and they must be people of faith. Thank God for them. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord God, thank You for Your Word today. And Lord, I just pray that You'll give us moms and dads of faith. In Jesus' Holy Name. Amen.

The Victory of a Mother's Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 12, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:23–27

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.”

HEBREWS 11:23

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding, please, Hebrews chapter 11. When you've found it, look up here with me, if you will. We're talking today on this subject: The Victory of a Mother's Faith. And, in case you missed the message, I'm going to put it one sentence before we do anything else: the most powerful and influential people on earth are mothers of faith. That's it! Listen to it again: the most powerful and influential people on earth are mothers of faith.

I was reading in our local newspaper this past week just a few days ago—this is actually dated Thursday morning, May the 9th—here's an article, the title: “Do funds deter youth crime? No telling,” and then it speaks of a lack of evidence, and it says “the Justice Department Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency has spent more than one billion dollars over the last two decades on programs to try to keep kids from turning to crime.” Now, folks, a billion dollars is a lot of money. Let me tell you what Senator Fred Thompson of Tennessee had to say about that—and I am quoting him—he said, “Despite all the years and all the money, we seem to know little more about preventing youth violence today than we did in 1974. And, unless we try some new approaches that we know will make a difference, we will be hit in only a few years with a youth crime wave that will make today's environment be recalled with nostalgic.” Now, what he's saying is this: unless we learn to do something new, something different, what we have

today will be called the good ole days in a few years. He is saying there is a youth crime wave that is on the horizon, and he said we need to try something new. With all due respect to the good senator, we don't need to try something new; we need to go back to something old. We need to find out what God's Word has to say about raising children for good, for God, and to make decent God-fearing citizens out of them.

Now, I want you to read with me please in Hebrews chapter 11 about a wonderful woman, and her name was Jochebed, and that name Jochebed means Jehovah is glorious—it's a beautiful name. She was married to a man named Amram. They were just really a couple of Hebrew slaves, and no one would have ever heard about them except God put them in His Word, in His Bible, and they ended up in God's hall of fame, in Hebrews chapter 11. Just insignificant Hebrew slaves, but they raised a son that changed the world. They were the parents of Moses. And they did it by faith. Look in verse 23: By faith—just underscore that, that's the key of the whole chapter—By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child. And they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

I. Faith's Vision

Remember again the most powerful and influential force on earth are mothers of faith. Five things I want you to notice with me, as we look at this passage. The very first of these is what I want to call faith's vision that sees a promise from God. Now, in verse 23, it says they saw they had a proper child. That's translated, a goodly child, a beautiful child. In Acts chapter 7, he is called a fair child, but he was a beautiful baby boy. And the mothers looked at him, and they looked at him through the eyes of faith. The Bible says, when they laid their eyes upon him, they did it with faith, and that's what we ought to do with all children. Children need to be received and looked upon as beautiful, as gifts of God, by faith.

I know that Joyce and I gave our children to the Lord. Literally, before they were conceived, and then, before they were born, and then, after they were born, and everyday, we hold hands and pray, and call our children by name, and give them back to God again and again and again, as we have already done this morning, to pray over our children and our grandchildren, because we are standing on the Word of God, because faith gets a promise from the Word of God.

Now, this chapter begins with a definition of faith—look at it in chapter 11, verse 1: Now, faith is substance of things hoped for. That means it is the substantiation of God’s promises. The word hope here does not mean, maybe it will happen, maybe it will not happen; I have a strong desire for it to happen; as we use the word hope today. The Bible word for hope is different. The Bible word for hope—hope means rock-ribbed assurance based on the promises of God—rock-ribbed assurance based on the promises of God. For example, the Second Coming of Jesus is called the blessed what?—the blessed hope. Now, that doesn’t mean the blessed maybe; it doesn’t even mean the blessed desire, though it includes desire; but it means, desire transfigured by assurance. Faith is the substantiation—the substance—of things hoped for. Where do we get hope? Where do we get faith? We get it from the Word of God.

Let me give you a verse that I have stood upon, and am standing upon, and remind God of over and over again. If you want to have faith’s vision for your child, look, if you will, in Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2: “Praise ye the Lord! Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandment. His seed—that is, his children—shall be mighty upon earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed.” Isn’t that a great verse to stand on? You say, Adrian, can we have faith for our children? Of course, we can! You remember the father who brought the little boy to Jesus, and the little boy was demon-possessed, and he said, Master, if you can do anything for my child, will you do it? And Jesus said to him, if you can believe, all things are possible to him that believe. And that man said what so many parents have said: Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief. But the point that I want you to understand is this: that that father had faith for his child. Moses’ parents, Amram and Jochebed, had faith for little Moses, because they saw that he was a goodly child. Every baby is a goodly child, not just Moses. Every baby is special to God. Now, let me say there are no illegitimate babies, just illegitimate parents. Every baby is special to God. Every baby is a gift of God, and a masterpiece of Almighty God. They are beautiful. And thank God for your child. And you need to pray over your child, and look at your child through the eyes of faith, and get a vision for that child, and never, never, never let it go. Sometimes, children are so exasperating. A father and his son were having one of those discussions, and the son said to the father, well, I didn’t ask to be born into this family. And the dad said, if you would have asked, the answer would have been no. I think sometimes we feel that way, but we need to see that they are beautiful, they are gifts of God. They saw that he was a proper child. That’s faith’s vision, that gets a promise from the Word of God. Mine is found in Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2.

II. Faith’s Venture

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see: not only faith’s vision, but faith’s venture

that acts upon the promise of God. You see, that turns a promise into action. Look again, in verse 23—look at it—the Bible says, “By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of—or by—his parents.” Now, what had happened is this: that the cruel king of Egypt, whose name was Pharaoh, had decreed that every little boy baby that was born of the Hebrews was to be drowned in the river Nile, told all the midwives, if the baby comes out of the womb, if it’s a boy, he has a death sentence upon him. Well, Amram and Jochebed didn’t know whether they were going to have a little boy or a little girl. But, when they saw it was a little boy baby, they said, we cannot let our baby die. We cannot let our baby be drowned. So they went against the king’s commandment, and they hid the child as long as they could, which was three months. They sequestered little baby Moses away, and hid the child.

Now here’s the point: they had faith, but their faith led to action. Do you know James said—James the apostle—James said, faith without works is dead. Don’t tell me you have faith for your child, if you’re not doing something to preserve and protect your child. The vision must be turned to the venture; you must do something you must act upon it. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6, Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Now, the word train means to discipline, to shape, to drill, to do what you can do, not only to teach the child, but to instill by training into that child what that child needs to do and be, which Moses’ parents did, as we’re going to see later on. But the point is that real faith is belief with legs on it. It does something. Faith without works is dead. Now, what they could have done is just said, well, we’ll just see what happens; Lord, we’ll just be trusting you. That’s not faith—that’s fatalism. That’s fatalism.

And today, we have that philosophy: well, you don’t have to pray over your children, or guide them, or discipline. After all, they’re all just inherently good, just let the little rosebud unfold. The little rosebud will unfold to black your eye. And you need to work and to train and discipline. Have you ever watched a man train a hunting dog? No, he doesn’t read to that dog, he gets the dog out in the woods and trains that dog. We need to learn how to train our children. Some men spend more time training their dogs than they do their children. Then they tie the dog up at night, and let the kids run wild. It’s amazing. We need to train them. I played football. How do you learn to play football? By watching others play football, you can learn some. By listening to the coach, you can learn some. But the way you learn to play football is on the training field—in practice. You see, you can teach them what is right. And they go off to school, and somebody else can teach them something else. And you say, well, I just don’t understand. I thought we taught him right from wrong. Question: did you train your child? Did you train your child? Training remains in a child. It begins very early. A little boy was riding around and around and around the block. Somebody said, son, what are you doing?

The little kid was on his tricycle, wasn't even old enough for a bicycle, just going around and around the block. He said, I am running away from home. He said, but you're just going around and around the block. He said, yes, mama won't let me cross the street. I like that. I like that. See, even in the earliest ages, even when rebellion comes up, there is the restraint of that training that has been put in the heart and mind by the parent. So watch it.

Faith's vision—they saw he was a proper child. Faith's venture—they hid him; they did something. They didn't just have fatalism; they didn't have fanaticism. They didn't throw him in the river Nile and say, let's trust God to take care of him. But they had faith—faith that acts, and faith that works.

III. Faith's Valor

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see. And this is so very important: faith's vision and faith's venture led to faith's victory. One of the greatest victories in the Bible is this particular victory. Now, remember: little Moses had the sentence of death upon him. But God gave them a victory.

Faith's venture led to faith's valor—faith's valor. Look, if you will, in verse 23, and the Bible says here, in verse 23: And they were not afraid of the king's commandment. Now, those were desperate days in which they lived. How would you like to be slaves? How would you like to live in a nation where there was a cruel despot who did not know the God of Israel? How would you like to live where it was by royal decree that little boy babies were to be put to death? How would you like to live then? Those were dark days. And yet, the Bible says that Amram and Jochebed were not afraid. They were full of valor. Why were they not afraid? Well, the only reason they were not afraid is because they knew God, and they knew the Word of God, and they knew that God had promised that he was going to deliver His people by the blood of the Lamb. They knew this. And in 400 years they were coming out of Egypt, they had the Word of God. Therefore, they were not afraid.

Now, I want to tell you this: if I did not have the Word of God, if I did not know what I know from God's Word, I would be a pessimist today, and I believe you would too. And I would be afraid to bring children into this world, if I did not know God. But, because I know God, I am free and glad to encourage you to have children. Don't ever let the devil intimidate you, as a child of God, from bringing children into this world. Sometimes people say, well, Pastor Rogers, the situation is so bad, so grave, so dangerous today, do you think that we even ought to have children? Yes! Yes! God's people, above all people, are the one's that ought to be bringing a godly seed into this world, and raising up children—and don't you be afraid. Now, the Bible says, in the last days perilous times will come. And that word perilous is only used one other time in the New

Testament, and it's translated there, exceedingly fierce. And these are exceedingly fierce days. And I am concerned for little children. Little boys and girls who don't have mamas of faith. And daddies of faith. My heart goes out to children whose parents attend liberal churches.

Now, I may make some people angry, but I'm going to say what I'm going to say; and, if it makes people angry, so be it. It is dangerous for a child to attend a liberal church where they do not believe that the Bible is the inerrant, infallible Word of God. It is dangerous for a child to attend a church where the blood atonement is not taught, where the full deity of Jesus is not taught, His virgin birth, and His vicarious death, and His visible return is not taught. And if parents only realize the danger of liberalism, they would never allow their children to be in that kind of a church.

I am amazed that sometimes people will send the child across the nation to get a secular education, and will not even drive across town to get them in a Bible-preaching church. May God have mercy! You say, well, our church wasn't always this way. Our church used to be a Bible-believing church, and Grandma is buried in the church cemetery, in the backyard. Well, Grandma would get up and leave if she could, I'll guarantee you, because Grandma believed in the old-time religion. I'm not just trying to get folks over here out of somebody else's church; there are plenty of wonderful churches that preach the Bible in this city. But I'm telling you that people ought to be a member of a Christ-honoring, Bible-believing church. It's dangerous for children to be sent to liberal churches that deny the very fundamentals of the faith. And then, that's compounded by the fact that they go to school, and there in school they're taught humanism. And what is humanism? It sounds so wonderful, because it sounds so much like humanitarianism, but humanism is just a disguised way of saying, atheism. It's a way that makes man the center and the circumference of everything, rather than God. It is humanistic and man-centered. And, I am telling you, it is so dangerous, and the children today live in a society where they've been taught that they have evolved out of ooze and mud and slime, that they're not the special creation of Almighty God. And, that is so dangerous.

They say, well, if you teach creation, you're teaching religion. When you teach humanism and evolution, your teaching religion in reverse, in its attempt to explain everything apart from God. And then, think about, in society, the heathenism in society, apart from liberalism in the church, and the humanism in the school. Think of the heathenism in society. It's so pathetic. The little children are taught safe sex. What do they mean by safe sex? Sex is not supposed to be dangerous. Safe sex. That is, child, we know that you're going to fornicate, so we're going to teach you how to fornicate without catching a disease, and without having a baby. Of course, they are not always successful in that, anyway, but that is an implicit approval of that which God has said is

sin against Almighty God. And sex education without biblical values is always a menace. And the alcohol people, they're out for your child. They're systematically seducing your children. The most incredibly wonderful advertisements—and you just have to give the devil his due—are these beer advertisements. I read something the other day where 95% of college students drink beer—95%. They have been successful. And they say, well, the idea is, you've got to teach them; you've got to teach them how to drink. You have to teach them to drink in moderation. You shouldn't overeat, and you shouldn't over drink. Moderation is the answer. I believe in moderation, and I believe that you ought not to overeat, but the comparison is not a good one. I've known of people who've been arrested for driving drunk; I've never known anyone arrested for driving fat. There is a difference. There's a difference. Shakespeare said, what fools men are to put that in their head which steals their brains away.

Our hearts were saddened as we read in the newspaper today about that airliner that went down in Miami. And 109 people, I believe, are presumed dead, as that airliner crashed there in the Everglades. And what a tragedy that was! And I can assure you there will be a through investigation. I want to ask you a question. What would happen if 1 out of every 15 airliners took off crashed and burned? Did you know 1 out of every 15 people who begin to drink is going to become a problem drinker—1 out of every 15 is going to become a problem drinker? Those are incredible odds. And yet, these money-grabbing beer barons and liquor dealers, they don't care about that. They're after money. And your children live in that society. Did you know, precious friend, that, 10 to 1, on television, when you see something drunk, 10 to 1, it will be beverage alcohol. 10 to 1 over any other drink. Did you know that the sex that is portrayed on television, 88% of sex that is portrayed, is illicit sex, sex outside the bonds of holy matrimony. And children are watching this. They are watching something called MTV, which is pornography set to music. And this is being drummed into their head by rock music, led by people like Madonna, the high priestess of filth. Madonna was shown on the front of a magazine not so long ago with five crucifixes around her neck. Somebody said, why do you have those five crucifixes around you neck? She said, they are sexy; they have a naked man on them. Now, that's the kind of a woman, that's the kind of a person that many teenagers, and even teeny-boppers—and they don't use that word any more—little kids—are watching. These are the idols; that's what the situation is in our world today. I'm telling you, folks, it's a minefield out there; it is dangerous. And do you know the great need today is not billions of more dollars—it's some godly mamas and some godly daddies. It's some mothers of faith and some fathers of faith, who, in spite of the king's commandment, they say, there's also the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and I'm trusting Him, and I am going to raise up a godly seed, and I will not be afraid. And I want to encourage you to take a stand of faith, and, in spite of all of these things, don't

get stamped; get in the Word of God. Claim your children for Jesus Christ.

IV. Faith's Victory

Faith's vision—they saw he was a proper child. Faith's venture—they did something about it. They hid little Moses. And we're going to show you in a moment, they did more. Faith's valor—they were not afraid of the king's commandment. And then, Faith's victory. That's why I had you to sing, Victory in Jesus. Notice in verse 24: By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Well, how did that get in there? How did Pharaoh's daughter get into this thing? Well, Moses' mother came to the place where she knew she couldn't hide him any longer. How long can you hide a little baby? So she conceived by the Holy Spirit a plan, that was to make a little basket called an ark out of bulrushes. She waterproofed it as best she could, made it soft, took her precious little three-month baby, and put him in that basket—it was an incredible plan—and put it down there by the river's edge, in the bulrushes, just floating there. And would you know what happened? Why, upon a time, Pharaoh's daughter came along, and she asked her entourage to stop. She wanted to go down to the river Nile to bathe.

Now can you imagine this? Friend, excavations have shown the palaces of Egypt. The most lavish baths you can imagine were in the palaces of Egypt, and yet, she decides she wants to bathe in the dirty Nile. Why would she do that? Well, divine providence, really. Maybe, she remembered, the Holy Spirit reminded her of a time when she used to play in the river Nile, the old swimming hole, or whatever. But she stops, and she goes down there, and she goes just to one particular spot. The river Nile is very big, but she goes to one particular spot. And there's the little baby. And then, the Bible says, and behold, the babe wept. Now, it wasn't a safety pin; an angel just went down there and tweaked that baby, just like that, and caused the baby to cry; I believe that something happened that the baby cried at just the right moment. And, the princess picked it up, and God sent a bonding there between the princess and that little baby. She held it there, and her motherly instincts began to work. And Moses' sister was standing over there, Miriam. And Miriam said, if you'd like to keep that baby, I know a nursing mother who'd be happy to take it and raise it for you. And the princess said, would you go get her? And so, here comes Jochebed, and Pharaoh's daughter said, I've got a little baby here. If I paid you, would you raise this child for me—if I paid you? Yes, I believe I would, if you paid me. I'll raise this baby for you. And Moses is turned back on to his own mother. You talk about God's sense of humor. God used a little ark to be a battleship to sink old Pharaoh's kingdom. And Pharaoh paid for his education, paid his room and board; paid his nursemaid, paid his tuition in college; paid the whole thing. And this is faith's victory.

I want you to see how God is moving heaven and earth. God is moving heaven and earth. Because a mother and a father know how to believe God, and how to get hold of God, and to raise a child by faith. It is a victory—a wonderful victory—that God gave, and so, here, Moses' mother holds little Moses in her arm, and sings lullabies to him, and whispers Scripture verses into his ear, and here a little, and there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept, she is teaching him the Word of God. And the Bible says, then, when it came to his own time, God had engineered through a mother's faith a faith in the heart of Moses. And that brings me to the last thing that I want to talk to you about.

V. Faith's Values

I've talked to you about faith's vision—they saw he was a proper child. Faith's venture—they hid him. I've talked to you about faith's valor—they were not afraid of the king's commandment. I've talked to you about faith's victory—how God preserved the life of that child. But now, I want you to think about faith's values—faith's values. Here's the part that I really do love in this time that speaks so much about values. Look, if you will, at Moses' values, in verse 24: By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king. Now, look at this—look at this. We're talking about faith's values.

I want you to look at some words. Look, if you will, in verse 27—we're going to take this and work backward to its source. By faith, he forsook Egypt. Now, that's something. By faith, he forsook Egypt. Now, what was Egypt? Egypt was the most powerful dynasty on the face of the earth. He was in line for the throne. He would have been the next pharaoh. Can you imagine what he would have had? The power, the possessions, the prestige? He forsook Egypt. Well, why did he forsake Egypt? Because he chose, in verse 25, to suffer affliction with the people of God. Now, why did he choose to suffer affliction with the people of God? Well, look in verse 26: He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Now, the word esteem here has an idea of reckoning. He's been taught the riches of Christ by his mama. And so, he has a choice. Over here is a lavish life, the riches of Egypt. Over here is the cause of Christ, and the suffering that sometimes comes with it. And so, he just esteems, he says, there are the treasures of Egypt, there the kingdom of heaven. You see, I can go this way, or I can go that way. If I go here, I'll have this; if I go here, I'll have the riches of Christ. He said, I'm going that way. Now, when he said, I'm going that way, he had to turn his back on this way. He esteemed; he chose; he refused.

Conclusion

Do you know why so many parents are failing today to get their kids to go right? They have never shown by precept and example the riches of Christ. And so, they are saying, you don't belong in Egypt, son. Don't drink; don't smoke; don't carouse; don't do this; don't do that; don't, don't, don't, don't. That's all they ever see. And then, they say there's no pleasure in Egypt. Well, that's a lie. There's a lot of pleasure in Egypt. Moses could have had a lavish life. But, if you don't show your children by precept and example the riches of Christ, they're not going to believe you. How do you take a nasty bone away from a dog? You try and snatch it out of his mouth, you get bitten. I'll tell you one thing, you lay a steak on the ground, and he'll drop that bone. Isn't that right? What we've got to do is show them the riches of the Lord Jesus Christ so that they can esteem, and say, yes, that's what I want.

Oh, how wonderful to have kids who have values! I clipped this out of the newspaper. I was blessed when I read this in the sports page. You probably saw it this week: Gator's Quarterback Nixes Playboy Team—Florida quarterback Danny Wuerffel. And, by the way, I'm a Florida fan—you know that. Florida quarterback Danny Wuerffel turned down a spot on the Playboy Magazine All-America college pre-season football team. Wuerffel, a Christian, and the son of an Air Force minister, declined an invitation to be the magazine's national scholar-athlete of the year. He said, you keep it; I don't want it. And here's the part I like: Wuerffel said, it didn't take any thought at all. Hallelujah! God give us today some young men and women who have some fires built into them, by mothers and fathers of faith. Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. The most powerful and influential people on the face of the earth are mothers and fathers of faith.

Lets pray. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus, that you would teach us, Lord, as parents, today, to believe you, and to turn faith into action, and to build into our children spiritual precepts and concepts that will see them through these desperate days. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

The Moses Principle

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 11, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:24

*“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused
to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;”*

HEBREWS 11:24

Outline

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- I. There Must Be a Wise Evaluation
 - A. The Treasure of a Clean Heart
 - B. The Treasure of True Love
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- III. There Must Be a Determined Refusal

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 11. And we're thinking tonight on this subject: Guard Your Heart, Protect Your Home. Your children, my children, our grandchildren, are under a greater assault and greater attack than any generation in history. That assault, that attack, is coming from the very pit of hell to corrupt the minds of our children through pornography.

Material that was once seen and sold in back alleys is now on open display in magazine racks and neighborhood drug stores. It is being piped into the homes of America's families through cable television, and, on top of all of that, the most dangerous and insidious of all is the Internet that has come into the home.

Now, this battle is so critical, because what Satan wants to do is to pollute a child's mind, to corrupt that child, to steal from that child the very best, to greatly damage him now, and to take away from that child—that boy or that girl—the future, and the future marital happiness that God wants for him. The evil has a pipeline right now into the homes of America. The research that I have done says that, since 1997, pornography, immorality, sexual content is drastically up. It's up in 68%—68%—of the 1999 to 2001 programs. Our children today have to walk through a mudslide—a mudslide—of sludge. Primetime television has become slime-time television in every home. It's

heartbreaking.

Now, my purpose in this series of messages—and this is the first in the series —is not to convince you that pornography is out there. If you need convincing, somehow you are numb. You are not awake. It is there. And I want to say, in the presentation of these messages, I have not looked at pornography, and I don't intend to. I'm not investigating to tell you what is there. I do not intend to put garbage in my mind. And I don't have to eat swill to preach on hogs.

But I have enough awareness to know what is going on. Some people say, "Well, it's only natural. That's the way God made us." Paul Harvey said it this way: "I am opposed to putting garbage on television for the same reason I would oppose open sewers in our streets. It can be argued that what is in these sewers is natural, and normal, and everybody does it. And that it is not dirty. But everywhere in the world where sewage flows unconfined, it breeds disease." It breeds disease. And yet the appetite, the American appetite, for pornography seems almost insatiable. It seems like we have eaten through the very bottom of the garbage can.

Again, I want you to hear these words from Charles Colson, in his Breakpoint radio program: "If I were to ask you what comes to mind when you hear the word 'pornography,' I would imagine words like perversion and shameful might pop into your head. Well, if trends and modern society are any indication, you may need to add the word 'mainstream' to that list. That's right. Because, no matter where you look these days, there is evidence of the increasing acceptance of pornography and its purveyors. Pornographic actresses regularly appear in rock videos, and have even appeared in the Grammy awards, and make some cameo appearances on popular television shows.

In the February issue of Talk magazine, author Martin Amos has written an article entitled, "For Millions of American Men, These Women are Movie Stars." It's all about the growing acceptance of the pornography industry in this country. U. S. News and World Report puts it this way: an amount much larger than Hollywood's domestic box office receipts, and larger than all the revenues generated by rock and country music recordings, are turned up through pornography."

Let me tell you something I think is the most startling thing that I read in all of this research. In 1973—that's about the time I came to be the pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church; I came in 1972—in 1973, Americans spent no more than 10 million dollars on pornography in a year. By 1999, Americans were spending \$10 billion a year. That is a 1,000% increase in pornography.

Now, this is sad for adults, but it's even sadder for children. Your children, my children, your grandchildren, our grandchildren, are being systematically seduced. They're becoming road kill on the information superhighway. The hardening and destructive force is beyond my power to state and to estimate.

Now, what I want to do in these messages is not to make an oration, not to play upon your emotions, but I want to give you a practical and a biblical way to gain the victory, and you can have victory.

Now, what I want to do is to show you that there can be no victory until you first make a personal choice and teach your children to make a personal choice. Where is the answer? The answer is not in political action. Though we ought to do all that we can do politically, the answer is not there. The problem is too pervasive, too persuasive. And we're going to have to take the policeman off the street corner, and put him in the heart.

The answer is not through electronic safeguards. But, in this series, I'm going to teach you and show you about some firewalls, some electronic safeguards. But all of these can be overridden by children, outsmarted and overruled by adults. Warnings are not enough, because the pull and the enticement and the curiosity of pornography is too strong. There must be a personal choice. We're going to talk tonight about a choice. We're going to talk tonight about the choice that Moses made.

And I want to give you tonight what I call "The Moses Principle." It's found here in Hebrews chapter 11. I want you to begin reading with me in verse 24: "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing..."—underscore that word—"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Now, Moses chose. Moses chose, is what this scripture says very clearly and very plainly. It says here that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the children of God." There will not be victory in your family, there will be no victory with your children, until they make a choice.

Now, I've often told you, when we talk about choice, that you are free to choose. Thank God for that. But you are not free not to choose. Because even not to choose is the choice not to choose. You are free to choose. You are not free not to choose. You are not free to choose the consequences of your choice.

First of all, you choose, and then the choice chooses for you. Now, Moses chose, and how did Moses choose? Well, look in verse 24. He did it by faith. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the children of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Now, Moses chose by faith. Well, how do you have faith? You have to hear from God. The Bible tells us, in the book of Romans, that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"—Romans 10, verse 17. Make no mistake about it. Moses

had heard from God. And once Moses heard from God, then Moses was able to make a choice.

Now, let me tell you something, parents. Satan's strategy is to keep your children away from hearing from God. Now, if your children do not hear from God, they cannot make a faith choice. And, if your children do not make a faith choice, they're going to go down. They are going to fail. Because it is the Word of God that gets in your heart that enables you to overcome.

As I told you this morning, Satan's chief weapon is to steal away the Word of God from the hearts and minds of young people. If you do not have a word from God, you will never, in my estimation, if you're a normal young person, overcome pornography. Never! If you're a grown man, you will not do it.

Now, the devil has substituted all kinds of sources of authority. Let me mention some of them. For example, there is relativism. Everything is relative. There's no fixed standard of right and wrong.

There was once a philosopher, a brilliant man, whose name was Hegel—H-E-G-E-L. And Hegel had this idea that everything is in flux. He was a philosopher. He said, over here you have an idea. We'll call that idea a postulate or a thesis. Over here, he says, is an antithesis—or I might pronounce it an anti-thesis. So over here is a truth that says one thing. Over here is another true, or another thing, a postulate; neither one of them may really be true. But people believe this antithesis. So there's a war between this thesis and this antithesis or anti-thesis. And these fight and these battle. And, after a while, there comes something called a synthesis. The two ideas come together.

For example, let's give you an illustration that perhaps you can understand. Let's say that the thesis is capitalism. Let's say that the antithesis is communism. And let's say these get in a battle long enough, and you come together with a synthesis which is what? Socialism. Now, what happens is this: Once you have a thesis, and once you get an antithesis, then they come together in a synthesis—that's what Hegel said. Now, that synthesis becomes a new thesis. And then somebody else gets another antithesis. And the new thesis and the antithesis go to war, and then you come up with a new synthesis. Do you see what's happening? Everything is moving. There is no fixed, solid standard. And so, all ideas just chase other ideas across the terrain.

Well, that's out in our world today. That's called relativism. Now, other young people are living by subjectivism, and adults. What is subjectivism? Well, I just feel this is right. I just feel this is wrong. So everything is based on feeling. And they might say to you—and you'll hear this: "Now, listen. What's true for you may not be true for me. What's true for me may not be true for you." And our young people are being taught, "Be true to your feelings."

Another substitute for fixed truth is not only emotionalism, or subjectivism, but

rationalism. People say, “No, don’t live by your feelings. Live by your mind. Figure it out. Weigh it. Test it. Put it in a test tube. Pull out your slide rule. Get out your calculator, and figure it out.” Behavior is based on logic. Thus saith the mind of man, rather than, thus saith the Word of God.

For others, the way may be pragmatism. People don’t even ask, “Is it true?” anymore. They just ask, “Does it work?” A very pragmatic society. But we’ve come today to the worst condition of all, which is postmodernism.

Now, I know that you are not all turned on by that word. I know that you didn’t spend all afternoon saying, “I hope Pastor will mention postmodernism tonight. I’ve just been salivating thinking about postmodernism.” What is postmodernism? Modernism tried to determine what is right or wrong, and the liberals and the conservatives argued, but postmodernists don’t argue about it, because they say there is no fixed truth. There is no right. There is no wrong. They ask, “Is there any truth at all?” You want your children to live right? You want your children to do right? Parents, you had better inculcate in their hearts and in their minds, there is a fixed standard of truth, and it is the Word of God. It is the Word of God.

Now, I’m telling you—you listen to me—you are fighting a battle that you are going to lose. In today’s society, it is not enough for you to put your hands on your hips, and say, “That is wrong.” “Why, Daddy?” “Don’t ask me why. Just because I said so.” That won’t work—that won’t work. If you say, “Just because I said so,” you’re going to fail. You need to say, “Son, it is wrong to steal, because God said so. It is wrong to commit adultery, because God says so. You are to obey your parents, because God says so. You’re to have a clean thought life, because God says so.” You are to put some rock-ribbed convictions on the heart of your children.

What is my job as a dad? What is my job as a grandfather? What is your duty, your job? Third John 1, verse 4—John said, “I have no greater joy than to hear my children walk in truth.” Boy, I can say “Amen” to that! I have no greater joy than to hear my children walk in truth. You see, it is the truth that sets you free.

Jesus prayed in John chapter 17 for us. And here’s what He prayed in John 17, verse 17: “Sanctify them through Thy truth. Thy word is truth.” Well, “sanctify” is a big word we don’t normally use, so I looked it up in another translation. Phillips’ translation gives it this way: “Make them holy by the truth.” Do you want holy children? They are going to have to have the truth.

Now, I want to mention three truths, three facts, three treasures, that you will learn from the truth. Notice verse 24. He says, “Moses, by faith, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.” Now, remember, faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Verse 26: “Esteeming”—that is, considering, figuring, judging—“the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” Now, he is doing some figuring here. And

what is he doing? Well, he is evaluating; he's getting some treasures.

I. There Must Be a Wise Evaluation

And let me just say, to begin with, that there must be a wise evaluation. That's the first point. There must be a wise evaluation. Now, Satan does not want you to make that wise evaluation. He doesn't want your children to make that wise evaluation. And so, you're going to be faced, and the kids today are going to be faced, between two things: pleasures and treasures. Look at verse 25: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the children of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin." Underscore "pleasures of sin for a season." "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt."

Now, the choice here is between pleasures: true pleasures and ungodly pleasures. Between true treasures and trash. Moses had a value system that is working for him.

A. The Treasure of a Clean Heart

Now, what are three treasures that I want to write upon my children's hearts? Three treasures, three things, I want them to evaluate, I want them to see from the Word of God. First of all, the treasure of a clean heart. Write it down: the treasure of a clean heart. Your children need to understand how great it is to have a clean heart. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 5, verse 6, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Pornography will blur the vision of God. A clean heart is its own reward. The treasure of a clean heart. When the heart is pure, God is real. And then, we can have that incredible fellowship with God.

Put down 1 John 1, verses 3 to 7. John says, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy might be full." Do you want fullness of joy? Then have fellowship with one another and with Jesus Christ. "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

I've thought about this. I can tell you that a clean heart, a pure heart, is the only kind of a heart that can have fellowship with God. And no pornography on earth is worth forfeiting fellowship with God. That's a treasure: to have fellowship with God. I am telling you, I don't care who you are: if you're into pornography, your fellowship with God is broken. You're in darkness, and you have no joy. I don't care who you are. If you are into pornography, I can tell you, without stutter, stammer or apology, you are not having fellowship with God. And I can tell you clearly, plainly, that you have no joy.

B. The Treasure of True Love

Now, what is the evaluation? First of all, we need to teach our children the treasure of a clean heart. A clean heart is its own reward. But secondly, we need to teach them not only treasure of a clean heart, but we need to teach them the treasure of true love. Now, these come in order. Only a clean heart can truly love. Go to 1 John again, and look, if you will, in chapter 2, verses 15 and 16: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." I am telling you, if you get pornography in your life, if the children get pornography in their life, they will automatically lose the ability to love.

You see, listen. When a person has fellowship with God, by the very nature of that fellowship with God, when he has that treasure of a clean heart, which is fellowship with God, it follows, he has the ability to love. There is nothing more debilitating, nothing more stultifying, nothing more harmful, to the ability to love than pornography. You see, God wants you to love. But pornography is not based on love. It destroys love. It is based on lust. Look again in verse 15: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father; it's of the world."

Now, the highest good is to love. The great joy is to love. But we have a generation today that talks about making love, but they don't know the difference between love and lust.

Have you ever heard anybody just say, "Well, you know, I love oranges. I just love oranges. They're so good. They're so sweet. I just love oranges." You know, it's so sweet. Man, that's good. I just love oranges. A boy gets a girl. He says, "I just love you. I just love you." He doesn't love her. He loves her like a man loves oranges. To suck all the goodness, the sweetness, the juice, the purity, and throws her away like a piece of garbage.

What's the difference between love and lust? Lust wants to get. Love wants to give. I'm telling you, pornography is based on lust. It looks at people as though people are objects to be used to gratify one's selfishness. When a person feeds on pornography, he has no respect for himself. And it follows, as night follows day, that he can have no respect for other people. No person who puts garbage in his mind, in his body, has any respect for himself. And, if a person has no respect for himself, herself, how do you expect them to have respect for other people?

You see, the Bible says we're to love others as we love ourselves. Do you think it's wrong to love yourself? No. It's right and proper to love yourself. How can I love you as I love me, unless I love me? And I'm not talking about standing in front of the mirror and

singing “How Great Thou Art.” If you do that, you’re sick. I’m saying that you ought to have some self-respect. You ought to have some love for yourself. And, when you have love for yourself, then you’re going to have love for others, because you’re going to want others to be treated as you would want your own self treated, your own self-respect. People who are into pornography look at other people—especially if they are men—look upon women as if they are objects for their own personal gratification, and they have no absolute love for them. They cannot have love for them, because they don’t have fellowship with God. How can they have fellowship with one another?

Put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight: people who treat sex lightly, treat sex lightly because they treat other people lightly. They have no respect for other people. It is a disdainful, trivial, and selfish attitude toward other people.

Don’t tell me that pornography is a private act. Don’t tell me that pornography is a personal choice. Don’t tell me that pornography is a victimless crime. Don’t tell me that pornography is harmless entertainment. Put your daughter, your granddaughter, out there as the object of some man’s lust. Think of your daughter. Think of your granddaughter. I’m telling you, mister. That is somebody’s daughter. That is somebody made in the image of Almighty God.

You lose your ability to love. You treat people as things. The statistics that I’ve read are frightening. A little baby born in the year 2001, 1 out of every 4 little baby girls that is born, sometime in her life will be sexually assaulted—1 out of 4—1 out of 4. One out of ten little boys born today—1 out of 10—will be sexually assaulted by a male in his lifetime. Most of them before they are physically mature. Now, not all people who read pornography do that. But a trained policeman said this: “Not everyone who reads pornography is a sex deviant. But every sex deviant reads it.” Every sex deviant reads it.

Now, what are the treasures that we wouldn’t trade for anything? Number one: a clean heart. How wonderful to have a clean heart, to walk in the light, to have fellowship with God. Is any filth, any dirt, any pornography, worth not having a clean heart? Number two: the ability to love. Don’t you want to be able to love people? Don’t you want other people to love you? I am telling you that pornography is the enemy of love.

C. The Treasure of a Godly Family

Here’s the third treasure you need to write on the hearts of your children: the treasure of a godly family. Because, you see, fellowship with God gives us the ability to love. And the ability to love enables us to have a family. God made the family before He made the government, before He made education, before He made the church. The family is the only part of the Garden of Eden that we have left. A monogamous family—that’s the reason the devil has leveled all of the artillery of hell against the family. Nothing is more devastating to the family than pornography.

You know what I want for my little children, my grandchildren? I want them to have the kind of home Joyce and I have. I want them to enjoy what I have enjoyed. Nothing would move me to sadness and anger more than to feel that somebody had ripped that away from them. A loving, physical bond between husband and wife is God's great gift. Do you think God is opposed to the idea of sex? God created sex. It's God's idea. When God says not to look upon a woman to lust after her, when God says, "Flee fornication," when God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," God is not trying to keep sex from us. He's keeping sex for us. It's God's great gift.

I feel so sorry for young people today. Young people today talk about going all the way. Friend, that is the one thing they do not do. You go all the way when you give yourself to somebody, heart, body, and soul, in a happy marriage. That is going all the way. The young people today don't know the difference between love and lust, and they have been saturated, as I say, by slime-time television, a tidal wave of sludge. The sad thing—the sad thing—is they miss the best. They miss the best.

When I'm speaking to teenagers, I tell them, "You eat your cake now, you'll have a crummy tomorrow." God has a plan, a wonderful plan. These people who are living in immorality—and that's what pornography leads to. Who wants to marry a girl who has been passed around like a bottle of Gatorade in a football huddle? Young people, save yourself for the one you're going to marry. Look forward to a happy monogamous marriage. You need to see what the treasures are. What are the treasures? Moses chose. He chose by faith. He refused the pleasures of sin. He saw the reproach of Christ greater treasure than all the treasures of Egypt. What are they? They are so simple: the treasure of a clean heart—I wouldn't take anything for that; the treasure for the ability to love; and, the treasure of a godly home.

Can you write that on the hearts of your children? Can you teach your children the value of a pure heart? Such a value: to have fellowship with God; to walk in the light; to be able to say, nothing between my soul and the Savior.

II. There Must Be a Clear Choice

The first point is, there must be a proper evaluation. That proper evaluation is going to come from the Word of God, and you will accept it by faith. Number two—number two: there must be a clear choice—a clear choice. We must teach our children to choose. Hebrews 11, verses 24 and 25: "By faith, when Moses was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Now, once the values are determined, then the choice becomes clear. You see the difference between treasure and trash, diamonds and garbage. Now, this doesn't mean that there will be no temptation. The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin. Moses was

faced with position, possessions, pleasures—all of these things. Every sensual desire would be satisfied if he went the devil's way. Pornography has a tremendous pull. It's always had a pull on me. I've refused it. But there is something in my body that says, "Look at that. Examine that." Every man feels it. Every man feels it. You say you don't feel it. I think you are probably lying. That is, if you have any hormones, any testosterone. They say a man becomes what he thinks about. It's a wonder I didn't turn into a girl when I was in high school.

There is a tremendous pull that is there. And a person has to come to the place where he or she makes a clear decision. The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin. Don't you be so foolish as to say to young people, there's no pleasure in sin. You're going against the Bible. There are the pleasures of sin. The devil is too smart to go fishing without any bait on his hook. There are pleasures, and there are treasures. And you're going to have to choose between the two.

It was not easy for Moses. It won't be easy for your kids. Mister, it will not be easy for you. And that's the reason you have to make a radical, dramatic, clear choice. Because, if you don't choose, you're going down. Now, Moses had been doing some figuring. Look, if you will, in verse 23 of this same chapter. The Bible says, he esteemed—he esteemed—some things; he esteemed the riches of Christ greater than the pleasures in Egypt. He's been thinking about it, and he just makes up his mind; he's thinking about profit and loss.

Look at it again. He chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches." Now, here's what he's doing. He's just thinking. All right, I have a choice. "Esteem" means he's figured, he judged. There are the glories of the future. There are the pleasures of the present. There's the King of kings. There's the king of Egypt. There's a clean heart, fellowship with God. There is lust and sensual satisfaction. God's treasures. Satan's trash. And he has to make up his mind. And the Bible says, "he had respect to the recompense of the reward."

Now, here's Moses. Moses has to make up his mind. He's got some things he's looking at. He says, "Well, here are the pleasures of Egypt. Here are the pleasures of sin. I can satisfy my physical lust." But then, he looks over here. He sees the riches of Christ. He sees the glory of God. He sees satisfaction. He sees joy. He looks over here. He sees this, and he sees where it's going to end. He looks over here, he sees that, and he sees where it's headed. He says, I'm going that way. I am going that way. Every man in this room, every woman, every boy, every girl needs to make a clear-cut choice. And, if you don't choose, you're going down. Nobody is going to drift into purity in these days. You're going to have to choose.

III. There Must Be a Determined Refusal

Now, what I'm trying to say is, there must be a proper evaluation. You do that by faith. Number two: there must be a clear choice. Number three: there must be a determined refusal—a determined refusal. Go back again to Hebrews chapter 11, and notice that Moses not only chose, but he also refused. Now, notice what it says: "By faith..."—verse 24—"By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Moses knew that you can't have both. You can have one, or you can have the other. But what happened is this: that Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. That means he refused all the pleasures of Egypt.

Now, listen to me carefully, and I want you to get the order. Moses refused, in verse 24, because he chose, verse 25. He chose because he had esteemed some things and he made an evaluation. Now, that's always the order. No one will refuse pornography until he first chooses righteousness. And no one will choose righteousness until he makes a proper evaluation and sees what really counts.

Now, you try and tell your child, "Don't look at that. Don't go to this film. Don't do this thing. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't." You say, "I'm not going to let you do that. You can't go there." "Why, Mommy? Everybody else is going." "No, you can't go." You're fighting a losing battle. Did you ever try to take a nasty bone away from a dog? It's a good way to get bit. But I'll tell you how to get a bone away from a dog: put a steak on the ground. Put a steak down there, and that dog will look at that steak and think about what he's got in his mouth. Now, what he will do, he'll go through a process. Step number one: evaluation. Step number two: choosing. Step number three: refusing. I want this. That's it. Even a dog has got that much sense. First, he evaluates. Then, he chooses. And then, he refuses. You are not going to lead your children until you take the same steps. They make a proper evaluation. Then, they make a clear choice. And then, they make a refusal. And they'll say, "No, that's not for me."

Have you made a refusal? You can, if you want, but it's going to have to be depending upon God. Satan wants to destroy our families. What Satan wants to do is to defy God, defile the mind, devalue your children, and destroy your family. Young man, listen to me. God is not a cosmic killjoy. God loves you. God is not trying to keep you from true pleasure. He wants you to have true pleasure. God is a good God. Let me give you some verses—Psalm 37, verse 4: "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 84, verse 11: "For the Lord thy God is a sun and a shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." First Timothy chapter 6, verse 17: "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded and trust in uncertain riches; but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."

Don't get an idea that, when God sees anybody having fun, He moves in to break up

the party. I've served Him long enough to know it pays to serve Jesus. I would not take anything for my relationship with Jesus Christ. I would not take anything for my relationship to my darling wife, who is Joyce. I would not take anything for those things that God wants for me. They are treasures and not trash.

Conclusion

Now, this is the first message: teaching your children to choose and then refuse after making a proper evaluation. You're going to have to get in their hearts and minds that a clean heart is its own reward, that the ability to love is the greatest gift that God gives, and pornography kills that. And the future hope of a wonderful home is the best thing they can have. It is God's highest good, apart from heaven itself. And the devil wars against that. If you're a father, it is your major responsibility to guard your heart, and protect your home.

Next Sunday night, I want to talk to you about how to maintain a clean heart, straight from the Word of God. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you pray that God would give you an understanding heart? Remember, you're going to have to teach your children there is a Word of God. They're not going to be able to choose unless they choose as Moses chose—by faith. And faith comes from the Word of God. There is a battle today against truth. That's the reason you need to have your children in a Bible-preaching church. It's the reason you need to know the truth, believe the truth, teach the truth, live the truth, love the truth. They need to understand the value of a clean heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They need to understand the difference between love and lust. They need to understand that the highest good, the sweetest thing, on earth is a godly family. And pornography wars against all three.

Father God, speak to my own heart. Speak to the heart of every father, mother, boy and girl in this building. O God, help us to be pure in heart, that we might know, see, and love You, and love one another, and have the kind of a home that You really want us to have, and not to trade treasure for trash. In Jesus' name. Amen.

How to Live in Victory in an X-Rated World

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 28, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:24–26

*“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of
God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;”*

HEBREWS 11:25

Outline

Introduction

- I. Moses Made a Firm Decision
 - II. Moses Made a Full Departure
 - III. Moses Discovered a Faithful Deliverance
- Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God’s word, today, and open, please, to Hebrews chapter 11, and as you have found Hebrews chapter 11, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 24.

And, years ago I read something that has stayed in my mind for many years. There were some soldiers at Fort Dix, many, many years ago who were fighting a forest fire. And, they were out there, the flames were all around them, and a plane flew over. It was an unidentified pilot, nobody knows to this day exactly who the pilot was. But, he flew very low over those fire fighters, and began to drop notes on them. He had weights tied to the notes and he dropped those notes. Three times he did this. And, this is what he said to them. He said, “You are surrounded by flames and you’re going to perish in the flames unless you take action immediately. There is one narrow corridor, and that is your only escape. And, before long it will be cut off.” Three times he did this. And, they read the note, and they obeyed the note. And, they saved their lives. There was a message from above that was telling them something that they could not know down there in the smoke, and the fire, and the heat where they were. Now they, thankfully, did not question the authenticity of the note, or the reliability of the note, but they acted on it. And, they acted in time, and they were saved.

Very much like our society today, we are surrounded. We are in a maelstrom of

trouble. We're in an inferno of problems and God is saying, "There is one way to escape." And, God has given us, today a message from above. Somebody has written a book on how to raise kids in an x-rated society. I want to borrow from that title, I've not read the book, but I want to borrow from the title, and just simply say, How to Live in Victory in an X-Rated Society. Not just raising kids, but all of us, today. How are we going to live in victory in an x-rated society? Moses did a long time ago and the Bible holds him up for an example. Look, if you will, in Hebrews 11 verse 24–29: *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned."*

How to have victory in an x-rated society. Moses, by faith, had victory in the society of Egypt, which was indeed very much like our society today. It is demon possessed and controlled by powers that are ungodly.

Now, there are three basic things that Moses did that I know if you'll do these same three things, God will give you victory. He will give you personal victory, domestic victory, social victory, spiritual victory, and eternal victory. Victory in Jesus can be yours.

I. Moses Made a Firm Decision

Number one is that Moses made a firm decision, a firm decision. Hebrews 11 verses 24–26. Now verse 24 says that he refused, and verse 25 says that he chose. Verse 26 says that he esteemed. That's the method of his decision.

Now, first of all, Moses refused something. Verse 24 says that by faith Moses refused to be called the son of pharaoh's daughter. That is, to be called the grandson of pharaoh. Now, who was pharaoh? Well, he was the king of Egypt. And, Moses had a choice. He was heir to the throne if he wanted to. He could have been the next king of Egypt. He was a prince, but he turned his back on that. Can you imagine the treasures and the pleasures of the king of Egypt? Can you imagine what this man turned his back on?

He turned his back on pleasure. He turned his back on treasure. He turned his back on power and that was the most powerful man on the face of the earth. He turned his back on prestige. He refused to be called the son of pharaoh's daughter. Well, why would a person do such a thing? Well, verse 25 says not only did he refuse something, but also all the more strange, he chose something. He chose rather to suffer affliction.

Now, didn't that sound strange? Turn your back on pleasure and turn your face toward affliction. But, that's what he chose. He chose to suffer.

Does anybody here want to choose to suffer? I don't think most of us do. Most of us would say, "If you don't mind, I'd rather have the pleasure and the treasure. I don't want to suffer." But, Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. He chose fellowship with God and fellowship with God's people. Now, why did he do that? Verse 24 tells what he refused, verse 25 tells what he chose, and verse 26 tells why he did it. Look in verse 26. The Bible says that he'd been doing some figuring and he esteemed the riches—the reproach of Christ—that had greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt.

It has been my privilege to travel Egypt and go to the Egyptian museum and to see some of the treasures of Egypt. Some of you have seen the treasures of Egypt as they were displayed here, and the treasures of old King Tut. And, you've seen all of that gold sarcophagus, all of those incredible, incalculable, treasures that were buried with old King Tut. But, friend, he's just as dead as if he'd been buried in a wooden box. Isn't that right? It didn't make any difference how many treasures were buried with King Tut. Now, what Moses did was he turned his back on the treasures and the pleasures of Egypt, because he esteemed. He'd been doing some figuring and he esteemed the riches—the reproach of Christ—to be greater riches than all of the treasures of Egypt.

Now, the word *esteemed* here is a bookkeeping term. Now, what Moses had been doing is just balancing the ledger. Moses said, "Well, if I go this way, let me see what will happen. What will I have if I go to Egypt? Well, I'll have this and I'll have pleasure, I'll have treasure, I'll have power, I'll have prestige, and I'll have all of this. How long will it last? For a season. Now, suppose I go this way and suppose I suffer affliction with the children of God. Suppose I take my stand, and stand up for Jesus. How long will that last? Well, let me take the telescope of faith and see." And, he sees the Lord Jesus upon the throne. He, by faith, gets a glimmer of what Jesus says: "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5). He sees power, and he sees joy. He sees fellowship with God divine. He sees this way, and he sees that way. And, he says, "I'm no fool. I am going that way."

Now, dear friend, the only way a man can do that, though, is by faith. You see, the devil says, "Take the short look." The Bible says, "Take the long look." Now, I would be a fool to tell you, my dear friend, that there is no pleasure in sin. The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin. Now, last night there were some kids down at the coliseum at a rock concert. Don't go down there and tell those kids they weren't having a good time, 'cause they'll think you're crazy. They were having a big time. That's what the Bible calls the pleasures of sin. And, by the way, if you're watching, don't some young person write me and tell me there's nothing wrong with all that because you're wasting your ink and my

time. Okay?

Now, listen, they can have a ball, but the pleasures of sin are but for a season. “Well,” you say, “Adrian, you’re never gonna reach the kids by talking down to them that way.” You’re right, and I’m really not talking down to them. If you try to tell the kids that there’s no pleasure in sin, you’ll never reach ’em that way. What they have to see is that there are greater riches in the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you ever try and take a nasty bone away from a dog? It’s a good way to get bit. But, I’ll tell you how to get a bone away from a dog. You just put a steak down on the ground. He’ll drop that bone to get that steak. And, what we’re trying to do, I mean, so many parents are trying to say, “Kids, don’t do that and don’t do this. And, that’s wrong and you can’t do this. And, you can’t do that!” And, the reason we’re missing a generation friend is because we’ve never shown them the riches of Jesus. We have never shown them what they could have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for by sin undermined. I have the secret. I know where ‘tis found. Only true pleasures in Jesus abound. That’s what they’re searching for, but they don’t know it. Moses by faith endured because he saw Him who is invisible.

Now, friend, you can look at the visible, or the invisible, and you can look at the temporal, or you can look at the eternal. You can look at the pleasures of sin or you can look at the joys of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hey, kids, don’t feel sorry for me because I’m a Christian. You say, “Well, wait a minute, fella, you’re so old you don’t know what it’s all about.” I know. Let me tell you something. You see, I was once young, and now I’m old. You’re only young and you’ve never been old. I know everything you know, and something else too. Huh, huh, you don’t realize that do you?

You see, listen, I’ve been where you are. And, I want to tell you I knew the Lord Jesus Christ when I was in high school. And, I don’t want to brag, but I wasn’t on the sidelines in high school. I was captain of the football team and president of my class. But, I was a Christian. I didn’t smoke or drink. I dated a virgin and I married a virgin. I was a virgin when I got married. I’ve lived for the Lord Jesus Christ in high school and right on. I haven’t missed anything, friend.

I want to tell you something else. The best is yet to be. The best is yet to be! You’d better take the long look and you’d better see what the Lord Jesus Christ has to offer. I’d sooner eat dirt than to willingly sin. I don’t care how much so-called pleasure there is in it. You see, what Moses did is this. Moses made a definite decision. Now, he refused. Why did he refuse? Because he chose and why did he choose? Because he esteemed, he did some reasoning. He did some thinking. It’s about time some of us did the same thing. Now, listen, do you want to have victory in an x-rated society?

II. Moses Made a Full Departure

Well, number one, my dear friend, what you must do is make a firm decision. But, secondly, not only did Moses make a firm decision. Then he made a full departure. I want you to go back, if you will, and look at our text again. And now, in verse 27 says that by faith he forsook Egypt. Do you see that? He made a firm decision and then a full departure. I mean, he checked out of Egypt. He got out of Egypt. Now, the devil didn't want Moses to leave Egypt. Now, remember, Egypt is a picture or an illustration in the Bible of the world. And, pharaoh is a picture or an illustration of the devil himself. And, pharaoh didn't want Moses to leave Egypt so he offered some clever compromises. And, those compromises are still with us today. Now, sometimes it's good to compromise.

I heard about a man who wanted to go to the beach for vacation and his wife wanted to go to the mountains. And so, they just compromised and went to the mountains. Now, sometimes it's good to compromise. But, dear friend, not when it comes to Satan and not compromising with Satan. I want you to go back, if you will, to where this story literally happened.

We're reading a New Testament commentary and an Old Testament story. So turn to Exodus chapter 8, and I want you to see what the devil, through pharaoh, threw at Moses because he'll throw the same four compromises at you. Now notice, there was a firm decision, but that firm decision had to be followed by a full departure. Now notice, in Exodus chapter 8 and verse 25. Moses has come to pharaoh and said, "Pharaoh, we're leaving here. Just color me gone!" And pharaoh said, "Now, wait a minute! Wait a minute! You can't just act that way." And, here's the first compromise in Exodus 8 verse 25: *"And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land."* Do you see it in verse 25? And, the land that he meant was the land of Egypt. Now, he says, "Now, Moses, listen. If you want to be religious, that's all right. If you want to serve your God, that's all right. If you want to have your Jewish sacrifices, that's all right. But, Moses look, don't forsake Egypt. Just do it right here in the land. There is no need to break with Egypt. Just worship God in the land of darkness and worship God in the land of slavery. Worship God here in the land of compromise."

Now, that's the same thing the devil is saying to an entire generation that, "You just stay right in the world and then go to church on Sunday morning. Just tack Christianity on. Just take the things of the world and refine them. You can dress up Egypt, but you don't have to desert Egypt." And, there are many churches and many so-called religions that are recommending culture rather than Calvary, and education rather than regeneration. You see, Satan is not against worship. He enjoys you worshiping and sacrificing to your God in the land. That is, never having a new birth and never, ever being saved. And so, the first compromise is to not get saved, but to just tack religion

on. It's what I call the salvation compromise. Lots of folks have bit it. A lot of religious people—baptized pagans—fill churches on Sunday morning. But, they've never forsaken Egypt. Isn't that right? You know it is true. You know it is true. But, the Bible says that Moses forsook Egypt. Well, here comes a second compromise.

Moses says, "Look, we're going and you're not gonna keep us here." So the pharaoh comes with a second compromise. In Exodus chapter 8 and verse 28, look at this one, *"And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away..."* Oh boy, I'm talking to a lot of folks today who've bought this one. What the devil said to Moses, through pharaoh, "Now, Moses if you're gonna get saved, whatever you do, don't become an extremist. Don't become a religious fanatic and be sure you don't become a Baptist. Live on the borderline of sin. I mean, if you're going out of the world, just stay in the wilderness. I mean, stay so close in the suburbs of sin that if you want to take a little excursion back into Egypt you can do it."

How many folks are like this? You're saved, but I'll tell you dear friend, you just did get out of Egypt, you're still out in the suburbs of sin, and you're living in compromise. You're living in disgrace to the Lord. And, some people can't tell whether you are a Hebrew or an Egyptian spiritually. The Bible says in Exodus chapter 11 and verse 7: *"the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel."* The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 17: *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."*

So many of us want to see how close to the world we can live. We don't want to drink, necessarily. But, we'll go to pub and we'll sit around with our friends, and we'll sip a ginger ale so that they won't know that we're any different. Oh, my dear friend, why don't we just go ahead and be different? Why don't we take an out-and-out stand for the Lord Jesus Christ? As a matter of fact, I believe that Jesus would rather have you on the wrong side of the fence than sitting on the fence. He literally says that in Revelation chapter 3 verse 15–16: *"I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."*

Did you know that those compromisers, who are living in the suburbs of sin, are doing more to harm the cause of Christ than the out-and-out atheists and unbelievers? Did you know that? Many times we can't reach the goal because we're stumbling over our own teammates. And, they're heartbreak to pastors. They're the alibi of sinners. They make angels weep. And so, pharaoh said, "Hey, Moses! Stay right here in Egypt!" He said, "I'm not gonna do it." "All right then, Moses. If you're gonna come out of Egypt, just go right out into the wilderness, out into the suburbs of sin." Moses said, "No, we're going. And, we're going all the way."

Then, pharaoh's not finished yet. Turn to Exodus chapter 10 and look with me in

verse 8–9, and see what he says. *“And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God...”* That is, if you’re going and you’re going all the way, just go ahead. *“But who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.”* Now, look in Exodus 10 verse 10–11, if you will, *“And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you.”*

Doesn’t he sound so nice now? He can’t do anything else but that. *And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.*

You know what pharaoh said? Pharaoh said, “Look, Moses, if you’re gonna be such a fanatic then you’re gonna forsake Egypt. And, if you’re gonna be such a double fanatic that you’re going to, not just stay in the suburbs in the wilderness, and then it’s all right. You men go. But hey, it’s dangerous out there and don’t take your kids with you. Don’t take your families with you just leave your family in Egypt.”

The devil hates family religion. The devil says, “All right, go ahead parents, and be religious, but don’t take your kids to Heaven with you.” We’re losing a generation. Right here in our congregation we have folks who love God, but somehow their children are being left behind and their children are going to die and go to Hell.”

Now, listen. It’s a compromise and a strategy of Satan to get the kids of God’s people, but the Bible says in Acts chapter 16 and verse 31: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”* God wants household salvation. Genesis chapter 7 and verse 1: *“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark.”* Joshua said in Joshua chapter 24 and verse 15: *“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”*

Dear friend, listen, the devil wants us to compromise in this matter of family religion. Acts chapter 11 and verse 13–14, the angel said to Cornelius, send for *“Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”* And, he didn’t mean the building you’re living in, but he means your household. Do you think it’s all right for you to sitting here in church on Sunday morning and members of your home are on the road to Hell? And, you’re not setting an example. You’re not living for them and you’re not witnessing to them.

Do you know what Katherine Boothe who was the wife of the founder of the Salvation Army said? I want to give you this. She prayed and she said, “Oh God, I will not stand before thee without all my children.” And, there are some dads here who need to say that. There are some of you dads who’re leading your kids straight to Hell. And, you’re saved, but you’re living so in the suburbs of sin so that your sons are following

your example, and your sons are going to die and go to Hell. Katherine Boothe said, “God, I will not stand before you without all my children.” And, every one of them was saved and became a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

You see, listen, Moses made a firm decision and then he made a full departure. But now, the devil’s not finished yet. You’d think he’d give up now. Moses won’t buy these compromises, and so now, see what he does. Look in Exodus chapter 10 verse 24: “*And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD...*” And, implied here is, take your kids with you. But now watch. Boy, he dies hard didn’t he? “*Only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.*” Huh, that is, “Okay go ahead, go all the way, and take your kids. But, leave your cattle, leave your flocks, and leave your herds because I want them in Egypt.”

And, many men and many women have bought this compromise. “Go ahead and be religious and be a Christian, but don’t bring your business into it. I mean, don’t let your wealth, your business, and your finances be committed to the Lord.” You say, “There you go again, preaching on finances.” Well, friend, I don’t preach about finances nearly as much as the Bible mentions it. And, I’m getting under conviction about it. Did you know that one out of every six verses in the four gospels—one out of every six verses—has to do with the right and wrong use of a man’s possessions? Did you know that sixteen out of the thirty-eight parables that Jesus told have to do with the right and wrong use of possessions? The devil knows that if he can get your treasure, he has a part of you. “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Luke 12:34).

And, so here it is. The devil says, “Stay in Egypt.” Moses says, “We’re going.” And, then the devil says, “Well, all right, don’t go very far.” Moses says, “We’re going all the way.” And, then the devil said, “Well, don’t take your kids with you.” Moses says, “I’m taking my kids with me.” And, then the devil says, “Well, leave your business back there in Egypt.” And, Moses says, “I’m not going to leave my business in Egypt. We’re taking it all.” And, I want you to listen to the answer that Moses gave. I just love this answer. Notice, in Exodus 10 verse 26. Boy, I hope if you haven’t underlined this in your Bible yet, you’ll underline it. Here’s what Moses says, “*Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind.*”

Don’t you love that? And, I would just say, “Moses, I wish you’d of said ‘not a hide, not a hair, not a horn, and not a hoof. Not anything’s going to be left behind. It’s all going. We’re going and we’re going all the way. We’re all going, and we’re taking everything we got with us.’” Amen? Have you ever said that? I mean, have you ever said that to the lord? Look, first of all, a firm decision and then a full departure. Have you made a full departure? Go back to our text. The Bible says that by faith he forsook Egypt. Just go back now, to Hebrews chapter 11 says that by faith he forsook Egypt. Now, let me come to the final, and the wonderful thing about it.

III. Moses Discovered a Faithful Deliverance

You see, he made a firm decision and he made a full departure, because he saw what he had in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, he discovered a faithful deliverance. The Lord did something very wonderful for this man. Continue to read here in Hebrews chapter 11 and look, if you will, in verse 28. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. I love this part of it. You see, now, it's not just enough for anybody to make a decision. I made a lot of decisions, I was not able to fulfill. It's not just enough for a person to say, "I'm leaving Egypt." Hey, folks, we don't have what it takes to leave Egypt. I mean, it's not in us. We don't have the power unless God gives us the dynamic. So, I want you to see what happened.

There was a decision and there was a departure, but how? Because, my dear friend, there was a dynamic deliverance. There was faithfulness on God's part. Now, he says here that by faith he kept the Passover. What's he talking about? Well, that night before they left Egypt, God said, "I want you to take some lambs, spotless lambs, male lambs without spot or blemish." In that male pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. And, he said, "I want you to sacrifice that lamb." And, then he said, "I want you to roast it." Can you imagine how those Egyptians must have felt? The smell of barbecued lamb all over Egypt. "What are they up to now?" And, then God said, "I want you to eat the lamb." Oh, my dear friend, listen. The lamb gave protection and power. And, every time an Israelite went out, a lamb went out in him.

Now listen, huh, huh, do you see? A lamb was in them. A lamb went out in them. Christ in you is the hope of glory. See, the Bible says, "*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*" (1 Corinthians 5:7). You see, we are, we are freed from the punishment and the power of sin. Now, when Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us, this is what they were told to do: take a lamb, kill it, take the blood of that lamb, and put the blood of that lamb on the doorpost and the lintel of the house. And, some say that when they did that, they made the sign of the cross. Putting it on the lintel and on the doorpost.

And so, here it is. Whenever a Jew went out, he went out under the blood, and with a lamb on the inside. Don't you like that? He went out under the blood, and with a lamb on the inside. Picture the blood of Jesus and the power of God to help you to come out of Egypt. Cause, my dear friend, just deciding you are gonna come out is not enough. Dear friend, God went out with them. God did something very wonderful for them. I want you to just use some sanctified imagination. I want you to imagine three boys that night. Now, remember what God said the night of the Passover? God said, "I'm gonna send my death angel through the land. And, my death angel's gonna be looking for the blood on the door post of every house." And, God said, "If my death

angel doesn't see the blood then he's going to come into that house and he's going to smite with death the first born."

I want you imagine one son who goes to his dad and he says, "Dad, I've heard what Moses said and God told Moses what to say. God said 'We'd better get a lamb.' After all Dad, I'm the first-born. Don't you think we'd better do what Moses said?" And, the dad said, "We certainly will, son. Let's look at this lamb. How's this lamb, son?" And, the son replied, "Oh Dad, that's a perfect lamb." His dad said, "All right, son, we're going to kill this lamb. He's dying for you, son. He's becoming your substitute. There's his blood, son, it's on the door. We've done just what God said." The boy says, "Thank you, Daddy. That's so wonderful. Thank you, Dad." That boy goes to sleep that night and he sleeps so soundly.

But, here's another boy. He comes to his dad, and he says, "Dad, I heard what Moses said and, Dad, I'm the first-born here. Dad, don't you think we'd better get a lamb?" The dad said, "All right, son, we will." And, the son said, "Dad, I want to see that it is a perfect lamb." The dad replied, "All right, son, it is perfect." The son said, "Dad, I want to see the blood's put up there." The dad said, "All right, son, the blood is there. We've done everything." And, the son said, "Thanks, Dad." And, then all through the night that boy tosses and turns, worries, weeps, and prays. And finally, when the sun comes up and he's still alive and he says, "Oh, I made it, hallelujah!" I want to ask you a question. Which son was the most safe? They were both just as safe because the blood had been applied. But, one got there second-class, didn't he? Now, friend, the blood makes us safe, but the Word makes us sure. Did you know that? Now, a lot of us are just failing to take God at His Word. Listen, when we're under the blood, we're under the blood. And, so many of us, we're going to get to heaven, and we're going worry our way all the way there.

But now, let me give you a third son. Let's say this is pharaoh's son. And, pharaoh's sons come to pharaoh and he says, "Dad, you know those Hebrews down there? You know that leader they got, that troublemaker, Moses? He is telling them that, there's a death angel that's gonna come through tonight and the first-born is going to be killed, even of the Egyptians. And, Dad, I happen to be your first-born son. And, Dad don't you think that we'd better get us a lamb, sacrifice that lamb, and put the blood on our doorpost?" And, pharaoh says, "Son, are you crazy? That's the religion of the Hebrews. We have our Egyptian priests. We have our culture. We have our ways. Son, the religions of Egypt have been good enough for us. We have our priest. Son, don't you worry about that blood-of-the-lamb stuff. Besides that there will be guards outside your door all night long."

Conclusion

But the Bible tells us that pharaoh's son died. I want to tell you, dear friend, there is no other way but the blood of the Lamb. Had there been some other way—are you listening?—God would have taken it. Do you think that God would let His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, die on that cross in agony and blood, had there been some other way? Do you? I mean, do you think that God would've said, "Now, Jesus, it's not necessary for you die for the sins of men, but just go ahead and die. But, there are many ways to get to heaven." No, my dear friend, there is but one-way and that is the blood that makes us safe and the Word makes us sure. How can you have victory in an x-rated society? I'll tell you how. A firm decision, a full departure, and a faithful deliverance. God will see you through, I promise. Better than that, He promises. I want us to bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed.

Christ in the Passover

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 4, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:24–29

Outline

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 - A. The Salvation Compromise
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- II. The Divine Deliverance Concerning the Pollution of Sin
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Conclusion

Introduction

We're going to be thinking today on this subject. This past week we had a delightful experience where we had here at Bellevue Church what we call, or what is called, a "Seder Supper," which is a Passover supper. We had many Jewish friends to come and share that Seder with us. It was beautifully prepared, sumptuously enjoyed. And, we had someone to come and explain what the Passover means from the Old Testament perspective, from the background of our Jewish friends, and then what it means to those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It was a delightful evening. And then, as we were having that Seder, I was thinking, "You know, Sunday, I'm going to be preaching, and I'm preaching on looking unto Jesus—a series in the Book of Hebrews." And, my heart said, "What about preaching on the Passover from the Book of Hebrews?" And so, I went home and looked in Hebrews chapter 11, and I want you to look at these verses with me.

Hebrews chapter 11 and beginning in verse 24: "*By faith*"—well, I'll wait just a moment. I was reading "by faith." I can still hear the pages going. All right, Hebrews 11, verse 24—"*By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches*

than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Hebrews 11:24–29).

Keeping the Passover by faith, seeing Christ in the Passover—that’s what we’re going to be talking about. Life is short; death is sure. Sin is the cause; Christ is the cure. We need to understand that the malady of this world is, indeed, sin. And, by nature, by birth, by practice, we’re all sinners. We may be rich sinners or poor sinners; we may be educated sinners, ignorant sinners; we may be religious sinners or irreligious sinners, we may be baptized sinners or not baptized sinners—but by birth, by nature, and by choice, we are sinners and need to be saved from that sin. And, I’ll tell you that America needs more than a war on poverty—she need a war on sin. Did you know that the costliest thing around is sin? It brings poverty. Now, I wouldn’t expect anybody to stand up in Congress and say, “Gentlemen, the problem is sin.” I wouldn’t expect anybody to stand up in the Pentagon and say, “Our enemy is sin.” I wouldn’t expect anybody to stand up in one of the great laboratories and one of our universities and say that it is the sin factor that has called so much pain, and moan, and groan, and woe, and heartache in the world today. No. But, ladies and gentlemen, we never, ever deal with a problem because we never, ever make the right diagnosis. I’m talking about mankind in general. They spend all of the time sweeping down cobwebs, rather than killing spiders. We need to understand that the cobweb is the result of the sin. The heartache and the poverty—the sin itself is that spider that causes it.

Now, where’s the answer going to come? From where is it going to come? It’s going to come from above. Years ago, there were 80 soldiers in Fort Dix who were fighting a forest fire, and they were out there with their shovels, and trucks, and so forth, making trenches and trying to night that fire. When the fire got ahead of them and engulfed them and they knew no way out—there was a wall aflame all around them, and they thought for awhile that they would perish—and then a private aircraft flew low through the smoke and over them this way and that way. Then, he circled back again, opened the window of that airplane, and dropped a weighted note. And then, he did this again, and a third time—three notes he dropped them. They picked it up and read the note, and what he said is this: “I can see your predicament in thus-and-such a direction. There is a narrow passage; there’s an opening. You must head for it directly and go through it; it is your only chance to be saved from the flames.” They took the note; they believed it. They went through that narrow channel; they went through that corridor

there, through the flames, and they were delivered. Had they refused to receive the message from above, the charred remains would have been there in the forest below. And, dear friend, I want to tell you that God Himself is the One who is sending us a message from above, and it is God who is telling us the only way out. And, we had better believe it.

Now, I want you to notice here in the scripture that I had given you—in Hebrews chapter 11, especially the first or the last three verses of the scripture that we read—verses 27, 28, and 29. Verse 27 speaks of a decision. Verse 28 speaks of a deliverance, and verse 29 speaks of a demonstration. And, I want us to see this.

I. The Definite Decision Concerning the Practice of Sin

First of all, I want you to see Moses's faith—the faith that led to a definite decision regarding the practice of sin. Read it again in verse 27: *“By faith he”*—that is, “Moses”—*“forsook Egypt”* (Hebrews 11:27). Now, Egypt, in the Bible, is symbolic of sin. And, the King of Egypt, who was Pharaoh, is symbolic of Satan. And, when Moses forsook Egypt, it symbolizes Moses forsaking sin. Egypt is a picture of the bondage of sin, and Pharaoh illustrates Satan. Now, of course, Pharaoh did not want them to go. I've told you before and want to tell you again that Satan never gives up anybody, anything, without a fuss, without a fight, without a struggle.

So, I want you now—just to put your bookmark there in Hebrews chapter 11, and I want you to turn back to Exodus chapter 8, where these events transpired, and let's look at them. Exodus chapter 8—I want you to notice some clever compromises that Pharaoh, who represents the devil, offered to Moses to keep Moses out of the Promised Land.

A. The Salvation Compromise

Let's look, for example, in Exodus chapter 8 and verse 25. Do you have it? *“And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land”* (Exodus 8:25). Now, what he meant by that was “in the land of Egypt—no need to make or break with Egypt. No need to move out of Egypt. If you want to be religious, Moses, go right ahead. If you want to worship your God, Moses, go right ahead, but Moses, do it right here in Egypt.” Now, what he was saying to them is the same thing the devil going to say to some of you: “if you want to be religious, that's quite all right. Just tack your religion onto your old sinful life; just add a little religion in there, and it will be quite all right. You can just dress up Egypt; you don't have to desert Egypt—you don't have to leave Egypt.” You see, what the devil does is to try to get you to be religious but lost. The devil had rather you substitute education for regeneration. He

doesn't mind it if you have culture rather than Calvary. Satan's master plan—listen—is to have you religious but lost. Pharaoh was not against their worship, and the devil is not against yours. *The devil had just as soon send you to Hell from this pew as he had the gutter.* He doesn't mind if you're religious so long as you stay in Egypt—that is, so long as you stay in your lost condition.

B. The Separation Compromise

And so, that's the first clever compromise. Well, Moses said, "Oh no, Pharaoh, we're not going to stay here in this place. We are coming out of the land of bondage." Well, Pharaoh doesn't give up yet, so I want you to notice now in chapter 8 and verse 28 what he says: *"And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away"* (Exodus 8:28). Now, God had not called them to the wilderness; God had called them to the Promised Land. God had not called them to a rocks, and sand, and rattlesnakes; God had called them to milk, and honey, and pomegranates, and grapes, and hills, and valleys, and waterfalls, and rivers. But, ole' Pharaoh says, "All right, if you're going, don't go very far. You just move right out to the suburbs of Egypt, and that's where you can worship—right out there." You see, if the devil cannot keep you from going, he'll try to keep you from going all the way. He'll try to make you a wilderness Christian; he'll try to make you a carnal Christian. He'll try to get you to be saved and then settled down in the suburbs of sin, and that's what some of you have done—and you are still doing it—by the compromise of the devil.

You see, God wants you to be different. The Bible says they were to go all the way. In Exodus chapter 11 and verse 7, that verse says, *"[God] doth [make] a difference between the Egyptians and Israel"* (Exodus 11:7). God makes a difference. We ought to be different—a Christian ought to be different. A Christian ought to stand out in this world like a gardenia in a garbage can. He ought to be different. We ought not to be the same. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians: *"come out from among them, and be...separate, saith the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 6:17). Are you separate? Are you different, or have you taken the devil's compromise? I mean, can those people who look at you tell the difference between you and a real child of God? Sometimes we dress alike, we talk alike, we act alike, and we even smell alike—no difference. One man said, "I'm glad my wife doesn't smoke; I'd hate to kiss my wife and smell a camel." Amen? They even smell alike. We need to be different. And so, ole' Pharaoh, first of all, he brought up the salvation compromise. They wouldn't buy that; and so, he brought up the separation compromise: "if you go, don't go very far." Moses said, "Look, Mr. Pharaoh, we're going and we're going all the way."

C. The Soul-Winning Compromise

Well, he doesn't give up yet, so turn to chapter 10 and look, if you will, in verse 8—chapter 10 and verse 8: *“And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go. serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD. And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you”*—doesn't he sound religious, this old rascal?—*“[and] I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you. Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire”* (Exodus 10:8–11). Now, what was Pharaoh saying? Pharaoh said, “Hey Moses, if you're going and you're going all the way, tell me who's going.” Moses said, “We're all going.” He said, “Now, wait a minute—don't take your families with you; just leave your children behind. It might be dangerous out there. Leave your wives behind. Don't all of you go.” And, Moses said, “Look, we're going; we're going all the way and all of us are going.”

The devil hates family religion, but the Bible teaches family religion. I don't know how anyone could be content to go to Heaven and leave their loved ones behind to go to Hell. Now, I know somehow God's going to make it all right, but I don't understand how I could be in Heaven and my son Steve be in Hell. I don't understand how I could be in Heaven and my son David be in Hell. I don't understand how I could be in Heaven and my daughter Janice or my daughter Gayle be in Hell—or my grandchildren, or my mother, my father, my brother, my sister. How can I be satisfied to know that I have gone and my loved ones are behind? I know—I know—that God will make it right. I know He does. I understand that, but I cannot understand, dear friend, how anybody in this world could be content now to go to Heaven and leave their loved ones behind. And, Moses said, “Mister Pharaoh, we're going, and we're all going. We're not going to leave our children behind.”

The Bible teaches family religion. Acts chapter 16, verse 31: *“And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:31). That's what Paul told that Philippian jailer: “Look, you go home and tell the people at home, and if they believe, they will be saved also.” Genesis chapter 7, verse 1—when God told Noah to come into that ark: *“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all [of] thy house into the ark”* (Genesis 7:1). Do you think Noah would have been content to go into that ark and leave his family behind? Remember what Joshua said in Joshua chapter 24 and verse 15: *“choose you this day whom [you] will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (Joshua 24:15). Catherine Booth was the wife of the founder of the Salvation Army. She was a godly little lady. She loved God, and

she loved her family. And, this was her prayer—it is recorded: she said, “O God, I will not stand before Thee with out all of my children”—“I will not stand before Thee without all of my children.” All of her children were saved, and they all became preachers of the gospel. This is what Moses said: he said, “We’re going; we’re going all the way, and all of us are going.”

D. The Stewardship Compromise

The devil doesn’t give up yet, so I want you to notice the fourth compromise. Look, if you will, in chapter 10, verse 24: *“And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you”*—“All right, if you’re going to take the children, go ahead and take them, but now, you just leave your flocks. Leave your cows, and your sheep, and so forth behind”—*“And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God”*—that is, “we’re not going to go out there without a sacrifice to give to God. We love our God, and when we go, we’re going to worship Him with these things—our flocks, our herds; they’re going to be the means of our worship to God. And so, he says in verse 26—*“Our cattle also shall go with us”*—and here’s one of my favorite lines in all of the Bible; look at it—*“there shall not [be a] hoof..left behind”*—*“there shall not an hoof be left behind”*—*“for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God”* (Exodus 10:24–26). That is, “We’re going to serve God with our substance.” And, if the devil could not get them on the salvation compromise, or on the separation compromise, or on the soul winning compromise, he tried to get them on the stewardship compromise: “just leave it behind; leave your substance in Egypt.”

And, some of you are in danger doing that. Some of you are going to Heaven, but the devil has your business. You have never taken your substance—you have never taken your business—and dedicated it to Jesus Christ. And, therefore, there is a dimension in your worship that is failing, because Moses said, “Look, we need these things to serve God, to sacrifice to God.”

In a moment, we’re going to receive an offering, and that offering, dear friend, will be an act of your worship, just exactly as your prayer is an act of your worship. It will be an act of your worship, just as your Bible study is an act of your worship. It will be an act of your worship, just as your witness is an act of your worship. And, are you going to sit here and not serve God with your substance? It belongs to God; the devil has no right to your money. Many of you have not given God your money. I mean, it all belongs to God. Listen to Psalm chapter 50, verse 10: *“For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the*

fulness thereof" (Psalm 50:10–12). And, I tell you, we have no right—we have no right—to leave our substance in Egypt. And, if you're saved, my dear friend, I want to tell you that your pocketbook belongs to the Lord Jesus, your bank account belongs to the Lord Jesus—it all belongs to the Lord Jesus. Christ is blessing our church in a wonderful way. He's going to bless it even more. And, we're going to give—every one of us, including this man who's preaching—an opportunity to prove whether or not we've left something in Egypt. It all belongs to the Lord, and we're to say, "Here it is, Lord, take any part of it You want."

I tell you, God has set before us an open door, and God has given to us a tremendous challenge. Our Long-Range Planning Committee is going to report out before long, and they're going to tell you things; and when they tell you things, your ears are going to tingle and your hair is going to stand straight up. Then, we're going to find out whether or not you've got anything left in Egypt. I want to tell you something, friend: it's got to be all. Don't you let that dirty compromiser of the devil fight against you to compromise. Moses made a decision. He forsook Egypt. And, what Moses said—"Mr. Pharaoh, I want you to know we're going. I want you to know we're going all the way. I want you to know we're all going, and I want you to know we're going with all we have. We're taking our flocks with us—not a hide, not a hair, not a hook, not a horn is going to be left behind." Amen.

That's the way we ought to be living; that's the way you ought to be living. And so, first of all, now, to get ready for a Passover you need to understand there is a decision that needs to be made. Now, go back to the Book of Hebrews here for just a moment. Now, look again in verse 27. In verse 27, we see the faith that led to a definite decision regarding the practice of sin: "*he forsook Egypt*" (Hebrews 11:27).

II. The Divine Deliverance Concerning the Pollution of Sin

But now, the second thing I want you to see—I want you to see not only the definite decision concerning the practice of sin, but I want you to see the divine deliverance concerning the pollution of sin. Look, if you will now, in verse 28: "*Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them*" (Hebrews 11:28). It wasn't enough just simply for Moses to decide that he's going to forsake Egypt. If that's all Moses had done, he would have done like so many of you and just simply turn over a new leaf, saying, "I'm sick of the old way. I'm going to do better." But, you see, dear friend, with that decision there must be a dynamic. And, what is the dynamic that delivers us from the power of Egypt? It's one thing for us to repent, but the Bible teaches "*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Acts 20:21). And, what kind of faith? Faith in His shed blood as is exemplified

by the Passover.

Now, when God led the children of Israel out, He taught them to slay a Passover lamb. That Passover lamb was a picture, a prophecy, of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the Bible tells us in the New Testament that *“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”* (1 Corinthians 5:7). That Old Testament lamb represented God’s Lamb.

Now, go back, if you will, again, to Exodus. Let’s look, if you will for a moment, in Exodus chapter 12, and let’s begin reading in verse 1: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take...every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb”—*now, notice especially verses 5 and 6—*“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month”* (Exodus 12:1–6).

A. A Special Lamb

Now, let’s just pause there. This lamb was to be a special lamb—not just any lamb, couldn’t have a female lamb. The feminists are trying to de-sex the Bible, take what they call the “sexism” out of the Bible; and so, they’re trying to neuter the Bible. I wonder what they’re going to do when they get to this passage: “Take a male of the firstlings, a lamb without blemish, that is a pure, a spotless, an unblemished lamb” (Exodus 12:5) for that lamb pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to keep it up for three days. They were inspecting that lamb; they would look at every bit of that lamb. One blemish and that lamb was disqualified. Why, the Old Testament rabbis would even examine the eyelids of that little lamb. One blemish and it was disqualified. Had Jesus Christ not been the perfect Lamb of God—absolutely, sinlessly perfect—He, too, would have been disqualified, for this Old Testament lamb was but a picture and a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, the rabbis started raising lambs out in the fields of Bethlehem, the fields of Boaz—special Passover lambs. They were special and raised only there, and they were for Passover. And so, when Passover is getting ready on a special day, the shepherds take those lambs and they bring them into the city of Jerusalem by the sheep gate. On the same day that those lambs were coming into the city of Jerusalem in Jesus’s time—on that same day that they were coming in there to be examined—Jesus Christ, God’s Lamb, was also coming into the city of Jerusalem on that same day—what

we call “His triumphal entry.” Have you ever wondered why so much of the gospel is given over to the last week? Some of the gospels have more than one-third given over to the last week. Why is this? Because that was the time when God’s Lamb, the Lord Jesus, was being examined. How they examined Him! How they nitpicked! How they looked at Him! How they questioned Him! But, they had to say, “*Never a man spake like this man*” (John 7:46). Even old Pilate said, “*I find no fault in him*” (John 19:4). Jesus could look at them and say, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” (John 8:46). The Sadducees examined Him, the Pharisees examined Him, the priests examined Him, Pilate and the civil leaders examined Him—but all of them, in their heart of hearts, knew that there was not one sin against God’s sinless Lamb, the Lord Jesus. He was a special Lamb.

B. A Slain Lamb

But, continue to read here verse 6. Not only was He a special Lamb; He was a slain Lamb. Verse 6: “*And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it [until] the evening*” (Exodus 12:6). There was a special time when this lamb was to be slain—and just as there was a special time for the Son of God to be slain. He came in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4). He was God’s slain Lamb. On the fourteenth day of April—that’s the Jewish month that’s spoken of here; it’s our April—the father would take that little lamb, that spotless lamb, in his house, and he would pull the chin of that lamb up, and he would take that keen razor sharp knife, and slit the throat of that little spotless lamb—that little lamb that would not even make a murmur, that would not even bleed, as its throat was cut—and take the basin of that blood of that lamb as it was poured into a basin, and gather that in a basin.

You see, dear friend, go again with me to the Lord Jesus Christ there at His crucifixion. Remember, I told you about Bethlehem’s lambs coming into the city and Bethlehem’s Lamb, the Lord Jesus, who was coming into the city. Those little lambs were examined, and the Lord Jesus was examined. And then, on Mount Moriah, where Abraham was about to offer Isaac—and then Abraham saw that ram caught in the thicket, and the Bible says, “*Abraham saw Jesus and was glad*” (John 8:56). What was so significant about that ram that Abraham saw caught in the thicket? I’ll tell what it was. When Isaac and Abraham were getting ready to go up that mountain, Isaac, who was supposed to have been the sacrifice (at least in their mind), said, “*Father, I see the wood and I see the fire, but father, where is the sacrifice? Where is the lamb?*” And, do you remember what Abraham said? “*[The Lord] will provide himself a lamb*” (Genesis 22:8). Now, pay attention—not “*the Lord will provide a lamb for Himself*”; “*the Lord will*

provide himself as a Lamb.” Jesus was the Lord providing Himself. The Lord says, “I will be that Lamb.” *“[The Lord] will provide himself a lamb”* (Genesis 22:8). And, when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming there by Jordan, John the Baptist, by the speed of God that was upon him, said, *“Behold the Lamb of God”* (John 1:29).

And, as those Levites were there pulling back the throats of those little lambs there on that Passover day, as they were slitting those throats, Jesus was on that cross dying in agony and blood. God’s Lamb was dying. And, He bowed His head, and He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)—“So , Mr. Levite, you can go home; we don’t need you anymore. Little Bethlehem lambs, you can rejoice—don’t need you any more. The Lamb has died.” *“The Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29)—t hat Lamb was a special Lamb. That Lamb, ladies and gentlemen, was a slain Lamb.

C. A Saving Lamb

And, therefore, He became a saving Lamb. Look, if you will, in verse 7—Exodus chapter 12, verse 7: *“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it”* (Exodus 12:7). And then, look in verse 13—*“And the blood shall be to you for a token upon [your] houses where [you] are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you”* (Exodus 12:13). Judgment was deserved, but God says, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you”* (Exodus 12:13).

Now, verse 7 tells what they were to do with the blood—look at it: *“And they shall take...the blood, and strike it on the two side posts”* (Exodus 12:7). Can’t you see the father as he dips his cup in the blood—that basin of blood? And, can’t you see as he strikes it—not just rubs it, strikes it—on this doorposts as he takes it and strikes it on that doorposts, then, as he takes it and strikes it on the lintel of the door? Do you see it? Do you see the cross? Do you see the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as that blood drips from that lintel there upon the threshold—as the blood is there upon the two doorposts? Here is the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and everybody that went into that house that day went in under the blood; and, therefore, they were safe. For God said, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you”* (Exodus 12:13). And, it pictures the blood of Jesus Christ. For the Bible says, *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us”—hallelujah!—“from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). Oh, thank God for the blood!

Can you imagine a little Hebrew boy back in that time—he says, “Dad, listen, Moses says we’re to get a lamb, and we’re to kill it, and we’re to put the blood on the doorpost of our house—and if we don’t do it, the firstborn in the family is going to die. And Dad, since I happen to be the firstborn, do you mind if we check it out one more time?” And

so, he says, “Now Dad, have we done it according to the Word of God?” “Yes, Son.” “Dad, was our Lamb without spot, without blemish?” “Yes, Son.” “Now Father, did we put the blood upon the side post and the lintel of our house?” “Yes, Son.” “We’ve done everything we’re supposed to do?” “Yes, Son.” “All right, Dad. Thank you, Dad. Good night, Dad.” And, he goes to bed, and he sleeps so soundly that night because he’s just trusting the Word of God and the work of God.

Now, there’s another little Jewish boy—let’s just imagine him. And, he also has a fine daddy, and he says, “Dad, you know, I’m the firstborn in our home. So, I just want to check things out, Dad. I want to ask you a question, Dad: Did we get us a spotless lamb?” “Yes, Son, we did.” “Did we kill it as God said?” “Yes, we did.” “Did we apply the blood specifically as God told us to apply it?” “Yes, Son, we did.” “Well Dad, sounds good, but, well, I’ll tell you, that’s a terrible thing. If you don’t mind, I’m just going to sit up and pray all night. And oh, Dad, I don’t think I can sleep a wink tonight.” The death angel comes, and he passes over the first house; and he comes to that second house, and he passes over that one, too. That poor little boy worried all night for nothing.

You see, some people are going to Heaven first-class, and some people are going to Heaven second-class. Amen? Let me tell you something, friend: *the blood makes us safe, but the Word makes us sure*. Oh, when you take the Word of God and you rest in what God says... And, God cannot lie, and so you might as well rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

But now, let’s imagine a third boy. This is Pharaoh’s little boy. And, Pharaoh’s little boy says, “Hey Dad, you know this guy, Moses? He’s making all kinds of predictions, and they’re coming true. There are all kinds of plagues. And, now he’s saying that the plague of all plagues is coming. Why, he’s saying that if we do not place the blood of a lamb upon the doorposts of our house, a death angel’s going to come in and destroy the firstborn. And Dad, I happen to be the firstborn.” “Oh, Son, don’t worry about it. Listen, Son, I’m Pharaoh, and we’ve got many religions here in Egypt—and they’re good religions. We’ve got the best priest money can buy.” “Well Dad, but we’ve got lots of lambs—one little ole’ lamb?” “Son, don’t worry about it. Moses is a religious fanatic. Don’t worry about that blood of the lamb stuff. Go to sleep, Son. Daddy loves you.” And, at midnight there’s a flash, and a gasp, and a scream, and Pharaoh’s son is cold and dead, for the death angel has come.

God said, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*” (Exodus 12:13). Had they taken a live lamb and tied it to the door, it would have done no good. Salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ but by receiving life from the death of Christ. Had they taken rubies, and diamonds, and gold, and silver, and poetry and adorned those lintels, it would have done no good. God said, “*When I see the blood, I*

will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13). And, Hebrews chapter 9, 22 says, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22).

Oh, dear friend, have you come the blood way? I want to tell you that when you leave this auditorium this morning, everybody will walk out either under the blood or over the blood. Do you understand what I’m talking about? Either you will walk out as a child of God, receiving Christ, knowing Christ, loving Christ, or you will walk out trampling beneath our feet the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This Lamb was a special Lamb. This Lamb was a saving Lamb.

D. A Shared Lamb

This Lamb was a shared Lamb. Aside, I want to focus in on this Old Testament shadow that I want to see. That’s all I can see is just the shadow, just the substitute, just the imitation. Oh, my friend, it stands for Christ—Christ our Passover, His sacrifice for us. He is the Lamb of God. Don’t focus on a shadow. Feast on the substance—Jesus. I want you to continue to read. Look with me in verses 8 and 9, if you will: *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night”—that is, “the flesh of the lamb”—“roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs shall they eat it”—*now today, some of our friends who keep Passover do it with a chicken. A lamb—a lamb. Look here, even when we had our Seder the other night, we did the best thing we could do and put a lamb shank, a bone, on the table, but look—*“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread”—*and verse 9—*“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head [and] his legs, and with the purtenance thereof”* (Exodus 12:8–9)—a shared Lamb.

Can you imagine? Now, you have an imagination. Can you imagine what thought must have gone up over Egypt when a quarter of a million lambs are being barbequed in one night? I mean, there it is. Can you imagine the aroma that must have filled the air as they are roasting these lambs and these people are feeding upon these lambs? Do you know what was happening then? A group of slaves were becoming a nation, and a bunch of sinners had begun to fellowship with God and one another over a lamb. Not only was it the lamb that was delivering them, but it was the lamb that was energizing them. For Jesus Christ gave Himself for us that He might give Himself to us. And, the Bible speaks of *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27). When we have the Lord’s Supper, that pictures us feeding upon the Lamb of God, oh, as we receive strength from Him!

Conclusion

I’m going to the third point of this message... Let me just come to the conclusion right

now. Friend, the Old Testament was but a shadow. It was but a picture. It was a prophecy. Oh, my friend, don't substitute the shadow for the substance.

Last week I heard of a friend of mine who's now in Heaven. His name is Glendon McCullough. He used to live and work here in Memphis with our Brotherhood Department of our Southern Baptist Convention. He was in Washington at the Smithsonian with his children, and there in Washington at the Smithsonian he was showing his children all of the mighty things that have taken place in America. And, I have been in this room, and I suppose many of you have—the room where they have the first ladies (that is, the replicas of the first ladies), the wives of the presidents. And, they are dressed there in their beautiful gowns. Each one of them at one occasion wore the gown that is on the replica of the wax figure. It's like a wax museum. And, Glendon McCullough was standing there in front of Lady Byrd—at least, a replica of Lady Byrd. And, he had his children there, and he was telling his children about President Johnson—Lyndon Baines Johnson—and Lady Byrd, and about Texas, and all of these things, and he was giving quite a little lecture on history, when he, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a lady listening. And, he looked at her, and she looked very much like the wax figure. He looked again, and finally, had enough courage to look at her. And, standing there beside Him listening to Him talk about her and her husband was Lady Byrd Johnson. Right away, I thought, “O God, when I tell people about Jesus, You're right there listening to me. How careful I need to be when I tell them, Lord, about You! You're listening to every word.”

But, that's not the point of this little story. And, they were so happy and thrilled to get to meet her and talk with her. But, there was an amateur photographer who was there, and he was taking pictures. And, he wanted to get a picture of Lady Byrd—at least, of the replica—and he couldn't get his camera quite in focus. And so, finally, he said to her, “Lady, would you move out of the way? I'm trying to get a picture of Lady Byrd.” And so, she moved out of the way, and he took his snapshot of that wax figurine. Friend, sadder than that would be for you to say today, “Jesus, step aside; I want to focus in on this Old Testament shadow. That's what I want to see. That's all I can see is just the shadow, just the substitute, just the imitation.” Oh, my friend, it stands for Christ—Christ our Passover, His sacrifice for us. He is the Lamb of God. Don't focus on a shadow. Feast on the substance—Jesus.

Let us pray.

Vision: A Bridge to the Future

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 30, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:24–30

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

HEBREWS 11:27

Outline

Introduction

I. The Treasures He Foresaw: There Is a Prize to Possess

II. The Pleasures He Forsook: There Is a Price to Pay

III. The Measures He Followed: There Is a Plan to Pursue

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, and turn to the book of Hebrews, and find chapter 11. And when you’ve found it, look up here. We’re going to begin reading in just a moment about a man who had an incredible vision. His name was Moses. Because Moses saw the invisible, he valued the imperishable, and he did the impossible. He was a man that had an incredible vision. We’re talking today about vision, “A Bridge to the Future.”

Helen Keller, born blind, was asked by someone, “What could be worse than being born blind?” She said, “To have sight and not to have vision.” I wonder today do you have a vision. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 29 and verse 18: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

Now what is vision? We’re not talking about daydreams. We’re talking about vision. “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” We’re going to learn in the passage that we’re going to read in just a moment vision is seeing the invisible and turning it into reality. The vision is the dominant factor of your life if you have a vision. It will determine your friendships. It will determine your relationships. It will determine your choices, the vision that you have. It is the dominant factor. Your vision is what your prayers are about. Your vision is what you’re giving your influence, your money, your energy toward. It is the dominating factor. Somebody has called vision hope with a blueprint. I love that. Hope with a blueprint. Or somebody else said that vision is a star to steer by. Do you have hope with a blueprint? Do you have a star to steer by? Has God put a vision in your heart? Do you have a bridge to the future? Moses had a vision. I think one of the

best definitions of vision that I have heard is this: that vision is foresight with insight based on hindsight—seeing what has happened, seeing what ought to happen, and seeing it with insight. Foresight with insight based on hindsight.

There was a man, one of the brightest stars in the Hebrew heaven; his name was Moses. And Moses had a vision and he built a bridge to the future. Look in verse 24: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured—now here it is; underscore it—for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible”—just write by that vision—“...for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.” Oh, the wonderful miracles of faith that were rooted in a God-breathed, a God-given vision.

Look up here and let me ask you a question. Not a rhetorical question, but more than that, a sincere, heart-to-heart, pastor-to-people, man-to-man, man-to-woman question. Do you have a vision? Now, without a vision, you are existing, but you’re not living. All you’re doing is simply drawing your breath and drawing your salary, fighting to live while you live to fight, but you’re not going anywhere.

One of the greatest architects of the centuries was Christopher Wren. Christopher Wren designed a mighty cathedral in London, St. Paul’s Cathedral. As the cathedral was being constructed, Sir Christopher Wren disguised himself as an ordinary person and walked around among the workman just to talk to them. And he asked one man, he said, “What are you doing?” And the man said, “I am cutting stone, cutting a piece of stone.” He asked another man, “And what are you doing?” And the other man said, “I am earning five shilling, two pence a day.” He asked a third man, “What are you doing?” And the third man said, “I am helping Christopher Wren build a great cathedral.” Now are you just simply cutting stones and drawing your salary, or is there something bigger, is there something larger? Individuals need a vision. Your family needs a family vision. But individuals and families and churches and people need a vision.

This Scripture tells us that Moses saw the invisible. Moses sought the imperishable. Moses did the impossible. And he did it by faith that was rooted in a vision.

Now I’m not talking about a daydream. I’m not talking about carnal ambition. When the Bible says in the book of Hebrews “Where there is no vision, the people perish,” that word vision is translated somewhere and sometimes and rightly so “Where there is no

open revelation, the people perish.” You see, a vision is a revelation from God. It is not what you simply dream; it is not your mere ambition; it is not what you assay to do; it is what you see by faith from God as an open revelation and, therefore, you will not perish.

Now there are three things I want you to notice. But, you know, you need to take notes. “Oh,” you say, “I’ll remember, Pastor.” Oh, will you? I can’t even remember what I preached; I know you can’t. The weakest ink is better than the best memory. And you learn to take notes, and you’ll be surprised how much more you will learn.

I. The Treasures He Foresaw: There Is a Prize to Possess

Put down Roman numeral 1. The treasures he foresaw—the treasures he foresaw. Look, if you will, in verses 24 through 26: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter—that is, he could have been a grandson to the king—choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God—well, why would a person choose that?—rather than, to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” Why? Because of the treasures he foresaw. Look in verse 26: “Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Moses was no fool. Moses did not get on the negative side of the ledger; he got on the positive side of the ledger.

Now look up here and write down this: In a vision there’s always a prize to possess. In a vision there’s always a prize to possess. Why do we want to get to the other side of the bridge? Because of what is over there! There’s a prize to possess. Moses had been doing some estimation, and he saw the riches of Christ. Vision and values are always linked together. Got it? Got it! Vision and values. And so, Moses was no fool. He was doing estimation. He esteemed. That means he estimated, in verse 26. He reckoned. He did some spiritual figuring. And what he saw was that the reproaches of Christ were greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Now the treasures of Egypt were incredible. If you ever get a chance, as I have done, and I thank God that I had the privilege to visit the wonderful museum in Egypt in Cairo, and to see something of the treasures of the Pharaohs. Incredible! And all of that was at Moses’ fingertips. He could have had it all: position, power, prestige, and pleasure, but he said, “I’ve got something better than that.” You see, he had been doing some estimation in verse 26. He could be a grandson of Pharaoh, or a grandson of God, or son of God, in a grand way. He would have the pleasures of sin or he could have the joys of Jesus. He could have the riches of Egypt or he could have the rewards of heaven. He could have that which is temporary or he could have that which is eternal.

Do you know what most of the people in this building need today? You need to stop, sit down, and think! Most of us never do it. We get up, go about the mundane things of life, and we never stop to ask ourselves where are we going? What are we doing? What

is it all about? Ask yourself this question, my friend, because you're on a journey. When you get where you're going, where will you be? That's worth writing down. When you get where you're going, you're going somewhere. I mean, you're on a journey, like it or not. When you get where you're going, where will you be? Moses saw the lean look and he saw the long look, and he liked the long look better. You need a vision.

Do you know why most peoples' lives are not energized? They have no power. There can be no power for the present if you don't have faith for the future. There can be no power for the present if you don't have faith for the future. It is a vision that energizes, infuses your life. You need to sit down and take time.

John Maxwell has written a wonderful little book entitled, "Be All You Can Be." And he said something about people who have visions and people who have goals, and this is what he said. One thing that stood out to me as I read that book recently: He said, "The researchers show that 95% of us have never written down our goals in life." Ninety-five percent. But he said, "Of the 5% who have written their goals, they have achieved their goals. But of the 5% who have, 95% have achieved their goals." Ninety-five percent have never written down their goals, but of the 5% who have, 95% of them have achieved their goals. And then he gave this interesting story. He said they did a survey at Yale University, and in 1953 they found out that of the students at Yale University in the graduation class, 3%, are you listening, 3% of the students at Yale that graduated in 1953 had specific goals. That is, they had a vision. And because of that vision, they set some goals. Later on, they came back in 1975, and they found out that the 3% who had specific goals had achieved more than the other 97% put together. That's amazing. That's amazing. That's the power of a vision. You see, it's so much better to look ahead and prepare than it is to look back and regret. And so many of us are going to come to the end of our lives and we're going to look back and say, "Well, what did I do? I didn't make any preparation. I had no dream for myself, for my family, for my church."

I'm told that a man was aboard the Queen Mary, and he was talking to the captain of this great ocean-going vessel. And he said, "When you stop this ship, how long does it take to stop it?" And he said, "If I were to shut down all of the engines, all of the power, it would take me a mile to bring this great ship to a dead stop." And then he said, "A good captain looks at least a mile ahead."

Now, there are forces in your life. They're taking you somewhere. You need to look to the future. Proverbs 19, verse 2: "Also, that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good: and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth." Plain English. If you don't consider where you're going and just keep on going there, you're living in sin. Proverbs 24, verses 3 and 4: "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: By knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant

riches.” Do you have understanding? Do you have knowledge? I mean, do you have a vision or is life just happening to you? Proverbs chapter 27 and verse 12: “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.” A prudent man looks to the future. The simple, the nonchalant, the naive, he just passes on.

Now, Moses did all of this in the midst of a pagan and a mat, materialistic society. He had to be different. He had to separate himself. He had to come out from the herd. Come up close and let me tell you something. Listen to me. You are going to have to think for yourself. Don’t let your friends and Madison Avenue and society and fads and pleasures dominate your life. Moses had to sit down and do some estimation. He had to do some honest thinking. Have you done that?

I was reading about a 10,000-meter race, a collegiate race of the NCAA, out in Riverside, California. A hundred and twenty-three of the 128 runners missed a turn. There was one man; his name was Mike Decalvo. He saw what the right way was, and he took the right way, and turned around, and beckoned to the other runners to follow him. Only four followed him and the rest of them laughed at him. They thought he had taken a wrong turn, and they said, “Look at that fool. He’s gone the wrong way.” Five out of 128 runners took the right way. There are people who will laugh at you. They’ll say, “Hey, you’d better get with the crowd. You’d better join the crowd.” And they’ll laugh at you if you set some standards. But the first point is this: friend, the treasure he foresaw. There is a prize to possess.

II. The Pleasures He Forsook: There Is a Price to Pay

Number two—write this down: The pleasures he forsook. There’s a price to pay. The pleasures he forsook. There is a price to pay. Why is it that some people do not live by vision? They will not pay the price. Listen to this: here’s the price he paid. Look in verse 24: “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” He had to make a choice.

Do you know what a vision will do? A vision will help you at any given moment to forsake all that you are in order to gain all you can be. Did it sink in? May I say it again? A vision will enable you at any given moment to forsake all that you are in order to become all that you can be.

I mean, Moses in many ways had already arrived. I mean, he was the high muckety-muck in Egypt. He was heir to the throne. And yet, he turned his back on it all because he saw something greater. There was a prize to possess and there was a price to pay.

Now, folks, you always pay. You just pay now or pay later. You always pay. I mean, in life there’s a price to pay. You can enjoy now and pay the price later or you can pay

now and enjoy later. That's just a principle in life. I mean, in health, you can, you can live in indolence now. You can be couch potato, you can eat everything you want to eat, drink what you want to drink, do what you want to do, sleep when you want to sleep, and you can have a good time, but, folks, you're going to pay the price, is that not right? You pay now or you pay later.

Brother Bob Sorrell is a golfer, and some of you men are golfers. I heard about three golfers who were out—young men like Brother Bob—getting ready to tee off. And they looked over there, and there was a poor old man all humped over, and kind of palsied and pallid, but he had his golf clubs. And they said, "Well, we need a foursome. Let's ask Pop to come and play with us." And they said, "Well, the old guy, he couldn't stay up with us. We're young and vigorous." But they said, "No, that's not right. If Pop hasn't got anybody to play with, let's ask the old man to come and play with us." And they said, "Pop, would you like to join us? You think you could stay up?" He said, "Yeah, I think I could make it." They said, "You sure, Pop?" He said, "Yeah, if you'll just let me stop and blow awhile, I can make it. I can stay up." So they took the old man, and he did pretty good. I mean, he had to stop and breathe and so forth, but he stayed with these three youngsters. They got to the end, and they said, "Well, Pop, we've got to hand it to you. You did pretty good for a man of your age. Pop, how did you manage to do that? What, what gives you your vigor?" He said, "Well," he said, "I drink a quart of liquor every day, and I smoke nine cigars every day." They said, "Pop, that's amazing. How old are you?" He said, "Thirty-five!" Enjoy now; pay later. And pray now, and enjoy later.

It's the same thing in finances—in finances. I mean, you can sacrifice your future and your security upon the altar of immediate gratification and pleasure. That's what's wrong with so many young people today. They get married, and they will sell them everything on credit, and they go out and buy it. You see, listen. When you have a vision, there is a price to pay. Vision and values are linked.

In another sermon on this passage I told you about the meat and bone principle. How do you take a nasty bone away from a dog? Suppose your dog has a nasty, smelly, stinking bone he wants to bring in the house, and you try to get it away from him. He won't let it go. As a matter of fact, if he's not your dog, he may bite you, if you try to take that bone away. But, you know, there's one way to get a bone away from a dog like that. You just put a steak down on the ground. And that dog will drop the bone to get the steak. Why wouldn't he? Now, you see, it's a matter of values.

There are certain things the Bible calls the pleasures of sin. Moses said, "I don't want them." Why? Who wouldn't give up a nasty bone for a steak? Vision and value are linked together. The problem with many people is they have never really gotten a vision of what they could be, what they ought to be, of what the treasures of Jesus are.

III. The Measures He Followed: There Is a Plan to Pursue

Now here's the third thing. I want you to see the treasure he foresaw. And, remember, there's a prize to possess. I want you to see the pleasures he forsook. And, remember, there is a price to pay. And then I want you to see the measures he followed. That's the third thing: the measures he followed. There is a plan to pursue.

Now a vision without a plan is a daydream. That's all it is. Notice the measures he followed—verse 24: “By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God...” Put this down: In your plan, it is a matter, first of all, of cooperation. It is a matter of cooperation. In order for me to be all that I can be, I need to help you to be all you can be. Did that sink in? Write it down on your notepad. In order for me to be all that I can be, I need to help others to be all they can be. Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. His vision was not selfish. It was not self-centered. If you have a God-given vision, I will guarantee you, I will guarantee you that it will include your family. It will include others. It will include your church. If you have a vision that is egocentric and self-centered, it is not of God! It's of Satan. It is not a God-given vision. Your plan will include the matter of cooperation. Even the people of the world know this.

Lee Iacocca, the leader in the automotive industry, was talking to Vince Lombardi, leader in athletics, one of the great coaches; the coach many of us remember as the great coach of the Green Bay Packers. He said to Lombardi, Iacocca did, “What does it take, Vince, to make a great team?” Here's what this coach said. He said, “There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals. They have plenty of discipline, but they still don't win the game, because the third ingredient is missing.” Fundamentals, and discipline, but what is the third ingredient? He said, “If you're going to play together as a team, you have to care for one another and love one another.” Each player has to be thinking about the next guy, and saying to himself, “If I don't block that man, Paul is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his.” And then, the great coach said this: “The difference in mediocrity and greatness is feeling that these guys love each other.” Now, you think of football players as loving each other? They do. On a team, they're a team.

When I read that, I thought, Oh, how much more the church of the Lord Jesus Christ! Beloved, we must love one another. We must take seriously the command of Jesus to love one another. Not because we're lovely, but because He loves us. We ought to love one another. And Moses' vision was a vision that included others. That's the reason that we as a church are trying to have a vision, not merely for ourselves, not for me, not for my family alone, but for this church and this community. The plan is a matter of cooperation.

The plan is a matter of courage. Look in verse 27: “By faith he forsook Egypt, not

fearing the wrath of the king...” If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way, to be all that you can be, you will not be. The devil is the sinister minister of fear. He is your Pharaoh, trying to keep you in the land of Egypt, a life of mediocrity; to enjoy the pleasures of sin rather than to know the riches of Christ. It’s your vision that will help you to overcome this matter of fear. I wish I had more time on that point, but I must leave it and say, thirdly, not only in the matter of cooperation, and in the matter of courage, but in the matter of continuance, you need a vision. Look in verse 27 again: “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured”—he endured—“as seeing him who is invisible.”

So many of us start, and we fail. We lose the vision. We lose the dream. We don’t pursue the plan. We don’t endure. What was it that kept Moses on track? What was it that enabled Moses to endure? He had a vision. The apostle Paul was a great man. Moses, I believe, the greatest man in the Old Testament, Paul, the greatest man in the New Testament, they both had a vision. When Paul, who suffered affliction, sorrow, heartache, tears, trials, and all of it, but knew triumph, the greatest church builder, the greatest missionary, the greatest Christian, who ever lived gave the secret in Acts chapter 26 and verse 19, where he said, “Whereof, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” We’re going to talk about obedience.

Folks, it’s one thing to have a vision. It is another thing, beloved friends, to go beyond a vision and have faith. But right down at the end there must be obedience. Today, we’re talking about vision. What is the plan that you pursue? It’s a matter of cooperation. It’s a matter of courage. It’s a matter of continuance. It’s a matter of saying we’re going to stay with it as an individual, as a family, and as a church. Church, Bellevue, you listen to your pastor, please.

Almost a century ago in 1903, there were some people who caught a vision and they founded a church, began a church. This is it! They had a vision. They paid a price. They stayed together. They were not afraid. And they continued. About a decade ago, we, as a congregation, said, we’re going to claim our Canaan. Some people thought we were crazy. I mean, what we assayed to do when we moved out here from a human viewpoint, I really believe, was impossible, and yet, and I hope you believe this, God did it. God did it. God did it.

But, folks, now we’re on this side of the bridge. Thank God for the past, but we’ve got to get over there. I mean, do you think God is finished with His church? I mean, do you think that’s all God wants us to do is to come sit here in this air-conditioned, upholstered place and sit, soak, and sour? No! There’s a prize to possess. We must make an impact on this city, a hurting city. We must reach out to the last, the least, the lowest, the lost. We’ve got to tell the world about Jesus. We’ve got to get the young couples in our church to understand what it is to raise godly Christian homes. We’ve got

to lead our people to take care of their bodies, their souls, and their spirit. But there's a prize to possess. Do you have a vision?

Conclusion

Let me tell you the center of Moses' vision. I'm finished now. But what was the center of Moses' vision? It was Jesus. Listen—listen. Don't even fold your book. Just look right up here. It was Jesus. "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." The riches of Christ.

Those of you here today without Jesus, do you want to change your life from the mundane to the momentous? Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. Every God-centered vision centers in Jesus Christ. Those of you who know Him, turn your life over to Him anew and afresh. And if you don't know Him, I want you to receive Him.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. I want you to pray this prayer, if you need Jesus: "O God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You right now. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me, Lord Jesus." Now, look up here. If you'll pray a prayer like this, if you'll pray a prayer like that, and say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me," if you will pray it and mean it, He will save you. And what will happen is this: that every sin will be forgiven. What will happen is this: the Holy Spirit will take up residence in you. What will happen is this: you will have a home in heaven, safe and secure, and if you died tonight, you'd go straight to heaven by receiving Christ. And I'm going to ask you to do that today. I'm going to ask you today, now, to give your heart to Jesus Christ, to make the greatest decision you could ever make, to receive Christ as your Lord and Savior and Master, in repentance and faith. And I'm going to ask you not only to receive Him, but I'm going to ask you to make it public, because making it public settles it and seals it.

The Victory of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 18, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:27–28

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

HEBREWS 11:27

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Salvation Compromise
- II. The Separation Compromise
- III. The Soul-Winning Compromise
- IV. The Substance Compromise

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn please to the Book of Hebrews chapter 11, and we begin our reading in verse 27. Now as we do that, I've spotted Dr. and Mrs. Ramsey Pollard in the congregation this morning, our pastor emeritus and his wife. What a joy, Dr. Pollard and Mrs. Pollard, to have you here today. We love you and thank God for you. We're delighted you could be here. Hebrews chapter 11, and we begin in verse 27. Actually, we're continuing our message about Moses and the faith of Moses and the victory of faith: “The Victory of Faith.” Now we read here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 27, *“By faith he”*—that is Moses—*“forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them”* (Hebrews 11:27–28). And these two more episodes in the life of Moses deal with the faith of Moses.

Now ladies and gentlemen, the most important thing on earth is to please God. *If you please God, it really doesn't matter who you displease. And if you displease God, it really doesn't matter whom you please.* And the way to please God is to believe God. No matter what else you do, if you don't believe God, you can't please God, for the Bible says in Hebrews 11:6—*“Without faith it is impossible to please him.”*

Well, why is that? Well, suppose you were to say all matter of nice things about me—and if you want to do that, that's all right—but suppose you were to say all matter of nice things about me, and then you were to say, “But there's just one thing about

Adrian Rogers: you can't believe what he says." Now friend, no matter how many nice things you may have said about me, when you say that, you have just cut the taproot of my character, and if you say you can't believe what I say, then it really doesn't make much difference what else you might say about me. You see if a person is not trustworthy, he has no character at all—if you can't believe what a person says.

Now you can come to church and say all sorts of nice things about God: "God is good," "God is great," "God is love," "God is kind," "God is this," and "God is that," but friend, if you don't believe God, do you see what you've done? The Bible says, "*He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar*" (1 John 5:10). And no matter what good things you may say about God, dear friend, if you don't believe God, that negates it altogether. If you want to please God, then believe God. And that's the reason that we're in this series on God's Hall of Fame and how to be in God's Hall of Fame. And remember, it's not according to your friends, your fortune, or your fate, or things, but according to your faith, be it unto you. That's what we're talking about in this series of messages today. And I don't know about you, but I'm going to tell you it's blessing me, whether you get blessed or not. It's just blessing me to study this eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews and to learn more and more about faith and have what we already know just re-enforced.

Now today we're going to talk about faith that gives victory over sin. And let me say, ladies and gentlemen, that man's great problem is a little three-letter word: sin. You don't have any problem that what, somehow, it's rooted in sin. You are a sinner by nature, by choice, and by practice, if you are not saved, because the Bible says, "*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). Now you may be a rich sinner or your may be a poor sinner; you may be a young sinner, you may be an old sinner; you may be a moral sinner, you may an immoral sinner; you may be a religious sinner, you may be a baptized sinner, You may be a Baptist sinner, but dear friend, "*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,*" and something needs to be done about your sin.

Now *the problem with the world today is we've never really seen where the problem is. And the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart, which is desperately wicked.* But I wouldn't expect anyone to stand up in Congress and say, "Gentlemen, the problem is sin." Would you expect that? Or would you expect someone to stand up in one of our great universities—a PhD—and say, "Sirs, I have finally found the problem with mankind. It's sin"? Of course not! Would you expect anybody to come running out of the laboratory with a test tube and saying, "Eureka! I've found it! The problem is sin"? Do you think the Security Council of the U.N. is going to stand up and say, "The problem in the world and the problem between nations is sin"? No, they're not going to say that, and that's the reason they're never going to solve the problem. You

see, they never do get a proper diagnosis; so how on earth are they ever going to get a proper remedy? They can't do it. And so all of these agencies and all of these people they're spending time sweeping down cobwebs rather than killing the spider, which is sin.

And we're just dealing with the effects. For example, we have a war on poverty. Well, we don't need a war on poverty nearly as badly as we need a war on sin. Now I'm not saying poverty is a good thing, but dear friend, poverty is even rooted in sin: the greed, and the grasping, and the carelessness, and the hatefulness, and the waste, and the strife, and the wantonness, that has turned this world into a garden of weeds and a swamp where the mosquitoes of hate are breeding by the millions. The costliest thing around is sin. Don't you forget it. And I tell you, if we'd just have a war on sin, we'd do something about the poverty problem and every other problem. But you see, nobody wants to admit what the problem is, so no wonder we are never coming to the solution.

Years ago, 80 soldiers from Fort Nix were fighting a forest fire, a fire that had gotten out of control. And they were trapped. It seems as though the flames had encircled them and they could find no way out. And the pilot, an unknown pilot, flying a light plane, flying over swooped over back and forth several times and then he dropped from the cockpit of the fuselage of that airplane three weighted notes. And he dropped them in the midst of those 80 soldiers and with these notes he gave direction to these 80 men down there on the ground and showed them how they could escape, for he had seen from above a narrow channel, a corridor, a flame-lined corridor through which they might go and escape. When they read those notes, they did not question his authority, they did not argue with him; they simply dropped their spades, their tools, and they fled through that corridor, and they were saved because there was a message from above. It was a message from the only one that could understand the situation.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have that kind of message today from the Word of God, and would to God we were wise enough to follow it and to listen to the only one who knows the way out of the human dilemma, the only one who knows the answer to the human problem, which is sin. Now here in this message on faith that we have this morning, "Faith That Gives Us Victory Over Sin," I want you to know how well the life of Moses illustrates that.

For first of all, his faith led to a definite decision regarding the practice of sin—his faith led to a definite decision regarding the practice of sin. Now let me show you what I'm talking about. Look here in Hebrews 11:27: "*By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king.*"

Now Egypt in the Bible is synonymous with sin. Always in Bible typology, Egypt is a picture of the land of bondage, the land of sin, the land of darkness, the land of tradition. And it is used symbolically in the Bible to picture sin. And therefore, Pharaoh, who was

the king of Egypt, is used symbolically in the Bible to represent the devil himself who tries to keep us in the land of bondage and in the land of darkness. Now God said to Moses, “Moses, I have chosen you. You will be my leader to lead my people out of the land of bondage, out of the land of darkness, out of the land of sin, and into the Promised Land.”

Now Moses came to Pharaoh, and Moses gave Pharaoh the message of the Lord: “Let my people go,” and Pharaoh refused. And Moses and Pharaoh had a head-on collision. Now this is a picture of anybody who decides to be saved, anybody who decides to come out of the old world, the old life. And he's going to obey the promises of God, and he's going to claim the promises of God, and he's going to enjoy the possessions of God. The minute he does, he comes into a head-on collision with the devil. I've told you before, I'll tell you again: *If you've never met the devil, it's because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. You turn around and start to live for God and you're going to have a head-on collision with the devil himself.*

Now I want us, therefore, to turn to the Old Testament, and I want us to see what happened when Moses forsook Egypt. Turn, please, to Exodus chapter 8. Of course, Exodus is the book, because of its title, that tells about the forsaking, or the exodus, out of Egypt.

Now I'm going to show you here from the Book of Exodus how old Pharaoh, who represents the devil, suggested four clever compromises to try to keep the children of Israel from fulfilling their destiny. And I want you to notice when God said to Moses, “Forsake Egypt,” what Pharaoh, who represented the devil, said to Moses.

I. The Salvation Compromise

First of all, read, please, in Exodus chapter 8 and verse 25, and you'll find the first of these compromises: “*And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron*”—that was Moses' brother—“*and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.*” Underscore that: “*Sacrifice to your God in the land.*” Which land is he talking about? He's talking about the land of Egypt. And what's Pharaoh saying? Remember now, Egypt represents sin, Pharaoh represents Satan, and Pharaoh says to Moses. It's all right if you want to be religious. It's all right if you want to worship your God. It's all right if you want to make sacrifices. But do it right here in Egypt. Don't make a clean break with the world. Don't come out of Egypt. Just stay right here in the land of darkness, in the land of superstition, in the land of slavery, in the land of bondage, in the land of compromise. Worship God right here. You can take the things of Egypt and refine them and fix them up. You may dress Egypt up; you may decorate Egypt. Just don't desert Egypt.

Now what does that tell us today? It tells us, sirs, that when God calls us to be saved, the devil will come along with his first compromise, and say, “It's all right for you

to be religious, just so long as you stay in Egypt; that is, so long as there's no real, divine change. So long as there is no repentance, so long as there is no new birth, so long as you don't come out of Egypt underneath the blood of the lamb, it's just fine."

Say, did you know that *the devil doesn't mind you being religious. As a matter of fact, he's in favor of it. The devil had rather have you religious and lost than a drunkard.* Did you know that? As a matter of fact, the drunkard is a mighty poor advertisement for the devil. He really is. I'm not so sure that "the devil made you do it." I believe that you did it all by yourself. Let me tell you something, friend. All that the devil cares about is that you simply be religious, but lost. *The devil is not against religion. He is in religion up to his ears.* Did you know that the first temptation that man had in the Garden of Eden was a religious temptation? It was a temptation to be like God—to be godly. And Satan said to Eve, "You do this, and then your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God" (Genesis 3:4–5). It wasn't a temptation to fall down; it was a temptation to fall up—to be like God—a religious temptation.

And you see, I've told you before that *the devil had just as soon send you to hell from the pew as from the gutter.* It makes no difference to him, as long as you stay in Egypt, as long as you have culture rather than Calvary, so long as you have education rather than regeneration, so long as you keep turning over a new leaf rather than getting a new life. The devil doesn't want you to be born again. There are millions of people who have taken religion and have simply tacked it on to their lives, and they are still in Egypt. There has been no break with the world. There has been no blood redemption. There has been no deliverance. They are very religious, and they are very lost.

Religion is a terrible thing when it keeps a man from Jesus Christ. *Most of the people in America don't need religion; they need to turn from religion to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* Remember this: It was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus. Now the devil says, "I don't mind you being religious. You want to worship your God: go ahead and do it, but do it right here in the land of Egypt." But Moses said, "Oh, no, not around here. We are leaving."

II. The Separation Compromise

And so I want you to notice the devil, who, I said, never gives up anybody or anything without a fight, offers the next compromise. For if Moses would not take the salvation compromise, then he gives him another compromise. Notice here in Exodus 8:28: "*And Pharaoh said, I will let you go...*"—big deal. He couldn't stop them, and he can't stop you if you want to go. *There are not enough demons in hell or out of hell to keep you from coming to God.* Don't you know that? All right—"Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness..."—underscore this now. God doesn't want you in the wilderness. He has called you to a land that flows with milk and

honey—*“that ye may sacrifice to your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away.”* That is, “If you are going, don't go to far. If you are going to be saved, don't be a fanatic about it. Don't be a freak, don't be a fool. And whatever you do, don't be a Baptist. If you are going, if you are going to get religious, and if you've got to be saved, all right, go ahead and be saved, but don't go very far. You just settle down in the suburbs of sin. You just get out, and once you get out, you just settle down, and then once you want to make an excursion back into Egypt, just think how easy that will be.”

And there are a lot of people who want to do this. I mean, they want to be saved because they don't want to go to hell, but, you know, they're not all that interested in going to heaven either.

They're like the little girl who prayed, “Lord, make me good; not too good, just good enough not to get a spanking.”

And there are a lot of people that way. I mean they want a little fire insurance. They want to get out of Egypt all right because they don't want the judgments that are going to fall on Egypt, but they sure want to camp just outside Egypt. But you see, God doesn't want us to do that. God wants us to be separate. The Bible says in Exodus chapter 11, verse 7, that *“the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel”* (Exodus 11:7). And the Bible says, *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing”*—2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 17 (2 Corinthians 6:17). But the problem with many people is that once they get saved, they still stay so close to Egypt; they're so worldly that you can't tell whether they're an Israelite or an Egyptian. They've never really ever come out.

We call them worldly Christians. Billy Sunday said to speak of a worldly Christian is strange. You might as well talk about a heavenly devil. And yet we have people who are saved but they're very worldly. And you have to feel sorry for them. You talk about someone who's miserable, it's a person who's come out of Egypt and camped right there in the wilderness. He's got just enough religion to keep him from being happy in the world and too much of the world to keep him from being happy in Christ. And he's miserable in both halves of his life. You have to feel sorry for a person like that. And yet I believe that there are countless thousands who are listening to me this morning who are like that: who are truly children of God, who have been truly saved, who have truly been born again, and yet they're camping in the suburbs of sin.

I want to show you how God feels about that. Turn, if you will for just a moment, to the Book of Revelation the third chapter. And God speaks here in the Book of Revelation the third chapter about a church that makes Him sick to His stomach. It was the church of Laodicea, and I believe it characterizes what churches in the last days will be like. And I'm reading here in Revelation chapter 3, beginning in verse 15—God says to this church: *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert*

cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15–16).

Do you know what that means—"I will spue thee out of my mouth?" God says, "You make me want to vomit." You say, "Brother Rogers, that's not elegant." Well, it's not elegant here if you could see it—you know, "*spue thee out*," in the old King James Version. But that's not what God is saying. I want you to hear what He is saying: "You're not hot. You're not cold. You're not for me. You're not against Me. You're a fence-straddler. You've come out of Egypt, but you have you're not cold—you're not cold—you are lukewarm," and God says, "you make me sick to my stomach."

"Now," you say, "wait a minute, Brother Rogers. It would better to come out of Egypt, even if we didn't go all the way, than to stay in Egypt and be condemned with Egypt." Well, maybe for you it would be better. But I want you to see what God says, though. The Lord says, "I'd rather that you be hot or cold." Did you read that? "I would that you were hot or cold." Well, what does that mean? Well, to be hot—what does that mean? To be hot means to be on fire, glowing, growing, for the Lord Jesus. To be cold—what does that mean? That means to be out-and-out against Him. Now He says, "I'd rather have you out-and-out against me than lukewarm." You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, wouldn't it be better to be lukewarm and be going to heaven?" From God's viewpoint, God had rather have you out-and-out against Him than to be lukewarm sitting on the fence.

You say, "Why on earth is that, Brother Rogers?" I want to tell you something, dear friend. It is the cold dishwater Christian, the lukewarm, the "good Lord, good devil," self-satisfied Christian that is doing more harm to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ than all of the pornographers, and the bartenders, and the prostitutes put together. And you mark it down—*if we only had 10 percent of the number of Christians who name the name of Christ, and every one of them were on fire, zealous for the Lord Jesus, we would take this world for Christ. But we can't reach the goal for stumbling over our own players. Lukewarm Christians are the alibi of the lost.* They're a disgrace to God.

G. Campbell Morgan said that "Lukewarmness is the worst form of blasphemy." To say "I believe in you, God, but you don't excite me to much." Think about it. "I believe in you, God, but you don't excite me too much." Think about it. "I really believe in you, but I just don't get too excited about it." I believe God had rather have you not believing in Him than claiming to believe in Him, claiming that you've come out of Egypt, and you've settled down right in the wilderness. My God, if it's worth anything, it's worth everything, isn't it? What a disgrace to grace that we're willing to be lukewarm. And the devil will do all he can do, dear friend, to get you to settle down in the suburbs of sin—to come out of Egypt rather than go all the way.

III. The Soul-Winning Compromise

Well, let's go on. Go back to the Book of Exodus, because if the devil cannot get you with a salvation compromise, and if the devil cannot get you with the separation compromise, he's still got another compromise. He doesn't give up easily. Now I want you to notice here in Exodus chapter 10, if you would please, the third compromise of Satan. I'm beginning in verse 8: *“And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God: but who are they that shall go?”* Now Moses said to Pharaoh, “We're going, mister, and we're going all the way.” And so Pharaoh comes back and says, “All right, you're going, and you're going all the way. But who's going?” *“And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD. And he said unto them”*—Pharaoh said unto the—*“Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it”*—be careful for them—*“for evil is before you.”* In other words, don't take all those children with you. *“Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that ye did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence”* (Exodus 10:8–11).

Now what was Pharaoh saying? Pharaoh was saying, “Well now, it's all right for some of you to go. And you big old strong men, you can go out there. But don't take those children out there. No, I'm afraid for them.” The dirty liar! But notice what he's doing. He's trying to keep them from going and taking their entire family.

This is Satan's way. You see the devil hates family religion. And if the devil can't keep you from being saved, if the devil can't keep you from going out of Egypt and going all the way to Canaan, he'll try to get you to leave someone behind. And oh, we need to learn the lesson this morning from the Word of God that when Moses by faith forsook Egypt he took his loved ones with him. Are you taking your loved ones with you? Is your father saved? Your mother saved? Your son saved? Your daughter saved? Your brother saved? Your sister saved? Your children, your family—are they saved? Are you content to leave Egypt? Are you content to be born again? And yet you leave your family in this world? How can you go to heaven and let your families go to hell?

Oh, the Bible puts such an emphasis upon household religion. Do you remember there in Acts the sixteenth chapter when Paul and Silas were there in prison and God sent a mighty earthquake angel to shake that prison and the prison got under conviction? He was trembling. He came in with a light, and said, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* And we quote that answer in Acts 16:31, but many times we don't quote it all. It says, *“They said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* But it doesn't end there. He went on to say, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:30–31). That is, if they believe, they shall be saved also. They did believe, and they were saved.

Now notice the emphasis. Oh, friend, let me give you another verse—Genesis chapter 7 and verse 1, when the ark was ready and God was ready for Noah to come into the ark: *“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark”* (Genesis 7:1). That is, “Noah, it's not enough for you to get into the ark. I want you to bring your family with you, bring your children into that ark.”

Or again, we read there in the Book of Joshua chapter 24 and verse 15—Joshua is standing up there before the children of Israel declaring his faith, and Joshua says, *“Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”* (Joshua 24:15). Joshua said, “My children are coming with me. My household is going to heaven with me.”

When Cornelius was under conviction, and God wanted to save Cornelius, God spoke to Cornelius, that centurion, that Gentile soldier, and said, “You go get Simon Peter.” And we read in Acts chapter 11, verse 14, where God tells him to send for *“Peter, who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house may be saved”* (Acts 11:14). *“Thy house,” “thy house,” “thy house.”* The devil doesn't want you to do that. The devil doesn't want you to get your children saved, your husband saved, your wife saved, your parents saved.

I tell you, we'd have a revival like this world has never seen if just those that are seated in this congregation this morning were to get a real burden for their lost loved ones and start bringing them to Jesus. And if you can't win them to Christ, who on earth is going to? They ought to have more faith in your religion than in anybody else's. And the reason that we don't witness to our loved ones: do you want me to tell you why? I'll tell you why: because we've camped just outside Egypt—that's why. We're so worldly that we're ashamed to witness to our loved ones.

One of these days when the clods fall on that casket, it will be. A woman called me up in hysterics: “Brother Rogers! Brother Rogers!” I said, “What's wrong?” She said, “My daddy! My daddy never made a profession of faith in Christ, and my daddy is in hell, Brother Rogers!” And she was weeping. And I said, “You get hold of yourself. I went by and talked with your daddy. I explained to your daddy how to be saved. Your daddy very sweetly bowed his head and received Christ into his heart. He was born again. No, your daddy is not in hell. Your daddy is in heaven.” But friend, if it had it been up to her, her daddy would have been in hell. She waited until he died and then she got concerned. Are you concerned about your loved ones? You don't know; I don't know.

I spoke last week about Catherine Booth. Do you remember Catherine Booth, the wife of William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army? And when William Booth was on trial because of some of his ways and methods that some of the ecclesiasts didn't like, she was the little one up there in the balcony. When they said, “William Booth, will you do what we tell you to do?” Catherine Booth stood up in the balcony and waved her

handkerchief” and said, “William, say no! Say no!” Oh, thank God for a woman who stands behind a good man like that. Do you know what Catherine Booth, this little saint of God—do you know what she said? Do you know what she prayed? She said, “Oh, God, I will not stand before thee without all my children”—“I will not stand before thee without all my children. We're going and our children are going with us!” No wonder every one of Catherine Booth's children were saved and became preachers of the gospel—the faith that she had, the determination that she had.

The devil, if he can't keep you from going, and if he can't keep you from going all the way, he'll try to get you to leave some loved ones behind. Oh, the great compromiser. But listen. Moses wasn't buying that, and he wouldn't take the salvation compromise, he wouldn't take the separation compromise, and he wouldn't take the soul-winning compromise either. He said, “We're going. We're going all the way. And all of us are going—all of us are going.”

IV. The Substance Compromise

Now I want you to notice the next thing. Old Pharaoh, he's not finished yet. Turn to Exodus chapter 10, and verse 24—here's the final stroke: *“And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.”* That is, “If you're going to have to take the children, just go ahead and take them, but now you leave your flocks and your herds behind.” *“And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God. Our cattle shall also go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God...”*—friend, it takes substance to serve God— *“thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither”* (Exodus 10:24–26).

Now what Pharaoh said was this: “Well, if you're going, and if you're going all the way, and if all of you are going, well, at least you can leave your material wealth in Egypt. Leave your substance.” That's what he's talking about. Their flocks, their herds: that represents their material wealth. And my, what a fast one the devil has pulled on so many people. They've gotten saved, and they're fairly committed Christians, except for one thing: God has never really gotten hold of their wealth. Their money, their business, is still in the world. And there are many Christians who not only believe in separation of church and state, but they also believe also in separation of church and business. Have you noticed? They don't want to have their wealth committed unto the Lord. And the devil is very clever. For the devil knows that if God doesn't have your treasure, he really doesn't have you. *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”* (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34).

You know, sometimes when you talk about money, and I probably don't do it enough. Most of you if you would think about it and be honest, you'd have to say, "I don't hear him say very much about money." But most of the time, if we talk about money, do you know what someone will say? They will come along and say, "You know, I wish he would quit talking about money and just preach the Bible—just preach the Bible." My sweet friend, let me tell you something. If I preached as much in the Bible as there is about money, you would probably think I preached on it every Sunday. Did you know that one out of every six verses in the four Gospels deal with the right and wrong relationships of man to material possessions? I said, one out of every six verses. Did you know out of the Lord's 38 parables, 16 of the 38 parables that the Lord Jesus Christ gave dealt with man's relationship with material things and his right and wrong use of his money and material possessions.

You see, it's such a sensitive thing. But Moses knew that he could not separate his wealth from his God. For God owns it all. The Bible says—and incidentally, you want to put a verse down by this verse in the Book of Exodus, by Exodus chapter 10, verses 24 and 25; write by that Psalm 50, verses 10 to 12. Here's what God says. Here's the reason that Moses said we are going to take our cattle with us. Here's what David said that the Lord is saying, *"Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof"* (Psalm 50:10–12).

Now friend, listen. God doesn't need your money. God is not going to starve if you don't tithe. God says, "If I'm hungry, I'm not going to tell you. It's all mine. I own it all." You say, "Well, I earned it." You did. With whose strength? Whose raw material? Whose brain? Whose breath? Whose water? Whose air? The earth is the Lord's. You don't have even one thin—even your strength or your mind—that God didn't give you. It all belongs to God—every bit of it. And you can't help God out. He's already got it all. And if we would only learn that tithing is not something that we do for God, it is something that God does for us. Learn that.

The Bible says in Malachi chapter 3, verse 10, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it"* (Malachi 3:10). It's your way to get blessed!

Somebody says, "Do you think the little widow with a pension ought to tithe? She can hardly make it." Well, by all means, she ought to tithe. You know, "Well," you say, "God doesn't need that money." No, she needs to give it. She needs God to move into her life. She needs to learn she can do more with nine tenths and God as a partner than

she can do with ten tenths by herself. That's it. Oh, friend, it's just a matter of faith. You see, the tithe is only symbolic of the Lord. Don't get the idea you can give God a tenth and spend the other nine tenths any way you want. Oh, no, it all belongs to God. The tithe—the tenth—is only your indication that you're obeying God.

Now some of you are tuning me right out, because you say, “Well, I'm interested in coming out of Egypt, but I want to keep my cows over there, if you don't mind.” Well, friend, the old slew foot, the devil, told you that. It belongs to God. And you're never going to know victory in your spiritual life, and you're never going to know the blessings God wants you to have, until you get honest with God about your finances. Don't let the devil have your finances. Take it with you.

I like what Moses says. It blesses my heart. Look in Exodus chapter 10 and verse 26. Old Moses said, “Our cattle also shall go with us”—and then notice this phrase; I always smile when I read this—*“there shall not an hoof be left behind”* (Exodus 10:26)—not a hoof. We're going. We're all going. We're going all the way. And everything we've got is going with us. Every cow, every hide, every hair, every horn, every hoof—we're going! And you're not going to stop us.

Now what would happen if we had a generation of Christians to say that in this day and this age? I say, what would happen if we got serious, if we got busy about this thing of serving the Lord God?

Conclusion

Let's go back to Hebrews for a moment. Go back to our text where we started. We have half of it, but we got a good half. Now look in verse 27. How did Moses do this? I mean, how did a two-legged man stand in front of the mightiest king on the face of the earth, mighty Pharaoh, and have the audacity—the audacity—to confront him in such a way? How did he do it? The writer of Hebrews tells us—look at it: *“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king:”*—well, why wouldn't anybody be afraid of the king? Well—*“for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11:27).

He saw another king. He had his eyes on another king—the invisible king, the only wise God, immortal, invisible. He saw God by faith. How can a man see the invisible? By faith. And when he sees the invisible, he'll know the unknowable. And when he knows the unknowable, he'll do the impossible. And that's exactly what Moses did, because he saw the invisible. He had his eyes upon God.

Do you know the reason that you're afraid of anything? You're not afraid of God. You see, when you fear the Lord, you don't have to fear anybody else. *The man who can kneel before God can stand before anybody or anything.* And by faith he endured, by seeing Him that's invisible.

Well, you say, “I just can't see Him, Brother Rogers. I've been looking, but I just can't

see Him.” Well, you know why? You've been looking with the wrong eye. You see, faith is the organ of the soul. Faith is to the spirit what eyes are to the body and ears are to the body. You see, God made you. Here's the way God created you. God created you so that your spirit would respond to God the same way that your eye responds to light and your ear responds to sound. You see, I can close my eyes if I want. I can stop my ears if I want. And dear friend, you can refuse to see God if you want. But I tell you right now, if you'll just open up, God will reveal Himself to you. He will. You just open up the eyes of your spirit.

You don't have to make yourself believe. You can't make yourself believe. You couldn't believe unless God were to reveal Himself to you, but He will. The Bible says, Christ is that light that *“lighteth every man that cometh into the world”* (John 1:9). Don't tell me you cannot believe. It is that you will not believe. You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I'm a reasonable man. I'm not going to believe anything unless I can reason it out.” Then you'll die and go straight to hell. You say, “That's not fair.” That is very fair, because, you see, there are some of you who are smarter than others of us, and if it took reason to get to God, then all you smart guys would have a head start, see? But *“there is no respect of persons with God”* (Romans 2:11).

And you're not going to put God in your test tube. You're not going to weigh God on your scales. You're not going to put God in your formula. The Bible says, “Can a man by reasoning find out God?” (Job 11:7). He cannot. There's one thing everybody can do. And that's have faith in God. The child can do it. The adult can do it. The scholar can do it. The person who's not a scholar can do it. Isn't that great? Isn't that wonderful? That's the reason it's by faith! Don't tell me you cannot believe in God. You can if you want, for God will enable you, and God will give you the faith.

And how did Moses come out of Egypt? *“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as by seeing him who is invisible,”* immortal, eternal, our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Redeeming Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 6, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:28

*“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood,
lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.”*

HEBREWS 11:28

Outline

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Introduction

Praise our great God. Now, as the choir’s finding their place, would you open the Word of God to Hebrews chapter 11, and we are going to spend some time together enjoying the Word of God. We’re in a series of Bible studies entitled “Champions of Faith.” And last week we spoke of Moses. This week, again, we’re going to speak of Moses, who is, indeed, a champion in faith.

How’s your faith doing? We meet one another today. We say, “How are you feeling?” Why don’t you say, “How are you faithing?” Feelings are fickle. Faith keeps us steady. You’re no stronger than your faith. The Bible says, “According to your faith be it unto you.” And I want you to be a champion of today. Today, we’re talking about the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, the redeeming blood, and we’re going to help you to understand something of the power of faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, look, if you will, here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 28. It speaks of Moses, and it says, “Through faith he kept the Passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.” Now, that’s just a verse of Scripture unless you get it in context. Now, let me give you the context.

The children of Israel are in bondage. They’re down in Egypt. They’d gone down into

Egypt in a time of famine. They stayed down there, and now, old Pharaoh has them as his slaves, and they're making bricks without straw day after day under the cruel taskmaster and under the lash of the lictor. They are working night and day in bondage. But God is going to deliver them. God is going to bring them out. And God brings them out in a night called the night of the Passover.

Now, what is the Passover? Well, God had told the children of Israel, the Jews, that He's going to send an angel through the land of Egypt, and that angel would be a death angel, and the firstborn in every family would be slain that night—a terrible, horrible thing. But there was an exception. God said to His people, "If you will take a lamb, a spotless lamb, take the blood of that lamb and put it upon the doorposts of your house, and upon the lintel of that house, when the death angel comes through the land and he's going to be looking for the blood." And God says, "When he sees the blood, he will pass over you." Hence Passover. That's what Passover is all about.

Now, this is the season of the year when our Jewish friends celebrate Passover. Did you know that Christians are to celebrate Passover? Did you know that? Did you know that the Bible commands us to celebrate Passover? Did you know that Easter and Passover are linked together, that they are inextricably interwoven? Now, many Christians don't know that, but you're in for a great blessing, because in Passover we see a picture, a prophecy, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me tell you, friend, you take the Bible and cut it anywhere, and it will bleed. It is a book of blood. It tells us about the blood redemption all the way from Genesis right on through to the Book of the Revelation. And so, in Passover, we see Calvary's sacrifice in anticipation. And then, at Calvary, we see the sacrifice in consummation. Then, in the Lord's Supper, we see the sacrifice in celebration. Now, that's what we're going to look at today, so just take your Bibles and be ready to study with us. Look again, if you will, please, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 28, speaking of Moses: "Through faith he kept the Passover."

Now, Passover is all about a lamb. A little lamb was slain. We all love lambs. We call our babies little lambs. I have a granddaughter whose name is Rachel, which means little lamb, a cuddly, little, white lamb. Is there anything more tender, anything more gentle, anything more helpless, than a little lamb? A little lamb seems to say, "Are you hungry? Kill me and eat me. Are you cold? Then shear me and make some wool. Keep yourself warm." If you kill a lamb, the lamb will hardly make a sound. The lamb seems to be defenseless. It can't butt. It can hardly run on its wobbly little legs. It has no claws to fight with. It has no incisor teeth to bite with. He's just a little lamb. Almost presents itself to death.

Now, God—listen—God is going to use a lamb to deliver His people. Now, where are they? They are in the land of Egypt. In the Bible, Egypt stands for bondage. It stands for the world, the flesh, and the devil. Pharaoh is a type, a picture, an illustration,

of the devil; Pharaoh, of course, the King of Egypt. Now, old Pharaoh had a crown, and on his crown was a serpent. Right there on his crown is a serpent. You look at some of those ancient Egyptian pictures, and look, and you'll see a serpent coiled up there. That's the symbol of Egypt. Here you have the serpent. Over here you have the lamb. Now, it's the lamb who's going to defeat the serpent. That's what Passover is all about. God is going to bring His people from the land of bondage, from the land of wickedness, from the land of sin, from the land of cruelty. God is going to deliver them and God is going to do it with a lamb, a Passover lamb. Now, keep all of that in mind, and let's look at the first point.

I. The Prophetic Anticipation of Calvary's Sacrifice

All right now, here's the first thing. We're going to see the prophetic anticipation of Calvary's sacrifice. Calvary is not an afterthought. It is not an emergency matter. Calvary was in the heart and mind of God before He swung this planet into space. Now, we're in Hebrews chapter 11, but it's writing about the Old Testament, and so we're going to find that in Exodus chapter 12. So just go back to Exodus chapter 12, if you will, and we'll spend most of the rest of our time in Exodus 12, so you can feel free to turn to it. Keep your Bibles there in your lap. Now, let's see what He says here in Exodus 12, beginning in verse 1: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbors next to his house take it according to the number of the souls every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." And then He says in, in verse 11: "And ye shall eat it; with your loins girded—that is, have your robe on—your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat it in haste—and here it is—it is the Lord's Passover." The lamb, the lamb, the lamb, the lamb, the lamb—it is the Lord's Passover. Now, I want you to notice some things about this lamb that anticipates the Lord Jesus Christ in prophecy.

A. A Spotless Lamb

Number one: It was a spotless lamb. Look again, if you will, in verse 5: "And your lamb shall be without blemish." That spotless lamb is a picture, a prophecy, of the sinless Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, they took this lamb on the 10th day of April, and they kept it for three days, and the lamb was not to be killed until the 14th day. They

keep this little lamb together. They examine this lamb very, very carefully, from its little tail, its ears, its eyes, its nose, every hoof, every inch of the skin. Any blur, any blot, any blemish, any scar, any scab, any malformation—that was no good. These little lambs, they had to be without blemish, a spotless lamb. Say spotless—spotless. All right now, the lamb is a spotless lamb.

B. A Sacrificial Lamb

Now, they take a spotless lamb, and they make the spotless lamb a sacrificial lamb. Look, if you will, now in verse 6: “And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.” Now, wait a minute! A spotless lamb? That little lamb’s done no one any harm, but they’re going to kill the lamb. This lamb is sacrificed. The father would take the neck of that little lamb, and take a lethal knife and pull it across the lamb’s throat, and the rich, red blood would spurt out into a basin, and the blood caught in a basin. What is God teaching? Already here by anticipation, without shedding of blood is no remission.

C. A Saving Lamb

Now, here it is—a spotless lamb, a sacrificial lamb. And then, the lamb becomes a saving lamb. Look, if you will, in verse 7: “And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper post of the houses, wherein ye shall eat it.” And then look, if you will, in verse 12. God says what’s going to happen that night is this: “For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and I will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord.” Now, watch! “And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you...”—now, you know why it’s called Passover—“when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” Now, this lamb, this spotless lamb, this sacrificial lamb, is, therefore, the saving lamb. They were to take the blood of the lamb, put it upon the doorposts of their house, and, when the death angel that night that comes through the land of Egypt sees the blood, he passes over them, and does not bring the judgment.

Now, they were to take a little shrub called hyssop. And the father takes that basin of blood, and he comes to the doorposts of the house, and he strikes the blood on this side, and he strikes the blood on that side, and he strikes the blood up here; and, if you were to look at it, what he’s done is to make a cross. There’s the blood; there’s the blood of the lamb applied openly and publicly and unashamedly. Here is a house that believes in the blood. No ifs, ands, and buts about it—openly, clearly, plainly, publicly, the blood there upon the doorposts. They could not put it in the back room. It would

have done no good. It had to be upon the doorposts. Had they taken silver and gold and encrusted the lintels, it would have done no good. Had they put rubies and diamonds there around that door, it would have done no good. Had they put a spotless, live lamb there, it would have done no good. Salvation, I've told you, is not learning lessons from the life of Christ; it's receiving life from the death of Christ. Without the shedding of blood is not remission. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. A spotless lamb is a sacrificial lamb, is a saving lamb. It is when the blood is put there upon the doorposts of the house that the death angel passes over.

D. A Shared Lamb

Now, watch: this lamb is also a shared lamb. Look, if you will, in verses 8 and 9: "And they shall eat the flesh that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water—that is, don't boil it in water, but roast it with fire—roast with fire; his head with his legs, and the purtenance thereof." The whole lamb is to be roasted with fire.

Now, we're talking here about a shared lamb. Can you imagine what it must have smelled like in the land of Egypt, a quarter of a million lambs being roasted that night? What must it have smelled like? And they're to take this lamb and they're to feast on this lamb. Why? Listen. A group of slaves are now becoming a nation, and a group of people are having fellowship around a lamb. They now feed on the lamb. Now, they were to eat all of the lamb. That means, when you receive Jesus Christ, you receive all there is of Him. He's Master, Mediator, and Messiah. You don't say, "Well, I'll have a little saviorhood today, but no lordship, thank you." No, no, they were to eat all of the lamb. And they were to eat the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

Now, bitterness speaks of brokenness. Have you wept over your sins? You see, you cannot feed on the Lord Jesus Christ apart from repentance. The Bible says that godly sorrow works repentance. With bitter herbs and unleavened bread—leaven in the Bible is an illustration, a type, an emblem of sin. It works quietly in lukewarm conditions. It's yeast, ladies. It's what you put in cake and bread and cookies and these things that causes it to be inflated and puffed up. Well, Passover was not with leaven. All through the Bible, leaven, as we're going to see even later in the message, illustrates sin. So as they feed on the lamb, they are to eat the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. That tells us that we are to be broken over our sins, and broken from our sins.

Now, they eat this lamb, all of this lamb, this lamb that has been roasted. Why was it roasted? Because the fires of God's wrath would burn themselves out on the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has become our sacrifice. When they had this celebration, no work was to be done. Exodus 12, verse 16: "And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day shall be an holy convocation for you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done

of you.” The only work that could be done was to be to prepare the lamb. That’s all. No other work. What is God teaching? It is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. And so, God says, “Now, when you feed upon this lamb, don’t do it with any kind of work.” And then, He says, “You eat it.” Look, if you will, in chapter 12 and verse 11: “And thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s Passover.” That is, this day is not the end; it is the beginning.

I performed a wedding for a boy and he was frightened to death. After they said, “I do,” he said, “Pastor, is it all over?” I said, “No, son, it’s just beginning.” Now, when you give your heart to Jesus, and you feed on the lamb, then you do it with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand. You are getting ready to serve the Lord. And then you become a new creature. Look, if you will, in chapter 12, verse 2: “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.” When you give your heart to Jesus, it’s a brand new day. You’re all tomorrows; you’re no yesterdays. It’s the first day of the rest of your life, when you get saved and feed upon the lamb.

Now, what have we said? This Passover lamb, a spotless lamb, a sacrificial lamb, a saving lamb, a shared lamb—that’s the Passover lamb. That, friend, is Calvary in anticipation—in anticipation. Isn’t the Bible a wonderful book?

II. The Promised Consummation of Calvary’s Sacrifice

Now, let’s see, Calvary in consummation. Let’s see the promised consummation of Calvary’s sacrifice. That lamb only prophesied that Jesus would come and die for us upon the cross. Jesus is the Lamb of God. John the Baptist, who was the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, saw Jesus coming. When John was down there by Jordan baptizing the people, he saw Jesus coming, and John said, “That’s Him. Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” You know, Moses knew. He understood that all of this was only prophecy. John the Baptist knew and understood that all of the Old Testament was only prophecy concerning Jesus who would come. Now, let’s see how Jesus compares to the Passover lamb.

The Passover lamb was a spotless lamb. Jesus was a spotless lamb. First Peter 1, verses 18 and 19: “Forasmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ—now, listen to this very carefully—as a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Do you see how it ties together? God said to Moses, “Moses, take a lamb.” That’s Moses’ lamb. This is Mary’s lamb. Mary had a little lamb; His fleece was white as snow. As a lamb without spot and without blemish—Jesus was a spotless lamb. Now, you remember that they took that little Passover lamb,

and they kept that Passover lamb up for three days. Why did they have that Passover lamb for three days? Well, he could be examined. If there were any flaw, anything wrong with him, they would find it within three days.

Have you ever wondered why so much of the Gospels is given to the last week of Jesus' life? At least a third of the Gospels is given to the last week, most of it to the last three days. Why? Because this little lamb is being examined, God's lamb. In the Old Testament, they began to breed Passover lambs, because to find a perfect lamb was difficult. So they had a special group of shepherds who would breed lambs, and these lambs were Passover lambs, and they would be bred—do you know where? In Bethlehem, in the fields of Bethlehem. That's where they bred these Passover lambs, perfect lambs. Those little lambs in Bethlehem were not ordinary lambs. They were born to die. They were Passover lambs. I believe it was to that kind of shepherds that the angel appeared and told about Mary's lamb, and they went on Christmas to go see Mary's little lamb, that baby that was born there in the stable. These shepherds had these Passover lambs, these little lambs. Then came Passover week. They would bring the lambs from Bethlehem where Jesus was born, down about five miles to Jerusalem, and they would bring them in through the Sheep Gate up to the temple mount, and there the priest would examine those lambs to make certain that they were absolutely without blemish.

Now, the same time that those shepherds were bringing those Passover lambs to the temple mount, Jesus was coming into the temple mount. We call it Palm Sunday. Do you remember that, where they were saying, "Hosanna, Hosanna," and they were throwing down their clothes and palm branches, and Jesus is riding a donkey? And Jesus comes through the Easter Gate up to the temple mount, and those lambs are coming in. Now, they're examining the lambs, and Jesus is being examined. Those last three days He's being examined by the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and the Herodians and the priests, and they're carping at Him, and they're criticizing Him, and the civil authorities are looking at Jesus Christ, trying to find some fault in Him. But old Pilate said, "I find no fault in Him—I find no fault in Him." Everything that they said about Him was a lie. Jesus Christ could say to them, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" He was a perfect lamb. He is being examined there because He was going to die. This sacrificial lamb is going to die for their sins.

Now, Jesus goes out to Gethsemane. But before He goes to Gethsemane, He says to His disciples, "We're going to celebrate the Passover." Now, think about it. It's all about Jesus. And Jesus says, "Go prepare the Passover feast." We call it the Last Supper. It was a Passover. He said, "I'm going to prepare, I want us to have, the Passover." So they go to that upper room, you remember the story. Jesus gathers His disciples, and the Bible says He takes bread, and He blesses it, and He breaks it, and

He gives it to His disciples, and He says, "Eat it. It's my body which is broken for you."

Now, for three centuries the Jews had developed a tradition. They would take a piece of cloth, a bag called a matzah tash, and it would have three sections in it: top, middle, and bottom. In the middle section would be a piece of bread. And the father in the family at Passover would reach into that middle section, pull out the piece of bread, break it, and give it to all of those around. It's still done in Seder suppers today. Now, Jesus reaches in and takes that middle piece of unleavened bread. It has been baked. It has been broken. It has been pierced. And Jesus says, "This is my body"—the middle piece. For centuries, the Jews had held the Trinity in their hands: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. He takes that middle piece, and He breaks it, and He distributes it. And then, He takes the rest of it, and He wraps it in a linen cloth, and He hides it. Our Jewish friends still do that today. It's hidden—it's hidden. It is, as it were, buried, because the children go to try and find that later on. It is buried. Now, the Bible says that night that Jesus blessed the bread. Matthew 26, verse 26: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body." Did you know that when Jesus blessed that bread not only was He, in the breaking of the bread, showing His death, but He was also showing His resurrection?

Do you know what the blessing is at the Passover, when our Jewish friends keep the Passover? Do you know what the blessing is? Do you know what is said when that bread is taken out? "Here it is. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who bringeth forth bread from the earth." Jesus here is prophesying His resurrection. He is the bread broken that's going to come from the earth. "This is my body." From the ground it's going to be raised. Then Jesus goes, and where does He go? He goes from there to judgment and to crucifixion on Mount Moriah.

If you've been with us in this series, you remember when Abraham took Isaac where? Mount Moriah. God said to Abraham, "Abraham, you can't offer Isaac just any place. You take him to the place that I will show you, and there you offer him." But you remember that Isaac didn't have to die. And why did Isaac not have to die? Because God had prepared a substitute for Isaac there on Mount Moriah. But that, too, was just prophecy, because Isaac said to Abraham, "Father, here's the wood, here's the fire, but where is the sacrifice?" And Abraham said, "God will provide Himself a lamb. God will provide Himself a lamb." And He did, and His name is Jesus. God will provide Himself a lamb. Where did Jesus die? Upon that same spot that had been prophesied so long ago. Do you think it is by incident or accident? Do you think it just happened that all of this came together? And there on bloody Calvary, Mount Moriah, Jesus, the Son of God, was crucified, nailed up on a cross at 3:00 p.m. All of those Passover lambs are there. The Levites have sharpened their knives. They tilt the throat back and the blood spurts from the necks of those little lambs. At that same time, the Son of God, God's

Lamb, is upon the cross, and He bows His head, and He says, “It’s finished; It is done!” Levities, you can go home. We don’t need you anymore. Priests, we don’t need you anymore. Passover shepherds, we don’t need you anymore. That is all anticipation. Calvary’s consummation. There it’s done. It is finished. It is paid in full, because God’s spotless lamb has been God’s sacrificial lamb, who’s now God’s saving lamb, and now He becomes God’s shared lamb, because, just as they fed on that lamb so long ago, we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ day by day. That’s why we have the Lord’s Supper, to remind us of that.

III. The Perpetual Celebration of Calvary’s Sacrifice

Now, here’s the third and final thing—and I have just a few moments for this. But notice the perpetual celebration of Calvary’s sacrifice. We talked about anticipation, consummation. Now, here’s celebration. We keep the Passover. First Corinthians 5, verses 7 and 8—Paul is talking to the Corinthian church: “Purge our therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us”—if some of you think that I’m far-fetched and reading too much in it, so did Paul—“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast”—we’re to keep Passover. How do we keep Passover? When we come to the Lord’s Table. When we have the Lord’s Supper, we’re keeping the feast—“let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” That’s why we use unleavened bread in the Lord’s Supper. Leaven, I told you, yeast, represents sin that works quietly and stealthily. But, this, the pure blood of the grape, and this unleavened bread. And, by the way, fermented wine has yeast in it. No, this is unleavened bread that we take up. And this unleavened bread represents the pure body, the sinless Son of God. And we’re to keep the feast with unleavened bread.

The Jews, when they have the Seder, the Passover, they have a little game. The father will take some crumbs of leavened bread, some cookies, or some cake, and maybe put it on the mantle, or in the bookshelf, or under the couch, and the little kids burst into the room to try to find a crumb of leaven in the house. And they say, “Papa, papa, there’s some leavened bread.” And Father comes in with a feather and a wooden spoon, and gets it, carries it to the fire, and throws it in. Why? Because there’s to be no leaven in the house when you take the Passover. What is God saying to us? When we come to the Lord’s Table, how do we come? With clean hearts, no unconfessed, no unrepented-of sin, because we are celebrating the Lord’s Passover. We’re celebrating what the spotless, sinless Son of God did for us. Listen to the Scripture—1 Corinthians 11, verses 23 through 26—Paul said, “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament, the new covenant in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death, hallelujah, till he come"—till He come. We are celebrating. Friend, when we come to the Lord's Table, we're not coming to mourn a corpse; we're coming to hail a conqueror. Jesus Christ has defeated the old serpent. The Lamb has slain the serpent, and we celebrate. Of all people, we ought to celebrate. I'm telling you, precious friend, the little children would find that piece of matzah wrapped in linen, hidden somewhere, maybe under a cushion. And when a child finds it, he says, "I found it. Here it is." He doesn't know it, but he's celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ—that very bread, wrapped in linen, coming up out of the earth.

Conclusion

Isn't the Bible a wonderful book? I mean, when you think of how God put all of this together, how God tied it all together. I love Jesus. I love Him with all of my heart. I love Him. And I thank God for the precious blood of Jesus.

Now, in the Old Testament, they put the blood upon the doorposts. In the New Testament, we confess Christ openly as our Savior: "That if thou shalt believe in thine heart and confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, you'll be saved. With the heart man believes unto righteousness; with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Let's bow for prayer.

Overcoming Obstacles by Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 25, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:30

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”

HEBREWS 11:30

Outline

Introduction

I. The Worship of Faith

II. The Work of Faith

III. The Wait of Faith

IV. The Word of Faith

V. The Wonder of Faith

Conclusion

Introduction

Now you know that we're studying through Hebrews 11, God's Hall of Fame, and we're telling you the way to be in God's Hall of Fame is to be a believer. Because when God comes to sum you up, and when God measures you, and when God rewards you, He says, *“According to your faith be it unto you”* (Matthew 9:29). Not according to your fame, not according to your fortune, not according to your friends, not according to your feelings, not according to your fate, but *“according to your faith be it unto you.”* And so I want to pastor a church where the people believe God. I want to be the kind of pastor that believes God. And so I'm preaching a series of messages that I trust will engender faith in your heart. And, bless God, they're doing something for me. Whether they are doing anything for you, I know not, but they're doing something for me.

And we've come here to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 30, as we move right on through these episodes, these grand stories of faith. And we read here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 30, *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days”—“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days”* (Hebrews 11:30)—that is, after they were circled for seven days.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, may I say that Jericho lay before the children of Israel. God had promised the children of Israel a land that flowed with milk and honey, but between them and the fulfillment of God's promise and God's plan and God's provision

for their life was mighty Jericho. Jericho was a great city. It was great in antiquity: one of the oldest civilizations known to men. It was great in iniquity. They were unspeakably immoral. Great in enormity: a city strong and powerful, with walls all around it. And it seemed as though it were impregnable. It seemed as though it were unconquerable. It seemed as though it said to Joshua and to the children of Israel, “Stay out, and stay away from the fulfillment of God’s promises for you.”

Now what does that mean to me today? And what does that mean to you? Because we’ve told you in studying any passage of Scripture, you have to ask three questions. Number one: What did it mean then? Number two: What does it mean now? Number 3: What does it mean to me personally?

Well, we know what it meant then. Here was an obstacle between the people of God and the promises of God that had to be removed. Now what does it mean today? It means today that there are still people of God, and there are still obstacles, and they still need to be removed. What does it mean to me personally? It means to me personally that through the Lord Jesus Christ and by faith I too can be victorious, because in your life and in my life the devil will see to it that there is some great obstacle that looms large and impossible between us and the plan of God and the will of God for our lives, something that stands between us and the dreams of our youth, something that stands between us and the will of God for our lives, something that stands between us and our loftiest and most holy ambition; something that says, “Stop: you can go no further.”

I don’t know what your Jericho is. I don’t know whether it is some family problem, some financial problem. I don’t know whether it is an unhappy marriage, an unholy life, an unhealthy body. I don’t know whether it’s some unfulfilled dreams, unrecognized potentiality. But I know that you, like I, face problems, and perhaps key problems, some key, strategic forces of evil that stand between you and all that God would have you to be.

Now we want to show you today how to overcome obstacles by faith. And that’s the title of our message: “Overcoming Obstacles by Faith.” And that’s the way to do it. Notice what we read here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 30: *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.”* No other way, just simply, *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”* You see, ladies and gentlemen, *when God has a gigantic task to perform, it is the man who has faith that gets the contract. Faith is the link that binds our nothingness to His almightiness.* It is faith that gets the job done.

So I want us to leave Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 30 and go backward in the Old Testament to Joshua chapter 5, and I want us to find that Old Testament story that the writer of Hebrews is speaking of, and there we’re going to find out just how their faith

was fulfilled and how that fortress was removed.

Now I want you to notice four or five steps in removing obstacles by faith.

I. The Worship of Faith

First of all, I want you to notice the worship of faith—the worship of faith. Turn please to Joshua chapter 5, and let's begin reading in verse 13. Now remember, let's get the setting. The Jews have already come out of Egypt. They've been traveling through the barren, blistering, burning desert waste. Now they've crossed over Jordan, and they're ready to capture the land, the land of Canaan that flows with milk and honey. But Jericho, mighty Jericho, the pagan city is there. And I begin reading now in verse 13—Joshua 5, verse 13: *“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so”* (Joshua 5:13–15).

Now Joshua had been out to reconnoiter. That is, he's looking at the problems. He's a general, a commander-in-chief. And so he's out there to see what the next strategy is going to be, what the next problem is going to be, and there is mighty Jericho with its huge walls that mighty fortress that is between him and the promise of God for him and for his fellows. And while he's looking at his problem, I doubt not that he has become very problem-conscious. And that's a bad way to be—to be problem-conscious. And then suddenly something happens. He is aware of a presence. There is somebody there near him. He knows not who it is. He pulls his sword instinctively and wheels around, and he comes face to face with a man with a drawn sword. Joshua looks at him. He's never seen him before, and Joshua asks him a question: “Friend or foe? Are you for us or are you for them?” And do you know the answer? The man said, “No.”

Now can you imagine how frustrating that would be? “Are you for us or are you for them?” “No.” Now what did he say? He said, in effect, “I'm not for you, and I'm not for them. I'm the captain of the Lord's host. I haven't come to take sides. I've come to take over.”

Now you need to understand what this is all about. Who was this that Joshua met? It was the pre-incarnate Christ. He met the Lord Jesus Christ. Frequently in Bible times, before His incarnation, the Lord Jesus visited this earth, and He appeared as the angel of Jehovah, as the captain of the Lord's host. And Joshua is coming face to face with the Lord Jesus, and when Joshua sees this, he puts down his sword, he falls in the

dust, and he worships his Lord. That's the way I know it was no angel. No angel would have allowed himself to be worshiped in this way. Here Joshua is worshiping the Lord, the captain of the Lord's host, because Jehovah, His Father, has given unto the Son all of the hosts and armies of heaven, and Jesus Christ is the Lord of lords, the King of kings, and the commander of the Lord's host. And so Joshua just surrenders himself. He just prostrates himself in the dust before this person and worships Him. And this is where his faith starts to grow and this is where his faith starts to build. It always grows; it always builds as we worship the Lord—as we worship the Lord.

In a moment, the writer of Hebrews is going to say to have faith is to be *“looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith”* (Hebrews 12:2). That's what Joshua is doing right here: he was looking unto Jesus, and that faith begins to build in his heart and in his life.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to become God-conscious rather than problem-conscious. Now we have a lot of people who are problem-conscious. They see the problem. They see the Jericho. Well, you need to take your eyes off Jericho and put them on Jesus. Learn that. You see, here is the way of faith. Don't dwell on your problems. Dwell on your Lord. Be *“looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith.”* Catch a vision of Him. Worship Him. Bow before Him, and you'll find your faith growing. *Learn to* glance *at your* problems *and to* gaze *at your* Lord. Keep your eyes on Him—keep your eyes on Him. Don't go around negative; don't go around with a problem complex. Go around with your eyes and your hopes and your affections fastened upon the Lord Jesus Christ, with your affections in the heavens. *“Set your affection on things above”* (Colossians 3:2). Put your eyes upon the Lord and your faith will begin to grow.

But let me say this: Faith *never* grows *in the* heart *of* rebels. Rebellion and faith are not in the same heart, in the same life. And you will never, never, never have faith until you bow before Him and say what Joshua said to the captain of the Lord's host. Notice what he said: *“What saith my Lord unto his servant?”* Have you said that? Have you said, “Lord, what do you want me to do? I'll do what you want me to do. I'll be what you want me to be. I'll say what you want me to say. I'll give what you want me to.” You say you want more faith in your life. Well, it begins with the worship of faith, worshiping the Lord, bowing before the Lord, taking the shoes off your feet, so to speak, recognizing His holiness, recognizing His awesomeness, recognizing, ladies and gentlemen, that *it is far more* important *to be on God's* side *than it is to have* God *on your* side.

God's not going to get on your side. You say, “Well, I want the Lord on my side.” Well, forget it. Joshua said, “Are you for us or for them?” He said, “No. I've come to take over.” Have you realized that? God wants to take over. I hear some businessmen say, “Well, God is my partner in business.” That sounds pretty good, but that *ain't* so. He's

your boss. He is Lord!

II. The Work of Faith

Now look. There must be that worship of faith. Now after there's the worship of faith, you're not finished yet, because there's also the work of faith. There's also the work of faith. Continue to read here in the Book of Joshua chapter 6, beginning in verse 1, and I want to read the next five verses: *"Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do for six days." That is, for six days you march around the city completely one time. "And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times,"—that is, there will be 13 times altogether that you are going around the city—"and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him"* (Joshua 6:1–5).

Now here was God's plan for victory, and it was a strange plan. Now remember Joshua is a general, and remember he's a military man. And what kind of a strategy was this? God doesn't tell him to dig any trenches. God doesn't tell him to throw up any battlements and earthworks. God doesn't tell him to build some ladders to scale the walls. God doesn't tell him to dig some tunnels. God doesn't tell him to hurl some rocks over the walls. God tells him to do something that is very strange: "Just begin to walk around the walls, around and around and around." And I can understand that some of the savants and the sophisticates of that day may have said, "Why are we going around in circles? Why don't we do something?" They were doing something. And may I tell you what they were doing? They were obeying God.

Now they didn't have to understand it. As a matter of fact, to the human eye, it didn't make sense. That's no way to take a city: just marching, marching, marching, going around in circles. You see, why did they do it? Why did God tell them to do this? I think for one thing, just to test and to prove their obedience. You see why do it? Because God said to, and that was enough. It's not our job to understand. It is our job to undertake. Just do what He says to do.

Those of you who have children, have you ever told your children to do something, and they say, "Why?" Just nod your head. Sure. And what did you say? I know you said it on some occasion. "Because I said to, just because I said to. I don't have to give you an explanation. I may give you an explanation, but I don't have to. I'm the daddy. I'm the

mom. You're the child. Now I said do it, and you do it." And they still don't do it. "Do it." Well, that's what God is saying to us today ladies and gentlemen: "Just simply obey."

Now let me tell you something about this book that I hold in my hand. It is not first and foremost a book to be explained. It is first and foremost a book to be believed and therefore obeyed. Whether you understand it or not really doesn't make much difference. And the people of this world are not going to understand it.

I imagine that those people that lived in Jericho must have been up on those lofty walls, looking down, laughing and saying, "Ha! Would you look at that? They don't even know how to fight. They don't even know how to run a battle. Look at them marching, marching, marching." Of course, on the inside they were getting more and more unnerved, but I'm certain on the outside they jeered and they laughed.

Don't let the jeers of Jericho keep you away from your faith in Jesus. People of this world will laugh at you. If they don't laugh at you, you're not like your Lord, for the servant is not better than his Lord (Matthew 10:24; John 15:20), and *"they laughed him to scorn"* (Matthew 9:24; Mark 5:40; Luke 8:53). The Bible, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 18 to 21, says, *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this [age]? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:18–21).

And did you know there are some people, doubtless watching by television, listening by radio, traveling through Memphis, Tennessee, and you just happen to be listening, and you're saying to yourself, "That man's a fool, and what he's saying is foolishness." Well, that's your prerogative. You can believe that if you want to. But the Bible says, "To those of us who are saved, the cross is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). We've proved it in our own lives. And dear friend, *it's not our job primarily to understand. It is our job to obey.* And it doesn't matter whether we feel like it or not.

Don't think you're a hypocrite if you obey when you don't feel like it. As a matter of fact, sometimes you prove your love even more by mastering your feelings and just simply obeying the Lord, for feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the Word of God, and naught else is worth believing. Don't be shackled by feelings. Feelings are fickle. Don't try to understand everything God says. Live by faith, whether it makes sense to or whether it doesn't.

Now dear friend, the worship of faith is to bow before the Lord. What is the work of faith? The work of faith is full, prompt, glad, unreserved, and unquestioned obedience. *"Faith without works is dead"* (James 2:20, 26). "Trust and obey, for there is no other

way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.”

III. The Wait of Faith

Now the third thing I want you to notice is the wait of faith—w-a-i-t—the wait of faith, waiting on the Lord. I want to read here in Joshua chapter 6 and verse 14: *“And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times”* (Joshua 6:14–15). One times, two times, three times, four times, five times, six times, seven times in one day, round and round and round they go, and they’ve already been doing this for six days. I can imagine someone is saying, “Now wait a minute. I’m getting tired of this. We did it once—it didn’t work. We did it twice—it didn’t work. We’ve done it six days—it hasn’t worked. Here’s the seventh day—we’ve been around six times on the seventh day and nothing has happened yet. I’m tired. I quit.” Oh, dear friend, had they done that the walls would still be standing perhaps. God was teaching them a great lesson: the lesson of patience, the lesson of waiting on the Lord.

Now when you wait upon the Lord, you’re not wasting time. How hard it must have been for them just simply to obey in silence and wait upon the Lord. But you know the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 28—let’s turn to that—and verse 16. What a great chapter that is, and what a great verse it is—Isaiah chapter 28 and verse 16: *“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste”* (Isaiah 28:16). When you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the sure foundation, when you put your faith in Him, dear friend, you can afford to wait. *“Wait, I say, on the LORD”* (Psalm 27:14).

And then let me give you another verse while we are in Isaiah. Turn, if you will, to Isaiah chapter 30 and verse 18. Look at it. *“And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you...”*—why does God fail to answer your prayers right away? Why does sometimes it seem the feet of deity are leaden and that the Lord does not be swift to answer you? Well, the Bible says, because God loves you—*“therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you,”*—anything that God does is rooted in His grace and in His love for you—*“and therefore will he be exalted”*—another reason He’s in the business of not only being gracious to you but in getting glory for Himself—*“that he may have mercy upon you.”*—dear friend, if God has not yet answered your prayer, it is not because He is unmerciful but because He is merciful unto you—*“for the LORD is a God of judgment:”*—what does that mean? He knows things you don’t know. Never make the mistake of saying, “Well, if I were God, I would do thus-and-such.” How ridiculous! And then notice how He concludes this verse—*“blessed are all they that wait*

for him” (Isaiah 30:18).

Do you want to be blessed? Wait for the Lord. Wait, I say. Wait on the Lord. *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength”* (Isaiah 40:31). *“Wait, I say, on the LORD.”* God is waiting for you to wait on Him. The Bible says, *“[Be not] weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Galatians 6:9).

And then let me give you another verse while we are talking about this. Look in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 36, and see if this verse is talking to you: *“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise”* (Hebrews 10:36). Isn’t that a great verse? *“For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”* O God, help us to trust in thee and to obey thee and to keep on keeping on.

There are some of you listening to me who are just about ready to quit. Some of you are in the hospitals, some of you are at home, some of you are discouraged. I want to tell you there is the worship of faith, there is the work of faith, but there is the wait of faith. *“Wait, I say, wait upon the Lord.” “Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you.”* Have faith in God. Don’t give up. Don’t let up. Keep your faith in God. Faith is marked by endurance and by not quitting.

IV. The Word of Faith

All right now, the next thing I want you to notice: Not only the wait of faith, but I want you to notice the word of faith—the word of faith. Notice here in Joshua chapter 6 now. I begin reading again in verse 15: *“And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city...”*—this is Joshua chapter 6 and verse 15—*“and [they] compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.”* And now notice in verse 16: *“And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city”* (Joshua 6:15–16).

Now the city hadn’t fallen yet, and yet Joshua said, *“The Lord has given it to you.”* Not *“the Lord will give it to you”*—*“the Lord has given it to you.”* Well, how could Joshua say it’s been done when it hadn’t been done? Well, it had been done in the heart and mind of God, even though it had not been done in actuality; it had been done by faith and potentiality. And Joshua knew it was as good as done, and therefore Joshua said, *“The LORD hath”*—not will, but hath—*“given you the city,”* because Joshua knew the Word of God. Go back, if you will, to Joshua chapter 6 and verse 2: *“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho.”* Not *“I will”*—*“I have.”* Now what is Joshua doing? Joshua is speaking a word of faith. But where did he get that word of faith? He got his word of faith from the Word of God.

Now pay attention. I have been saying it. I've said it over and over again, but I want to drive it home. *"Faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"*—*"Faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Joshua did not just decide there was something he wanted and therefore he would believe for it. That's not faith. Faith is not just cooking up something you wish and saying, "I'm going to believe God for it." You cannot just believe God for something and make it so. You can only believe God for something that already is so in the heart and mind of God. You see, God had already said, "I have given you the city. It is done in my heart and mind," and therefore Joshua says behind God what God has already said. Faith is just simply agreeing with the Word of God. God must speak before you have faith. Either He shall speak in His Word or by His Spirit, or by a combination of the Word and the Spirit, but God speaks to you, and faith is your reaction to what God has said. Therefore you have to be walking with God and worshipping God and knowing God and waiting upon God so you can hear God so you can believe God.

Now look. The reason some of us don't have any faith is we don't know what God is saying. We never hear God speak. I told the Sunday School class this morning as we were talking about prayer that *the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven*. We just close the circuit. Here's what prayer is. Prayer *is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father and putting that desire into our hearts and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross*. That is powerful prayer: knowing the will of God, hearing the Word of God, and then speaking a word of faith.

Now most of us don't walk with the Lord, know the Lord, listen to the Lord enough even to know. We come running to God with our petitions and our prayers, and we say, "Listen, Lord; thy servant speaketh," when we ought to be saying, "Speak, Lord; your servant hears. Speak, Lord. What is your will?" Joshua knew the will of God. And therefore he could say to his people, "Speak the word of faith." *"Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city"*—*"the LORD hath."*

Now let me show you this principle in the New Testament. Turn to Hebrews chapter 13 for a moment—Hebrews chapter 13, verses 5 and 6. Learn this principle, and learn it well: *"Let your conversation"*—that is, your behavior—*"be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said..."*—now underscore that—*"for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"* (Hebrews 13:5–6). Verse 5: *"He hath said."* Verse 6: *"We may boldly say."* You know what faith is? Faith *is saying with boldness what God has already said*. *"He hath said...that we may boldly say."* How could Joshua be so bold? How could Joshua say, *"Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city"*? God had already said it. *"He hath said...that we may boldly say."*

Now here's a person haunted by the ghost of guilt. Here's a person who has

perhaps committed some horrible, heinous sin. And this sin has etched itself upon the consciousness. This sin reverberates through the mind. It thunders in the soul. And this person night and day has this sin waiting upon him. And then he reads in the Word of God, *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son [cleanses] us from all sin,”* 1 John 1:7. He reads in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* And this person hears what God says, and then he says, “By faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and through faith in God’s promise, I now confess and I declare that I am clean, I am free, I am forgiven. Hallelujah!” And the burden is lifted.

Why is the burden lifted, and why does that Jericho of guilt and condemnation fall and crumble? Because here is a man, a woman, a boy, or girl who has learned to say what God has already said. Amen? Faith is just saying what God says behind Him.

Let me give you the other side of that. Sometimes we will be preaching the gospel and give the invitation and ask people to come forward and give their heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. And people come forward with hungry hearts, and they’re dealt with by a counselor, and the counselor shows them the Word of God where it says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). And the counselor shows them the Word of God where it says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). And they say, “Now, sir, pray and ask Christ into your heart.” The man prays and says, “Lord Jesus, I trust you to save me.” And then the counselor says, “Are you saved?” He says, “Well, I don’t know. I don’t feel that I am. I don’t think I am.” Well, I’ll tell you: He’s not. I don’t care what he prayed.

But now here’s another man. He comes forward. The counselor shows him the Word of God and says, “Now pray and ask Christ into your heart.” He says, “Lord Jesus, I trust you to save me.” And the counselor says to him, “Are you saved?” And he said, “Well, the Bible says, *‘Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’* I called upon Him; therefore I’m saved. And you know what God says? “That’s right. You are.”

Whatever you say about it, God says about it. Confession brings possession. *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:9–10).

There is the word of faith. Learn to speak the Word of God. Learn to say what God is saying. *“He hath said...that we may boldly say.”* That’s what faith is. There is the worship of faith where we bow before the Lord and make Him Lord. There is the work of faith where we do what He tells us to do. There is the wait of faith where we wait upon the Lord until He tells us the time is now. And then there is the word of faith where we

speak that word. 'Tis done, just like that. The word of faith.

V. The Wonder of Faith

Now just let me say finally, ladies and gentlemen, there is the wonder of faith—the wonder of faith. Notice again in Joshua chapter 6 and verse 20: *“So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city”* (Joshua 6:20). And that’s the city that loomed large between them and the promises of God. It fell, and God’s people went by faith to claim their possession.

God works wonders when His people believe in Him. And that’s what Hebrews chapter 11 is written to tell us. And ladies and gentlemen, that’s what this sermon is calculated to tell you: that the great God is still in the miracle business, and that God wants to work wonders for you, and that there can be victory for you, and that your walls of opposition can crumble, and that your spiritual enemies can be vanquished, and that you—yes, you—can know victory, not by trying, but by trusting; trusting the Lord, obeying the Lord.

But there’s a dark note here, as we talk about the wonders of faith. There’s a somber note here, because not only was God giving victory to His people, but God was also at the same time judging another people. Not only was God giving victory to Israel, but God was also judging the people of Jericho, the Canaanites. And how wicked were the Canaanites. They were unspeakably immoral. They worshiped demon gods. They practiced the crudest forms of sexual immorality. They sacrificed their little babies. They were almost as wicked as modern day Americans—almost, I suppose. And at the same time God was giving the victory to His people who believed, God was also giving judgment to the people of Jericho.

Now pay attention. God had been very patient with the people of Jericho. God had been very patient with the people of Canaan. And God said concerning these people, in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 16, that *“the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full”* (Genesis 15:16). That is, they were sinful, but the cup of sin had not come up to the brim, and God was waiting, and God was patient, but they got more wicked and more wicked and more wicked until finally God said, in Leviticus chapter 18 and verse 25, *“The land is defiled: therefore do I visit the iniquity thereof upon it”* (Leviticus 18:25).

Now notice at first *“the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full,”* and finally God came to the place where the land is defiled. Some people think that perhaps God acted carelessly, capriciously, when God judged Jericho, and when the inhabitants of Jericho were destroyed, and when those walls fell. But God was not acting capriciously. God

had waited in judgment. God had warned. But they had gone on in their iniquity, and finally the dam of God's mercy gave way to the raging waters of God's wrath. And God judged Jericho, and their manmade fortress collapsed under the hands of God's judgment. Now notice what I'm saying and pay attention now. Through faith is the victory. Through unbelief there's nothing but judgment and condemnation.

Conclusion

Now ladies and gentlemen, I want you to have faith. There's no way you can live in these last days except by faith. Everything that's not nailed down is coming loose. And you'd better learn to trust God. And you'd better learn to teach your children to trust God. And you'd better have the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture to stand upon, because—you listen to me—America is ripe for judgment. This world is ripe for judgment. I believe that the cup of sin is filled to the brim in America and in the world. And you look at the world situation. You hear our brother from Taiwan here today plead for prayers for Taiwan. You see what's happening now in Vietnam, in Cambodia, in Russia, in China, in Iran, in Israel, in Egypt. You see the sin and the boiling, seething sea of sin and humanity, and you can see that God is writing in boxcar letters across our generation that things are surely coming to a climax.

I want to tell you. I want to tell you something, and you pay attention. Soon another trumpet will sound. Soon there is going to another shout. And when there is, the kingdoms of this world are going to collapse, and *"the kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ"* (Revelation 11:15). And it's those who know the Lord who are going to be the victors, and it's those who don't know Him who are going to be the vanquished. And the trumpet may sound before I give the invitation. You don't know, and I don't know, for the Bible says, *"In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh"* (Matthew 24:44). Coming with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God.

Are you ready? There's only one way you can be ready, and it is by faith. For the Bible says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."*

Tough Faith for Troubled Times

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 26, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:30–40

Outline

Introduction

- I. Mature Faith Realizes the Supernatural Power of God
- II. Mature Faith Recognizes the Sovereign Purposes of God
- III. Mature Faith Remembers the Settled Promises of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find Hebrews chapter 11. In just a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 30. But I want to talk to you today about, "Tough Faith for Troubled Times."

Have times sometimes gotten so troubled, so disconcerting to you, that you get discouraged? You pray, and faith seems to fail. You stain heaven with your prayers, and nothing happens, so far as you can see. There is no apparent answer to your prayer. Sometimes, it may be a semi-serious matter. You're planning an outdoor event, and perhaps a lawn party, and you say, "God, give us good weather today; we're having this thing outside," and the bottom falls out. Have you ever been there? I mean a stump-floating, frog-strangling rain. And you were saying, "O God, I asked You for good weather. What happened?" Or perhaps you're young, and you say, "Lord God, let me marry that girl. O dear God, let me know that man as my husband," and he or she marries your best friend. And you say, "Lord, how could You do that? God, I prayed—I prayed." Or, even more seriously, we've had loved ones in the hospital, loved ones who are sick, loved ones who perhaps with some greedy malady eating away at their life, and we go to God, and we say, "O God, please, in the name of Jesus, deliver my child. Let my husband be made well. O God, send health to my own body," and the prayer doesn't seem to be answered, and our loved one steps to the other side. I've seen people get bitter at God, and stop serving God. They say, "Where is God?" Or perhaps a national election comes along, and we pray, and we say, "Now, God, let me explain to You how this whole political situation works. Lord, there are certain things that You need to be informed of. And, now, Father, here's what needs to be done. And remember, Lord, your people are praying, and we're trusting You." Maybe it doesn't work out the

way we think it ought to work out. Well, let's look in the Word of God.

Hebrew chapter 11, verse 30—it talks about many episodes of faith. And I'm going to break in, for respect of time, but let's begin in verse 30: "By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, and they were compassed about seven days. By faith, the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace. And what more shall I say? For time would fall me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, and of David, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again..." Most of us would like to put a period there, and say, "That's what faith does. Hallelujah. Count me in. Where can I sign up? Where can I join?" But let's continue to read. There are two words here that may be disconcerting to you: "and others." "And others—listen to this—were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute and afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report..."—they didn't fail. They got A on their report card—"...and these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. God, having provided something better for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." That is, actually, complete.

Well, what's the background for this passage of Scripture, this peon of praise to faith? Well, it's in chapter 10. And, in chapter 10 of the Book of Hebrews, you're going to find out that the people of God were going through a great ordeal. For example, in chapter 10, verse 32, he said, "ye endured a great fight of afflictions." God's people were being pressed hard. They were being pressed so hard that they were tempted to throw in the towel. Have you ever been tempted to throw in the towel? Have you ever been tempted to say, "What is the use? I've prayed, and it doesn't get better. It only seems to get worse." And so, he says, in verse 36 of chapter 10, "For you have need of patience—that is, endurance—that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise." That's one of the things that we greatly need is patience, endurance—tough faith for troubled times.

These are troubled times—these are troubled times. And I'm calling you as a congregation to touch faith. I want us to go back to chapter 11, and I want to give you three principles. And I pray God that He will write these three principles upon your heart. They will help you to endure, to have patience, that you might receive the promises that

you not throw in the towel in tough times—three things about tough faith that I’m going to call really mature faith.

I. Mature Faith Realizes the Supernatural Power of God

Number one: Mature faith realizes the supernatural power of God—mature faith realizes the supernatural power of God. There are enough stories told here in Hebrews chapter 11 to tell us that our God, as we’ve sung this morning, is a mighty God. Our God is an awesome God. There is no limit, none whatsoever, to His power. And he mentions some of these things, beginning in verse 32—look at it: “What shall I say more? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and Jephthae; of David, and Samuel, and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword...” These are all stories that we know. Stopped the mouths of lions—that’s Daniel and the lion’s den. Every one of you in Sunday school you learned the story of Daniel and the lion’s den. And the wicked king said, “Daniel, you cannot pray to your God.” And Daniel said, “I’m going to pray to my God.” And they threw him in that lion’s den with those ferocious lions. And he’s the man of God, and Daniel’s not perturbed about it, because he’s trusting God. He pulls up an old lion, and fluffs him up for a pillow, and gets his Old Testament, and begins to read between the lions. He’s just having a wonderful time. We say, “Oh, I love that story. Oh, thank God for that story, how God delivered Daniel. We love that story. It’s a wonderful story.”

Then, we read about the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and the old king says, “If you don’t bow down and worship my image, I’m going to throw you into a fiery furnace, and we’re going to heat it seven times hotter than it’s supposed to be heated.” It shows how dumb he was. He wanted to make them squirm—he’d have cooled it down a little bit; keep them in there for a long time. But, guys, the men were turned to bacon. Here are these three boys, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the furnace. They said, “Bow down and worship.” They said, “We’re not going to bow.” They said, “Change your mind.” Said, “We’re not going to budge.” Said, “We’ll throw you in.” He said, “We ain’t gonna burn.” They throw them in the furnace. They throw them in the furnace. And the king looks in the furnace, and who does he see in the furnace, but a fourth man, and his visage, his image, is as the Son of God. Jesus did not keep them out of the fire; He went through the fire with them. And when they came out, not even the smell of smoke was in their clothes. I wish I could say that when I go to the barbershop. Not even the smell of smoke was in their clothes. We love that story.

What about those who escaped the sword? He talks about those. That’s David—David and old Goliath. There was Goliath, Goliath of Gath, over 9 feet tall. I couldn’t

even scratch the top of his head by standing on my tiptoes and lifting my arm up this high. I'd have to get a stepladder. Goliath of Gath, the original Bigfoot. There he is, belching out blasphemies against the children of Israel. And David says, "Why doesn't somebody go out there and shut his mouth?" And they're all afraid. Even Saul was afraid. Somebody said, "Why don't you do it, David?" He said, "I believe I will." David, little David, he had a different perspective that day than everybody else. Everybody else was looking at Goliath, and thinking, Look how much bigger he is than we are. David was thinking, Look how much smaller he is than God is. Everybody else was saying, "He's too big to hit." David said, "He's too big to miss." And David comes against Goliath, a little teenage boy with a little peach fuzz on his chin. The Bible says he was of ruddy and of a fair countenance. And David destroys Goliath, and cuts Goliath's head off with Goliath's sword. Oh, we love that story.

We love the story of the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. We love the story of Daniel and the lion's den. We love the story of David and Goliath. And I thank God for those stories. And I want to tell you the God who did that yesterday is the God who is alive and well today.

Now, that brings me to say this: If God does not answer your prayer, it doesn't mean He's not able. It does not mean that He is not able. There are enough stories in the Word of God, and enough experiences in our own personal life, to know that our God is an awesome God. Our God is a mighty God. And there's not a mother's child in this building, if you walked with God long enough, served God faithfully enough, been filled with the Holy Spirit, you've seen God do the same thing for you. You can say, "I want to tell you when God Almighty did something that is totally, completely, inexplicable, apart from His hand."

I just had prayer with a family today who were holding in their hands a little baby, had gone through some awful surgery, and God had delivered that child. And here we were there, just thanking God, and praising God for the victories that we see.

So, put it down—here's the first principle: Mature faith realizes the supernatural power of God. Now, you have to understand that. That's the building block. God is not weak. God is not impotent. God is an awesome God.

II. Mature Faith Recognizes the Sovereign Purposes of God

All right now, here's the second thing: Mature faith also recognizes the sovereign purposes of God. Now, sometimes, God's power is there, but God's purpose does not do what we want God to do. Now, go again, verse 35, and look again in the middle of that verse. It begins, "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance..."—others. Now, we can always fall in that "and others" category. Look down in verse 37 about what happened to the others.

For example, “They were stoned...” You have a book in your Bible called Zechariah. Zechariah the prophet, according to tradition, was stoned to death. In the New Testament, Stephen was stoned to death. Stephen was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. You say, “Boy, I’d like to be filled with the Holy Spirit like Peter was on the day of Pentecost.” Peter got filled with the Holy Spirit, and got 3,000 souls. Yeah. Stephen was filled with the Holy Ghost, and got 3,000 stones. Same Holy Spirit. Men of God, both of them loving the Lord.

They were sawn in two, according to verse 37. This probably has reference to what happened to Isaiah. Tradition tells us that Isaiah was put into a hollow tree trunk by King Hezekiah, and then they took a big crosscut saw and sawed the tree, a part with Isaiah in the middle of that hollow tree—actually, literally, sawn in two. That verse says they were put in sheepskins and goatskins. You know, this happened in the Coliseum, as well as in Old Testament times. They would take the saints of God and put animal skins on them, put them out there in the middle of the Coliseum. And then, the crowds would begin to cry, “Send out the lions! Send out the lions!” And there would be those little Christians there huddled—a father, perhaps, and a daughter; a young mother holding a baby in her arms. And those ferocious beasts would come out there and redden their mouths with the blood of these saints.

I’ve been to the Coliseum, as some of you have, and I have to bow my head and hold back the tears sometimes as I think of what literally happened in that spot and in other spots called the Circus Maximus. Not a circus as we know a circus. It means simply a circle where they were slaughtered. Tens of thousands of them paid for their faith with their blood. I wonder what you would do. I wonder what I would do. I wonder if I would say, “Well, faith has failed.” No, faith has not failed. It was faith that enabled them to do this.

I’ve read in church history. You can read where they took some of the saints of God. Ladies, they would put them in a big bag, and then put snakes in the bag, poisonous snakes, and sew up the bag, and leave them in there with those poisonous snakes, until, of course, they perished. They would take some of the saints and tie them to the beach at low tide, and let the water come up and slowly drown them, as the water would come up. You say, “Why didn’t God do something?” God was doing something. You have to understand that these people did not fail. It was not that their faith failed. The Bible said, “They received a good report.”

Now, let me tell you something, friend. It’s one thing to have faith to escape. Thank God for that. It’s even better to have faith to endure. It’s one thing to love God, and believe God, and say, “O God, will You heal me?” and God does—and thank God for that. I believe He’s healed me. And, if I’m sick, I’m going to pray, and I’m going to stain heaven and ask God to heal me. It’s one thing to pray and ask God to heal you and

have faith. It's another thing to have faith when God doesn't heal you. You see, it's one thing to escape; it's another thing to endure. Those who escaped had faith. Those who endured had faith. Now, this is the kind of faith I'm talking about, which is tough faith. You see, listen. If you get your theology from circumstances, sooner or later, you're going to come to the conclusion that God doesn't love you. Let me say that again. If you get your theology from circumstances, just wait a while. Sooner or later, you will come to the conclusion that God does not love you. Let me give you a classic example.

Turn to John chapter 11—John chapter 11. You're going to find out what the Bible says about Jesus and His friends, Lazarus, Mary and Martha. John chapter 11, verse 5: "Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus." Now, that's a great statement. Jesus loved Martha and her sister—that's Mary—and Lazarus. You can't quibble about that. Jesus loved them. And they had prayed, and said, "Jesus, Lazarus is sick. Will you heal him?" Now, go down to John chapter 11 and verse 14: "Then said Jesus unto them plainly—now watch this—Lazarus is dead. And I am glad..." Oooh, I can't believe that. Jesus loves Martha and her sister and Lazarus. "Lord, heal Lazarus." Jesus says plainly, "He's dead, and I'm glad." How do you put that together? How do you put that together? But you see, God had a different plan. Jesus had a different plan. Verse 15 says, "And I'm glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."

You see, we need to understand this: that God has not promised to deliver us from every difficulty. As an individual, as a church, and as a nation, God has not promised to deliver us from every difficulty. What God has promised—we're talking about tough faith, now, for troubled times—what God has promised is the ultimate victory.

Romans chapter 8, beginning in verse 35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Now, watch this next statement, verse 37: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Now, folks, that's tough faith. He doesn't say, having escaped all of these things. He doesn't say, never having to face all of these things. He says, "in all of these things we are more than conquerors." Put it down big, plain, and straight. Difficulty in your life does not mean that God has abandoned you or that God is not hearing your prayers.

Now, you're in Hebrews chapter 11. Fast-forward to chapter 13. Remember, he's talking about Christians who are ready to throw in the towel because they're going through such difficulty. Now, what he's trying to do is to encourage them. And, very frankly, what I'm trying to do is to encourage you, because I don't know what may happen to this nation. And what I'm trying to do is to put a tough faith in you that cannot be shaken.

Hebrews 13, verses 5 and 6: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper. I will not fear what man shall do unto me. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” The Greek students tell us that in that sentence there are five negatives. It’s as if he said, “I will never, never, never, never, no never forsake thee.” It doesn’t come in the English, but it’s there in the Greek.

I heard one time about a young embryonic theologian, been to seminary, tried to tell some dear old mother in Israel that, and explain it to her. She just smiled, and said, “Son, God may have to say it five times for you Greek boys, but once is enough for me.” I will never forsake thee. May I submit to you, that is either true or it’s false. I say it’s true. I say it is true. And you’d better get a bulldog grip on that. He says, “I will never leave you.” I’ve seen the lightning flashing, I’ve heard the thunder roll; I’ve seen sin’s breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. I’ve heard the voice of Jesus telling me still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.

Again, I want to say this: don’t you judge God by circumstances. If you do, you’re going to lose your faith. That’s what happened to John the Baptist. John the Baptist was a mighty man. Jesus gave him one of the greatest compliments ever given to anybody. He said, “Not a greater is born of woman than John the Baptist.” I’d say that’s a pretty high compliment, especially considering from whom it came. Jesus said, “There’s not a greater among men than John the Baptist.” But John the Baptist got down in prison one time. Herod had put him in prison. And John the Baptist couldn’t understand why. “If Jesus can raise the dead, why can’t He get me out of prison?” And so he actually sent some of his messengers, his disciples, to Jesus to say, “Are you really the one that we’re looking for, or should we look for somebody else?” Can you imagine that? This is the same John the Baptist who stood on the shores of Jordan, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.” This is the same one who said to Jesus, “I’m not even worthy to untie your shoelaces, much less baptize You.” And yet, he says, “Are You really the Messiah?” And I want you to get the answer that Jesus gave to him. Put it in your margin—Matthew 11, verses 4 and following: “Jesus answered and said unto them; go show John again the things which ye do see, which you do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk. The lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear. The dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended at me.” “Now, John, if I haven’t gotten you out of prison, I want to tell you, son, it’s not because I can’t. Not because I can’t. I can open blind eyes. I can unstop deaf ears. I can raise the dead. So, John, have a tough faith. If I haven’t, it’s not because I can’t.” A wise man once said this, and I want you to listen to what he said: “Faith is not so much receiving from God

the things that we want as it is accepting from God the things that He gives.” “Faith is not so much receiving from God the things that we want as it is accepting from God the things that He gives.”

Now, if you’re trusting the Lord—and I trust that you are—and you say, “I’m putting my faith in God; my God is an awesome God; and my God is able to deliver me,” yes, recognize the sovereign power of God, the supernatural power of God, but also remember the sovereign purposes of God, and put what I want to call an “if not” clause in your faith—an “if not” clause.

Now, turn with me to Daniel chapter 3 in the Old Testament. I want to show you what I mean by an “if not” clause. “If not,” I-F N-O-T, an “if not” clause. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—I’ve already alluded to—were told to bow down and worship a pagan idol, or else they would be put to death. I’m reading Daniel 3, beginning in verse 16: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said unto the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not—now that’s the clause. I want you to just underscore that if it’s not underscored in your Bible—But if not—that is, if God doesn’t deliver us—be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Now, let me tell you what their faith was. Let me give you three S’s.

First of all, it was a settled faith. They said, “King, we’re not careful to answer you about this matter.” Do you know what that means? “We don’t have to have a huddle. We don’t have to consider it. We have already considered it. Our faith is already settled. We’re going to serve God, no matter what!” It’s a settled faith.

Now, the second thing I want you to notice about it: it was a sure faith. “Our God will deliver us. Well, He may not be able to see it. It may not happen the way you think it’s going to happen, but He will do it!” Do you have a settled faith? That’s the thing you need to understand—to get a bulldog grip on faith, and let it be a settled faith, a sure faith, as well as a settled faith.

And then, it is a steadfast faith. Now, that’s the part I love: “Our God is able to deliver us”—that’s a sure faith. “He will deliver us”—that’s a sure faith. “But if not, we’re not going to bow down to your old image. If He doesn’t deliver us…” There’s an “if not” there. “If not, we’re still not going to serve your gods. Because, if God doesn’t give us what we want, God is going to give us something better than we want.” The Bible speaks of those, in the Book of Hebrews, and said they didn’t escape, but they obtained a better resurrection. Now, friend, that’s faith.

What kind of faith are we talking about? What kind of faith is tough faith in troubled times? It’s the faith of the prophet Habakkuk. Everything around him was caving in, and

the bottom was falling out, and there didn't seem to be anything he could hold on to, except God. Now, listen to one of the greatest two verses of Scripture in all of the Bible—put them in your margin—Habakkuk 3, verses 17 and 18—here's what the man of God said: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields yield no meat; the flock shall be caught off, shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the LORD. I will joy in the God of my salvation." Listen to it: "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD. I will joy in the God of my salvation." What he's saying is this: if there's no food in the supermarkets, if the Dow Jones goes to the bottom, if all of my retirement goes, if there's chaos in the streets, if I don't have a job, my lifestyle may change, but my style of living will not change. "I will rejoice in the God of my salvation." That is tough faith for troubled times. It's the kind of faith those Hebrew children said, "Hey, we're not going to bow down and serve your image. We don't care. We're going to serve God."

I'm telling you again. If you get your faith from circumstances, you're going to be perplexed, because God's ways are hard to understand.

Let me give you another example. And I admit that we're looking at a lot of different places in the Bible. But, in Acts chapter 12, there was a mean, malevolent king who was on the throne. His name was Herod. Acts chapter 12, verse 1: "And about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword." Now, James was a spiritual leader. We'll just say, it'd be like having your pastor killed for standing up for Jesus. "And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also." He killed James. Now, he's arresting Peter. He intends to bring Peter out, and parade him before the people, and then kill Peter. But, if you'll go now to Acts chapter 12, verse 11, you're going to find out that there was a jailbreak. An angel comes in. He has to wake up Peter. Peter is there asleep. "Get up!" "Huh." "Get up!" Here's Peter in prison. He's got all these four quatrains of soldiers round about him. He's sleeping so soundly the angel has to shake him. You talk about faith. Peter's not worried. By the way, you know, Peter knew that James, that Herod had cut off his head. You know why Peter knew that? Jesus had already said to him, "Peter, when you're an old man, they're going to lead you around." Peter's still a young man. He knew he was going to be an old man. He knew that somehow he was going to be delivered. And he says, "Now, get up! Get dressed, Peter. I'm waiting on you." "We're not sneaking out of this place. You dress up." Peter dresses. They start there, and the gates open. Another gate opens. They walk out of there, just walk out. Peter's dressed with an angel escort.

Now, back over there at a particular place, the disciples are praying for Peter in prison. They've already seen what happened to James. "O God, please deliver Peter, please." "See who's at the door." Rhoda goes to the door. "It's Peter. Hey, it's Peter."

“Hey, Rhoda, you’re having a dream. You’re crazy, gal. O Lord, deliver Peter. Maybe, Rhoda, you’re hallucinating.” Peter had more trouble getting into prayer meeting than he had getting out of jail. Here’s the question—here’s the question: The same God that allowed James to have his head cut off springs Peter from prison—how do you explain that? You can’t. You just say, “Let God be God. Just let God be God.” There are the “and others.”

Now, what I’m trying to say—look, folks: If you try to say, “Well, does it make sense?” No, not to you, it doesn’t make sense. But because it doesn’t make sense to you doesn’t mean it doesn’t make sense. And because you can’t see God working does not mean that God is not working. And because it doesn’t make sense now doesn’t mean it won’t make sense some day. Now, you need to understand that.

III. Mature Faith Remembers the Settled Promises of God

Now, here’s the third and final point. What we’re talking about now is tough faith for troubled times. Mature faith also remembers the settled promises of God. It sees the power of God. It recognizes the purposes of God that are unknown to us. But it also remembers the promises of God that He cannot fail. Look, if you will—go back again to Hebrews chapter 11 and you’re going to see what I’m talking about. I’m talking about these promises of God. Let’s begin in verse 39 of this same chapter: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise—that is, immediately—God having provided sometime better for us, that they without us should not be made perfect—or complete.” Now, in plain English, that means that God said, “Not now—later. Not now. I’m doing some things.” And there’s a promise, but you just have to keep that promise in your heart and in your mind. Today is a day of disillusionment for many people, and for many people, it’s a day of fallen castles and faded dreams. The longer you live, you’re going to learn this lesson: Be sure that you don’t expect too much of life and too little of God. Life is fickle. Life says, “Eat, drink, and be merry.” And then, the stock market fades, and we have nothing but a mouthful of ashes. We fall in love. We get married. We have a home. We have children and grandchildren. But then, the undertaker comes, and there’s an empty fireside, and life is so hollow. You better fix your eyes upon God. If your money is lost, it’s not your true treasure. If you’re never famous, it’s what God thinks of you that really matters, anyway. Remember that God will keep His promises in His time and on His own schedule. God told Abraham, I’ll give you all this land, the Promised Land. They’re fighting over it now, but I’m going to tell you, it belongs to Abraham, and one day he will receive it. God says, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Be meek today, and see how much you get. But I’m telling you the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. You pray for your loved one, and you say, “Lord,

where's your promise? You said, with your stripes we are healed." Well, friend, your loved one is healed over there in heaven. You're the one who is sick. Perfectly well, perfectly whole. We need to understand that. Don't take the lean look. Take the long look, and understand the supernatural power of God, the sovereign purposes of God, and the steadfast promises of God. Have faith in God. He cannot fail. Have faith in God. He must prevail. Have faith in God.

I want to tell you something else. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ will prevail. Jesus said, "I'll build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." There are a lot of people who want to pronounce the funeral for the church, but I'm going to tell you the church of the Lord Jesus Christ will outlive her pallbearers. The gates of hell will not prevail against it. God is on His throne.

Conclusion

I was raised in West Palm Beach, Florida. Can you believe it? The West Palm Beach that used to be. I was raised in West Palm Beach, Florida. And for some reason, West Palm Beach, Florida seemed to be hurricane alley. When I was a boy, with my brother Buddy, we loved to see hurricanes come. Nobody else did, but that was an exciting time. Boy, we had mountainous waves. We could go, after the hurricane, on the beach, and find all manner of things washed up. It was just exciting to us for a hurricane to come. But I can remember my dad would sometimes say, "The storm is coming, boys. Go out and take the patio furniture, and put it in the storehouse. Gather up things, because we don't want it to get blown away." And then, sometimes, perhaps, take a piece of rope. He'd say "If you can't put it inside, just tie it down—tie it down." Well, friend, that's okay. It's okay to go out and tie something down, but it's kind of strange to come out in the morning and find it gone, and what you tied it to gone, too.

What am I trying to say? I'm trying to say, my precious, sweet friend, that storms may come, and you'd better tie those things that are precious to something that cannot be moved, someone who cannot be moved. We have an unshakeable kingdom. In this Book of Hebrews, God says, "I'm going to shake everything that can be shaken, so that which cannot be shaken will remove." And what I'm calling you to do—I don't know how things are going to happen this evening, in the next several days, but I'll tell you one thing, friend. I have anchored my soul on Jesus. He is my rock, and He cannot be moved. He is a supernatural God. He has a sovereign purpose. And He has settled promises. And you can bank on it all the way through. And don't you get blown around. On Christ the solid rock I stand. And you stand with me.

Let's pray. Father God, we realize that troubled times are not new to the church. They're really the one thing the church has ever really known—the true church. But, Lord, You've promised never to leave us nor to forsake us, and for that we give You

praise. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, do you have a solid rock? I mean, are you lashed to Him? If not, when the storms come, you're going to be blown away. Are you saved? Do you know you're saved? I'm not asking do you have some sentimentality about religion. I'm asking, do you have Bible faith? Have you been born again? Are you truly saved? You can be saved by trusting Jesus. He died to save you. Jesus paid for your sin with His blood on the cross. He took your sin and carried it to Calvary and paid for it. And He paid in full. You can be saved and kept saved by putting your faith in Jesus, for the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." To be saved means that every sin is forgiven, that Christ is in your heart to give you peace, power, and purpose, and that when you die, He'll carry you to heaven. If you'd like to be saved, you can be saved right now by praying a prayer like this: Dear God, I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. I want to be saved. Jesus, You promised to save me. You died to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. I receive You now—right now, this moment—as my Lord and Savior. Right now, with all of my heart, I trust You. I trust You to save me. Thank You for doing it. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be, because I'm weak. I need to grow. I need strength. Start with me right now. Make me what You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, I'll not be ashamed of You. I will make it public that I'm trusting You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

From the House of Shame to the Hall of Fame

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 4, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:31

“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”

HEBREWS 11:31

Outline

Introduction

- I. Rahab Was Convicted by the Spirit
 - II. Rahab Was Convinced by the Word
 - III. Rahab Was Converted by the Blood
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles now and look, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 31. We’re continuing our series in Hebrew chapter 11—“God’s Hall of Fame.” And these people were placed in God’s Hall of Fame not by feeling, not by fortune, not by fighting, not by friends, but by faith. *“According to your faith be it unto you”* (Matthew 9:29). And the Bible says here concerning a certain person, *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace”* (Hebrews 11:31).

Here we have the story of the transformation of a harlot whose name was Rahab, and therefore the title of our message is “From the House of Shame to the Hall of Fame.” Here’s what the gospel did for this woman. Oh, the transforming power of the life of faith! *Nature forms us. Sin deforms us. The world conforms us. Education informs us. But faith transforms us.* And here was a woman who was transformed by faith. And what a terrible woman she was, to begin with!

I want you to notice the situation this woman found herself in, just by way of introduction. May I say to you that she was a pagan living in spiritual darkness. She was a harlot living in spiritual degradation. She was a Canaanite destined for sure destruction. And yet this woman found grace through faith and was transformed. Now she was a harlot, to begin with, but what a transformation, as we’re going to see. This

woman called Rahab the harlot was so changed and was so transformed that she married a prince of Israel. She was so changed and was so transformed that she became the great-great-grandmother of King David. She was so changed and so transformed that she became a part of the bloodline of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And when you read the genealogy of Jesus, you're going to read, "*According to the flesh*" (Romans 1:3). Now His true bloodline came from heaven, but "*according to the flesh,*" a part of the bloodline of the Lord Jesus Christ was this Canaanite woman who went from the house of shame to the hall of fame. How wonderful it was! From a child of hell to a citizen of heaven, from a shady lady to a shiny star, transformed by the grace of God. How did it happen?

Well, the New Testament, Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 31, merely mentions it. You have to turn to the Old Testament to see the story, and the story is found in Joshua chapter 2. Go be finding that, would you please. And we're going to find the story in Joshua chapter 2. Now while you're turning, may I say that God had commanded His people, the Israelites, to take the land of Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey, the Promised Land. And they came out of the wilderness, and there between them and the Promised Land was the city of Jericho. We talked about that last week—how the walls fell down by the faith of Joshua and the people. And we talked about faith to overcome obstacles last week, but today we're talking about the transforming power of faith, because in that city of Jericho there was this Canaanite woman, this woman that the Bible calls a harlot, and she was saved and transformed.

Now God had said He wanted the city destroyed. Joshua, who was God's general and commander-in-chief, selected two men, and these two men who were God's representatives went into the city of Jericho, and there they met this woman Rahab. And through their witness she was transformed and she was converted.

Now there are three things that I want us to notice that took place in the life of this woman Rahab that brought her to the Lord Jesus Christ—very significant things.

I. Rahab Was Convicted by the Spirit

First of all, I want you to notice that she was convicted by the Spirit—she was convicted by the Spirit. Look in Joshua chapter 2 and verse 8, and you're going to find something very amazing. Here the spies come to this woman—she has her house upon the walls of Jericho, and they come to her and they engage her in a conversation, and you cannot believe what this pagan woman is saying to them. And she put them upon the roof to hide them there. And the Bible says, "*Before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; and she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red*

sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man,”—now notice especially the tenor and the tone of the last part of verse 11—*“because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath”* (Joshua 2:8–11).

Can you imagine a Canaanite talking that way? Can you imagine a sinful, fallen, depraved woman making such a glorious, marvelous statement of faith? Who had been working on her? Who had been speaking to her? The Holy Spirit of God had been speaking to this woman. It is remarkable that she has such conviction.

But now let me tell how the Holy Spirit operates. And we’re going to learn something about the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God searched the city of Jericho, and in that city of Jericho the Holy Spirit of God saw a woman with a predisposition towards spiritual things, the Holy Spirit of God saw a heart that He could tender and work on. And so the Holy Spirit of God is working on this woman, working on her and bringing her under deep conviction, and she was already under conviction of a sort before these men ever got to her.

Now ladies and gentlemen, let me just make a practical application right here, and I want you to pay attention, because this isn’t just what God has said. This is what God is saying. The same Holy Spirit of God still works in the same way. Do you want me to tell you how the Holy Spirit brings men, women, boys, and girls to the Lord Jesus Christ? He searches a city and He finds in that city someone with a spiritual predisposition. And the Holy Spirit of God begins to work on that person to tender their heart, to sympathize their heart, to speak to their heart, to enlighten their heart, and bring them a certain spiritual proclivity and predisposition to spiritual things. And then the same Holy Spirit searches the city and He finds some of His people—a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, a group—and He guides these people to that person He has already prepared.

Now you just think with me a moment. Think of the great city of Jericho. Think how big it was. Think of all of the people in that city. Do you think it was by chance that they happened to go the house of Rahab? Do you think that just happened? Do you think that was quote—“good luck”—end of quote? No! It was the providence of God! These men were in the stream of the Spirit, and like a guided missile God brought them right to the heart right to the house, right to the home, of the woman that He had been preparing. She was already under deep conviction.

Now what does that mean to you? That means, ladies and gentlemen, that all over the city of Memphis today the Holy Spirit is working. Tonight, He will be working. Tomorrow, He will be working, tendering hearts. And He wants you to be so led of the Spirit as a Christian. That hungry heart and that helpful soul winner will be brought

together, because the Holy Spirit is working both sides of the fence. Over here, He's preparing a heart, and over here, He's preparing a messenger. Isn't it wonderful the way it works?

Now lest you think that I'm exaggerating that point, you can turn to the New Testament and see the same thing. Do you remember in Acts chapter 8 that Ethiopian eunuch who had been to Jerusalem for to worship and he had not found a thing there and he was leaving Jerusalem? He was a very wealthy man riding along in his chariot. He had been to Jerusalem for to worship—it was a very religious city—but the wells of religion had run dry. His thirsty soul out there in the desert wanted God, and God went up to Samaria, and God found a deacon who was preaching a revival up there. I tell our deacons they ought to be able to preach. I tell them, brother, if someone drops a handkerchief to preach, you ought to be on the second point before it hits the ground. Our deacons ought to be able to preach. Oh, Philip was a preaching deacon, and God brought him out of the land of Samaria where there was a great revival meeting, and God brought him like a guided missile to a man whose heart the Holy Spirit had prepared (Acts 8:26–40).

And you remember there in Acts chapter 10 how that man got saved. If you don't, go home and read it this afternoon. There was a man named Cornelius, a man that we would call a pagan man, a man, however, who had a hungry heart, for the Bible said he *"gave much alms...and prayed to God always"* (Acts 10:2). And remember what God did? God went to Simon Peter and gave Simon Peter a vision. God went to Cornelius and gave Cornelius a vision. And God brought the soul winner, Simon Peter, and God brought the lost man, Cornelius, together, because here both of them were being worked on by the Holy Spirit of God. That's the way it ought to work.

Do you remember there in John chapter 4, there was that other woman—the other shady lady? You remember her in John chapter 4, the woman at the well, the one who had so many husbands? *"You've had five husbands and the man you're living with now is not your husband"* (John 4:18). If she lived today, we'd give her an academy award. There she was, that woman, and Jesus spoke with her, and Jesus brought her to Himself. Now do you think it was just happenstance, just chance, that Jesus happened to be at that well the same time that woman was at that well? I tell you, it was not! If you read the context there, the Bible says of Jesus, *"He must needs go through Samaria"* (John 4:4).

Now the average Jew wouldn't travel through Samaria, wouldn't get caught there in Samaria. They looked upon the Samaritans as a mongrel race. They looked down upon them. But the Bible says, Jesus *"must needs go through Samaria."* Why? Because of that woman. The meeting of that woman, ladies and gentlemen, was not by chance. When Jesus went through Samaria, it was not geographical; it was providential—

providential.

God likes to guide His people. A while back, I was supposed to go to a meeting. And I got confused about the time of the meeting, and it was a breakfast meeting. And so Joyce was going to go with me, and finally we realized that the person that was going to pick us up did not pick us up. They were counting on us to go there, and so it was time for the meeting, and I said, "Well now, Lord, I don't understand this. It was an honest confusion. I just give you thanks for it anyway." And then I said, "Lord, what do you want me to do, therefore?" And I just prayed, I said, "Lord, give me wisdom." And the Lord seemed to say to me, "Adrian, take Joyce to breakfast by yourself." I said, "Lord, where do you want us to go?" Now I don't generally pray about where to go to breakfast, but I did. I said, "Lord, where do you want us to go?" And the Lord told me a certain restaurant. He said, "You go there." So I went there. We were sitting there and we were having breakfast together and we were sitting right by the window. And an automobile drove up, parked there, looked right in the window. The man jumped out, ran around, came in and said, "Brother Rogers, you're the one man in the city of Memphis I need to see more than anyone else." He said, "I'm desperate to see you." He said, "I cannot believe that my car came right up here and looked in the window, and there you were." The upshot of the fact is that this young man who had been in deep sin got his life and heart straightened out. His wife got saved that day and came to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I don't think it was happenstance. I don't think that just happened. I believe that God the Holy Spirit arranged that, because I don't even normally pray about where to go to breakfast, but I felt impressed. I said, "Lord, where do you want me to go?"

Now that's a strange thing that I would pray that, but oh, how the Holy Spirit of God, He just wants to guide His people. And ladies and gentlemen, let me tell you something. I believe in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, God the Holy Spirit is doing His job on this side of the fence. I believe there are all kinds of people in our city that are hungry to know the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe tomorrow when you kids go to school there will be other kids who went to church this Sunday, but they went to a dry, liberal, modern, cold, dead church, just like that Ethiopian who had been to Jerusalem, and they've come away with a hungry heart. But the Holy Spirit of God has been working on them. And kids, if you're walking tomorrow in the stream of the Spirit, God will bring you together, perhaps. Maybe that will be His assignment for you. You, sir, a businessman, maybe God is preparing the heart of that man you're supposed to sign a contract with tomorrow.

What I'm trying to say is this: I believe *if we get right with God, stay right with God, walk in the Spirit, we'll have to backslide to keep from* winning souls, because I believe that God and His Holy Spirit, on the one hand, will be preparing a lost person, on the other hand. He's wanting to use you, and God the Holy Spirit will guide you and show

you where He wants to go—where He wants you to go. Don't tell me it was by chance that these men in all of the city of Jericho went to that one house—that one house. And when they got there, there was a woman already under deep conviction.

Now I want to tell you something else about that conviction. We said she was convicted of the Holy Spirit. Now let me ask you a question: What brought her under the conviction of the Holy Spirit? She had heard what God was doing for His people. Now we've got a twofold responsibility in this matter of soul winning. Number one: We should be witnesses; but number two: We ought to be part of the evidence. Amen? We ought to be part of the evidence.

She had already heard what God was doing for His people. She said, "I know what God has done." Look in verse 10: *"For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed."* She said, "We've seen what God is doing for His people."

Ladies and gentlemen, what God is doing for Bellevue Baptist Church, what God is doing for you, and what God is doing for me, what God is doing for His people, ought to bring this city under conviction. Did you know that? They ought to look at us and say, "There's something different, there's something supernatural about the way they're living, and their God is alive." The Holy Spirit of God, in order to bring conviction, uses His own people and their lives and their victories to bring conviction to the unsaved. On the Day of Pentecost in chapter 2 of Acts and verse 12, after they had that amazing service when the Holy Spirit descended, and there was that miracle service there on the Day of Pentecost; in Acts chapter 2, verse 12, those unsaved people asked this question: *"What meaneth this?"* (Acts 2:12). There was something there that confounded and amazed them, that alarmed them; something they could not understand and something they could not explain away. There was something supernatural about them that the world could not understand. And that brought them under such conviction that you find them saying a second thing in Acts chapter 2, verse 37: *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37).

Now pay attention. Two questions: "What does this mean?" Number two: "What must we do?" You know the problem with the modern church? We try to get them to ask the second question before they've ever asked the first question. We want people to say, "What must we do to be saved?" before they see enough in us to say, "What does this mean?" I tell you, if they saw enough in us to say, "What does this mean?" if they were to see something so different, so supernatural, so much of the hand of God upon us that they could not explain it, then they'd be asking another question before long: "Sirs, what must we do?"

This woman in Jericho had seen the exploits of the people of God. She had seen

God do something so marvelous, so wonderful, so inexplicable, that it brought her under conviction. I'm saying, ladies and gentlemen, that the reason more people are not saved is not because they are so hard-hearted. If you want to know why more people are not being saved, just look around in this congregation. It's us, friends. We are the ones. When we begin to live victorious, and when we begin to walk in the stream of the Spirit, God the Holy Spirit is going to bring that unsaved man and that soul winner together. He's going to be working both sides of the fence. That's the first thing I want you to notice about this shady lady of Jericho—was the Spirit that convicted her. She was convicted by the Spirit.

II. Rahab Was Convinced by the Word

Now the second thing I want you to notice: Not only was she convicted by the Spirit, but she was convinced by the Word—she was convinced by the Word. Begin reading now in Joshua chapter 2, verse 11: *“There's no God like your God for “he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.”* And now notice what she says after her conviction, in verse 12: *“Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token.”*—that means a sign that you're going to take care of me and that I'm not going to perish. And she goes on to say—*“and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.”* You see, the sentence of death and judgment was upon them, as it is upon every man outside of Christ. *“And the men answered her, Our life for yours...”*—now here we already see a prefiguring of the cross. *“We'll lay down our life for you, lady, if you'll enter into a covenant with us—“Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee. Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest your pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear.”* And now notice verse 21: *“And she said, According unto your words, so be it”* (Joshua 2:11–21).

She was convicted by the Spirit. She was convinced by the Word. Now what she received here was the Word of God. This was not the word of men. It was the Word of God. And James calls these two men, in James chapter 2, “messengers.” In James chapter 2, verse 25, the Bible calls these men “messengers” (James 2:25). They were more than spies. They were spokesmen of Almighty God. They had heard the Word of God, and what they were doing was being a principle of translating or giving the Word of God to this particular lady. And what they were speaking was God’s Word.

Now listen, ladies and gentlemen. Why did Rahab have faith? Because she said, “So be it, according to the Word—according to the Word.” Now if you haven’t learned this yet, please learn it. Please listen closely. Do you want to know what real faith is? Do you know what biblical faith is? It is not believing you can. It’s not confidence, per se. It is not positive thinking. It is not wishing upon a star. It is not “believing makes it so.” Real faith is taking God at His Word.

Now pay attention! You can’t have faith till God gives you a word, until God speaks to you. And faith is your response to the Word of God. Romans chapter 10, verse 17: “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17). Now that Word may come through a messenger; it may come out of the Bible; it may come by the Holy Spirit speaking to you directly. But there will be, there must be, there has to be, the speaking of God before you can have faith. How important it is that you listen to the voice of God. How important it is that you be attuned to the Word of God. How important it is that you get alone with God and spend a quiet time with God, and go into the Word of God and saturate your soul with the Bible, for “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” You will never, never, never have faith until you begin to listen to God. You don’t just decide what you want, and say, “Believing will make it so.” You cannot believe it until it is so. “*He hath said...that we may boldly say*” (Hebrews 13:5–6). You might as well try to ice skate on water as to have faith without first of all a word from God. Now you might get that word from the Bible, from the Spirit, as it’s mediated from someone else, but always God will speak.

III. Rahab Was Converted by the Blood

Now notice we’ve come two steps so far in this little lady’s journey to salvation. First of all, she is prepared: convicted by the Spirit. Secondly, she is convinced by the Word. Thirdly, she is converted by the blood—she is converted by the blood. I want you to notice here in Joshua now, chapter 2, and verse 21: “*And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window*” (Joshua 2:21)—“*and she bound the scarlet line in the window.*”

Now when these men escaped her house when the enemies came, she said, “Here, sirs, I’ll let you out, and you go hide up there in the mountains three days, which to me

speaks of the three days that our Lord was in the grave. But I don't want to spend too much time on detail and typology, because you may not agree with that, and that's all right. But let me say this, friend: She let them down by a scarlet line. Now don't tell me that this was just happenstance that this was a scarlet line. And don't tell me that it was just by happenstance that they said to her, "You bind this crimson red line in your window, and when we see that scarlet line in the window, we'll pass over this house and no judgment will come to this house." What does this remind you of? Don't you remember there in Exodus 12 where God had told those people to take the blood of a lamb, a perfect lamb, a lamb without spot, a lamb without blemish, and to put the blood of that lamb upon the door posts of their house, and then God said, "*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*" (Exodus 12:13)?

Now why do you think these spies told her to put a scarlet ribbon—a scarlet line, a scarlet rope—in the window? It was a symbol, or as she said, "*a token*," a sign that she was coming into the covenant of those who had been redeemed by the blood. Of course, the Lord Jesus Christ had not yet died. And all of these Old Testament symbols and types and figures were merely shadows that pointed toward the blood redemption of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But you see, there's been that scarlet line that runs all the way through the Bible. There in the Garden of Eden when God made coats of skin for Adam and Eve, He had to shed the blood of an innocent animal to do that (Genesis 3:21). When Abel offered his lamb and God had respect toward Abel's lamb rather than to Cain's vegetables, there again you see the shed blood (Genesis 4:4–5). When you see Abraham offering Isaac there on Mount Moriah and there is a ram caught in the thicket with a crown of thorns on his head as it were, and that ram becomes a substitute, there you see the blood (Genesis 22:1–19). When you see Noah coming out of the ark and offering a sacrifice, there you see the blood (Genesis 8:20). When you see thousands of smoking altars there in the tabernacle and the Jewish temple, as the blood was shed, you see God saying over and over and over again, "Without the shedding of blood, is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

You see, ladies and gentlemen, we're guilty—we're guilty before God. We're sinners. All have sinned. Rahab had sinned. But so have you sinned. And dear friend, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." There is no way. It is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us. The Bible says in 1 John 1:7: "*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7). You see, Rahab was cleansed. The important factor is not that she escaped death, because eventually she died. The most important thing for you, sir, is not that you live two or three years longer. The most important thing for you is that you live for eternity, amen? I mean with God. You see the most important thing is not the sparing of your physical life. The most important thing is

the cleansing of your soul. You see, I know Rahab had far more happen to her than just simply that she escaped the sword. Because James tells us, in James chapter 2, that Rahab was justified—justified (James 2:25). She was made right in the sight of God a filthy old harlot made whiter than the driven snow. *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). Hallelujah! What a Savior, who can take a poor, lost sinner, lift him from the miry clay, and set him free.

I tell you Jesus Christ worked a miracle in the heart of this woman. And He made her as pure as any woman who ever lived. That’s what the Savior can do. Oh, she was converted by the blood. And there’s no other way. I love that song, “Rock of Ages, cleft for me.” And the one who wrote it has a very significant phrase in that song: “Be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure” (Augustus M. Toplady). See? Do you see? It’s not just that she escaped the sword. Oh, she did that, but oh, she was made pure. She was transformed. And, as I say, she became not a harlot, but she became the great, great grandmother of King David of Israel. She came to be in the bloodline of the Lord Jesus, listed in the genealogy of our Savior, listed in God’s Hall of Fame, spoken of by James as an example of those who are justified. Oh, what a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful salvation we have in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

Now friend, I must close this message, but are you paying attention? Convicted by the Spirit? Say, do you think it is just by chance that you’re here and I’m here today? Well then, you’re wrong. The same Holy Spirit that brought that woman and the messenger together so long ago has brought us together so you could be convicted by the Spirit, convinced by the Word, so that you could be converted by the blood. You say, “But wait a minute, Mr. Rogers. The gospel is all right for her, for, after all, she was a harlot.” You think that the gospel is for the harlot, the thief, the murderer, the prostitute, the dope addict, the alcoholic, but not for you. After all, you are a nice person. You’ve got manners, you’ve got culture, and you live a moral life, and you think that the gospel is for the down-and-out, but not for the up-and-out.

I want to tell you something, friend. The Bible says that, *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). And it’s not the amount of sin that condemns you; it is the fact of sin. And one sin unforgiven is enough to send you to hell—just one. The Bible says that, *“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [the same] is guilty of all”* (James 2:10). You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I don’t need to be saved; I’ll just live a good life.” You can’t live a good life until you get saved, not really a good life. And let me tell you something. *The worst form of badness is human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.*

I want you to hear that. The worst form of badness is human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.

Do you know what Jesus said concerning the harlots in His day? Jesus said concerning the harlots and the dishonest tax collectors in His day, Jesus said to the religious crowds, the Pharisees, He said, “The harlots and the publicans will go into heaven before you do” (Matthew 21:31). Now you think about it. He said they are going to get there before you do. Why? Because they were so self-righteous. They never saw their need of salvation. And they were boasting of their human goodness. At least Rahab knew that she needed the Lord.

Do you know it? I want to tell you that there’s nobody here today in my congregation who is too bad to be saved. If Rahab could be saved, you can be saved. But I want to say something else. There is no one here without Christ that is so good that you don’t need to be saved. “Whosoever will may come” (Revelation 22:17). And if you are saved, it will be because you have been convicted by the Spirit, convinced by the Word, converted by the blood.

Let me tell you what the greatest tragedy, the greatest transaction, and the greatest transformation is. The greatest tragedy is this—John 1:11: *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”* The greatest transaction is this: *“But as many as received him...”* The greatest transformation is this: *“To them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe [in him]”* (John 1:11–12). He came. He’s here. He will save you. He wants to save you. He’s promised to save you. The greatest tragedy would be if you refuse. The greatest transaction will be if you will receive Him. The greatest transformation is when you become a child of God. If I could do it for you today, I would.

I have preached the best I know how. And I want to tell you on the authority of this book that if you will by faith turn from your sins to Jesus Christ, He will forgive your sins and He will make you a new creature.

The Transforming Power of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 13, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:31

“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”

HEBREWS 11:31

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Confronting Power of the Providence of God
- II. The Convicting Power of the Spirit of God
- III. The Convincing Power of the Word of God
- IV. The Cleansing Power of the Grace of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, thank God for Calvary. Take God’s precious Word and find Hebrews chapter 11. We’re talking about champions of faith, and the champion of faith that we’re going to be talking about today was a harlot, radically, dramatically, eternally changed by the power of God. Hallelujah for that. Look, if you will, in Hebrews 11, verse 31: “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.” Now, if you don’t know the Old Testament story, that won’t make much sense to you now; but, in a few moments, it will. Our Lord is in the transformation business, and the greatest—the greatest—power on earth is the grace of God made available by faith.

There is a lady that I know who is a great, tremendous soul winner and witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. Her name is Iris. She was a prostitute. Somebody told Iris of the grace of God. Somebody told her how she could be saved. I’ll never forget her testimony. She said, “I got on my knees a filthy prostitute; I rose a virgin in the sight of God.” Do you believe that’s possible? Let me give you a scripture over here. Listen to it. First Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 through 11: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God—it doesn’t sound like there’s much hope, but now listen—and such were some of you...”—not such are some of you—“such were some of you: be ye are washed, ye are

sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God.” Thank God, thank God, thank God for the transforming power of faith. Nature forms us, sin deforms us, schools inform us, jails reform us, the Word conforms us, but Jesus transforms us. He changes people. He literally, actually, eternally changes people.

This is the story of Rahab. Let me tell you plight that she was in. Let me tell you what she was up against. She was a pagan living in spiritual darkness. She was a harlot living in sinful degradation. She was a Canaanite destined for sure destruction, and God reached in to the heart of Rahab, this prostitute, and God saved her. And let me tell you how her life was changed.

First of all, there were others around her that perished, but her life was spared. She was happily married, no longer a prostitute. She married a prince in Israel. This woman, Rahab, became the great, great grandmother of King David, Israel’s greatest king. When you look at the bloodline of the Lord Jesus Christ, can you believe that Rahab, the harlot, is in the bloodline of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, according to the flesh? She’s gone from the house of shame to the Hall of Fame, and she’s listed here in the Bible; this Canaanite harlot is listed here in Hebrews chapter 11. The shady lady of Jericho has become a saint in God’s Hall of Fame. How did it take place? Well, I want to mention four things, and they ought to be an encouragement to all of us, and see the transforming power of faith.

I. The Confronting Power of the Providence of God

Number one: I want you to see what I’m going to call the confronting power of the providence of God. Now, let’s go back in the Old Testament to Joshua chapter 2, because the New Testament is commentating on what happened so long ago. So go backward to Joshua chapter 2, and there we’re going to see the confronting power of the providence of God. Joshua chapter 2, verse 1: “And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot’s house, named Rahab, and lodged there.” And then Joshua 2:4: “And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not—or knew not—whence they were.”

Now, here’s the situation. The children of Israel are coming out of Egypt. They’re going to Canaan, the Promised Land. There’s the River Jordan. Beyond Jordan lies the city of Jericho—Jericho, one of the oldest cities on the face of the earth, great in antiquity and great in iniquity. And General Joshua says, “I need some men to reconnoiter.” So he sends out some spies, and furtively, like the special ops, they go over, and they’re looking around, and they come to the house of a harlot, a woman named Rahab. And we’re going to see that she took them in, and hid them from the men of Jericho, and was used of God to help Joshua to conquer Jericho. Now, here’s

the question. I'm talking about the providence of God. Do you believe that it was by chance? Do you believe it was by happenstance that they happened to come to Rahab's house? No. Friend, the Holy Spirit of God is in operation right here. Here's was Rahab's heart. Rahab had already been under deep conviction, as we're going to see. She has been sensitized to the things of God. She is longing to know God. She is dreading the with fear the judgment of God, and God, by His providential mercy, brings these men to her specific house on that day. I could give you illustration after illustration of how this works in the Bible.

There was Philip. He was in a great revival meeting. This was over in the New Testament, in the city of Samaria. And the Holy Spirit said, "Phil, look, leave that revival, and you go out over here to the desert to Gaza. There's a man out there, an Ethiopian, riding in a chariot. You go to him and tell him about Jesus." Now, this Ethiopian had been to Jerusalem to worship. He was seeking God. His heart was hungry. He had been to the most religious city on the face of the earth, but the wells of religion were dry. He's reading the prophet Isaiah. And what happens? God, in providence, brings Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, and he gets saved.

Another story. There was a man named Cornelius. He was a Roman army officer. He had in his heart a hunger to know God. Where he got that hunger, I don't know, but the Bible tells us, in the Book of Acts, that he had a spiritual inclination. Perhaps, one night out on a lonely sentry duty, he looked up into the shining stars, that candelabra that God has set in the heavens, and he said, "Oh, that didn't just happen. O God, whoever You are, whatever You are, wherever You are, I want to know You." And God took Simon Peter, you remember the story. God gave Simon Peter a vision on the rooftop, and God sent an angel to Cornelius, and God, by His providence, brought the two together. It's not happenstance.

One time in Jacksonville, Florida, I was preaching a revival crusade. We had a name we thought we were supposed to visit. My buddy and I were out driving around. We got as lost as a goose in a snowstorm. We could not find the address. Finally, we took a dirt road, and it went up, it dead-ended. There was a little shack, a one-room shack, a weather-boarded house. We said, "Well, this is not where we're supposed to be going, but let's knock on the door." An old man came to the door. His name was Mr. Pugh. And he was an older man, white whiskers. And his wife was in the house with him. The stove was here. The bed was here. It was all just one room. And we went in, and I began to talk to Mr. Pugh. This was an older man. I said, "Sir, are you saved?" He said, "No, sir, I'm not." I said, "Do you understand spiritual things?" He said, "My father was a preacher." And I said, "You're not saved?" He said, "No." I said, "Well, Mr. Pugh, do you want to be saved?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Can I share with you?" He said, "Well, not today." I said, "Mr. Pugh, you're not getting any younger." I said, "You need to get this

thing settled.” I shall never forget, as I shared the gospel with that man, and we got on our knees by that creaky old bed there in that one-room shack, and Mr. Pugh wept so loud it seemed to me that whole little room began to shake, and the glory of God filled that room. I don’t believe it was by happenstance that we ended up at the house of Mr. Pugh.

Let me tell you how God the Holy Spirit works. Listen. This is the providence of God. God will find somebody whose heart is tender toward Him. God will find somebody who longs to know Him. And then, God will get a soul winner who’s in the stream of the Spirit, somebody who is obeying Him, and God, by His providence, brings them together.

I believe out here in the city of Memphis God is preparing the hearts of people. These high school girls who sang just a few moments ago, it could be that they’ll go to high school tomorrow, and there’ll be some girl there who went to church on this day, but she didn’t find what she was looking for. But her heart is tender. And, if one of these girls is walking in the stream of the Spirit, and sensitive and open, by the providence of God, He’ll get them together. Could it be that God is bypassing you and not using you to be a soul winner because you’re not in the stream of the Spirit, and God can’t guide you? Did you know our city is full of people whose hearts are hungry, and God, by His providence, wants to guide you and that person. And God works on both sides of the equation. God works in the heart of the sinner, and God works in the heart of the soul winner, and God gets the two together. Many of us remember Manley Beasley, a great man of God. He’s spoken from this pulpit. He’s in heaven now. Manley Beasley used to say, “You get right with God, you’ll have to backslide to keep from being a soul winner.” Just get right with God. Get in the stream of the Spirit. Now, what I’m saying, here is this woman, it was not by happenstance that she is there. This is God’s Holy Spirit working.

II. The Convicting Power of the Spirit of God

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see. Not only the confronting power of the providence of God, but now notice with me the convicting power of the Spirit of God. Now, this woman was convicted by the Holy Spirit. Joshua 2, beginning in verse 9: “And she—that is, Rahab—said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt: what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you—now, listen to this—for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven alone, and in earth beneath.”

Here's a woman under great conviction. How did the Holy Spirit of God bring her under such great conviction? She saw what God had done for His people. That's it! She saw God in the life of these people. She saw them marching from victory to victory to victory. She saw God performing miracles for His people, and that brought her under great conviction. She had come to believe there's no God like Jehovah. She had come to believe that the only hope was in Jehovah. Now, where did a pagan woman get such belief? Look again—Joshua chapter 2, verse 10: “For we have heard how that the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you.” That is, “I have seen what God is doing for you.”

Now, listen, folks. Is God doing anything for you? Can your neighbor see any difference? Can your associates see any difference? Not only are we witnesses; friend, we are part of the evidence. There needs to be a transformed life. That's what's going to convict those round about us. Why should anybody believe in our faith, if we're not transformed, if we're not different, if the hand of God is not obviously upon us?

On the Day of Pentecost, back over now in the New Testament, on the Day of Pentecost, the early church was there loving one another, seeking the face of God, praying, waiting before the Lord, and suddenly the Holy Spirit came and filled the room. It was like a tornado on the inside. Cloven tongues of fire sat on everybody's head. They began to speak in strange languages, languages that they'd never heard. The pagans were there. They were looking around. They were amazed. Unbelieving Jews were there, looking around, amazed. Two questions were asked there that day—Acts 2, verse 12: “And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying to one another, What meaneth this? What is all of this?” That was the first question. The second question is in Acts 2, verse 37, and they said, “men and brethren, what must we do?” Now, notice. First of all, they said, “What does this mean? We don't understand it.” Then, they said, secondly, “What must we do?”

Do you know what's the problem with many of us today? We're trying to get them to ask the second question before they've ever asked the first question. We're trying to get them to come to us and say, “How can I be saved? What must we do?” before they've ever seen anything in us to make them ask this question. I mean, is there anything in my life that is so different that a person might come to me and say, “Adrian, I can't explain you, apart from God.” Did you know that the only part of you that has any right to be believed by another is the part that cannot be explained? What is there in your life, sir, and in your life, and in your life, ma'am, that nobody can explain, apart from God? They said, “What does this mean?” And then, they said, “What must we do?” Rahab, the harlot, was convicted by the Spirit of God when she saw a miracle-working God in the hearts and lives of God's people. What makes you any different from your neighbor? What right do you have to say, “Believe in the God who has not even changed my life?”

No, friend. Rahab saw a miracle-working God. There was the confronting power of the providence of God. It was not by accident, happenstance, that they got together. There was the convicting power of the Spirit of God.

III. The Convincing Power of the Word of God

Now, thirdly, there is the convincing power of the Word of God, because providence and conviction needs convincing. Now, it's not just your life that's going to save them. They need the Word of God. Look, if you will now, in Joshua chapter 2, verse 11. Here's what Rahab says: "As soon as we had heard these things—underscore this; she's hearing something—our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now, therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token." She's saying, "Look. Spare me. I don't want to die. I want to be one with you. I want to be a part of the people of God. Promise, sirs, that I will not die, and give me a sign, give me a token." Now, listen to this: "...give me a true token"—verse 13—"that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. And they answered her...—underscore that—they answered her, our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business." That is, we'll lay down our lives for you, Rahab, if you keep it a secret that we're over here. We're spies. "And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee."

Now, chapter 2, verse 21 here also is a very key: "And she said, according to your words, so be it." Well, you say, "Adrian, this was just conversation. This is not the Word of God." Yes, it is the Word of God. These men were speaking for God. You say, "Adrian, how do you know?" Well, I'm glad you asked the question. James chapter 2, verse 25: Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers"—messengers. More than spies—these were divine messengers. They were speaking the Word of God to her. You see, there's the convicting power of the Spirit of God. There's the convincing power of the Word of God.

Now, Rahab is famous for her faith, according to our scripture here in Hebrew 11:31. Well, how did she get faith? The same way you're going to get faith, I'm going to get faith, anybody's going to get faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God—Romans 10, verse 17. The Bible says she believed. Again, Hebrew 11, verse 31: "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." She wasn't one of those that believed not. She was one of those that believed.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, do you want faith? Study the Word of God. Do you want to inculcate faith in others? Give out the Word of God. You might as well try to ice skate

on hot water as to get people to have faith without a word from God. There is the confronting power of the providence of God. There is the convicting power of the Spirit of God, when people see what God is doing in our lives. There is the convincing power of the Word of God, when we share the Word of God. That's what convinces.

IV. The Cleansing Power of the Grace of God

Now, let's come to the next thing, and there is the cleansing power of the grace of God. Oh, I'm so grateful for this—the cleansing power of the grace of God. Notice here how the grace of God begins to operate, and change this fallen woman, and turn her into a saint. Joshua 2, verse 18: And the messengers—also the spies—spoke to her and said, Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by...”—so it's more than a sewing thread. These men were able to go over the wall with this cord. It's a scarlet cord—“which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street—notice this phrase—his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.” Now, he mentions blood twice, and he mentions a scarlet thread, a scarlet cord. Now, what he's saying is, “Look, Rahab, we're going to come into the city. This city is going to be visited with death. But, Rahab, if you will take this scarlet cord and hang it outside the window, when we come, we will pass over you.” Now, where did they get an idea like that? Well, you already know. It's a picture of Passover when you put the blood of the Lamb upon the doorposts and the lintel of the house. And God said—in the last message we talked about this—“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” This was the best they could do right now, but they're saying, “Look, we know the power of the shed blood, and so when we see this scarlet thread in the window, Rahab, we're going to pass over your house, but make sure that those that you love are in the house; that is, that they are under the blood.” Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22 says, “without shedding of blood there is no remission.”

You see the blood in the Old Testament. I mean, there is a scarlet thread that runs throughout the Bible. It begins with Adam's coat, and Abel's lamb, and Noah's sacrifice, and Abraham's ram, and the Passover Lamb, and the temple sacrifices. It is all telling us, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. And every page in the divine Word is stained with the precious blood of our dear Savior Jesus Christ. Put a scarlet thread in the window. What's he saying? There's power, power, wonder-working power, in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Now, we're talking about the cleansing power of the grace of God. She received divine protection, because the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 31, that she

perished not. Doesn't that remind you of John 3:16? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." She perished not. But not only was there divine protection; there was divine transformation. It's not just that she didn't die; she was changed. You say, "Pastor, how do you know she was changed?" Again, I go back to James chapter 2, verse 25, that tells us she was "justified"—not just that sin was overlooked. No, she's changed! She's no longer a harlot. She's had an inward change. She's been made pure. She's brought into the bloodline of the Lord Jesus Christ, radically, dramatically changed.

George W. Bush was being interviewed, and they were asking other intellectual top waters and leaders, "Whom do you admire the most?" Many of them, to look intellectual, would go back through history and find some person. They asked the President, "Whom do you admire most?" He said, "Jesus Christ." They said, "Jesus? Why?" He said, "He changed my life! That's why." You ask Rahab, the harlot, "Why do you love the Lord?" Because He changed my life.

Conclusion

It was battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it scarcely worth his while to spend much time on the old violin, but he held it up with a smile.

"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried, "and who'll start the bidding for me?

A dollar? Two dollars? And who'll make it three?

"Three dollars once; three dollars twice; and going, and going," said he. But, no.

From the back of the room, a gray-haired man stepped forward and picked up the bow.

And wiping the dust from the old violin, and tuning up all the strings,

he played a melody pure and sweet, as sweet as an angel sings.

The music ceased and the auctioneer, in a voice hushed and low,

said, "What am I bid for the old violin," and he held it up with the bow.

A thousand dollars! And who'll make it two? Two thousand! And who'll make it three?

Three thousand once; three thousand twice; and going and gone," said he.

The people cheered. But some exclaimed, "We don't understand.

What changed the worth?" The man replied, "The touch of the Master's hand."

And many a life out of tune with God, all battered and scarred with sin, is auctioned cheap to a foolish crowd, much like that old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine, a song, and he travels on.

He's going once; he's going twice, he's going and almost gone.

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd can never quite understand the worth of a soul, and the change that is wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.

His name is Jesus—His name is Jesus. He is the One who is in the transformation business. He's the One who could take a filthy harlot and make her whiter than snow.

Now, don't you sit here and say, "Well, that's good for a harlot; I don't need that." Do you know what Jesus said in the Book of Matthew to self-righteous people? He said, "Tax collectors and harlots are going to heaven before you do." You know why? Because of their self-righteous pride.

If you want to get the meaning of this message today, I give it to you in a sentence: There's no one so bad he cannot be saved, and no one so good he need not be saved. Even our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of our God. But I'm telling you, there is the transforming power of the grace of God. And God will change you. He changed me when I was a teen. He changed me. I know He changed me. My teachers knew He changed me. This is church history, friend. When I went back to school, the teachers began to talk, and they said, "What happened to Adrian?" I mean, they—praise God—"What happened to Adrian?" I'll tell you what happened. The God that saved Rahab saved me. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Now, if your religion hasn't changed your life, you'd better change your religion. You don't have the New Testament kind. He's in the transformation business. There's no one—no one—so bad he cannot be saved. God is not finished with you. God loves you. And there's no one so good he or she need not be saved. Bow your heads in prayer.

The Transforming Power of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 13, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:31

“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”

HEBREWS 11:31

Outline

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- I. The Confronting Power of the Providence of God
- II. The Convicting Power of the Spirit of God
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- IV. The Cleansing Power of the Grace of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Praise the Lord. Thank you, young ladies.

Take God’s Word and find Hebrews chapter 11. We’re continuing our series entitled “Champions of Faith.” Hebrews chapter 11 is God’s Hall of Fame for those champions who are put there because of their faith in Almighty God. And we have enjoyed this series. But today, we come to an unusual person that we’re going to celebrate and learn from. Would you believe it? She is—at least, was—a harlot—what today we would call a streetwalker, or a prostitute—and God saved her. God radically, dramatically transformed her, and now she finds her name here listed in this eleventh chapter of the Book of Hebrews. I call her the shady lady of Jericho. We’re going to learn today about the transforming power of faith. Faith has power, incredible power, to radically, dramatically change a prostitute back in that time, or in this time. A lady that I know, who is a great testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ, and one of the finest soul winners in America, is named Iris. Iris was a prostitute before Jesus saved her. Iris said this—and its always lingered deep in my heart—she said, “When I learned about the Lord Jesus Christ, and someone witnessed to me and led me to Christ,” she said, “I got on my knees a filthy prostitute, and I arose a virgin in the sight of God.” Do you believe that is possible? It is absolutely possible. Let me give you a verse of Scripture that will back it up beyond a shadow of any doubt—1 Corinthians chapter 6, verses 9 through 11—Paul says, “Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not

deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” God says, “If this is your lifestyle, you’re lost and hell bound. But now, listen to this. He says in verse 11, “And such were some of you...”—not such are some of you. Did you hear it?—“such were some of you: but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God.” Washed, justified, sanctified. No longer a prostitute; now a saint in the house of God. Thank God for the transforming power of faith. Nature forms us, sin deforms us, schools inform us, prisons reform us, the Word conforms us, but Jesus transforms us. He changes us by His power, and that’s what the gospel is all about. Christians are not just nicer people; they are transformed. They are absolutely new people. Think about this person, Rahab, the harlot. We’re going to learn later that she was a pagan, living in spiritual darkness. She was a Canaanite, demon-possessed people, a pagan living in spiritual darkness. She was a prostitute living in sinful degradation, and she was a Canaanite destined for sure destruction, because the judgment of God was upon the city of Jericho where she lived. And yet, God saved this woman. And would you believe, she’s listed here in the Word of God as one of the heroes of the faith, a champion of faith? Rahab, delivered from judgment. Rahab became the great, great grandmother of King David. She married one of the princes of Israel. She is a part of the bloodline of our Savior, this woman who was a harlot. No longer a child of hell—a citizen of heaven; not walking the back streets of Jericho, but now she’s walking the streets of gold in heaven. How did it happen? It is the transforming power of faith. The greatest power, beyond a shadow of any doubt or peradventure, is the power of Jesus Christ, but we’re linked to that power and transformed by that power through faith in Christ Jesus.

Now, four things I lay upon your heart this morning. And, by the way, in order to understand all of this, you’ve got to go back to the Book of Joshua chapter 2. So just turn left in your Bible, and keep going for a long time, and you’ll come to the Book of Joshua, somewhat near the front of the Old Testament—Joshua chapter 2. We’re going to find the story. I want to give you the background.

The children of Israel have come out of the land of bondage, out of the land of Egypt. We talked about it when we talked about the Passover. And now they are right on the threshold of Canaan. Only the River Jordan stands between them and the Promised Land. General Joshua wants to know what is on the other side of the river, so he sends out some special ops, special operational forces, to go across, and to reconnoiter, and to spy. He takes the men. We call them today spies. They went over to spy out the land. And they come, as they cross Jordan, and go into Jericho, which was the first formidable city there; Jericho, great in antiquity, one of the oldest cities on the

face of the earth, and great in iniquity. And God was going to destroy Jericho and bring judgment upon Jericho. And so, they go to Jericho, and they end up there seeking refuge in the house of Rahab, who, as we have learned, was a harlot. Now, I want you to see four things that God did to transform this woman.

I. The Confronting Power of the Providence of God

The first thing I want you to see is what I'm going to call the confronting power of the providence of God. Now, write it down: the confronting power of the providence of God. Look, if you will, in verse 1: "And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there." All right now, look, if you will, in verse 4: "And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not—or knew not—whence they were."

Now, Joshua says, "Go spy out the land." They come to a particular house. Here's the question I have for you: Was that by mere chance? Was that a coincidence? Was it happenstance? No, it was the will of God, and it was the providence of God, and, as you read the story, you're going to find out that the hand of God is here providentially working. "Adrian, why do you say that?" Well, first of all, this woman was under deep, deep conviction. There's no doubt about it, she had a heart hungry to know God. And also, the Bible teaches that these men who came to her were messengers. I'll talk about that later on. But we're going to see that it was not mere chance that brought these men to the house of Rahab; it was the providence of God.

Now, let me tell you how the providence of God works. God works on both sides of the equation. God will find a person whose heart is tender, a person who wants to know God, a person under conviction, a person seeking God. And God will take a witness, a messenger, a soul winner, and work in that person's heart, as well as He works in this person's heart. And then, God gets the two together. We call that divine providence. The Bible is full of all of those kinds of stories.

For example, the Bible tells over in the New Testament about Philip who was a deacon. He was down in Samaria preaching in a revival crusade, and God was doing great wonders and works. But God, by the Holy Spirit, said to Philip, "Philip, I want you to leave Samaria, and I want you to go down toward the Mediterranean, toward the land of Gaza, and there I want you to go." He went under sealed orders, not really wondering why he went. And when he got down there in the desert, there is a man of great authority, great wealth, and great prestige and influence. He's riding in a chariot. He is the treasurer of the nation of Ethiopia, and he had been to Jerusalem to worship, and now he's returning back to North Africa. He'd been to the most religious city on the face of the earth seeking God, but the wells of religion were dry, and would you believe, he's

reading the prophet Isaiah? And God says to Philip, “Go join yourself to that chariot.” Now, Philip had to run. Here was an opportunity on wheels, and Philip, the Bible says, he made haste, and joined this man, and witnessed to him, and this man got saved. Tradition tells us that this treasurer was the one that opened up North Africa to the gospel. I want to ask you a question: Was that mere chance? No, that was providence.

You read about the Lord Jesus Christ making a journey, and the Bible says that Jesus said, “I must needs go through Samaria.” Was that geographical? No, the easier way was another way. Why did He take that mountainous route, and why did He take the route that would go through a hostile city? Because there was that Samaritan woman there whose heart was so hungry. She wanted to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus met her, shared with her. She brought revival to the city of Samaria. She also, most likely, was a fallen woman, as you read the context there. Do you think that was by happenstance?

Do you think it was by happenstance that Paul met Lydia there by the river and opened up the city of Philippi to the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Do you think it was just by happenstance that there was a soldier named Cornelius, a Roman army officer? The Bible says that his heart was hungry to know God. And God took Simon Peter, the apostle who was full of prejudice and didn’t want to have anything to do with the Gentiles, and God worked on Simon Peter. And God sent an angel to Cornelius, and God got the two together, and Cornelius got saved. Happenstance? The providence of God. God works on both sides of the equation.

I was in a revival meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, some years ago. I was with a friend. We went out soul winning. We had an address. We got as lost as a goose in a snowstorm. We could not find the address. We went round and round. Finally, we ended up, it seemed like we were almost in a pasture. We went out down a dirt road and came to a little cottage. I didn’t even know that there’d be a house like that in the great city of Jacksonville. It was a one-room house, unpainted, weather boarding, and the car just came up there in the front, nowhere else to go except just turn around and go backward, no other road. It was just there at the end. We said, “Well, our time is gone. We’ve got to go back to the meeting. Let’s just witness here, whoever’s there.” We went and knocked on the door. An old man came. His name was Mr. Pugh. He had a white beard, kind of hunkered over like this, very much up in years. We said, “May we talk to you about Jesus?” He said, “Certainly.” “Mr. Pugh, are you saved?” He said, “No.” “Well, do you know how to be saved?” He said, “My father was a preacher.” I said, “Your father was a preacher, and you’re not saved?” He said, “No.” “Do you want to be saved?” “Yes.” “When are you going to be saved?” “One of these days.” “Mr. Pugh, you’re not getting any younger. Would you like to be saved?” “Oh,” he said, “if I only knew how.” We went in there and shared with that man. A little one-room house—the

kitchen was in there, the bed was in there; it was the whole house, just one room. I remember kneeling by that bed with Mr. Pugh, and he wept, and sobbed, and wept. I thought he would shake the house down, as he prayed and gave his heart to Jesus Christ. Do you think it was just by accident that we got lost? No, because we were being guided. It was the providence of God.

Now, let me tell you how God works. God works on both sides of the equation. God finds somebody whose heart is tender and ready toward Him, God gets a soul winner who's moving in the stream of the Spirit, and God gets the two together. These beautiful high school girls who just sang—could it be that tomorrow they will go to high school, there will be some girl there whose been to church today, who came seeking God, but she didn't find what she was seeking, and her heart is going to be tender? And, if that girl that sang is in sync with God, and that person who is hungry to know God is there, we can see the providence of God, that God will bring them together.

Out yonder in our city God is preparing the hearts of many. And when you're in the stream of the Spirit, ready and available, you might be surprised how God would use you. You see, Manley Beasley used to preach here. Many of you remember Manley Beasley. He's a dear man of God, a great man of faith. Manley used to say, "You get right with God, you'll have to backslide to keep from winning souls." God is looking for people whose hearts are tender, people that He can guide and steer, people who are hungry to know the Lord. It's the providence of God.

Now, may I say something to those of you who are sitting here? Do you think it is by happenstance that you're here today? I don't think so. I think God brought you here, and God brought me here, because God wants you saved. God wants you saved. The providence of God that confronted her—that's the first thing.

II. The Convicting Power of the Spirit of God

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see—and that is the Spirit of God that convicted her. This woman is under great conviction. Now, the question is this: How did this pagan Canaanite woman, how did this prostitute get under such great conviction? Well, it's quite easy to see. Let's look, if we will, in verse 9: "And she said unto the men...—that is, these spies who found their lodging here at her house—she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land..."—now, I want you to notice the conviction she's under—"I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt: what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man,

because of you—now, watch her conviction now—for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.” What a statement! God, He is God in heaven and earth. He is the God of might, the God of miracle, the God of power. How did this woman know this? Because she said, “We have seen what God has done for His people. We’ve seen how God opened the Red Sea. We’ve seen how God piled victory upon victory. We have heard what God is doing for you.”

What convicts people? How does the Holy Spirit of God do it? He doesn’t do it in abstraction. He does it through people who are living and walking in victory. Now, here’s the big question: Would anybody fall under conviction because of your life? Would anybody say, “I know that there’s a God because I can see what He’s done for you—I can see what He’s done for you; I can see what He’s done for that church; I know that there is something about your life that is inexplicable, unexplainable, apart from the hand of Almighty God”? What is there about your life that makes you different from your neighbor? What is there about you that cannot be explained apart from God? The only right that we have to ask anybody to believe anything we say is that they see in us something that is different. You see, folks, we are witnesses. But not only are we witnesses; we’re part of the evidence. We’re part of the evidence. I mean, why should a person say, “You want me to be like you? It’s made no difference in you. Why should I believe in your God? I can’t see any difference in you.” On the Day of Pentecost, back over in the New Testament now, the early church was coming together. It’s the birthday of the church, the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is come with mighty signs and wonders. There sits upon every man’s head a flickering fire, tongues of fire. There is an indoor cyclone that fills the house like a mighty, rushing wind. The people begin to speak in languages they have never learned. And the Bible says that those people, unsaved people there, were amazed—amazed—and they said, “What does this mean? What meaneth this?” And then in a few more verses, they asked this question: “What must we do? What must we do?” Two questions. Question number one: “What does this mean?” Question number two: “What must we do?” May I submit to you that the problem in the modern church is we’re trying to get them to ask the second question before they’ve ever asked the first one. I want them to look at your life, my life, and say, “What does that mean? I can’t understand. This is amazing.” We ought to be living amazing lives. When we begin to live amazing lives, people will be asking, “What must we do?” Right? How did the Holy Spirit of God convict her? Well, she saw what God had done in the heart and lives of His people.

III. The Confirming Power of the Word of God

Now, there was the confronting power of the providence of God. There’s the convicting power of the Spirit of God. Now, I want you to notice, thirdly, the confirming power of the

Word of God, because people are not going to be saved apart from the Word of God, no matter how you live. They can see the power of God in your life, but they still need a word from God.

Now, continue to listen, in Joshua chapter 2, verse 11: “And as soon as we had heard these things”—Now, what did she hear? She’d heard what God had done for His people—“our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now, therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father’s house, and give me a true token—that is, show me grace, kindness, and give me a token of it—that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. And the men answered her, and the men answered her, our life for yours, if ye utter not this business...”—that is, if you do not disclose that we’re here, we will lay down our lives for you, if necessary—“our life for yours, if you utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.”

Now, skip on down to verse 21, and here’s the key: “And she said, according to your words—now, underscore that—according unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed, and she bound the scarlet line, or cord, in the window.”

Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, was this just a conversation?” No, it was a message from Almighty God. “How can you be so certain?” Well, put in your margin, James 2, verse 25: “Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers.” Now, they’re not called spies. They’re called messengers. They were there with the Word of God. She received the messengers. And again, verse 21: “according to your words.” These men were speaking to her the Word of God. They were divinely appointed by providence to bring to this woman the Word of God. You say, “Pastor, are you certain that she was convinced by the Word?” Absolutely, because the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 17: “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” You cannot have faith until you get a word from God. You might as well try to ice skate on hot water as to have faith without hearing from God. Here was a woman confronted by the providence of God, convicted by the Spirit of God, and confirmed by the Word of God. Now, she believed. Well, in order to believe, you have to have something to believe. Hebrews 11, verse 31: “By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not.” She was confirmed by the Word. She did believe.

IV. The Cleansing Power of the Grace of God

Now, here’s the fourth and final thing: not only confronted by the providence of God, convicted by the Spirit of God, confirmed by the Word of God, but, praise God, she was

cleansed by the grace of God. Notice the cleansing power of the grace of God. Well, look, if you will, in Joshua 2, beginning in verse 18: “And the messengers said to her, Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this scarlet thread in the window...”—now, in another place it’s called a cord. Don’t get the idea of a sewing thread here. These men had to hang on to this and go down the wall on it, with its strength, so it was a stout line—“thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window, which thou didst let us down by. And thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father’s household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street—now, underscore this—his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him.” Now, he’s tying the idea of blood with the scarlet cord. Now, he’s saying to this: “Look, Rahab, we’re going to come. We’re going to come as the avengers of God, and there’s going to be sure destruction upon this city. And the only way that you can be safe is to take a scarlet ribbon, a cord, a thread, a sign—hang it there in the window. Get all of your loved ones on the inside. And when the invading army comes, when judgment comes sweeping through, when I see the cord, I will pass over you.” Does it remind you of anything? Where did these men get this idea? Why, you remember our lesson last week about the Passover? God said, “Take the blood of the lamb, and put it upon the lintel and the doorposts of the house. The death angel is coming through, and when the death angel sees that scarlet blood, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” They had no Passover lamb there in Rahab’s house, but they knew the principle. They knew that God in mercy would forgive on the basis of a blood sacrifice. Hebrews 9:22: “without shedding of blood there is no remission.” This was their token, their sign. This is all in their mind. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure this out. They said, “This is our idea. We’re going to get Rahab spared the same way we were spared, by faith in a merciful God.”

You see, all of the Bible is about a blood sacrifice. You cut the blessed Book anywhere, it will bleed. The blood of Jesus seems to stain every page. If you began with Abel’s lamb, and you go right on through to Noah’s sacrifice, you go right on through to Abraham’s ram there on Mount Moriah, go with all of the smoking sacrifices on every Jewish altar, till finally you come to Calvary where the Lord Jesus Christ hung in agony and blood, all of it is saying, all of it is saying, all of it is saying, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. Now, listen. The Bible says there in verse 31 that she was delivered from destruction. She perished not—that’s what it says. Does that not remind you of John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not—what?—perish.” She didn’t perish. She was delivered from destruction.

But now notice, not only was she delivered from destruction, but she was radically changed on the inside. She had a character change. You say, “Pastor, how do you know that she had a character change?” Because the Bible tells us that she was justified. She was justified. James 2, verse 25: “Likewise, also was not the Rahab the harlot justified.” She was justified. That is, she was delivered from destruction, and made right, pure, in the sight of God. We sing that great song, “Be of sin, the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure.” You see, that’s what it’s all about. He not only delivers us from hell; He gives us a brand new nature. Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, that’s fine for those harlots. I hope those harlots get saved. That’s fine for those drunkards and those murderers. I hope they get saved.” You missed the point altogether. You know what Jesus said there in the Gospel of Matthew to the self-righteous, religious Pharisees? He said, “Harlots and unjust tax collectors are going to go to heaven before you do.” Think about it.

Conclusion

Listen, friend. The message here is this—and I want you to get it, and I don’t want you to miss it: There is no one so bad he or she cannot be saved. Do you believe that? There is no one so bad that they can’t be saved. Harlot? Yes. An adulterer? Yes. Murderer? Yes. Sexually perverted? Yes. God forgives. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin. And don’t you let that dirty devil tell you you’ve done too much, you’re too bad, you’re too wicked, you can’t be saved. The God that saved Rahab, the God that saved the girl named Iris that I’m talking about, is the God who can save you. So that’s the first thing. No one so bad they can’t be saved. Now, listen carefully. There’s no one so good they need not be saved. That’s what Jesus was warning the Pharisees about, when He said, “The harlots and the prostitutes are going into heaven before you.” You see, Jesus transforms.

*It was battered and scarred, and the auctioneer thought it barely worth his while
to spend much time on the old violin, but he held it up with a smile.*

“What am I bidden, good folks,” he cried, “and who’ll start the bidding for me?

A dollar? And who’ll make it two? Two dollars? And who’ll make it three?

“Three dollars once; three dollars twice; going for three,” but no.

From the back of the room, a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow.

*And wiping the dust from the old violin, and tuning up all the strings,
he played a melody soft and sweet, as sweet as an angel sings.*

*The music ceased, and the auctioneer, in a voice hushed and low,
said, “What is my bid for the old violin?” and he held it up with the bow.*

A thousand dollars! And who’ll make it two? Two thousand! Who’ll make it three?

Three thousand once; three thousand twice; going and gone for three.

The people cheered. But some inquired, "We don't quite understand. What changed its worth?" The man replied, "The touch of the Master's hand." And many a life out of tune with God, all battered and scarred with sin, is auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd, much like that old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine, a game, and he travels on.

He's going once; he's going twice, he's going, and almost gone.

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd can never quite understand the worth of a soul and the change that is wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.

That's what happened to Rahab. That's what happened to me. I was just a teen, but Joyce, who is sitting here on the front row, will testify that, after I found Christ, the schoolteachers were asking the question, "What happened to Adrian?" I'll tell you what happened. Jesus happened to Adrian.

President George W. Bush was being interviewed. They asked him, "Whom do you admire more than anyone else?" His answer just knocked them back against the wall. He said, "Jesus Christ." "Jesus." They said they were expecting some philosopher, some general, some president. He said, "Jesus Christ." They said, "Why?" He said, "He changed my life—He changed my life." Praise God. He may not be perfect, and I'm not perfect, you're not perfect, but if you are saved, you're a changed person. "If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."

And, friend, if your religion has not changed your life, you'd better change your religion. He's not here just to make you a nicer person. He is here to radically, dramatically, eternally transform you. And if God saved Rahab, and God saved George W. Bush, and God saved Adrian Rogers, God will save you. God saved Robert Wagner. God will save you. "Robert, did He change your life?" He changed your life. He's in the life-changing business. Now, that change, though radical and dramatic, is also progressive. You're not going to sprout wings and get a halo right away. You're going to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Bow your heads in prayer.

Facing Failure with Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 29, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.”

HEBREWS 11:32

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Source of Samson’s Sin
 - II. The Course of Samson’s Sin
 - A. The Indifference of a Careless Life
 - B. The Indulgence of a Carnal Life
 - C. The Inequity of a Calloused Life
 - III. The Force of Samson’s Sin
 - A. The Blinding Force of His Sin
 - B. The Binding Force of His Sin
 - C. The Grinding Force of His Sin
 - IV. The Remorse of Samson’s Sin
- Conclusion

Introduction

All right, find Hebrews chapter 11, as if you did not already know. And we’re continuing our series of messages on “God’s Hall of Fame”—faith: what it is, how to get it, how to use it, how to please God with it. Hebrews chapter 11, and I want us to look at verse 1 for just a moment: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report”* (Hebrews 11:1).

Say, what is your report card like today, so far as faith is concerned? A? A-plus? C-minus? One boy came to the professor and he said, “Professor, I don’t believe I deserve this F.” The professor said, “Neither do I, but it was the lowest grade I had.” Is that the kind of faith you have? What kind of a report card would God give you today if God today had to measure you?

“By [faith] the elders obtained a good report.” And why is faith so important? Well, look in verse 6. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6). And now notice verse 32. *“And what shall I more say? for the time*

would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson” (Hebrews 11:32).

And we come today to the story of Samson, and you can be turning backward in your Bible to Judges chapter 13, as we see the story of Samson, who also was one of the elders recorded here in the Word of God, one of those great men of faith. And so turn, please, to the Book of Judges, Judges chapter 13, and I want us to begin reading in verse 24. The title of our message today is “Facing Failure With Faith.” Anybody here feel like a failure? Anybody here feel like you’ve failed the Lord, and really, you don’t even deserve a second chance? Then this message is just for you. Now I’m reading here in Judges chapter 13, beginning in verse 24: *“And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him”* (Judges 13:24–25).

“The woman [bore] a son, and she called his name Samson.” Do you know what the name Samson means? It means “shine.” Oh, what sunshine this little boy brought into the life of his mother! Do you imagine that she called him Sunny when he was a little boy? Sunny Boy—that was his name! Samson! Sunshine! And he had come into the life of this home, and he brought such joy. And they began to notice that he was a very unusual child. The Spirit of the Lord God was upon him. And God, through His Spirit, began to move this child. And what mighty, tremendous feats of strength he performed! He was the strongest man I suppose that has ever lived. Entire armies trembled at his sight. One time with a whittled bone picked up from a field, he slew a thousand Philistines. There was a time when a mighty lion roared upon him, and Samson, the Bible says, with nothing in his hand, tore that lion as you would mangle a baby kitten in your bare hands. On one occasion, he took the post and the city gates and bars and all and just took them for a ride on his shoulders. What a man of strength was this man Samson!

Now what was the secret of his strength? Be careful, or you’ll make a mistake. You’re liable to think that he was the Incredible Hulk of the Old Testament. But he wasn’t. Had you seen him, he would not have had mountains of muscles. He would not have had bulging biceps. He would not have been *this* tall and *this* wide. No, the secret of his strength was not his physique. If the secret of his strength was his physique, then it would be no secret. You just look at him, you say, “No wonder he’s so strong. Look how big he is.” That’s not the secret of his strength. Delilah kept saying, “What is the secret of your strength? What is the secret of your strength?” Well, somebody says; “Well then, the secret of his strength was in his long hair.” Oh, now, he was a Nazarite. That means he had taken a special vow to abstain from certain paralyzing sins and activities in his life, and in this day the symbol of his Nazarite vow was his long hair, that no razor would ever come upon his head. And some people have mistakenly said therefore the secret of Samson’s strength was his hair. Ridiculous! The secret of his

strength was not in his hair. That was only a symbol of his submission to God.

The secret of his strength was plainly shown right here in the Bible: The Spirit of God came upon him. That was the secret of his strength. The Spirit of God was in this man. And God, through the Holy Spirit, gave him supernatural strength. And his physical strength in the Old Testament is meant to be to us an illustration of the spiritual strength that the Holy Spirit is giving to us in this day and in this age, for our Lord said, *“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me”* (Acts 1:8).

To what great heights this man soared! He was the judge over all Israel, and he judged Israel for 20 years. And therefore not only was he a man of physical strength; he was a man of great wisdom. He was the hero of his day. His name was on the lips of everyone, and for 20 years they followed Samson and his great strength. But oh, dear friend, just as he soared to great heights, he also fell to great, great depths. How the mighty have fallen! Samson went from hero to zero. He went from victor to victim. He went from overcomer to overcome. And one of the saddest stories in all of the Bible is the story of the power of sin, the blighting, awful power of sin in the life of Samson as he went from disobedience to defeat to disgrace to disappointment, and finally to destruction.

Now having said that by way of introduction, I want us to notice three or four things about Samson’s sin this morning.

I. The Source of Samson’s Sin

The first thing I want us to notice is the source of his sin—the source of his sin. We notice here that God blessed the child, in verse 25: *“The Spirit of the LORD began to move [upon] him at times”* (Judges 13:25). Therefore, where did this sin come from? How did Samson ever get into sin to begin with? And even before we get into the story itself, I want to talk just a moment about the source of his sin.

Here’s the source of his sin: No matter that he loved God and knew God and believed in God, he still had an old nature about him—and don’t forget it. The Bible says, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”* (John 3:6). And because of that old nature that was in him, and because he took his eyes from the Lord and allowed his eyes to wander to certain temptations and things, Samson fell.

Now James tells us how it happens in James chapter 1, in verses 13 and following: *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:”—*you can’t say, “God made me do it.” You can’t say, “The devil made me do it—*“but every man is tempted,”—*James says—*“when he is drawn away of his own lust... Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”* (James 1:13–15).

Now there are three persons sitting in your seat this morning. You say, “No wonder it’s so crowded.” There are three persons in your seat this morning. Pay attention to me now. There is the self that is sitting there right now. There is the saint that you could be; I mean, the person for God you could be—that’s the second person—if you would just let go of this world with both hands, and take hold of the Lord with both hands by faith, and say, “Sink or swim, live or die, once and for all, now and forever, I’m going for God.” You just don’t know what God could do through you. Oh, there’s the person you are—that’s one person. The person you could be for good—that’s another person. But also the sinner that’s sitting in your seat. I don’t believe that any of us realize the potentiality for evil there is in our lives. “Oh,” you say, “well, something bad would never happen to me.” You’re no better than Samson. You’re no better than Simon Peter. You’re no better than King David. A lot of God’s choicest of saints have sinned and they’ve fallen. And let me tell you something. The Bible says, “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12). There is no sin of the flesh that a child of God is not capable of committing if he takes his eyes from the Lord Jesus Christ. “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*” And the source of this sin is this: “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. And lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin.”

II. The Course of Samson’s Sin

Now the second thing I want you to see: Not only the source of his sin, but I want you to see the course of his sin. I want you to see the course that his sin took. Three steps in his downward fall.

A. The Indifference of a Careless Life

First of all, there’s what I call the indifference of a careless life. Look, if you will, please, in chapter 14 now, the first four verses: “*And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up, and his father and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines: now therefore get her for me to wife. Then his father and his mother said unto him, Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take the wife of the uncircumcised Philistines? And Samson said unto his father, Get her for me; for she pleaseth me well*” (Judges 14:1–3).

Now he’s not thinking here about pleasing God. He’s thinking about pleasing Samson. Now mark it down, friend. The Bible says, “Without faith, it’s impossible to please God.” But now he’s not acting in faith; he’s acting in selfishness. He’s trying to please himself. *If you please God, it doesn’t matter whom you displease. But if you displease God, it doesn’t matter whom you please*, and especially if you please yourself.

But Samson is trying to please himself.

Now the problem with Samson now is he's just acting very carelessly. He had no business being down there among the Philistines. He had no business looking around at those unsaved girls. He had no business wanting to marry an unsaved person. Did you know, ladies and gentlemen, that the Bible teaches that a Christian is not to marry an unsaved person? Did you know the Bible teaches that? Oh, I see these young people, what foolish mistakes they make! They love the Lord God with all of their heart, and yet they go out and get unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. The Bible says clearly, plainly, succinctly, without a shadow of any doubt, *"Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers"* (2 Corinthians 6:14). Samson married a Philistine girl. The Philistines were demonic people. The Philistines were wicked people. And Samson married a Philistine girl. He married a child of the devil.

Now you pay attention. *If you marry a child of the devil, then you get the devil for a father-in-law.* You talk about in-law problems. Now this is where Samson's problem began: he married an unsaved girl. He was out of the will of God. He just simply compromised. Here was what we call the indifference of a careless life. Now that didn't seem like such a great sin, but sin starts small. Nobody goes roaring off into sin. It just started with the wrong company. He was down there among the Philistines. He was where he should not have been. He was not practicing Biblical separation. Pay attention. You show me the crowd you run with, and I'll tell you the kind of a person you are, or the kind of a person you will soon become. Mark it down. You show me the crowd you run with, and I'll tell you the kind of a person you are, or the kind of a person you will soon become. He started running with the Philistines; before long, he was living in sin and acting like the Philistines. The Bible says, *"A companion of fools shall be destroyed"* (Proverbs 13:20). And there was the indifference of a careless life.

B. The Indulgence of a Carnal Life

It led, secondly, to the indulgence of a carnal life. Now begin reading here in Judges chapter 14 and verse 5—and we read here, *"Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion. So his father went down*

unto the woman: and Samson made there a feast; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him. And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you: if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments: but if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, Put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it. And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle” (Judges 14:5–14).

Now let me just stop there and say what’s happening. Samson is walking along. There’s a lion that pounces upon him. The lion thought he would have a Samson burger steak. He had a mistake. He got hold of Samson, and Samson got hold of him, and he just tears this lion apart, limb from limb. Now he goes on down there for the wedding feast. And here are 30 young Philistines. He says, “Say, I’ve got a riddle for you.” He said, “If you can tell the riddle,” he said, “I’ll just make a little wager with you. If you can figure it out, I’ll give you 30 brand new suits. If you can’t figure it out, you give me 30 brand new suits.” And he says, “*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.*” The lion was the eater. The meat was the honey. The lion was strong. The honey was sweet. That was his little riddle.

Well, they couldn’t figure out this riddle, and so they come to Samson’s new wife, and they say, “You get him to tell the answer to this riddle.” And so she says to Samson, “Samson, tell me the answer to the riddle.” And Samson said, “I’ve not told my father and my mother. Should I tell you?” Now he shouldn’t have said that. That was his first mistake. Nobody ever tells a young bride that. “I haven’t told my father and my mother. You think I’m going to tell you?” And then she turned on the waterworks, and she started to cry. And then he told her, and then she told her friends and her brothers, and they told Samson, and Samson was infuriated. He said, “If you’d not plowed with my heifer, you’d not found out my riddle” (Judges 14:15–18).

Now I don’t advise a wife to double-cross her husband. I certainly don’t advise a husband to call his new bride a heifer. But things are getting bad for ole Samson now. So Samson, he’s going to keep this debt, and he goes out and in order to keep the debt, he kills 30 Philistines, takes their clothes off, and comes and pays this wager. And things are thickening now, and Samson is starting to go down and down and down. You see this man, now he’s at a feast jesting, gambling, fighting, arguing, already in a terrible broken relationship with this unsaved woman because their home is not built on Almighty God. And this is what I call the indulgence of a carnal life. You see him now as he starts to bend. As I said, nobody just goes roaring into sin, but his life is starting to come apart. He’s starting now to lose control, this man that had been so mightily used

of God.

C. **The Inequity of a Calloused Life**

But he goes on further another step, and this is what I call the inequity of a calloused life. Read here in Judges chapter 16 now, and verse 4: *“And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah”* (Judges 16:4). Now he lost wife number one. Then he had an affair with another woman. And now he ends up keeping company with a trashy harlot whose name was Delilah. Delilah also was a Philistine. And I cannot believe that Samson, the man of God, is doing such a thing. But the devil is very clever. The devil never told Samson this is the way he wanted him to end. Young people, the devil never comes to you and says, “Do you see that old drunkard lying in the gutter covered with vomit, and lying in his own wallow, the flies buzzing around his face and crawling in and out of his mouth? You see that? That’s the way I want to make you.” No, he doesn’t say that. He says, “You drink, and you’ll be a young man of distinction. It’s the finished product.” And it’s just so fine, he makes it seem. Sin starts small, but it doesn’t end small.

Young lady, the devil doesn’t point to you and say, “You see that girl, that woman with a child out of wedlock? Do you see that body of hers filthy and ridden with disease? Do you see that coarse laugh that she has that’s only covering up her broken heart? I’m going to make you like that disgraced and broken woman.” The devil never starts that way. No, he doesn’t start that way.

I don’t think that Samson would ever have thought that he would have ended up in the arms of this filthy harlot named Delilah. “Who is it knocks so loud? A lonely little sin slipped through. I answered, and soon all hell was in.” And we see now Samson with the callousness of a sinful life, the inequity of a calloused life.

III. **The Force of Samson’s Sin**

Now the third thing I want you to notice: Not only the source of his sin, and not only the course of his sin, but I would like for you to notice here in this marvelous passage of Scripture, the force of his sin. I want you to see what his sin did to him, because the consequences of Samson’s sin could not be escaped. The Bible says, in the Book of Numbers, *“Be sure your sin will find you out”* (Numbers 32:23).

There are not many things in this world you can be sure of. Something somebody has said, “Well, something’s just as sure as death and taxes.” Well, even those things are not sure. You may not die. Jesus may come, and by a miracle of miracles, there won’t be any more taxes. But don’t bet on it. Somebody says, “Well, just as sure as the sun will rise in the morning.” Well, the sun may not rise in the morning. One time in the past, God made the sun to stand still. He can do it again any day He chooses. There

are a lot of things you can't be sure of, but there is one thing you can know beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure: *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* Just be sure.

I want you to notice the force of Samson's sin. I want you to notice the deadly force of that sin.

A. The Blinding Force of His Sin

First of all, there's what I call the blinding force of that sin. Now Samson here is keeping company with Delilah. The Philistines are hating him by this time, and so we read in chapter 16, verse 5: *"And the lords of the Philistines came unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver"* (Judges 16:5). That equates to about 3,000 dollars. They said, "Delilah, if you find some way that we can tie this man up and do him harm, Delilah, we'll pay you 3,000 dollars."

And so she began to entice him. She began to bribe him. And first of all, she said, "Sammy boy, would you tell me what makes you so strong?" And he said, "Well, I can't tell you that." She said, "Well, would you tell me how you could be tied up if someone wanted to hurt you? Just tell me. Just between you and me, Sammy boy." And Samson said, "Well," he said, "if you were to tie me with seven green vines," he said, "I wouldn't be able to break those vines." And so she tied him up with seven green vines. And then she said, "Samson! The Philistines!" And he jumped up, and the Bible says he broke those vines just like that. She said, "Samson, you've lied to me. Now tell me how you can be tied up and what's the secret of your strength." "Oh," he said, "well, if you tie me with seven new ropes," he said, "then I wouldn't be able to move at all." And so she got seven brand new ropes and tied him up, and the same old thing again: "Samson! The Philistines are here!" And he jumps up, and the Bible says, "And he broke the ropes like they were thread" (Judges 16:12).

And then again she says, "Now Samson, you say that you love me, and you haven't even told me all your heart." Look in verse 15: *"And she said unto him, How canst thou say, I love thee, when thine heart is not with me?"* (Judges 16:15). It's a shame he didn't hear God saying that to him, isn't it? "How can you say you love me, when your heart is not with me. Now you tell me." And so Samson, he's gone through this thing, he said, "You put vines on me." Then he said, "You put new ropes on me." Then he said, "You weave my hair in the web of the loom; then I won't be able to move." But wait a minute. He's getting closer now, isn't he? He's dealing with his hair now, but he's still not telling her the truth. And so she begins to needle him, and to wheel, and to nag, and to beg, and to plead. And the Bible says that finally, when she vexed him unto death—verse 17, *"he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon mine*

head; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my mother's womb:"—in other words, "The secret of my strength is spiritual and—"if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, Come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand. And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him. And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him." And now just underline verse 21, because it's a key verse. "But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house" (Judges 16:17–21).

Now what is the force of his sin? What did his sin do to him? What was the deadly force? It's, first of all, what I call the blinding force of sin. The Philistines took Samson, and they took searing hot pokers and they plunged them into his eyes, into his skull; and his eyeballs fizzled and fried, and they burned his eyes out. And Sunshine would never see the sunshine again. The blinding power of sin.

But I want to tell you, long before this had happened to Samson, he was already blind—he was already blind. Can you imagine when Delilah says to him, "Samson, what's the secret of your strength? Tell me," and "How could you be afflicted? Tell me," and he keeps toying with her? Don't you feel like saying, "Samson, you nincompoop! Don't you see what she's trying to do to you? Samson, how can you be so blind? Samson, how can you be so stupid?" There are none so blind as those who refuse to see.

You know, people tell us sometimes that we need to get experience in sin. We need to be a part of the *avant garde*. We need to be a little bit of the savant and sophisticated generation. "After all, why knock it till you've tried it?" You know, that's what the devil told Eve in the Garden of Eden: "After all, just get into sin. Live it up! Experience it! Don't be a babe in the woods." Then you'll know—mark it down—the deeper one goes into sin, the less he understands about sin. Just mark it down.

How stupid Samson was! How blind he was! And this physical blindness was only a graphic illustration of the greater spiritual blindness, for the Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and verse 4, "*The God of this [age] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*" (2 Corinthians 4:4). He was blind in his mind before he was blind with his eyes.

B. The Binding Force of His Sin

But I want you to notice not only was there the blinding force of his sin, there was also the binding force of his sin, for the Bible says here in verse 21: they *“brought him down to Gaza, and bound him.”* Here was mighty Samson bound in fetters of brass. But before that, he was already shackled by his sin, wasn't he? And the binding in the physical way was only illustrative of the fact that already he had been bound by his sin.

And trust me, there's none so shackled as the man who's shackled by his sin. These people talking about being free, they say, “I don't want to be a Christian. I want to be free, free, free!” The biggest slave in the world is a man who's a slave to his sin. Did you know that? Satan says, “Jump!” and they say, “How high?” And they're talking about being free. The Bible says concerning the Lord Jesus, *“If the Son...shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36). It was power to bind you. Here was mighty Samson who was bound.

People say, “Well, I want to be free to drink my whiskey.” You do? It may be not long before you'll be bound to drink whiskey. You know, the Japanese have a proverb: “First of all, the man takes a drink. Then the drink takes a drink. And then the drink takes the man.” He drank first of all happily. Then he drank heavily and habitually. He drank first of all delicately. Then he drank daringly. He drank first of all proudly. Then he drank proddingly. First of all, he was carefree about it. And then he was crushed by it.

I read a story years ago about a man named the Tyrant of Syracuse, one of the meanest despots that ever occupied the throne. He was angry with the blacksmith, and the blacksmith didn't know it. He called the blacksmith in before the throne, and he said, “I want you to show me how you would forge a chain.” The blacksmith got his molten metal. He got his anvil, his hammer, and began to make a chain of the finest steel. Finally, he had finished, and he held the chain out up to the Tyrant of Syracuse, and he said, “There, Sire, is an example of my work. It's the finest chain in all of the kingdom.” He said, “You could put a team of horses on either end and they'd not be able to part this chain.” Then the Tyrant of Syracuse said, “Guards! Take him! Bind him in that chain! And cast him in the dungeon!” And he was forging the chain that would bind him.

That's exactly what Samson did. Samson was the one that forged those chains that bound him, and he was already shackled by his sin before he was shackled by these fetters of brass. There is the binding force of sin. Oh, how many today who are listening to me are slaves of sin, rather than servants of the Lord Jesus Christ!

C. The Grinding Force of His Sin

But it's not over yet. There's also the grinding force of sin. Look again in verse 21. It says they *“put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.”* In this day, when they would grind out

the corn and the wheat, they would have a long pole, and an animal would be tied to that pole, an ox, a donkey, some sort of an animal. And with the lictor's lash they would make that animal go round and round and round and round. And here is Samson like a dumb ox, like a donkey, like an animal. The man who was meant to be a judge in Israel, day after day, he's grinding in the prison house.

If Samson could write his autobiography, he would have to say, "The devil lied to me. The devil told me this was the way of joy and the way of happiness, and the way of fun and fulfillment." The devil will lie to you. Dr. Lee used to say, "The devil offers high wages, but he always pays off in counterfeit money." Dr. Lee said, "Sin promises substance, but it gives shadow. Sin promises velvet, but it gives a shroud. Sin promises nectar, but it gives gall. Sin promises sleep, and it gives sin's nightmares. It promises rest, and it gives sin's weariness." The grinding power of sin.

Pay attention to me. There's nothing good about sin. There's nothing that sin can do for you. You'd better treat sin like sin will treat you. And if you don't understand how sin will treat you, then you study here in this story that God has recorded in His divine Word. I had just as soon eat dirt, as to willingly sin.

IV. The Remorse of Samson's Sin

There's the blinding power of sin. There's the binding power of sin. There is the grinding power of sin. This was the force of Samson's sin. But the story is not over yet. I want you to see finally, not only the source of it, and the course of it, and the force of it, but the remorse of it. Continue to read, if you will, please, in Judges chapter 16, now beginning in verse 22: "*Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god*"—this was the fish god that they worshiped. They were seafaring people—"and to rejoice: for they said, *Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand. And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry,*"—that is, when they were drunk—"that they said, *Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport*" (Judges 16:22–25). That is, they made fun of him. They ridiculed him, like a big ole overgrown buffoon. They jeered and mocked and laughed at a man of God, a judge in Israel, a man in whom the Spirit of God had rested.

Now he's bringing disgrace and contempt upon the name of Jehovah God. Oh, can you imagine such a thing? The remorse that Samson must have felt! Samson learned three things about sin that I want every man, woman, boy, and girl in this building to learn this morning. Write them down. One: Sin will take you further than you want to go.

Number two: Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. Number three: Sin will cost you more than you want to pay. Don't you forget it! Sin will take you further than you want to go. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. And sin will cost you more than you want to pay. Oh, the remorse, the remorse, the remorse of Samson's sin!

But in that remorse a thought came into Samson's heart. And now we're coming to the title of the message: "Facing Your Failure With Faith." Never has there been a greater failure than Samson, but in his remorse he began to think. And he thought of the great God that loved him. And he thought of the mercies of God. And he thought of the fact that God is always willing to forgive. And I'm reading now in verse 26: *"And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all of the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women..."*—now they shouldn't have been up there, Mr. Architect. The roof wasn't built for them—*"about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the LORD,"*—oh, I'm glad he did—*"and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God,"*—don't you wish he'd have prayed that before he ever got into sin? Don't you wish he'd have prayed that when he was first tempted? Don't you wish he'd have prayed, "O God, remember me; O God, strengthen me this once"? Don't you wish he'd have prayed it then? But thank God, at least he prayed it now—*"that I may at once be avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."* And verse 29: *"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all of his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all of the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life"* (Judges 16:26–30).

Conclusion

What does all of this mean? It means, in spite of what Samson did, and in spite of the terrible tragedy, God is the God of the second chance. And Samson, I suppose, is one of the greatest heroes of faith because he had such great faith. You say, "Where was his great faith?" Let me tell you where his great faith was—and that's the faith I want many of you to have today. Samson had enough faith to know that even though he was a failure and a disgrace, and that he'd failed and shamed God, that God still loved him and would remember him when he came in repentance and faith. That's a lot of faith.

Do you know what somebody called faith? I think it's beautiful. Faith is our acceptance of God's acceptance of us when we trust Him. Isn't that beautiful? Faith is

our acceptance of God's acceptance of us. I may be speaking to someone on television. You've failed and you've failed so much. But I'm here as a messenger of God today to tell you God loves you. God loves you. And the same God that blessed ole Samson—I didn't choose Samson as an illustration of faith—God, the Holy Spirit, chose Samson as an illustration of faith. And here was a man, though he failed, he learned to face his failure with faith.

Aren't you glad that we serve such a God? And aren't you glad that 1 John 1:9 is in the Bible: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* Sure, Samson died prematurely. Sure, he lost so many of the blessings that he could have had. But never forget this, never forget this: When he faced his failure with faith, God moved in his life one more time. And so will God move in your life, my friend, for He loves you very much.

Star Wars

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 18, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.”

HEBREWS 11:32

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Woman That God Chose
 - II. The Warrior That God Called
 - III. The Warfare That God Conducted
- Conclusion

Introduction

Well, take God’s precious Word and find Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 32. And in that verse, we’re introduced to a man whose name is not really a household name, a man named Barak. However, if you have kept up with modern Israel, you know that one of the most prominent recent leaders in Israel had the same name as this man, Barak, who is one of the champions of faith.

Some years ago, I went to Moscow, Russia. I went there to preach in Red Square shortly after the implosion of the Soviet system, and I wondered how did I get here, and why was this privilege afforded to me? I had a great \$30,000 sound stage built in Red Square on Easter morning, and God gave me the privilege to preach on nationwide television the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. But I think one of the most astounding things was an interview that I had and a briefing with a Russian naval captain and a Russian general with some of the U.S. military, and there were about maybe 15 of us in a room in the Cosmos Hotel there in Moscow. And questions were going back and forth between these military men with reference to the implosion of the Soviet system. And one of these American military asked the Russian general this question—he said, “What effect did SDI—that is, the Strategic Defense Initiative—have on the implosion of the Soviet system?” Now, you know, SDI was nicknamed Star Wars because Ronald Reagan said we need a shield to protect us from the incoming Soviet missiles that may have atomic warheads. And so, Ronald Reagan said, we need to build a shield. We need to have a strategic defense initiative. The newspapers called it Star Wars, where

our missiles would shoot down their incoming missiles. And so, again, the question was asked: “What effect did Star Wars have on the implosion of the Soviet system?” That Russian general said, “It destroys us.” He said, “It wiped us out. That was the turning point.” He said, “We were already spending an enormous amount of our gross national product and income on defense, and we could not stay up.” Now, here’s what he said. He said, “We told you that you did not need SDI because all of our weapons were defensive.” And then, he said, “Of course, we were lying.” Now, I said, can I believe my ears? Am I sitting in Moscow hearing a Soviet general say what he said to Americans because he felt perhaps the freedom, the safety, to say it? “Of course, we were lying.” We owe a great debt, in my estimation, to Ronald Reagan for his wisdom with the Strategic Defense Initiative.

But I want to tell you that Star Wars did not begin with Ronald Reagan, and it didn’t begin with Mr. Lucas—I believe he produced the film. Star Wars goes all the way back to Judges chapter 5 and verse 20. So let’s read, first of all, Hebrews 11 and verse 32, and then go backward in the Bible. And the writer of Hebrews, who is listing the champions of the faith, said, “And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon—now, we’ve spoken of Gideon—and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, and David also, and Samuel, and the prophets. Who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

Now, in that list, this man Barak is mentioned, and he fought a decisive battle, and God sums up that battle. You may turn backward now to Judges chapters 4 and 5. God sums up that battle in a song. It was a song sung by a woman named Deborah, who was a prophetess of that day, and here’s what Deborah said in Judges chapter 5 and verse 20: “They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” Listen to that phrase again: “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” Well, what does all of that mean?

Well, let me give you the background for this passage of Scripture. Now, we’ll go to Judges chapter 4 to find what Deborah was singing about in Judges chapter 5. There was a man named Sisera. Sisera was a Canaanite general. He had for twenty years kept his boot on the neck of Israel. He was a very successful general, and he had behind him 900 chariots of iron. Now, you cannot imagine what that would mean in this day of warfare. The Iron Age is here, and now Sisera has 900 chariots of iron. Israel had nothing like that, and Israel is under the boot of this Canaanite general, whose name was Sisera. And there was a great battle that day, and the battle went against Sisera, when ordinarily it should not have. And Deborah, in order to explain the battle, and how God gave to Barak the victory that day over Sisera and his 900 chariots of iron,

said, “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” Now, we will tell you more about that battle when we get into the story, but let's get some more of the background.

What had happened is this: that the Jewish people had turned against God. They'd sinned against God. Look, if you will, in chapter 4, verse 1. We're in Judges chapter 4, verse 1: “And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead.” Ehud was another judge that had delivered them. But now he's dead, and they go right back into sin. There seems to be a cycle in Israel at this time, very much like America, a senseless cycle of rebellion, retribution, repentance, and restoration. They had rebelled. God sent retribution. They repented. They were restored. And now Ehud is dead, and they go right back into sin.

Does that remind you of anything? Does that remind you of America? Can you remember back in the days of Desert Storm where we went against Iraq and Saddam Hussein the first time? I can remember this church had the next Sunday, I suppose, 25% more people than we normally have. We were on our faces crying out to God and saying, “Oh, God, deliver us. Oh, God, help us. Lord, we don't want to get bogged down in some desert war and have our boys come home in body bags. God, give victory.” God gave victory, and what happened? It seems like the slush gates of hell had been opened on America. We sunk deeper into sin and debauchery and wickedness than we did before this time, very much like Israel. And so, to Israel came this new crisis.

Look, if you will now, in Judges chapter 4, verses 2 and 3: “And the Lord...—underscore this—the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor, the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel.” Now, what caused this king to be raised up?

Well, look in your Scripture. Look again in verse 2: “And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan.” God did it. God took a wicked Canaanite king, and God turned His people over to them. Now, friend, listen to me, and let me tell you something. Not only is God our only hope; God is our biggest threat. You didn't hear that. God is our biggest threat. It was God—it was God—who was behind the scenes. It was God who turned them over to this Canaanite, malevolent, wicked, brutal king with nine hundred chariots of iron. God Himself had engineered it. Now, they prayed again, and it drove them to their knees. God has a way of driving His people to their knees. They prayed again. It drove them to their knees. And God answered to give them deliverance. And that deliverance is wrapped up in what I'm going to call Star Wars. Four things I want you to see. Are you ready? Okay, let's go.

I. The Woman That God Chose

First of all, I want you to see the woman that God chose—the woman that God chose. Look, if you will, in verses 4 and 5: “And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.” Here’s a woman now who is a judge in Israel. Her name Deborah means bee, like honeybee, and the Bible says here that she was a prophetess. As a matter of fact, she was one of a number of women in the Bible who are prophetesses. For example, if you know your Bible, you know that Miriam, Moses’ sister, was called a prophetess, which she was. Huldah was a prophetess. Anna was a prophetess. The Bible tells us there was a man named Philip in the New Testament who had four daughters who were prophetesses. That is, they spoke for God. And they’re called, at least, Deborah was called a “mother in Israel.” in Judges chapter 5, verse 7, she said, God has made me, “I arose a mother in Israel.” May I just pull over and park here for a moment, and say thank God for women. Thank God for women of faith. Thank God for the honeybees that we have today who love the Lord Jesus Christ with all of their heart, and speak with wisdom.

One of my dearest friends is Bill Bright. As a matter of fact, I was in Moscow with Bill Bright, when this experience I told about happened, and Bill Bright was in that gathering. Bill Bright will tell you the great influence on his life was a woman whose name was Henrietta Mears. And, by the way, if you want to get a good book, get the book by Henrietta Mears entitled, “What the Bible is All About.” Henrietta Mears was a woman of great, incisive wisdom, and she influenced Bill Bright. Bill Bright, I don’t know of any man, including Billy Graham, that has reached more souls for Jesus Christ than Bill Bright. I love him dearly. He’s a very close, personal friend. She was a woman used of God.

I think today of Beverly LaHaye. I’m grateful for Beverly LaHaye. And I am grateful for godly women today who have been organized under the leadership of Beverly LaHaye, and those now who are succeeding her, to help stop the tide of immorality and filth and abortion in America. What a wonderful woman Beverly LaHaye is!

Corrie Ten Boon—I had a lunch one time with Corrie Ten Boon—greatly blessed by the courage of this woman, Corrie Ten Boon, who has touched the world with her faith.

Back in 1979, there was a move to get a new president of the Southern Baptist Convention who would take a stand for the inerrancy of the Word of God and bring this denomination away from its liberal drift. There were many who were saying to me, “Adrian, you need to allow your name to be placed in nomination.” Very frankly, I did not wish to do that. I had my plate full; my kids were in high school; we were in a building program at Bellevue. I did not wish to do so, but a woman that I respect very much

called me on the phone. Her name was Miss Bertha Smith. Some of you may not know Bertha Smith, but Bertha Smith was one of America's premier missionaries, part of the great Shantung revival, a woman who walked with God. She called me on the phone, and she said, "Brother Adrian, God wants you to do this." It spoke to my heart because I knew the walk that that woman had with God. I thank God for the influence of Miss Bertha Smith.

Many of us today are influenced in ways we don't even realize, as we sing the hymns of a great lady named Fanny Crosby. When you sing, Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine, oh, what a foretaste of glory divine, thank God for Fanny Crosby.

God chose a woman, and she was, indeed, a mother of Israel. She had great wisdom and judgment. Look in chapter 4, verse 5: "And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment." Now, was that just something that once happened and that God doesn't want women to serve Him all the time? Well, read Acts chapter 2, verses 17 and 18: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaidens will I pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy."

"Pastor, does that mean that you believe in women pastors?" Absolutely not! Absolutely not! The Bible makes it very clear—1 Timothy 2, verse 12—Paul said, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence—that is, in quietness." The Bible says that a bishop is to be the husband of one wife. I've never met a woman who could be the husband of one wife. No. The Bible does teach, however, that God has a ministry for women, a very powerful ministry, and God speaks to women with wisdom and judgment. God speaks to me many times by my wife. Before I came out here this morning, I bowed in prayer and asked Joyce to lay her hands upon me and pray for me. And I thank God for the wisdom and the influence and the power of that godly woman. And I'm going to tell you something else, gentlemen. This church would be in great difficulty without the ministry of her women. Let's thank them for it. I am grateful for those that God uses. Here was a woman that God chose.

II. The Warrior That God Called

But now, here's the second thing I want you to see. Not only the woman that God chose, but I want you to see the warrior that God called. Now, begin to read in Judges chapter 4, verses 8 and 9: "And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the

Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.”

Now, Deborah knew there needed to be a battle. She needed, therefore, a warrior. And she knew that she as a woman was not called or equipped to lead the battle, so she called by divine inspiration a man named Barak. Deborah knew the limits of her position. She knew that she needed a man to do a man’s job. And, by the way, this time in Israel the men had failed, and Deborah having to judge Israel is a tribute to the failure of men.

And I want to tell you something else, sirs. I have observed that most of the problem in America and in our homes is not domineering women, but failing, slacking, shirking men who fail to do and be what they ought to be. That’s a good place for an “oh me”, or an “amen”.

Now, there are times when a woman has to do a man’s job. If a woman is on the frontier and her husband is killed, she has to maybe plow and chop. She may have to take a gun and defend her family from savages. But that’s not her normal calling. Her normal calling is to nurture.

What Deborah was calling for was a return to strong male leadership. God made man, and God made woman, and He made them equal, but He didn’t make them the same. God made a man to provide and to protect. That’s what man is equipped to do. When God created Adam, God created Adam and gave Adam this responsibility, “You are to till the garden, or tend it, and keep it. You are to protect it. You are the provider. You are the protector.” And men are meant to provide, and men are meant to protect.

Yes, there are times when a woman has to step up and do a man’s job, but that is not the norm, and that is not God’s desire. Deborah did not try to go to the battlefield. May I say something here? God does not expect women to be on the front lines. Yeah. God equipped women for having babies, and not for fighting battles. And it is obscene and insane to put women on the front line fighting battles. They’re not supposed to be there. Now, the radical feminists of today would like to see women on the front lines to prove that they’re equal. They’re already equal. But it doesn’t take much imagination or common sense to understand that they’re not supposed to be there. Number one: they don’t have the physical stamina and strength. Number two: can you imagine a woman POW and what she would have to go through and endure?

You say, “Well, I know some women who are as strong as some men.” Well, sure. It’s the exception that proves the rule. Did you know that, in the Bible when God speaks of His judgment upon a nation, God describes their soldiers like women? Put in Jeremiah 51 and verse 30: “The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight—that is, they have given up the fight—they have remained in their holds—that is, in their hiding places—their might hath failed—listen—they became as women.” God says, “You want

me to tell you what kind of a miserable army the Babylonians had? They became like women.”

Deborah had enough sense to know there was a battle. And she had enough sense to know that she needed a man, and that man had to be a man of great faith. And so, Barak comes. He is the warrior that God called, and he was a man of faith.

Where does faith come from? Well, first of all, let’s think about faith that wrought the victory. You know, over there in Hebrews chapter 11, the Bible says, “It is through faith that they subdued kingdoms.” This star war was fought by faith. What was the origin of his faith? Look in Judges chapter 4 and verse 6: “And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphatali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded.” As a prophetess, she is speaking for God. Now, what is the source of all faith? The Word of God. In this series, if you’ve been listening, you’ve heard over and over again Romans 10:17: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Impossible to have faith without hearing from God. Faith is believing what God has said, and acting upon it. The source of his faith was the Word of God. What was the object of his faith? Look again in Judges chapter 4, verse 6: “And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphatalil, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded.” Not only was God the source of the faith, but, correspondingly, as night follows day, he was the object of that faith. He was the origin and the object.

Every now and then, people say, “Well, just have faith.” Faith in what? “Only believe.” Believe what? Never put faith in faith. Faith in faith is faith in yourself. The object of your faith is Almighty God. The origin—the Word of God; the object—God Himself. Faith is not mere positive thinking. And what is the operation of true faith? Look in Judges chapter 4, verse 8. Barak says, “I will go.” Faith without works is dead. You say you believe. The word believe comes from an old English word by-live. What we believe we live by. Here was a man of faith. Doubt sees the obstacles; faith sees the way. Doubt sees the darkest night; faith sees the day. Doubt says, “Who believes?”; faith answers, “I.”

III. The Warfare That God Conducted

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see: not only the woman that God chose, not only the warrior that God called, but I want you to see the warfare that God conducted—the warfare that God conducted.

Now, let’s look in verse 12: “And they showed Sisera that Barak, the son of Abinoam, had gone up to Mount Tabor. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all of the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up;

for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand. Is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera and all his chariots, and all his hosts with the edge of the sword before Barak, so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left.”

What an incredible success this battle was. Here is Barak. He has ten thousand men. He’s going up against nine hundred chariots of iron. That would be like a division of infantry going up against a battalion of tanks. When Sisera, the Canaanite general, started out in this battle, he was absolutely confident of success. You think about it. He was far better equipped. He had been victorious for twenty years. He had a well-trained army. His chariots were superior. His army was superior. Had you that day put your money down in a bet, you would have bet on Sisera to win that battle. And Sisera was sure that he was going to win, but his faith was in the wrong place. There’s a very poignant verse that deals with this—Psalm 20, verse 7: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”

Now, what happened is this: that, as the battle is joined, something happens. There comes a rainstorm, a great storm. Now, go over to Judges chapter 5, and let me explain it to you. Look, if you will, in Judges chapter 5, verse 4: “Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchest out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water. The mountains melted from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.”

What happened is this: the battle starts. Nine hundred chariots of iron there by the River Kishon at the foot of Mount Tabor there by the Valley of Estralan where the battle of Armageddon is going to be fought. Here is Sisera. Now, remember, he has had victory for twenty straight years, and this is going to be a cakewalk for him. And then, all of a sudden, the earth trembles with thunder. The heavens open up. The bottom falls out. It’s what the country folks would call a frog-strangling, stump-floating rain. It begins to rain, and it rains and rains, and the Bible says, “and the mountains melted”—mudslides. Now, these dry gullies in Israel are called wadi—W-A-D-I—but, in times of rain, they become flash floods. This was a flash flood. I mean, it was a gulley-washer. It came down. It turned that whole battlefield into a swamp. Now, can you imagine nine hundred chariots of iron in a swamp, nine hundred chariots of iron in mud? Look in Judges chapter 5, verses 20 and 22: “They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away”—that ancient river, the river Kishon. Now, here the battlefield has changed. The storm turns the battlefield into a swamp. There was an historian whose name was Josephus. Josephus

wrote about this. Here's what he said: "They joined the battle, and, as the ranks closed, a violent storm came on with much rain and hail. The wind drove the rain against the faces of the Canaanites, darkening their outlook so their archeries and their slings were rendered useless. Their heavy armed soldiers, because of the cold, were unable to use their swords. But since the storm was behind the Israelites, it caused them less harm, and they further took courage from the belief that in God's assistance, so that driving into the midst of the enemy, they killed most of them." That's the reason that Deborah, when she sang the song of victory said, "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

Conclusion

Now, here's the point of the message—listen to me: "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Now, folks, that fight was fixed. It was fixed. What God is saying through His prophetess Deborah is this: that the entire universe is against the man who is against God—the entire universe. The stars in their courses, billions and billions and billions of innumerable stars, all of them against one puny man. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." It's Romans 8:28 in reverse. Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose." What Judges 5:20 teaches is all things work together for bad to the man who's against God. Even the good things become bad things, when you're against God. Sin can't win. Faith can't fail. Friend, we are on the winning side, and anybody—anybody—who is against God is fighting the stars. You're going to have a collision with the stars because you are against God. God has programmed everything to be against you. It may not always be visible, but, friend, it is there. An unknown poet wrote something like this: "On the far reef the breakers recoil in shattered foam; yet still the sea behind them urges its forces home. Its chant of triumph surges through all the thunderous din. The wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win. O mighty sea, thy message in changing spray is cast, within God's plans of progress it matters not at last how wide the shores of evil, how strong the reefs of sin. The wave may be defeated, but the tide is sure to win." And the God who programmed the planets and put them in orbit, and the stars to cause those tides, is the God who is over history. I'm telling you, folks, we're on the winning side. If you are against God, you're going to have a collision with the stars. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

Napoleon started out against Russia. Napoleon, military geniuses tell me, was the greatest of all military geniuses. He had 500,000 hand-picked soldiers. He was marching to take Moscow, and to have the world. A snowflake fell on his cheek, and he brushed it aside. And then, a handful of snowflakes. He paid no attention, and laughed

them off. And then, avalanches of snowflakes fell. And then, tons of snowflakes fell. And Napoleon's hand picked soldiers, 500,000 of them upon their horses, floundered in the snows of Russia. Many of them lay frozen on the plains of Russia. Napoleon was ignominiously defeated, but Napoleon before that battle had boasted. Here's what he said, "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions." Can you see his arrogance? "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions." That's what Sisera thought. God is on the side of the heaviest battalions. And, you know, Napoleon was right. But he forgot that God stations His battalions in the skies, and God from heaven shut the mouth of the little Corsican. And God shut the mouth of Sisera, and the stars in their courses fought against him. Now, friend, I'm telling you, you're going to have a collision with the stars, if you go against God. I don't care what things seem to be good; they're going to work out for bad. All things work together for bad to those who hate God. All things work together for good to those who love God.

What's the lesson here? Actually, I want to tell the folks upstairs there's a fourth point. Don't put it up because you folks didn't listen long enough, fast enough. You want to hear the fourth point you come? Come at 11:00. Folks at 11:00 are blessed. A lot of times I'll take a sermon and run it in the shop, and fix it up, and bring it back out at 11:00. I'll tell you what the point was: the wickedness that God condemned. God says in Judges chapter 5, "curse ye Meroz, because he came not to the aid of his brothers." No man has a right to be at peace when his brothers are at war. Come at 11:00, and I'm going to squeeze that in. Friend, now, listen to me. What can we learn out of this story? Number one: thank God for the ministry of women, amen? Number two: thank God for men of faith. Number three: sin can't win, and faith can't fail. Number four: you need the one who hung the stars there, and His name is Jesus. He's the one who put them in order, and by Him all things consist.

Would you bow your heads in prayer.

Are you saved? I mean, do you know, if you died right now, you would go to heaven? Has that burden of sin been lifted? Does Jesus Christ, is He to you a bright, living reality? Is the desire of your heart to love Him and serve Him? Is the Word of God rich to you? If these things are not true, you probably are horribly backslidden or need to be saved, one or the other. And, if I were you, I wouldn't just say, "Well, maybe I'm backslidden." I'd get certainly saved—for certain. I'd just make sure that I'm saved. And so, if you're not sure, let me just tell you very quickly and clearly that we're sinners by birth, by choice, by practice, and our sin deserves judgment. But God, in mercy, came to earth as a man, took our sins upon Himself, became our substitute on that cross, and shed His blood, that we might be saved. And what He did for us does us no good unless we receive it by faith. And the Bible says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Would you like to trust Him right now?

May I lead you in a prayer? Pray this way: Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Now, friend, you don't have to have a strange feeling. It's not a matter of emotion. Emotion may be there, but you're not saved by emotion. I've often said that emotion is the shallowest part of your nature. God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part. It's the faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ that saves. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Would you just trust Him now? Would you say, "Lord, I am trusting You. I receive you as my Lord and Savior. Begin now to change my life, because I'm weak and You're strong. I give my life to You, and I receive You into my heart as my Lord and Savior. Thank You for doing it, Jesus. And, Lord, to show I mean business, I'll make it public. I'll not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your wonderful name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here—every head right here. Precious friend, we're going to sing what we call now an invitational hymn. And the ministers of our church are going to be here at the head of these aisles to welcome those of you who'll be coming forward. And, if you prayed that prayer—you may already been a church member somewhere, even here—but if you've not truly had it settled, you just make your way down any of these aisles, and take this man by the hand, and just say something like this: "I'm trusting Jesus." We'll rejoice with you, give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions we can, and seal it in prayer. If you're in the balcony, you needn't come all the way down here. There'll be someone standing under the banner over there that says Redeemer, on that side, or the one that says Messiah, over here, to receive those of you in the balcony. Now, if you've already been saved before this morning, and you didn't need to pray that prayer with me—you've already prayed it and meant it—but if you haven't made it public and followed Jesus in believer's baptism, there is much lacking. And while baptism and church membership is not necessary to salvation, it is necessary to obedience. And obedience is necessary for joy and fruitfulness in the Christian life. And, if you really mean business, you'll want to be baptized. If you're really trusting Jesus, you'll want to follow Him. He said, "Why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" So many of you need to step out, and come, and say, "Look, I know I'm saved, but I want to make an appointment for my baptism." There are others of you who have been saved and baptized, and you know that you're saved, and happy with your baptism, but you need a church home. May I invite you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here." All of us need to be a part of a local, New Testament church, if at all possible. Now, don't look around and see what anyone else is going to do. You do what you know that you ought to do, and you do what you would do if you knew this was your last opportunity to do it. Forget what anyone else is

going to do. Be in a spirit of prayer. Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation. You'll disturb other worshipers. Of course, if it's an emergency, you may leave during the middle of a sermon. But let's be in a spirit of prayer.

Father God, I pray now that many will say yes to Jesus. In His dear name. Amen.

Lets stand together as we sing.

Star Wars

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 18, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Woman God Chose
 - II. The Warrior God Called
 - III. The Warfare God Conducted
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Introduction

And you be finding Hebrews chapter 11. We've been in a series of messages entitled "Champions of Faith." And in Hebrews chapter 11 we have God's Hall of Fame. And the people who are listed in God's Hall of Fame are listed there because of one character quality, and that is faith. And so we're going to study today about a man named Barak. Most of us have never heard of him, and, although that is a famous name in Israel, and the former Prime Minister's name was Ehud Barak, whose name we're going to find in Judges chapter 4 in just a moment, both parts of that name. But be that as it may, Barak was known for his faith. Let's read about him. Look here, if you will, in verse 32. And the writer of Hebrews says this: "And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak—just underscore that; that's the one today—and of Samson, and of Jephthah; and David also, and Samuel, and the prophets, who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Some years ago, right after the implosion of the Soviet system and the Soviet empire—the Soviet Union we call it—I was invited to go to Moscow to preach. And the Cold War had come to a conclusion. The Iron Curtain had come down. And I found myself in Moscow preaching in Red Square on the orthodox Easter on nationwide television, across the nation—a remarkable experience. But even more remarkable than that—or at least parallel in the amount of remarkability—was the fact that we had a briefing with a Soviet, naval captain and a Soviet general. Both of these met with us in the Kosmos Hotel in Moscow. And there were some American military men there, and

these Soviets, former Soviets, and about fifteen in this briefing. And these other men had become Christians. The general had become a Christian, and the naval captain had become a Christian, and were talking with American Christian service people. I had the privilege to be there to listen. And it was a very interesting conversation.

One of the American military men asked this question to the general, the Soviet general: He said, "General, I want to ask you a question. What effect did SDI have on the implosion of Soviet Communism?" SDI, you will remember, is the Strategic Defense Initiative. Ronald Reagan said, "We need a shield against incoming missiles, and we need missiles that will shoot down those missiles." And so that was called SDI, Strategic Defense Initiative, but nicknamed Star Wars. You remember that? Star Wars, because a man named Lucas had produced a film about that time that was very popular and seen in all the theaters, about intergalactic war. And so, SDI was nicknamed Star Wars. This American military man said to this Russian general, "What effect did that have?" He said, "It devastated us. We were not able to stay up. We were already spending an immense amount of our national income on the military, and then, when you came up with SDI, that was it. We were not able to stay up, and everything caved in on itself." And they call that Star Wars. By the way, I'm grateful for Ronald Reagan, and I'm grateful for what he did in that particular. They mocked him, but the Russians didn't mock him. As a matter of fact, they said, "It destroyed us. It caused us to implode." And then, here's what he said. Now, listen to this. He said, "We told you that you did not need SDI because all of our weapons were defensive. We didn't have offensive weapons." And then, he said, "Of course, we were lying." I thought, Good night, how could this man dare say this in Moscow, in the Kosmos Hotel. But he said, "Of course, we were lying."

Now, the devil wants to tell you a lie about another Star Wars, because the title of the message today is this: "Star Wars." And I take the title of my message from Judges chapter 5 and verse 20, which says, "and the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Now, I'll tell you what all that means in just a moment. But that's the text. At least, that's the kickoff: "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Now, let me give you a little background. And, by the way, be turning over to Judges chapter 4. Would you do that? Judges chapter 4, because here we're going to learn the lesson of this man Barak and his story. Let me give you a little background.

Israel had gone through a senseless cycle, and they went through it over and over again. First of all, there would be rebellion. And then, there would be retribution. Then, there would be repentance. And then, there would be restoration. And they'd go around for a while, and then start up all over again. Well, they had been, Israel, under the judgment of God; had been under subjection to the king of Canaan for 20 long years.

The king of Canaan had had his heel on the throat of Israel for 20 years. And the king of Canaan had a general whose name was Sisera. Sisera was a great strategist. And he was a man who was a very successful general. But the important thing about this man was this: he had 900 chariots of iron. And Barak was the Israeli general. He had a contingent of 10,000 men. And they meet in a battle there at the foot of Mount Tabor. And there comes a battle that I'm going to tell you about. Sisera, who should have won the battle, lost the battle. Barak, who was greatly outgunned, won the battle. And over there in Judges chapter 5, verse 20, a woman named Deborah explains it all in a song that she wrote, and she said, "the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." That is, the fight was fixed. It was over before it began, because here was Sisera who had a collision with the stars, this Canaanite general.

Now, there are four things I want you to learn about this today, and we're going to take these from Judges 4 and 5, as we talk about Star Wars, and Barak, a man of faith.

I. The Woman God Chose

First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call the woman that God chose. God chose a woman to kick all of this off. Look, if you will, in Judges 4, verses 4 and 5: "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment."

Now, here was a woman named Deborah. Her name literally means bee, like a honeybee. And she was a judge and a prophetess. She was judging Israel at this time. She was a godly woman, and she had a great impact for God. Now, you may or may not know that in the Bible there were women, women of God, who were named and called prophetesses.

For example, Miriam, Moses' sister, was a prophetess. There's another woman in the Bible named Huldah who was a prophetess. Anna, in the New Testament, was a prophetess. The Bible tells us there was a man named Philip who had four daughters, and they were prophetesses. And, over here in Judges chapter 5, verse 7, Deborah is called, "a mother in Israel." May I tell you, I thank God for women down through history who have been called of God, and mightily used of God, chosen of God, for very special purposes.

Joyce and I were talking the other day about a, a woman named Henrietta Meirs. Henrietta Meirs was a godly woman of yesteryear who had a great impact on Bill Bright. Bill Bright, who, incidentally, was the man who engineered the whole thing in Moscow where I preached, invited me to come and preach. He's been a close friend. I've known Bill Bright for more than 40 years. And Bill Bright invited me to come. He's a mighty man

of God. Now, we think that perhaps Billy Graham has brought more people to Christ than any other man, but I daresay Bill Bright has been used in our generation to touch more people for Christ than any living man. And, by the way, you need to pray for Bill Bright because he is gravely ill at this time—the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ.

But, what got Bill Bright started? There was a woman named Henrietta Meirs who prayed for him, who guided him, who instructed him, who encouraged him in the things of God. And Bill Bright will tell you to this day, “So much of what I know and feel I learned from this woman, Henrietta Meirs.” And, in a very real sense, Henrietta Meirs was a mother in Israel.

I think of the women today whose lives have been challenged and encouraged by a woman named Beverly LaHaye. And I thank God for Beverly LaHaye, who has stemmed the tide, in many ways, against sexual perversion, and abortion, and immorality, and so many things. I am glad for this mother in Israel.

I think of Corrie Ten Boom. Many of you may not know the name, but Corrie Ten Boom, a remarkable woman, who stood up against the Nazis, spent time in a Nazi concentration camp, has impacted the world by her faith. Corrie Ten Boom—I had the privilege of having lunch with her one time. What a grand experience.

Back in 1979, our Southern Baptist Convention had been drifting to the left, away from her roots and her belief in the inerrancy of the Scripture. There were people who came to me and said, “Adrian, we need to elect you as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention.” I said, “Really, I’d rather not do that. I have so much on my plate.” To be president of the Southern Baptist Convention is like having another full-time job superimposed upon your regular job. But they continued to say, “No, you’re the man. You’re the man. You’re the man.” Joyce and I would pray about it, but never felt inclined, until one day Miss Bertha Smith called me. Bertha Smith is one of the Southern Baptists’ premier missionaries to China. She was there in the great Shantung Revival with Dr. Charlie Culpepper, whose name you may or may not know. Miss Bertha, as we called her affectionately, called me, and she said, “Brother Adrian”—that’s what she called me—“Brother Adrian, God wants you to allow your name to be placed in nomination for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention.” Now, I knew the walk that Miss Bertha had with God, and I knew her connectivity to God. And, when she said that, I can tell you, friend, that that brought a conviction to my heart that all of the pleadings of my friends and the nudging of my brothers did not. I thank God for Miss Bertha Smith, I believe, a mother in Israel. I thank God for these women.

We, today, are blessed by the songs of Fanny Crosby. When you sing “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine; O, what a foretaste of glory divine,” you’re being blessed by a woman, Fanny Crosby.

I thank God for my own dear wife, who, I believe, is a mother in Israel. Before I came out to preach today, I kneeled and she laid her hands on me and prayed for me. I thank God for that. That means much to me.

I thank God for the dear women of our church. And I'll tell you gentlemen that Bellevue Baptist Church owes a great, great debt to the women of this church. Let's thank them for what they do.

There was a woman whose name was Deborah, and God called her. You know, the Bible speaks of prophetesses, and up until this day—Acts chapter 2, verses 17 and 18: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.” “Well, Pastor, does that mean that you believe in women preachers?” No! Women pastors? No! A pastor is to be a man. The Bible teaches that very clearly and very plainly. In 1 Timothy chapter 1, verse 12, Paul says, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence”—that is, to be in quietness. The Bible says that a bishop is to be the husband of one wife. I've never met a woman who could be the husband of one wife. The Bible's clear about that. But the Bible does speak of the ministry of women, and women who are gifted and wise and called of God. Deborah was such a woman.

II. The Warrior God Called

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: not only the woman that God chose, but I want you to see the warrior that God called. There needed to be a battle. And God was going to deliver Israel. And so, He needed a man to lead the charge, a warrior, and his name was Barak. Notice, if you will, in Judges 4, verses 8 and 9: “And Barak said unto her—that is, to Deborah—If thou wilt go with me, then I will go; but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding, the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.” Now, Deborah knew the limits of her position. She knew that there was going to be a war. She knew that she was not fitted nor called for the battle. She knew that she needed a man. Now, in this time, the men had failed. And, by the way, may I say that the problem in America today that we call militant feminism and domineering women is primarily a tribute to the failure of men—slacker, shirker, failing men—who fail to take the place that they ought to take.

There are times—there are times—when a woman has to do a man's work, but that

is not God's norm, not God's ultimate plan. If there's a woman on the frontier, and her husband dies, she may have to go out and chop wood. She may have to go out and plow the fields. She may have to take a gun and defend her family from intruders. But that is not God's intended plan, His perfect plan.

When God made Adam, God made Adam to tend the garden and to keep it. That is, he is to be the provider and the protector. He is to keep it. He is to guard it. God made the woman to be the nurturer. God gave her the soft, feminine side. Now, it doesn't mean that they're not equal. It means they are not the same. The devil tries to make men and women the same, and radical feminists are telling us today that women need to be put on the battlefield, in the front lines, in hand-to-hand combat. That's a lie out of hell. Friend, it doesn't take much imagination and much common sense to show you that women are not fitted for that. God did not make women for battles; He made them for having babies, and for nurturing and caring and loving. It doesn't mean that that's all that they can do, but I am saying that God did not make a woman, fit her for battle. Think about a woman prisoner-of-war. Think about what may happen. Think about the atrocities and the indecencies of a woman having to march side by side, use the same latrines, use the same facilities as a man there. That is not God's plan. You ought to know better than that. As a matter of fact, when God spoke of His judgment upon a people, He would say that their soldiers were like women. Let me give you a verse: Jeremiah 51, verse 30: "The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds—H-O-L-D-S—that is, their hiding places—their might hath failed, they became as women." Now, God is not putting women down in that verse. What He is saying is that here are men who are not fit for the battle. They're like women. God never intended for a woman to be in the battlefield. Deborah knew that.

And so, though Deborah was a woman of wisdom, and a woman of leadership, greatly gifted of God, greatly used of God, she got this man Barak to be the general to lead the army of Israel. And the man Barak is listed in the Book of Hebrews chapter 11 as a man of faith. And let's look at his faith. Let's look at the origin of his faith. What was the origin of his faith? The Word of God. Look in Judges 4, verse 6: "And she called, and she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded..." She is speaking for God. She is a prophetess. The origin of his faith was hearing from God. You cannot have faith—no one ever has—who's not heard from God. The Bible says in Romans 10:17—and I've referenced this in almost every one of these messages— "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." You must hear from God to have faith. Faith is hearing God, believing God, and acting on it. That's what faith is. And so, the origin of his faith is the Word of God.

What was the object of his faith? It's in that same passage of Scripture: "...and said unto him, Hath not the Lord God of Israel commanded..." The object of his faith was the Lord God of Israel. Now, sometimes people say, "Well, just believe. Have faith." I say, "Believe what? Have faith in whom?" Believe God. Have faith in God. That's what it's all about. "Jesus answereth and saith unto them, Have faith in God"—Mark 11, verse 22. Just having faith is positive thinking. And positive thinking is not faith in God; it is faith in yourself. And, what is the origin of faith? The Word of God. The object of faith? The God of the Word. And the operation of faith is obeying the Word of God and the God of the Word. And Barak said, "I will go." Faith is not mere mental intellectual assent; it is obedience. Faith is belief with legs on it. Our English word believe comes from an old English word by-live. What we really believe we live by; the rest is just religious talk. Don't tell me your creed without your conduct. So here was a man of faith.

III. The Warfare God Conducted

Now, here we go. There is the woman God chose. There is the warrior God called. Now, I want you to see the warfare God conducted. Now, there are some people who believe that all war is evil and wrong. Well, they had better go back and read the Bible. Judges chapter 4, verses 12 through 16: "And they showed Sisera that Barak, the son of Abinoam, was gone up to Mount Tabor. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even 900 chariots of iron, and all of the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles until the river Kishon, the river of Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the Lord—notice that; underscore this—the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand. Is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and 10,000 men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera—underscore that; the Lord did this, the Lord did this—and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak, so that Sisera lighted off his chariot and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all of the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left."

Now, here's the battle, how it's ensued. Barak, anointed of God, called of God, goes out with 10,000 men of Israel. But he is coming up against 900 chariots of iron. Now, you have to understand this time. This would be like a group of infantrymen going up against a battalion of tanks. How are they going to fight 900 chariots of iron? It looks hopeless. Had you been there that day, you would have said, "There's no hope for Israel. There's no hope for Barak to win this battle. Number one: Sisera is a gifted and a seasoned general. Number two: He has been victorious for 20 straight years. Number three: He has 900 chariots of iron. There's no way." But, of course, as you know the

Bible, the Bible says, “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”

Well, what happened was this: That day, just before the battle was joined, there came a rainstorm—I mean, a big one. Go over to Judges chapter 5, and look, if you will, in verses 4 and 5: “Lord, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled—now, that’s speaking of thunder—and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.” What that is speaking of is the bottom falling out. That is speaking of a stump-floating, frog-strangling rain. “The mountains melted—that’s talking about a mudslide—from before the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Israel.”

There came a storm, a thunderstorm. There was a brook there, Kishon—it’s normally a dry brook, and what we would call in Israel today a wadi—W-A-D-I. But there come flash floods sometimes. This time, there came an enormous flood, so much that there were mudslides, so much that the water began to gush down there right there at the battlefield. And notice, if you will, in Judges chapter 5, verses 20 and 22: “They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon swept them away.” Now, what they’re saying, they said the other day here in Memphis: “Be careful of flash floods!” They can pick up an automobile and sweep it away. What happened there was that the battlefield was turned into a swamp, and rushing torrents of wind, of rain, came down from Mount Tabor. And here is Sisera out there with all of his chariots of iron ready to join the battle, and it rains. He’s not prepared for this. What good are chariots of iron in a swamp? Josephus, who was a historian, wrote about this, and he said, “They joined the battle, and as the ranks closed, a violent storm came on with much rain and hail. The wind drove the rain against the faces of the Canaanites, darkening their outlook so their archeries and their slings were rendered useless. Their heavy-armed soldiers, because of the cold, were unable to use their swords. But since the storm was behind the Israelites, it caused them less harm, and they further took courage from the belief in God’s assistance, so that driving into the midst of the enemy they killed most of them.”

Now, what I said again is, that fight was fixed. That’s the reason Deborah, who after the battle wrote this song that we find in chapter 5, has this wonderful verse in chapter 5, verse 20: “the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.” Now, what does that mean? Here’s the crux of the message. We call the message, “Star Wars.”

Can you imagine how many stars there are in the glory? No, you can’t imagine it. None of us can even begin to imagine how many stars there are. Now, here’s one little puny Canaanite general, and all of those stars were lined up against him. As I say, the fight was fixed. It was impossible for him to win, because he was battling the stars. He had a collision with the stars. What is the message here? The message is very clear,

and the message is very plain, and I want you to listen to it and don't miss it. All the universe is against the man who is against God. That's it. All of the universe is against the man who is against God. What this is, is Romans 8:28 in reverse. You know what Romans 8:28 says: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose." What this verse says is, "All things work together for bad for those who don't love God, who are against His purpose." Friend, if you are not with God, ultimately, you are destined to fail. The God who runs those stars, the God who created the universe and flung those stars out into space, programmed everything against Sisera. There was no way that he could win, because sin can't win, and faith can't fail, and this was a battle of faith, and God gave the victory.

Now, friend, when you love God, I want to tell you, God is on your side, and you're programmed for victory. Now, it may not seem like it. It may not always be there according to your naked eye. But if you wait, you'll learn what an unknown poet wrote, when he said, "On the far reef the breakers recoil in shattered foam. Yet still the sea behind them urges its forces home. Its chant of triumph surges through all the thunderous din. The wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win. O mighty sea, thy message in changing spray is cast, within God's plans of progress it matters not at last, how wide the shores the evil, how strong the reefs of sin. The wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win." And God's purposes will prevail. Have faith in God, He cannot fail; have faith in God, He must prevail. He can't fail. Satan can't win. The stars in their courses are against the man who's against God. The stars line up for the man who loves God. And, if you go against God, you're going to stumble on the stars; you're going to have a collision with the stars.

One of the greatest military men who ever lived was a little Corsican named Napoleon. Military strategists are still studying Napoleon, that little French general full of ego. Napoleon marched against Russia. He had 500,000 handpicked men. What an army! His finest. He would have Moscow, and he would have the world. And, as he marched across the plains of Russia, a snowflake kissed his cheek. He brushed it off and laughed. And then, another snowflake. And a handful came. And then, bushels of snowflakes. And then, avalanches of snowflakes. And his fine horses reared and plunged and floundered in the snow. Progress was impossible. And, before it was over, Napoleon's finest lay frozen on the plains of Russia. Napoleon retreated like a whipped puppy. Napoleon had boasted. I want you to hear this boast. Here's what he boasted before that fight: "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions." And he was right. But he forgot that God puts His battalions in the skies, amen? See, the stars in their courses fought against Napoleon. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. And the stars

in their courses fight against any man who fights against God.

IV. The Wickedness God Cursed

Now, here's the fourth and the final thing I want you to see. Not only the woman that God chose, and the warrior that God called, and the warfare that God conducted, but I want you to see the wickedness that God cursed—the wickedness that God cursed. Look, if you will, in Judges chapter 5 and verse 23: "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." Now, what wickedness is this that God is cursing? Why did God put a curse upon Meroz? Because Meroz tried to be neutral in a time of moral crisis. Now, other tribes were brave. Look in Judges 5, verse 18: "Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardated their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." That is, they laid their necks on the line, but not Meroz. Meroz said, "We'll be neutral. We'll fail to take sides." And by failing to take sides, they took sides with the enemy. That's what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30: "He that is not with me is against me." Dante said, "The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in a period of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality." Edmund Burke said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

Now, there are many of us who love to watch other people fight battles. But, friend, if you don't take a side, if you don't stand up in a time of moral crisis, the curse of God is upon you, and the stars are against you. "Curse ye Meroz." He came not to the aid of his brethren. What is the truth there? No man has a right to be at peace when his brothers are at war—not until the war is over.

There's an interesting verse over there in Numbers 32, verse 23: "But if ye will not do so, ye have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out." What sin was that? Well, when they were going into the land of Israel, the Jews coming out of Egypt, there were two tribes who wanted to stay over there on the east side of the Jordan because the grass was tall and they had cattle. And Joshua knew there was going to be a battle over there in Canaan, and they said, "Can't we just stay here?" He said, "Okay, you can stay here, but there's going to be war over there when we cross Jordan. And when your brothers go to war, you're going to have to cross Jordan, and go over here and help your brothers. Now, if you don't help your brothers, you've sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out." Are you listening to me?

There are many of you who sit in this church and you think that you've done God a wild favor when you come on Sunday morning and listen to Adrian preach. You don't have that mere privilege. You say, "Well, I went to the service." This is not the service. You're getting ready for the service. The service starts when you go out there. And we

are in a battle. And you can't let other people fight your battle for you. And, if you try to do so, you've sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out. And God said to Meroz, "Curse ye, Meroz, curse ye because you came not to the aid of your brothers."

Now, there are all kinds of sins. There are temperamental sins. There are moral sins. There are social sins. But one of the greatest sins mentioned in the Bible is the sin of omission: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." It is the sin of trying to be neutral when there is a battle to be fought. It's the sin of sitting on the sidelines. You see, the sin of omission is the great sin. When Jesus cursed a fig tree, He didn't curse the fig tree because it brought forth poisoned fruit, but because it brought forth no fruit. When a man hid his talent in the ground and God judged him, God didn't judge him because he stole the money, but because he did nothing with it. He failed to be fruitful with that money. When the priest and the Levite passed the man on the road to Jericho, and left him wounded and bleeding and naked, before the good Samaritan came, those people, the priest and the Levite, did not beat that man up. They didn't rob him. All they did was to do nothing. What did Meroz do? Nothing. What do so many Christians do? Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!

Conclusion

Now, friend, listen to me. There's a battle, and it is more real than the battle that took place in that swamp that day. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places" And God will use women, and God will use men of faith. God will bring the stars behind the man who's behind God. But, don't you think it's time you stopped playing church? And, don't you think it's time that you got into the battle? And, don't you think it's time that you said, "Lord, use me."

Now, you say, "Well, pastor, I'm not a warrior, and I can't do much." There's a story told back in the Civil War of some Union soldiers who were riding through a cornfield in the South, and Grandma saw them. It really infuriated her. She went to the fireplace, and got a poker, and ran out there and started to whack one of those soldiers on the shins. Somebody inside said, "Grandma, come back in. You can't do anything." She said, "I can let them know whose side I'm on." Don't you think the devil needs to know whose side we're on? I mean, whatever you can do. Let's just take a poker and whack him on the shins. But don't be neutral.

There's the woman that God chose. Thank God for women. There's the warrior that God called. There's a battle. There is a warfare that God conducted. It was God who lined up behind faith. There was the wickedness that God cursed, people who tried to

remain neutral in a time of moral crisis. Edmund Burke said, “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.” Dante said, “The hottest part of hell is reserved for those who, in moral crisis, tried to maintain a position of neutrality.

Now, the main thing I want you to see is we need to put our faith in the one who put those stars in the heaven, Almighty God, and His Son, the Lord Jesus, who holds this mighty universe in the palm of His hand.

Would you bow your heads in prayer.

Let me ask you a question today: Are you saved? I’m not asking, Do you belong to Bellevue? I’m not asking, Are you moral? I’m not asking, Have you given your money? I’m asking, Are you saved? It was a religious crowd that crucified the Lord Jesus. Are you saved? Do you know Jesus? Is He real to you? Do you have a love for Christ and His Word? Has that burden of sin been lifted? Is there a changed life? Don’t go through the motions and not be saved. The devil had rather send you to hell from the pew than the gutter. Do you know Jesus? Would you like to know Him? May I lead you in prayer, and in this prayer you can receive Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Pray a prayer like this, but pray it from your heart. Forget anyone else is here. This is not a ritual, not a form. You, today, can do business with God. Pray this way: Dear God, I know that You love me and want to save me. I am a sinner. My sin has separated me from You. Lord Jesus, You paid for my sin with Your shed blood on the cross. Thank You for doing it. You said that You would save me, and forgive me, and cleanse me, if I would trust You. I do trust You now. I don’t wait for an emotional feeling. I stand on Your Word. I just trust You. Come into my heart. Take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. I’m weak, but You’re strong. Thank You for saving me. I just claim it by faith. And to show I mean business, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You, Lord Jesus, because You died for me. And, Lord Jesus, when the pastor gives the invitation, I’ll make it public. I’ll not be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Look up here. “Pastor Rogers, why did you say I’ll make it public?” Because that’s God’s plan. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me and my word before this sinful and adulterous generation, then I’ll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels.” But Jesus said, “If you’ll confess me before men, I’ll confess you before my Father.” Precious friend, look up here. Look at me. We’re not playing games. This is eternity we’re talking about. This is reality. This is God Himself. This is your life, your soul, your future. It’s all in Jesus. So, when we stand and sing, if you prayed that prayer, or still need some more help praying that prayer, I’m going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a man of God to welcome you and receive you.

If you're in the balcony, there'll be someone under that banner over there to my right for those of you in the balcony, the one that says Redeemer; or the one to my left up there in the corner that says Messiah to welcome those of you on that side.

Now, if you already have given your heart to Christ, and you're satisfied in your heart that you're saved, but you've never been baptized as a believer in Christ, and not an active member of a local church, you need to come and say, "Look, I've settled the matter of my salvation, but I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I need to be baptized and added to the fellowship of God's church." What a joy it would be to baptize you as a believer in Christ. We'll make an appointment for your baptism. Many of you need to do that, because, until you do, you're living in disobedience, and your growth and joy will be stultified.

Then there are others of you, you're saved and properly baptized, but now you've moved here. For whatever reason, you worship here. I'm going to invite you to come at the same time these others are coming, and you come and say, "I want to place my membership here," now, if you know that you're saved. Now, moving membership is not a substitute for being saved. I'm talking to those of you who have the assurance of your salvation. You need a church home—and everybody does, unless providentially hindered.

So some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." Others are coming, saying, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here."

Now, if you have questions, but you know you need God, just come. We have open Bibles. We'll guide you in this decision.

You may just want to come and say, "I need somebody to pray for me. I've got a king-size problem." We have people who will be happy to pray with you, and pray for you.

Now, when we stand and sing in a moment, I'm going to ask that no one leave during the invitation, unless it is a genuine emergency. Your leaving will disturb other worshipers. The time to leave is after the benediction. It'll be just a few minutes.

Let's pray for God's blessing. Father God, O God, bring the lost to Jesus. Help those who prayed today and said yes to Jesus to mean it enough to make it public. Bless those who need a church home, Lord, and give them to us in fellowship, is our prayer. And those who need to be baptized, help them to be obedient. In Your holy name.

Let's stand together. You step out and come.

Star Wars

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 18, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Infallible Source of His Faith
 - II. The Incredible Success of His Faith
 - III. The Invincible Strength of His Faith
- Conclusion

Introduction

Turning please to Hebrews chapter 11, and we begin reading in verse 1. We're continuing our series of messages in Hebrews chapter 11: "God's Hall of Fame." The title of our message today is "Star Wars"—"Star Wars." Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report"* (Hebrews 11:1–2). And then verse 6: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"* (Hebrews 11:6). And now verse 32: *"And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak"* (Hebrews 11:32).

And we come today to the faith of a man named Barak. And in a moment you'll understand why we have called our message "Star Wars." Barak was God's hero of faith, and he led the children of Israel in a victorious battle against their ancient foe, the Canaanites. And the commander-in-chief of the Canaanite army was a man named Sisera. And I want you to turn backward in your Bible now to Judges chapter 5, and look with me at verse 20, and thence you will see the title for our message. Judges chapter 5 and verse 20—remember now that Sisera was the enemy of the people of God. And the Bible says concerning the armies of Barak, God's hero, *"They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera"* (Judges 5:20)—*"the stars in their courses fought against Sisera."*

Now let me give you the background for the passage of Scripture that we're going to study. And incidentally, most of it will be in Judges chapter 4. But let me just tell you that Israel was in a deplorable condition. Sin was pandemic. The people had turned from God and had gone into idol worship, and God had sent judgment, and the armies of the

Canaanites had surrounded the people of Israel. And for 20 years they had been subjugated. They were so afraid that they would not even go out on the highways and the byways. And the Bible tells us that the highways were empty. People were afraid to live in the countryside. They had barred themselves in cities behind closed doors, and the streets were unsafe at night. Does it remind you of anything or anyplace? They were just unsafe, and they cried out to God for deliverance.

Suffice it to say that the background for the story that I'm going to tell you is a time when Israel was in desperate circumstances. We're living in a time of desperate circumstances.

I was interested to note the other day a survival pamphlet. I think it was called an Inflation Survival Letter. Now if you want to know how to survive because of the inflation that's coming, here's what one so-called expert said you were to do. Number one: Money is going to become absolutely worthless, so you're to take all of your money and buy gold. It would be the only secure thing to preserve your wealth. Number two: You're to gather up at least a year's supply of food for you and your family, and then you're to hide it away and store it away, because you'll not be able to get food in the future in order to survive. Number three: You're to buy property in some isolated area off the main roads, and there you're to build a fortress-like retreat in order to store your food and to hide away your family when the calamity comes. Next: You're to buy some arms. You're to buy some guns, some rifles, and other things, to protect your food and protect your family, because worldwide chaos will come, and everything will fall. Crime will be everywhere, and disorder and political disorganization will rule the day, and you're to barricade yourself in. And when others come to get your food, you're to shoot them, according to the pamphlet.

Now I'm not saying this. Understand, I'm not saying this. I'm just trying to tell you the advice that some people are giving in order to survive in these days.

Well, that seems, of course, very radical, but even the conservative *Wall Street Journal* has written a series of articles talking about what life is going to be like by the year 2000, what will life be like here in the United States. And the *Wall Street Journal* writers have predicted by the year 2000 the chief global concern will be food, and that famine will be everywhere, and starvation will stock the earth. Also, they say that if America is still surviving, she will be a fortress, an armed fortress, trying to survive in a world of chaos. But the biggest danger, according to these articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, will not be from invasion from the outside, but will be from terrorism on the inside. And by then they predict that terrorists will have atomic weapons.

"Well," you say, "Brother Rogers, that's awful frightening." And it is kind of frightening, when you think about it. Now whether or not these predictions are true, what is God's plan

for us? And what should be the goal for the child of God? Well, number one: It's not physical survival. Friend, you're not going to be able to survive in utopia. You wouldn't survive if everything were perfectly peaceful. We're all going to die. Amen? It's not physical survival. That's not God's goal for us.

God's goal for us is to have a philosophy of life and a meaning of life and a measure of life that gives us something worth living for, something worth dying for, and something that will last for all eternity. And thank God we have that in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I don't mean to be all that gloomy and all that pessimistic. I, for one, am a glowing optimist when it comes to God. And I'll tell you conditions have never gotten too bad that faith in God can't turn them around. You remember me. You listen to what I'm trying to say this morning.

These were dark days in Israel, as we're going to see when we get into the Scripture. And yet, God raised up some people of faith who dared to believe God, and God reversed that situation. And what God has done before, God can do again. And God gave a man named Barak a great victory, and it was a victory of faith.

So there are three things I want you to learn this morning about Barak and his faith, as we're studying God's Hall of Fame and the great heroes of the faith: number one, I want you to see the infallible source of his faith; number two, I want you to see the incredible success of his faith; and number three, I want you to see the invincible strength of his faith, as we study this message that we call "Star Wars."

I. The Infallible Source of His Faith

Now first of all, we're going to talk about the infallible source of his faith. And I'm reading from Judges chapter 4, verse 1: *"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD, when Ehud was dead. And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he"—that is, Sisera—"had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel. And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel come up to her for judgment. And she sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali and of the children of Zebulun? And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand. And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go:*

but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go. And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh” (Judges 4:1–9).

Now we’re talking, first of all, about Barak and his faith. And we’re talking, first of all, about the infallible source of his faith. I have said it once. I’ve said it twice. I’ve said it thrice. I’ll say it again. I want you to hear it. I want you to learn it. I want you to know it. I want you to remember it. I want it to be etched upon your soul. I want it to echo in your being. Hear it, and hear it well. The source of all faith is the Word of God. What was the infallible source of his faith? Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“She”—Deborah—“sent and called Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedeshnaphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying...”* And then she gave him, being a prophetess, the Word of the Lord.

The Bible tells us in Romans chapter 10, verse 17: *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). Oh, friend, faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not simply believing what you want, and then wishing for it, or whatever. Faith is getting a word from God. Faith *is* hearing God’s Word *and then* acting *upon it*. Let me tell you how Barak’s faith came into being. First of all, he heard the Word of God. Secondly, he believed the Word of God. But it still was not faith. Hearing the Word of God is not faith. Believing the Word of God is not faith. Thirdly, he acted upon the Word of God, and that was faith. He heard the Word of God. He believed the Word of God. He acted upon the Word of God.

The Word of God is translated into faith when we take it, believe it, and act upon it. Faith *is* belief *with* legs *on it*. When we act upon it, then the Word of God is translated into faith in our lives. And this man Barak had a faith that was rooted in the Word of God. And it began with the faith of a woman named Deborah. Deborah had faith in her heart. She knew how to get in contact with God. And thank God, she’d heard the Word of God and was able to pass it on to a man named Barak. She knew that God wanted to give the victory to His people. And she had the faith, but she couldn’t lead an army. She needed the man to lead the army. She had the faith; Barak had the feet. And so she got with Barak and she said, “Here’s what God wants to do.” And she gave to him the message of God.

And now his faith at first was weak. I mean, he said, “Well, I’ll go,” but he said, “You’d better go with me. And if you don’t go, I’m not going.” Now he had faith, but it was just such a little faith. But you know, God blessed it anyway. I want you to learn something else. Even though this man had a weak faith, a fearful faith, he’s still listed in the Hall of Faith, and don’t you forget it. *It is not* great faith *in* God *that you need nearly so much as faith in a great God*.

Now he didn't have great faith, but his faith was in a great God. You see, Jesus said, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Be thou removed and be cast into the sea,' and it shall be done" (Matthew 17:20). Now what did Jesus mean by that: faith like a grain of mustard seed? A mustard seed's so small that you can scarcely see it in the palm of your hand, about the size of a fleck of pepper. What did He mean by that? He wasn't putting a premium on little faith. But what He was saying was this: that the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. May I say it again? The least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty. If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Be thou removed and be cast into the sea."

Here was a man named Barak who had a little faith, but he used what faith he had. He didn't just hold that mustard seed in his hand. He planted it. He invested it. It began to grow, because he had a growing faith. He was like that man who said in the New Testament, "*Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief*" (Mark 9:24). And his faith continued to grow and to grow.

And ladies and gentlemen, today your faith may be weak, but it can grow. And two of the things that can help your faith to grow are the same things that helped this man. First of all, he heard the Word of God. Secondly, he was associating with the people of God. You see, faith is as much caught as it is taught. And it was the faith of Deborah that encouraged the faith of Barak. Do you want your faith to grow? Get with God's people and get in God's Word. Now that's simple, isn't it? Get with God's people and get in God's Word. Listen. The Bible says when we come to church, we here in church are to exhort one another. Did you know that you can come and sit through a service like this and hear God praised and hear God's Word preached, and you can go out with a heart full of faith. Faith will grow. We encourage one another. We exhort one another.

You see, you run with people of faith, and before long, you'll have it, because faith is contagious. You run with people who are unbelievers, and before long, you'll be acting like them. You show me the crowd you run with, and I'll tell you the kind of a person you are, or the kind of a person you will soon become. Ladies and gentlemen, we need to feed our faith and starve our doubts. And just simply feed your faith. Get with the people of God. Get with the Word of God. Get in the right context. That's what Barak did. And he had a weak faith, but it grew. And God used it.

But when we get to the bottom line, I want you to hear it, and hear it, and never forget it: that the infallible source of his faith was the Word of God. "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" You'd better love this book. You'd better know this book. You'd better saturate your soul with this book. You'd better understand this book if you want

faith. No Word of God, no faith. Faith is hearing the Word of God, believing the Word of God, and acting on the Word of God.

II. The Incredible Success of His Faith

So number one: the infallible source of his faith. Number two: I want you to notice the incredible success of his faith. One of the greatest military victories that was ever won was won by this man named Barak as he fought the good fight of faith. I want you to read here in Judges chapter 4, verse 10, now: *“And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and he went up with ten thousand men at his feet”*—you say, “That was a pretty good army.” Well, it was compared to Gideon’s army of 300, but it wasn’t a big army compared to the army of Sisera—*“and Deborah went with him”* (Judges 4:10). Now verse 13: *“And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron...”*—now in this day, this was an unthinkable number of chariots, this would be like having 900 Mig 14’s—*“And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles unto the river of Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles: and all of the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left”* (Judges 4:13–16). And the next verse says except for Sisera, who himself is running on foot. What a battle this was!

Now here’s what happened—here’s what happened. Barak came out with his army of 10,000 men. And Sisera came out with his mighty army, and he had 900 chariots of iron. And I’m sure ole Sisera is thinking, “There’s no way I can lose this battle. After all, I’ve got all these chariots, and I’ve got all these horses. Number two: I’ve got a superior army. Number three: I’ve got a track record. I’ve got 20 years of successful campaigns behind me. And I don’t have to worry about this upstart named Barak.” But it’s too bad he didn’t know this verse in the Bible. It is too bad he didn’t know Psalm 20, verse 20. And I want you to jot it in the margin. And here’s what Psalm 20, verse 7, says: *“Some trust in chariots, and some trust in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”* Isn’t that a great verse? That’s a verse for America today. *“Some trust in chariots, and some trust in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God”* (Psalm 20:7).

I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, the hope America is not in her atomic warfare. The hope of America is not in her arsenal of weapons. The hope of America is not in her

military might and her navies and her battleships and her aircraft carriers and her mighty bombers. Friend, if God doesn't save us, we're gone. I want to tell you about God. Not only is God our only hope; God is our biggest threat. Did you know that? Russia is not our threat. Red China is not our threat. God is our threat. I'm not afraid, not nearly so afraid of what China might do to us as I am about what God might do us if we don't get right. And you think about it. God not only is our only hope; God is our biggest threat. "Some trust in horses, some trust in chariots; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

Let me tell you something, friend. We're not fighting flesh and blood. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Humanism is an idea. Communism is an idea. Atheism is an idea. Materialism is an idea. Liberalism is an idea. And you cannot kill an idea with a bullet. The only thing that can bring down an idea is a better idea. And friend, that is the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. "Some trust in horses, some trust in chariots; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God."

And so here was Sisera, who comes to the battle. And I'm quite confident that he was quite confident on that day. But do you know what happened? When they were joined in battle, it began to rain. And you talk about a rainstorm. My goodness, folks, it rained that day. I want you to look at some verses of Scripture here that describe the rain on that day. Look, if you will, please, in chapter 5 and verse 4. Deborah is singing about the victory after it has already been given, and I want you to notice what Deborah says happened on that day: "*LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water*" (Judges 5:4).

Now friend, have you ever heard the expression, "The bottom fell out"? That's what he's talking about: "*The heavens dropped.*" I mean, the bottom fell out. As they say down south, they had a bodacious rainstorm. They had a frog-strangler and a stump-loader. It just rained. I mean, the bottom fell out. "*The heavens dropped.*"

And then I want you to notice also in verse 21 of this fifth chapter: "*The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou—God—'hast trodden down strength'*" (Judges 5:21). And so here comes ole Sisera, and his 900 chariots of iron that he was counting on so much. And God let it began to rain, and the battlefield became a swamp, and those horses reared and floundered, and the chariots bogged down in the mud.

And one secular historian whose name was Josephus described the battle this way, and I found a description of the battle in secular history, and I want to read it to you. This is what Josephus said: "They joined battle. And as the ranks closed, a violent storm came on, and much rain and hail, and the wind drove the rain against the faces of the Canaanites, darkening their outlook so that their archeries and their slings were rendered useless. And

their heavy-armed soldiers because of the cold were unable to use their swords. But since the storm was behind the Israelites, it caused them less harm, and they further took courage from their belief in God’s assistance, so that driving into the midst of the army they killed many of them.” And God gave a marvelous victory there because of a rainstorm that day. Oh, I’m talking about the incredible success of his faith.

And what happened to Sisera? Well, verse 17 and following of chapter 4 tells us that Sisera started running. And he ran for his life, this mighty Canaanite general. And he came to a tent, and there was a woman standing there in the doorway of the tent. Her name was Jael, and she said, “Oh, come in.” And she gave him some warm milk to drink. He was so tired that he lay down to go to sleep. And she covered him with a mantle, or with her rug, there in the floor of the tent. And he lay down thinking he was safe. And this woman named Jael went and got a tent peg about so long, and she got a big mallet, a big hammer. And while he was asleep, she walked quietly over to him, put the tent peg there on his temple, took that mighty hammer, rose up with all of her feminine strength, and pounded upon that nail. And it pierced his temple and pinned him to the ground. And squirming there on the ground, he died. Jael—it rhymes with *nail*. And she pinned him to the ground. And here’s the way this mighty general died: at the hand of a woman in her tent.

III. The Invincible Strength of His Faith

Now we’re thinking about the incredible success of the faith of this man named Barak. But the third and final thing I want you to see: Not only the infallible source of his faith, not only the incredible success of his faith, but I want you to notice the invincible strength of his faith. And we come back to our major text—Judges 5, verse 20: *“They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”*

Now friend, I want to tell you that battle was already lost for Sisera before he ever started fighting. It was already won for Barak before he ever started. Do you remember what Deborah told Barak? She said, “Now go on to the battle. The Lord has gone down before you. The victory is already yours.” What does this verse mean when it says, *“the stars in their courses fought against Sisera”*? What does it mean? I’ll tell you what it means. You listen to me and listen well. It means, ladies and gentlemen, that the whole universe is against the man who is against God—the whole universe is against the man who is against God. All things—just write it down—all things fight against the man who fights against God.

Now *“we know that all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). But I want you to see the other side of this: that all things fight against the man who fights against God. Sisera was defeated before he ever started. I want you to write this statement down, because if you don’t

remember anything else I say in this message, I want you to remember this in reference to Judges chapter 5, verse 20, that *“the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”* And here is the statement I want you to remember. I want you to write it down. I pray God you’ll never forget it. You listen to me, and listen well. Here it is: Sin cannot win; faith cannot fail. Sin cannot win; faith cannot fail. *“The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.”* The whole universe was against this man. There was no possible way that he could win.

Do you want me to tell you what wisdom is purely; simply what wisdom is? Wisdom, the highest wisdom, is just to find out what direction God’s going in and to join Him. That’s it. You just find out what direction God’s moving in, and you join Him, because if you don’t, you’re going to have a collision with the stars. If you don’t, you’re going to stumble over the stars. The stars in their courses fight against the man who fights against God.

What happened to the Roman Empire, that proud mistress that ruled over land and sea? What brought the Roman Empire crashing down? I’ll tell you what it was. The armies of Rome were marching in one direction, but the armies of God were marching in another direction. And I’m not talking about military might now. I’m talking about the people of God. And that empire came crashing down. They had a collision with the stars.

What happened to the Egyptians and the Egyptian Empire in the days of Moses? I’ll tell you. The difference between Pharaoh and Moses is this: that Moses lined up with the stars. Moses was in league with the One who scooped out the seeds, flung out the stars, heaped up the mountains. Moses was in league with Almighty God. And Pharaoh was in a collision with the stars. Do you know what Pharaoh should have done when Moses said, “Let my people go”? If Pharaoh had been smart, he’d have seen which way God was moving. He would have brought out his chariots and used his chariots to escort the people of God all the way to the Promised Land. That’s what he should have done: said, “Well, if God’s moving that way, I want to join Him.” That’s the wise thing to do. That’s the smart thing to do.

But today, the bleached bones and the rusting chariot wheels of Pharaoh by the Red Sea are now testimony to the fact that you can’t fight God and win. Sin can’t win. Faith can’t fail. Friend, when you go against God, you stumble against...

I think of that proud Corsican Napoleon—Napoleon, the little war general. Brilliant was Napoleon. Napoleon gathered all of his handpicked soldiers of France. And Napoleon began to march on Moscow. Soon he would have Moscow, and soon he would have the world. But there on the plains of Russia, a snowflake fell and kissed his cheek. He brushed it away. Another snowflake fell, and he brushed that away. Soon hands full fell. Soon arms full fell. Soon avalanches of snow fell. And there were mountains of snow. And ole Napoleon’s horses reared and floundered and sank in mountains of snow. And a half a million French

soldiers lay frozen on the plains of Russia. Do you know what Napoleon had arrogantly said before this battle? Somebody had warned him about finding the will of God, and this is what he said. He said, "God is on the side of the heaviest battalions." Well, he was right, but he failed to understand that God stations His battalions in the skies. And a little snowflake brought brought Napoleon down.

You see, the stars in their courses fight against the man who fights against God. Sin can't win. Faith can't fail. And Barak was a man with a weak faith, but his was a weak faith in a great God. And because of that the whole universe was behind him. I like Psalm chapter 8, verses 3 and 4: "*When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visiteth him?*" (Psalm 8:3-4). When you think of the vastness of this universe, man seems so puny. Man seems so insignificant when you consider man as compared to the stars.

It is said that Theodore Roosevelt used to have a friend that he loved to have coffee with. They would sit around in the library and talk about the vast affairs of the world. And then after they had finished their evening of conversation on a clear night, both he and the friend would go outside and they would turn their attention to the skies; and they would search the heavens, and they would look and look and look until one of them would find just a pinpoint of light by studying the stars. And they would find a little faint mist up there. And the one who would find it first would quote these lines: "That is the spiral galaxy in Andromeda. That speck is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each larger than our sun." And after they had seen that little point of light, they would say one to the other, "Now that we have our perspective, let us go to bed."

Oh, when you consider the vastness of the universe, "*What is man, that thou art mindful of him?*" I'll tell you who he is. He's the one that God lines every one of those stars behind when he trusts in God. Don't you forget it—don't you forget it. And he's the one that God lines every one of those stars against when he's against God. Friend, you can't win in the Star Wars if you're on the wrong side. "*The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.*" No wonder Barak won that day against 900 chariots of iron. Sin can't win. Faith can't fail.

F. B. Meyer was a great man of God. He said on one occasion, "If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves with sackcloth. The sun, moon and stars would reel from their courses. The universe would rock, and a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation the awful message that God can lie."

Conclusion

“Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, as I look around, it seems like sometimes sin is winning. As I look around with my five senses, it seems like, indeed, sometimes faith is failing. How do you explain that?” Well, friend, you just haven’t seen the whole picture yet. A poet wrote this:

On the far reef the breakers
Recoil in shattered foam,
Yet still the sea behind them
Urges its forces home:
Its chant of triumph surges
Through all the thunderous din—
The wave may break in failure,
But the tide is sure to win!
...
O mighty sea! thy message
In clanging spray is cast;
Within God’s plans of progress
It matters not at last
How wide the shores of evil,
How strong the reefs of sin—
The wave may be defeated,
But the tide is sure to win. (Priscilla Leonard)

The same God, who by the planets and the stars has programmed the undefeatable tide, is that same God who lines Himself behind you when you line yourself up with Him. Sin can’t win. Faith can’t fail. The infallible source of faith is the Word of God. The incredible success of faith is the victory that He gives. The invincible strength of faith is that God marshals the whole universe behind the man who believes in Him.

Have faith in God, He cannot fail.
Have faith in God, He must prevail.
Have faith in God, Have faith in God. (B. B. McKinney)

When Faith Seems to Fail

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 25, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32

Outline

Introduction

- I. Mature Faith Believes in the Supernatural Power of God
- II. Mature Faith Bows to the Sovereign Purposes of God
- III. Mature Faith Is Based on the Settled Promises of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen and amen. Thank you, choir. That's glorious.

Take your Bibles, find Hebrews chapter 11, and look up here. We've been talking about faith. We're in a series of Bible sermons entitled "Champions of Faith." You can't live the Christian life apart from faith, for the Bible says clearly, plainly, that we live by faith. The just shall live by faith. Lord Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you." The writer of Hebrews says, "Apart from faith it is impossible to please God." So we need not only to possess faith; we need a faith that possesses us. But what happens sometimes when faith seems to fail? Sometimes we pray. Maybe we're going to have an outdoor event, and we say, "Lord, give us beautiful weather," and the bottom falls out. Has that ever happened to you? I mean, it turns everything into a swamp, and you prayed, and you asked God for it. Sometimes you pray, and you say, "Lord, I want to marry that man. Give him to me as a husband," and he marries your best friend. You say, "Lord!" On a more serious note, sometimes we have a loved one who is sick, and we come to God, and we say, "Oh, God, heal my child. Lord, heal my wife. Heavenly Father, touch with Your healing hand," and they don't get better; they get worse, and it seems like some greedy malady is just eating away at those that we love the best, and we see them wind down to the grave. And we've tried to believe, we've tried to trust, and faith seems to fail. We're ready just to throw in the towel, and say, "What's the use? It's not working." Have you ever been there? Hold on, you may be. Times come sometimes where the answer doesn't come exactly as we think that it ought. Sometimes trials, temptations, tribulations, heartaches, tears, fears—they come, and faith doesn't seem to remove them. Now, actually, that's why this 11th chapter of Hebrews is written, because there were some who were ready to throw in the towel. There were some who

were ready to hang it up. They had been serving the Lord, and there was great persecution. Actually, to get a running start on Hebrews chapter 11, you need to go back to Hebrews chapter 10, verse 36, for the writer there says, “For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.” You need to learn to endure.

Lets look here in Hebrews chapter 11, and look here at some of the amazing victories of faith. Lets look in verse 32. Now, the writer of Hebrews chapter 11, who I personally think was Paul, but I wouldn't go to the mat with you about it. Look in verse 32: “And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; and of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets—now, listen to this—who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again”—now, if it just ended there, we'd say, “Sign me up! That's the kind of life I want.” But there are another two words here that some of us may not like— “and others—and others—listen—were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had a trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and cave of the earth.” Well, something must have been wrong with them. They must not have had faith. Oh, no? Notice verse 39: “And all these, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.” God said, “What do they get on their report card? A plus.” How did they do it? By faith. Did they escape? No, they did not escape; they endured. Some escaped by faith; some endured by faith. All had faith; but sometimes it seems like faith seems to fail. Now, I want to give you three propositions this morning so that you will have a mature faith. Many people have a superficial faith, and a superstitious faith, rather than a strong faith, and a spiritual faith, and a biblical faith. So, if you're about ready to throw in the towel, if you prayed for your child and your child didn't get well, and you're ready to quit coming... And, by the way, we have people—I, always, as a pastor, I see them. I see them in church. They're doing fine until the crisis comes, till the bottom falls out, and they quit. They don't endure. They don't continue. They say, in effect, “It's not working,” and so they quit. They have an immature faith, a superficial faith, sometimes a superstitious faith. All right, you ready for three principles?

I. Mature Faith Believes in the Supernatural Power of God

Number one: Mature faith believes in the supernatural power of God. Now, that means, if God doesn't do it, it is not because He cannot. Look again in verses 32 through 35: "And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; and of David also, and Samuel, and the prophets, who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women receive their dead raised to life again, and others were..."—oops, stop right there. Now, all of these are supernatural, supernatural deliverance. And, friend, we all love those stories. We have learned them from childhood.

Daniel in the lions' den. Don't you love the story of old Daniel? They said, "Daniel, don't pray. We'll throw you in the lions' den." He prayed anyway. They threw him in the lions' den, and God gave the lions lockjaw. And old Daniel pulls up a fluffy lion, and fluffs him up, and uses him for pillow, gets his Old Testament out, and begins to read between the lions. We love those stories.

We love the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They said, "Bow down to the pagan idol, or we'll cast you in the fiery furnace." They said, "We're not going to worship your filthy idol." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace. They wouldn't bow. They wouldn't budge. But they wouldn't burn. And the king looks in the fiery furnace. He said, "I thought we threw three guys in there. There are four in there, and the fourth is like the Son of God." And Jesus walked through the fire with them, and they came out, the Bible says, without the smell of smoke in their clothes. I can't even go to the barbershop without the smell of smoke in my clothes. What a mighty God they served!

David and Goliath—and David slew Goliath. We've heard that story since we were children. Goliath, over nine feet tall. The NBA would love to have him. Everybody else was afraid of Goliath. Not young David. David was just a kid, hadn't even begun to shave yet, I don't believe. The Bible said he was fair and of a ruddy countenance. Everybody else thought that Goliath was too big to hit; David thought he was too big to miss. Everybody else was thinking, look how much bigger Goliath is than we are. David was thinking, look how much smaller Goliath is than God is. And God gave David the victory over this giant. We love those stories.

We love the story in the New Testament of Simon Peter. Been cast into prison by wicked Herod. An angel comes in and leads him out of prison, and the angel says, "Wake up, Simon; get dressed." That is, we're not sneaking out; we're going out in

class. The doors open, and he walks out of that prison, great jailbreak. As a matter of fact, as you read the Bible, Simon Peter had more difficulty getting into a prayer meeting afterward than he had getting out of jail. We love those stories. I love those stories. And I'm going to tell you something. If you have walked with Jesus for a long time, everyone of you have a story like that where God miraculously, supernaturally, inexplicably worked in your heart, and in your life, and no way to explain apart from God, and you say, "Praise God"—the supernatural power of God. Now, I'm telling you, mature faith believes in the supernatural power of God. And don't ever say there's something God cannot do. God can do anything, anything, anything but fail. God cannot fail. Now, that's a mature faith. So, if you think I'm trying to explain away the miraculous in this message, you missed the whole thing. The writer of Hebrews gives all of these illustrations. Mature faith believes in the supernatural power of God. Got it? Say got it.

II. Mature Faith Bows to the Sovereign Purposes of God

Okay now, number two: Mature faith bows to the sovereign purposes of God. Now, there is God's supernatural power, but there is also God's sovereign purpose. Sometimes God's ways are mysterious, but that doesn't mean they're weak. Notice again, beginning in verse 35: "Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had a trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise." Now, we love the exciting victories, but sometimes they don't seem to come.

The Bible says, "And some were stoned." Zechariah the prophet was stoned to death. Stephen was stoned. I have a son named Stephen. Oh, you say, "He must not have been right with God." No, he was filled with the Holy Ghost. Simon Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost. He got 3,000 souls. Stephen was filled with the Holy Ghost, and got, perhaps, 3000 stones. Both of them filled with the Holy Ghost. Verse 37 says that some were sawn in two—"sawn asunder." Most likely that refers to Isaiah. Isaiah was put in a hollow tree, according to tradition, by the king. And King Hezekiah had the prophet that he hated put in a hollow tree, and the hollow tree was then sawn down. He thought that would be a way to mock God's prophet. Can you imagine being cut in two with a crosscut saw? And of others it says, "they wandered about in skins," and so forth. You see, the ancients used to make delight and fun out of torturing godly people. The

early Christians were sometimes dressed in animal skins and then turned loose in the woods so the dogs would bay after them in the hunt. Sometimes they were fed to the lions. Go to Rome sometimes and go to the Coliseum. Go to the Circus Maximus where bloodthirsty crowds would sit up there and say, “Bring on the Christians! Bring on the Christians! And they would seal their fate with their lives.

I read the Book of Martyrs. I’ve read where Christians would be sewn up in bags with poisonous serpents. They would be tied to the beaches at low tide so, when the tide would come in, they would drown slowly. Warren Wiersby said, “You’d better not try to get your theology from circumstances. If you do, you’ll come to the conclusion that God doesn’t love you.” If you get your theology—listen—if you get your theology from circumstances, you will come to the conclusion that God doesn’t love you. Let me give you an example of that.

In John chapter 11 and verse 5, the Bible says clearly and plainly that, “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.” Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. That’s John 11, verse 5. No ifs, ands, and buts about it. Jesus loved them. Now, Lazarus gets sick, and then he dies. In John chapter 11 and verses 14 and 15—listen to this now: “And Jesus said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead, and I’m glad.” Did I hear right? In verse 5, He loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. Verses 14 and 15: “Lazarus is dead, and I’m glad.” Now, friend, if you tried to reconcile those without knowing the whole story, you’d say, “Hey, there’s something very confusing here.” You see, God had a greater plan for Lazarus, didn’t He? Yeah.

You see, God has not promised that we would not know difficulty. As a matter of fact, what He has promised is we will know ultimate victory. That’s the reason that one of my favorite books in the Bible, if not my favorite, is Romans, and one of my favorite chapters in Romans is chapter 8, and some of my favorite verses in Romans chapter 8 are verses 35 through 37 that ask a question, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” He doesn’t say you’re not going to have these things. Don’t get the idea that somehow these things happen to those who don’t love the Lord. No, these are things that happen to the victorious. You see, friend, He has promised never to leave us, never to forsake us, but He has not promised that we will never have difficulty.

Now, if difficulty comes, you may be ready to quit. That happened to John the Baptist. You know, John the Baptist was a great man. I suppose the greatest compliment ever played to a human being was paid by the Lord Jesus of John the Baptist. You know what Jesus said of John the Baptist? “Not a greater born of woman.”

Pretty good compliment, right? “Not a greater born of woman.” Yet John the Baptist had a spell of doubt. John the Baptist was perhaps ready to hang it up, ready to throw in the towel, ready to quit. Why is this? Well, John the Baptist had been out there by the River Jordan preaching. He had a rock for a pulpit, a babbling brook for a choir, and, as Dr. Lee used to say, he ate honey, but he didn’t preach it. He preached repent. Called some of them a bunch of rattlesnakes. He said, “Come to God,” and he’s pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. He’s an outdoorsman. He was a rugged prophet, a man of God. But then he’s taken and put in prison. Can you imagine John the Baptist now in prison, some dungeon, some damp, smelly dungeon? Soon he’s going to have his head taken off. Now, he’s a man of God. He had been preaching a victorious Christ, a Christ whose winnowing fan was in his hand blowing away the chaff and burning it, baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire, a Messiah; and now he’s in prison. And he’s wondering, if He can heal the sick and raise the dead, and I’ve been true to Him, why can’t He get me out of prison? And he sent some people. You can hardly believe this is John the Baptist. He sent some messengers to Jesus, and said, “Would you go ask Him if He’s really the Messiah?” Oh, John. “Would you go ask Him if He’s really the Messiah, or should we look for somebody else?” Now, remember this is not an ordinary man. This is not a 6 or a 7, friend; this is a 10. This is the one that Jesus said, “not a greater among men than John the Baptist.” Let me tell you something right now. Never mistake the moment for the man, okay? This wasn’t the whole John the Baptist. But he had a sinking spell. He had a doubt. Now, I want you to listen to what Jesus says to him. Matthew 11, verses 4 through 6: “Jesus answered and said unto them—these people who came with John’s question—Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them—and now notice this—and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” “Now, John, let me tell you something, son. I can open blind eyes. I can unstop deaf ears. I can cleanse lepers. I can raise the dead. And, John, if I have not taken you out of prison, it’s not because I can’t. Now, John, don’t get offended at me.”

And, friend, I want to tell you something. If you prayed and asked God to do a miracle for you, and He’s not done it, it’s not because He can’t, amen? It’s not because He can’t. It’s not because He’s limited. And it’s not because He does not love. And don’t you pout at God. Don’t get offended. A wise man once said, “Faith is not receiving from God so much what we want as it is accepting from God what He gives, or what He allows.” That is faith. Therefore, you need to have an “if not” clause in your faith.

We mentioned a while back Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And the king says, “Look, if you don’t bow down to this image, you’re going to be cast into the fiery furnace.

Now, give me your answer.” Here’s the answer—Daniel chapter 3, beginning in verse 16 and going through verse 18: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” That is, we don’t have to study about it. “If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” But now notice this, verse 18: “But if not...”—now, if those words are not underscored in your Bible, they really ought to be—“But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve they gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Now, they said, “Our God is able, and we believe He will. But if He doesn’t, it’s not because He’s not able, and we’re not going to bow before your filthy image.” Notice they had a settled faith. They didn’t say, “Well, lets huddle about it.” Their mind was already made up. They had a sure faith—“Our God is able.” But they also had a steadfast faith that, “Even if He doesn’t, even if we’re turned to bacon in that furnace, we’re not going to worship your idol. Our God is able, but we know that, if He doesn’t, we’re still not going to worship your idol.”

Are you ready to quit, just because God doesn’t do the thing that you ask Him to do? You’d better have an “if not” clause in your faith. It doesn’t mean that your faith is weak. It means that it is stronger than ever. “God, I know You’re able, but if You don’t do it, Lord, I’m going to serve You anyway. I’m not going to make bargains with You.” Sometimes we don’t understand why God does things. What I’m talking about is, a mature faith bows to the sovereign purposes of God. Let me give you another example.

Wicked King Herod took James, put him in prison, and killed him. Everybody thought, boy, that was a good thing to do. So he took the big guy, Simon Peter, put him in prison. Well, he’s going to kill Simon Peter also. And God miraculously delivered Simon Peter. I already told you the story how he walked out of there, and the jail gates just swung open, and all of that. Question: Herod takes James and puts him to death. Herod takes Peter, and he’s delivered from prison. You explain it. Was James wrong, and Peter right? Did God love Peter more than He loved James? No. God has some sovereign purposes in life.

Are you willing to let God be God? Are you? Are you willing to have an “if not” clause in your faith? Are you willing to dwell among the “and others” if necessary? That’s not to diminish the supernatural power of God. You say, “Well, I want faith to escape.” I hope you have it, but if you don’t, do you have faith to endure? I want you to have faith to be healed, but if you don’t, do you have faith not to be healed, and still serve God, and praise God, and say with old Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him”? I will serve You, no matter what. Habakkuk 3, verses 17 and 18: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields

shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

III. Mature Faith Is Based on the Settled Promises of God

Now, here’s the third and final thing I want to say to you this morning. Listen. Mature faith believes in the supernatural power of God. We never diminish the supernatural power of God. Number two: Mature faith bows to the sovereign purposes of God. It lets God be God. Number three: Mature faith is based on the settled promises of God. Every promise of God is yea and amen in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, notice Hebrews 11, verses 39 through 40: “And these all...—those who escaped and those who endured—these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises—that is, they haven’t received it as yet—God having provided something better for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Now, what does that mean, in plain English? God has such a wonderful plan, and God is working on that plan. And it includes not only these Old Testament saints and these early Christians, but it includes all of us. One of these days God’s going to bring it all together, and God is going to fulfill His promises to them and to us. God will keep His promise. God cannot lie. God cannot fail. And these people had faith, and, if they did not have the answer in their hand, they had it in their heart, and they’re basing their faith on the steadfast promises of God. That is, they had an eye to the future.

Sometimes we expect too much of life, and not enough of God. We measure life by eat, drink, and be merry, and then the stock market caves in and craters, and some people jump off buildings, and so forth, because that’s where their faith was. Friend, even the good things of this life are going to ultimately fail you, I don’t care who they are. You fall in love and get married. Sooner or later you may sit in an empty family room looking at pictures on the wall. Life is fickle. If you’re looking for everything in this life, you’re not going to find it. You need to rest on the great eternal promises of God. And, if things go upside down on you, and all of your money is lost, remember that’s not your greatest treasure anyway. If you never, ever become known and famous, it’s what God thinks about you that really counts. If you have a loved one in Jesus who dies, there’s a homecoming in heaven.

God has not forgotten His promises. God gave the land of Israel to Abraham, and every grain of sand belongs there in the Holy Land to Abraham and his descendants. They don’t have it now, but they will. Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Be meek today, and see how much of it you get. I’m not saying, don’t be meek, but it’s yet to come. We pray for our loved ones to be healed, and they die. Was that prayer lost? No, it was heard. Those in heaven are whole; we are sick. They’re

made like the Lord Jesus Christ.

You get in the average prayer meeting—what are we praying for? We're praying for the sick more than we're praying for lost, more interested in keeping the saints out of heaven than the lost out of hell. Jesus is praying, "Father, I pray for those whom thou hast given me, that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." We're the bride. He's the bridegroom. Don't you think the bridegroom wants the bride with Him?

So Paul said, "For me to die is gain." We get things upside down sometimes. Sometimes people look around, and they say, "Well, the church is failing. There's scandal, and there's this, and there's that." Friend, listen to me. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is not dead, and we're not presiding over the funeral of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The promises of God are yea and amen.

Conclusion

I'm going to close this message this morning talking about the supernatural power of God, the sovereign purposes of God, and the steadfast promises of God, by reading to you something that was sent to me in the mail. One of our listeners sent this, one of the most poignant things I've ever read. I want you to listen to it. Now, I want you to excuse me for reading something a little long. It'll take about two minutes to read it. Here's what this man says:

Why I Follow Christ. Are you listening?

I've not seen clearer statistical evidence that fewer Christians die of cancer than non-believers, or that they are immune in greater degree from the diseases that afflict the human race. Some of the kindest, most selfless persons I have known have had more than their share of bad health. The fact that they belong to Christ did not insulate them from disease. Therefore, I will not follow Christ for promised healing. I will not deny or dispute evidence of restoration of health. I will rejoice at every recovery from what seems to be hopeless threatened death. I will not hesitate to pray for recovered health for my loved ones and acquaintances. I will set no limits on what God may do, but I will not follow Christ for promised healing.

I see no sign that Christians escape disaster and accident more often than others. I've helped dear friends empty muddy water out of dresser drawers and new appliances after a disastrous flood. I remember as a child taking clothes to a widow with five children whose house had burned to the ground. A bullet makes no detour around the body of a believer. Therefore, I will not follow Christ for any promised protection from disaster. I will not scoff at amazing survivals nor deny that providence has and

continues to work for the good of God's own. I will continue to pray for protection from wicked men and tragedy, but I will not follow Christ for promised protection from accident or catastrophe.

I do not observe that Christians are especially favored with prosperity. Like James, we've all seen the rich oppressing the poor, and justice is rarely perfect in this world. The psalmist has said that he had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread, and in the deepest needs of this life, that is certainly true. But all of us have known people of integrity who have not prospered. Therefore, I will not follow Christ for promised freedom from physical want or hope of affluence.

I'm not sure the Christians have stronger personalities or fewer neuroses than non-believers. I do know that there is no bitterness like religious bitterness, and no arrogance more insufferable. I have watched Christians suffer emotional and mental disabilities. And though it may seem heretical, I am not sure that I would really enjoy living in the same house with either the apostle Peter or Paul—hmm, I like that. God wills that the mind of Christ be formed in us, and there is no doubt in my mind that the Christian's attitudes and actions will be improved by his Christianity, but I will not follow Christ for any promise of personality enhancement or perfection.

Why then follow Christ? Why become a disciple of Jesus, when life may become more complicated as He so often warned? For one reason alone:—are you listening?—in Jesus, we behold the face of God. He is the truth, the everlasting truth, God in the flesh. I know that in His life, death, and resurrection I am reconciled to God, the giver of life. I believe that nothing can separate us from the love of God. He has all power and goodness, and I trust Him and His promises. To Him I offer my life, damaged or whole, brief or full of years, it matters not. He is the one certain thing in an uncertain world. He is to be worshiped, not so something will happen to me or to the world—something already has happened to me and the world—but because He is God who through Christ has reconciled the world to Himself. He saves me. He is my justification. He is the center that holds. To worship the God of our salvation, to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, that alone is our vocation. We offer our lives to God, not so as to be healthy, wealthy, or wise; not even so to gain the strength to do great things for Him. We offer our lives to Him because He alone has claim upon us. God is not a means to an end.

That was written by John C. Hutchinson, Jr., in 1981. He was Margaret Deaton's father. And that was passed to me. Now, friend, that's one of the greatest things that I've ever read—When faith seems to fail. It may be that you're asking of your faith something that God never really intended for your faith. Real faith—listen to me—real faith is to center your life on Almighty God.

Mature faith—mature faith—believes in the supernatural power of God. Mature faith bows to the sovereign purposes of God. Mature faith is based on the steadfast promises of God. And one of the greatest is this: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. Simple and sweet, a wonderful promise.

Bow your heads in prayer.

If you're not certain that you're saved, this is the time. Would you pray a prayer like this: O God, help me today not to be ashamed of You. Help me today, Lord, to take that step of faith, to openly and publicly acknowledge Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, in a moment, we're going to give an invitation. In a moment, I'm going to ask you to openly and publicly declare that you'll trust Christ. The devil will give you a thousand and one excuses, but he can't give you any reason. The Bible says, "whosoever will may come." And I want you to say, "Now, Lord Jesus, help me not to be ashamed of You, but to openly and publicly trust You today."

Father, I pray that many will come to Christ. Amen.

Now, look up here. Standing at the head of each of these aisles here, and all the way across the front, will be a man of God to welcome those of you who will be coming. If you're in the balcony, someone will be under the banner that says Redeemer over there, or the one that says Messiah over here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn: Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now. And, as we sing that hymn, wherever you are in this building, if you need to do it, I'm going to ask you to step out, and come down one of these aisles, and say to the minister, "I am trusting Jesus." We'll take an open Bible and give you some Scripture to stand on. We'll answer any questions we can answer. We'll guide you in this decision, and seal it in prayer. It'll take just a few moments, and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that Jesus will save you, and, furthermore, He'll keep you, if you'll trust Him. So, as soon as we begin to sing, if you'll give your heart to Jesus, I want you to come. Now, if you have already given your heart to Jesus, and not had believers' baptism, I want you to come and say, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I need to be baptized and added to the fellowship of this church." If you're already done that, and your membership is elsewhere, and you worship here, I want to ask you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here." You need to belong. God's plan is that every Christian be a member of a local New Testament church. Don't look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You be the first one down here. Some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." Others, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism." Others, "I want to place my membership here." Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave unless it is an emergency.

Lets stand together as we sing.

People God Uses

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 27, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32–34

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.”

HEBREWS 11:32

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Uses Common People
- II. God Uses Cleansed People
- III. God Uses Courageous People
- IV. God Uses Cautious People
- V. God Uses Confident People

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Hebrews, chapter 11. We’ve been working our way through this wonderful chapter; we’re calling it “Champions of Faith” and we come now to verse 32. He has given us one champion after another and then, in verse 32, he says, “And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon—and we spoke of him recently—and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; and David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets. Who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

Now, we’re going to take some of these names in here. Today, we’re going to be talking about Gideon. One of the things about Gideon that is particularly impressive to me is that he was an ordinary man, and God used him mightily. The title of the message is, “People that God Uses,” or, “How to Be Used of God.” Would you like God to use you? I mean, would you really? Will it make any difference that you lived?

Linus kept after Lucy in the comic strip Peanuts. Linus kept saying to Lucy, “Tell me a story. Tell me a story. Tell me a story.” Finally, in exasperation, Lucy said, “A man was born. He lived. He died.” She walked away. Linus said, “Kind of makes you wonder,

doesn't it?" Is that going to be true of you? He was born. He lived. He died. You draw your breath, you draw your salary, you exist to live, you live to exist, and that is all?

I heard of a man named Willie who worked for an organization. And Willie died, and somebody came and said, "I'd like to apply to fill Willie's place. I want Willie's vacancy." The boss said, "Willie didn't leave any vacancy." And I'm just wondering if there are a lot of us who will not really leave any vacancy when we go. Will it make any difference that you lived? What is your life really, ultimately, counting for? Who are the kinds of people that God uses?

Now, let me tell you the situation for our passage of Scripture. And, by the way, turn back over, if you would, to Judges chapter 6—Judges chapter 6. And we're going to find here the life of this man Gideon that we're talking about today, who is listed as a champion of the faith—Judges chapter 6. And let me give you the background now.

There were dark days in Israel. The devil was going about as a roaring lion, and the enemies of God were gaining victory upon victory, and the people of God had seemingly thrown in the towel. No longer are they singing, "Onward Christian Soldiers." They've hunkered down. They're singing, "Hold the Fort." That's all they were trying to do. Now, I believe that's our generation today. We have thought, well, perhaps we can't have any miracles today. That's what Gideon said. Where are all the miracles that we used to hear of? We have a generation today that really doesn't expect God to do miracles. "Poor God, He's not what He used to be. He doesn't have the power today that He used to have. No longer can He save multitudes, shake cities, turn the world upside down. God's kind of old, isn't He? God's kind of sick, isn't He? God's hand is feeble, that it cannot move. God's ear is heavy, that He cannot hear. God's eyes are dull, that He cannot see." No, my friend! God is still God, and we need to understand that there's not one shred of Scripture that says we cannot have a mighty revival in this day and age in which we live. Most of us don't believe that. You talk about revival, all people do is give a sympathetic smile, and they're simply waiting for Jesus Christ to get here. I'm here as your pastor to tell you there has never been a greater day, a greater age, to live and to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. And I'm going to tell you something else. God wants you—I said you, sir; you, madam—God wants you to be in the middle of it. God has a mighty plan for you. And we need to stop moaning and groaning and complaining about living in the last days.

Now, in our passage of Scripture, we're going to find something about Gideon. He's kind of hunkered down. Judges 6, verse 11: "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash, the Abiezrite: and his son, Gideon, threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." Now, he's not up on the threshing floor. He's down at the winepress. The threshing floor is up on the hilltop so the wind will blow the chaff away. The winepress is down there to collect

the wine. So he's hiding now from the Midianites. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor"—that's one thing Gideon would not think of himself is being, folks, a mighty man of valor. As a matter of fact, he is frightened to death. And he says—"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us..."—now, there are many of us who feel the same way. Oh, how wonderful it was back in the olden times when God was moving mightily, but now God has turned His back on us. God has forsaken us. And here Gideon is trying to blame it on God. Gideon here is waiting on God. God is waiting on Gideon, as we're going to see—"the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might...—underscore that—in this thy might—now, here is a man frightened to death. God calls him a man of valor and speaks of his might—"and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." God says, "Gideon, I've got a job for you to do, and you're a mighty man." He said, "Lord, do you know who you're talking to? Lord, of all the families in Israel, all the tribes, my tribe is the least, and all of the families in that tribe, my family is the poorest, and all of the kids in that family, I am the runt of the litter. You're saying that God is going to use me?" And God is saying, "Yes, Gideon, I'm going to use you."

Now, I want you to listen to me. Are you listening? Don't you dare insult God by saying God can't use you. Don't you dare do it! Don't you say, "Who am I? How can God use me? I'm just an ordinary person." I want to show you today, friend, that God can use you, and you—yes, you ma'am; you, sir; you, teen—you can be in God's Hall of Champions. Now, let me give you five characteristics of people that God uses.

I. God Uses Common People

Number one: God uses common people—God uses common people. Look again in verse 14: "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Here was a fearful farmer, but God says he is a man of valor. Why is this? God did not see Gideon as he was; God saw him as he could be with God's power upon him.

You see, it's not what you are in and of yourself. We might be common as such. Look on down to verse 34—the Bible says, “But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon.” Do you see that? The Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon. In the Hebrew language, it literally says, “The Spirit of the Lord clothed himself with Gideon.” How would you like for God to wear you like a suit of clothes? And, therefore, it is not necessarily the man; it is God in the man. God will wear you, friend, like a suit of clothes. God uses ordinary people.

Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26. Paul in the New Testament is talking to that group of Christians that was going to be used to turn the world upside down, and he said, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh—that is, not many PhDs—not many mighty—that is, not many people who are strong physically—not many noble—that means people of high birth—are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world—that word foolish is the word we get our word moron from—to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world—that word means physically weak, anemic, sickly—to confound the things which are mighty.” God takes these kinds of people. Folks, that's folks like us. What is God saying? It is not scholarship; it is relationship. It is not ability; it is availability. It is not fame; it is faith. God wants ordinary people to do extraordinary things, so God Himself can get the glory from it.

Years ago, in New Jersey, there was a man who advertised that he was going to play a concert on an extremely valuable violin. People came from all over to hear him play. He tucked that instrument under his chin and began to play. You could hear the laughter of children, as he played. You could hear the songs of the birds in the trees, as he played. You could hear babies cry, as he played. People were amazed at the music that came from that violin. When he had finished the concert, he took that violin and broke it on his knee. They were aghast. Why has he done that? Then he opened his case and brought out the expensive violin. He said, “The violin that I've been playing on is a fiddle I bought for a few dollars.” And then, he said, “It is not so much the violin that makes the music as it is the man who draws the bow.” Now, you may be just a cheap fiddle, but, friend, God is the maestro; God is the one who can make music out of your life and my life. God uses common people. God can use you. Say amen.

II. God Uses Cleansed People

Now, secondly, God uses cleansed people. Look, if you will now, in chapter 6, verse 25: “And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock—that's a young bull—even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal...”—Baal was a filthy fertility god. They sacrificed their children to Baal. They committed fornication and adulterous acts in the name of Baal. It

was the god of sexuality. It's the same god that has taken over America today—"and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it—that is, "There's an altar here. You take a bull, hook a chain to it, and pull that altar down"—and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of the rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down." Now, they worshiped Baal in groves. So he says, "You tear down the altar, take the grove, cut down the trees, build a fire, and offer a blood sacrifice there." Point: If you want God to use you, you've got to take the idols out of your life. If you want God to use you, you have to take the idols out of your life. You say, "Well, Pastor, this is a modern day. We don't have any idols." Who are you kidding? What is an idol? Something made of stick or stone? Not necessarily. Let me tell you what an idol is. An idol is anything you love more, fear more, serve more, value more than God. That's an idol. Anything you fear more, love more, serve more, value more than God—that is an idol. It doesn't matter what it is. You can make an idol of your job. You can make an idol of your own persona. Now, God says you've got to get the idols out of your life. Now, the problem with Gideon and those around him is their lives were stained with sin, they had forsaken the Lord their God, and they were serving idol gods.

Now, you want God to use you? Listen to me. God will not—He will not, He will not, He will not—use you, if there's unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your life. He will not do it. You want to know why God doesn't use me? You ask yourself that question. Is your heart clean? Friend, the Bible says, "Be clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." I don't even like to wash my feet in a dirty vessel. Now, we've got to be clean, if we want God to use us. And God is not going to use us, if, friend, there is any idolatry in our lives. Is Jesus Christ number one in your life? If He's not, you have an idol somewhere.

III. God Uses Courageous People

Number three: God not only uses common people, and God not only uses cleansed people, but God uses courageous people. Look, if you will, in verse 12: "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee—now, watch this—thou mighty man of valor." Valor? We don't use that word much, but it means courage—courage. Now, not only was God going to use Gideon, but God was going to make Gideon a general, and He said, "Gideon, blow the trumpet; gather an army." And he did, and 32,000 people came to help him to deliver Israel from the oppression of the Midianites.

Now, begin in Judges chapter 7, verses 2 and 3: "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.

Now, therefore, go to proclaim in the ears of the people, saying—now, underscore this—Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.”

Here they are—32,000 people. General Gideon says, “Listen to me. I have an announcement. If there’s anybody here who is afraid, we can’t use you. Go home. You’re excused.” Thirty-two thousand. After the stampede, Gideon gets up and brushes himself off. Ten thousand are all that’s left. He’s lost two-thirds of his army. They’ve gone home. Today, if you’re a coward, God cannot use you. God is looking for mighty men of valor. God is not impressed with the size of this congregation. We can be many and not much. God is looking for brave souls. God is looking for courageous people. God is looking for people that cannot be intimidated. Gideon’s army, his number, didn’t impress God. You say, “Well, our church is growing.” So is the cemetery. God doesn’t save by many. He says, if you’re afraid, I can’t use you. Fear fits you for failure, not for fighting. Besides that, fear is infectious. Deuteronomy—put it in your margin—chapter 20, verse 8: “And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart.” God says, if there’s a war, those who are afraid, just get rid of them. Not only will they not make good soldiers, but they’re going to infect others.

Two preachers were talking. The one said, “Do you have any committees in your church?” He said, “I have all kinds of committees.” And they were talking about different kinds of committees. One preacher said, “I bet you don’t have a bucket committee.” He said, “What is that?” He said, “Well, anytime anybody has a good idea, the bucket committee comes and pours cold water on it.” “Oh,” he said, “I’ve got that committee. I can tell you who the chairman is.” There are people who think that it can’t be done, and they’re going around telling everybody else why it cannot be done.

Now, are you a fearful person? Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, there are some things to be afraid of.” I’m not talking about normal fears, like being afraid of a rattlesnake or getting in an airplane when the weather gets rough, and your heart rate goes up. Those are normal fears. That’s a self-protecting instinct that God has put into us. You look both ways when you cross the street. The Bible speaks of the quick and the dead. Here in Memphis, you’re either quick or dead. Those are normal fears. They’re like a thunderstorm that comes and then it’s over. But the Bible speaks of a spirit of fear. Have you ever seen people with a spirit of fear? Second Timothy 1, verse 7: “God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” What is the spirit of fear? It’s like a fog. It just stays and it lingers in the air. It’s not like a thunderstorm and then the sun comes back out. “God hath not given us the spirit of

fear, but of power, and love, and of a sound mind.” If you’re a child of God filled with the Holy Spirit, God has given you the spirit of power. Jesus said, “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” I had rather die than be sentenced to preach without the power and the anointing of the Holy Ghost. God hath given us the spirit of power, and of love. Did you know love removes fear? The question is not, are you brave enough?; the question is, do you love enough? Friend, I tell you what: I’m not, by nature, courageous. Well, maybe I am a little bit, by nature. But, if you come after one of my loved ones, you’re going to face one of the bravest men you’ve ever seen—one of the bravest men you’ve ever seen. If you were to start after my wife or one of my children, friend, you’d be facing a brave man. Do you know why? Because I love them. Do you love the Lord? God has given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. And that word sound mind literally means a mind that cannot be stampeded. It means a mind that sees things as they are—not afraid of phantoms, not afraid of spooks, not stampeded by the sinister minister of fear, who is the devil. Get filled with the Spirit of God and you’re going to have not only an assurance that God can use you, but you’re going to find yourself unusually courageous.

IV. God Uses Cautious People

Now, here’s the fourth kind of person that God uses: God uses cautious people. You say, that’s contradictory. No, it’s not. Look now, if you will, here, chapter 7, verses 4 through 8: “And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many. Bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I shall say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise everyone that boweth down on his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; and let all the other people go every man unto his own place. So the Lord took victuals in their hand, so the people took victuals—that’s food—and their trumpets: and he sent all of the rest of the, of Israel, every man, unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley.”

Now, God says, “All right, Gideon, you’ve sent the fearful home. Now, Gideon, there’s another test. Bring the people down here to the brook of Harod, and tell them to drink water.” It’s hot in that valley. I’ve been in that valley. I’ve been to this very brook. And he said, “All right, men, break ranks and get a drink of water.” Now, the people

began to divide themselves, these ten thousand that were left. There were some men who got down like this, put their mouths in the water, and began to suck up the water. Can you imagine how vulnerable a man would be to the enemy like this with his neck bared? And the Bible says the enemy was right up there. There they are. Down with their mouths in the water, sucking up the water. There were three hundred men, however, who drank like this, putting their hand to their mouth, looking around. These were cautious men. They were cautious men. You say, “I thought we wanted courageous men?” Yes, courageous and cautious. I love the balance of the Bible. The Bible says, “In nothing be terrified by your adversaries,” but the same Bible says, “Be sober, be vigilant; your adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” How careful we need to be. We don’t just saunter forth and say there’s nothing to be afraid of. Friend, we have a wicked, cruel, cunning, malevolent devil, and he’s out there to sabotage your life. So the Bible says, “Watch and pray.” Paul said, “I keep my body under. I buffet it.” You need to watch what you watch, what you see on television. You say, “Well, that doesn’t bother me. I can look at naked women—it doesn’t bother me.” Is that what you believe, sir? One of three things is about you. Either you’re not a man, or you’re Superman, or you’re a liar. I believe the third one is true. No, you can’t take a fire in your bosom and be not burnt. You watch the company you keep. You watch the places that you go. I heard Billy Graham say on one occasion, “I stay frightened.” Paul said, “I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling.” There’s an enemy, and he’s real, and you need to stay on guard, or God can’t use you. Winston Churchill one time said, “We must be ready at our weakest possible moment to meet anything the enemy brings against us at his strongest possible moment.”

Are you on guard? Do you know what sin often is? Sin is an unexpected opportunity, an unprotected life, and an undetected weakness. You put those together and you go down. The Bible says, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” We must rush on.

V. God Uses Confident People

God uses a cautious people. Friend, God also uses a confident people—a confident people. Look, if you will now, in chapter 7, verses 12 through 15: “And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, and the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing

else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand hath the Lord delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, that when Gideon heard of the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshiped, and returned unto the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.”

Now, what had happened is this: now, here is a man. Here’s a man who’s a common man. Here’s a man who is a courageous man. Here’s a man who is a cautious man. But now he needs to be a confident man. He needs to understand that God is with him, so the Lord does something for him. He said, “Gideon, I want you to get a buddy, and I want you to go into the camp of the enemy, and I want you to reconnoiter—kind of like the special ops that were in Iraq. I want you to go down there into the camp. I want you to see what is happening.” And so, here goes Gideon, and he somehow slips past the guard, and he gets right into the middle of the camp of the Midianites. And he comes up to a tent, and he hears two people in a tent talking. And Gideon is eavesdropping. One man said to the other man, “I had a terrible dream last night.” He said, “What was it?” He said, “There was a loaf of barley bread, a barley roll of bread, and it came tumbling down the hill.” And he said, “It hit a tent. And, when it did, it knocked the whole tent down. The whole thing collapsed. Just a roll of barley bread.” The other man said, “You know what that was? You know what you saw? That roll of barley bread—that was Gideon. That was Gideon.” Gideon heard all of this. And the man said, “We’ve lost. Why, that’s just Gideon. We’ve lost.”

Now, think about it. Barley bread. Friend, barley bread was the poorest bread you could get. It wasn’t whole wheat. It wasn’t vitamin-enriched. That was poor man’s bread. And it comes tumbling down and destroys the whole thing. When Gideon heard that, he went back and said, “Fellows, we’ve won. We have won.”

Listen. Let me tell you something. There is a dread in hell over you. You say, “Me? I’m just barley bread.” That’s the point. The devil hopes that you never really understand who you are or what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “I’m just a piece of barley bread.” That’s right. Listen to me. I have seen people too big in their own sight for God to use; I’ve never seen a man small in his own sight that God could not use. God wants to take ordinary people and do extraordinary things through ordinary people. Now, you make certain that your heart is clean and you’re filled with the Spirit.

*A tiger met a lion as they sat beside the pool,
Said the tiger to the lion, “Why are you roaring like a fool?”
“That’s not foolish,” said the lion with a twinkle in his eyes,
They call me the king of all beasts because I advertise.
A rabbit heard them talking, ran home like a streak,
He thought he’d try the lion’s plan, but his roar was just a squeak.*

*A fox came to investigate, had luncheon in the woods,
And so, my friend, when you advertise,
be sure you've got the goods.*

Now, listen—listen. You do have the goods, if your heart is clean. If you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you may be only a piece of barley bread, but God is going to use you. There is a dread in hell that one of these days God's people are going to wake up as to who they are and what we have in the Lord Jesus.

Those people in that tent were already afraid. That's the devil's crowd. They knew Gideon. Gideon was known in hell. Are you known in hell? I want my name to be on the bulletin board in hell. I want it to be in hell's post office. "There he is—Adrian Rogers. He's dangerous. He's just barley bread, but he's dangerous." Friend, you can't have your name posted in heaven's Hall of Champions, unless you have it posted in hell's post office of enemies. Gideon was known in hell.

Conclusion

There was a man who tried to cast some demons out, in the Book of Acts—well, actually seven of them, seven sons of Sceva; Sceva and Sons, going out there, exorcists to cast demons out. And they came against a man who was filled with demons. And the man in whom the demons were turned on these men, stripped their clothes from them, beat them up. They ran like whipped puppies, naked, fleeing. What had happened is this: they said to this demon-possessed man, "We adjure you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, come out of him." That's second-hand religion. They didn't say, "In the name of Jesus, whom I know; in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches." That's second-hand religion. You can't say, "In the name of Jesus, that Adrian preaches." You have to say, "In the name of Jesus, whom I know." Do you know what the demons said? This is really funny. The demons said to these seven, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know—who are you? Who are you?" And they're running, because their name was not known in hell. Your name needs to be known in hell. The demons need to know that you're somebody—an ordinary person, barley bread, common, courageous, cautious, confident that God can use you.

God gave victory that day. Would you like to live in victory, or do you just want it written of you, there was man born, he lived, he died? Folks, what difference is it going to make? What is your life going to count for? Don't you give me that business that you're just an ordinary person! Don't you tell me you're too old, too young, too poor, too uneducated! "You see your calling, brethren, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."

Now, God may not use you the way He uses somebody else. You let God decide that. You don't choose your place of service. But you make yourself available to God, and God will use you. I believe that. Do you believe it?

Lets bow our heads.

People God Uses

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 27, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32–34

“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.”

HEBREWS 11:32

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Conclusion

Introduction

We're in a series entitled "Champions of Faith." And in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews we have these heroes of the faith. Let's begin reading now in verse 32: "And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and Jephthah; and David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets. Who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Now, today, our champion is a man named Gideon. The title of our message is, "People God Uses. Now, look up here, and let me ask you a question. Do you want God to use you? Now, don't answer it lightly, because it may radically change your life; but, do you want God to use you, or are you quite content just to go through life and make absolutely no impact on this world?

In the Peanuts comic strip, Linus was asking Lucy over and over again to tell him a story. And he kept pestering her until finally, in exasperation, she put her hands on her hips, and said, "A man was born. He lived. He died," and walked away. Linus scratched his head and said, "It makes you wonder, doesn't it?" Is that going to be said about you? You were born. You lived. You died. You fought to live while you lived to fight. You drew your breath, drew your salary, but what difference will your life make? How would you

like to be used of God? Now, let's go and find the situation that concerns Gideon. Just take your Bibles, and go back over here to the Book of Judges, all right? Chapter 6 in the Book of Judges, and I'm going to begin reading in chapter 6, verse 11, and give you the background for this passage of Scripture concerning Gideon. And then, I want to talk to you about how to be used of God, the people that God uses. Judges 6, verse 11: "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash, the Abiezrite: and his son, Gideon, threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." To Gideon this may have sounded like sarcasm, because, as we're going to see, at this moment, that is exactly what he was not—a mighty, courageous man of valor. And yet, the angel says, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, O my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?—in other words, why are we in the mess we're in, God, if you're with us—and where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Now, they're in trouble because of their sin, but they're blaming it on God. And Gideon is looking back to when God did miracles in history, but he's saying, "Where is God now? Where is God when we really need Him?" Now, notice verse 14: "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Now, here's the point. If there were ever a man that felt unusable, it was Gideon. God calls him a mighty man of valor. And Gideon must have looked over his shoulder to see who's being spoken to, but there's nobody else there but Gideon. He says, "Are You talking to me? Do you know who You are speaking with?" "Why," he said, "if you were to go through all the tribes of Israel, I suppose the worst tribe would be Manasseh. And, of all the families in that tribe, my family is the poorest. And, of all of the kids in that family, I am the runt of the litter. You can't use me, Lord." The Lord says, "Yes, I'm going to use you. You're the one I'm going to use to deliver my people from the hand of the Midianites."

Now, let me tell you who the Midianites were. They were satanically filled, cruel, wicked people who had held Israel in bondage. And now God is ready to deliver them. Now, God's people had just given up. They had thrown in the towel. They had hunkered down. They wouldn't dare sing, 'Onward Christian Soldiers.' They might sing, "Hold the Fort," because they're just waiting to get through this situation somehow. And God comes and says, "Gideon, I am going to use you."

Now, look up here, and let me tell you something, folks. Look at me. God can use you. God can use you now. God can use you where you are. And God can use you with what you have. Now, don't look at me that way. That is true. As a matter of fact, if you're not being used of God, you're living in rebellion and sin. You're not merely missing a blessing; you're guilty of high treason against heaven's King. God did not save you to have you sit idly around. Listen to me. Don't you dare insult God by saying God cannot use you. I don't care how old you are, or how young you are, how rich or how poor, how educated or how uneducated you may be. God wants to use you, and God will use you, if you make yourself useable. And I'm going to give you today five factors, five principles, five things, that, if you will put these in your life—they'll come right out of the story—if you'll put these in your life, I promise you that God will use you. Now, look up here. We need you. The kingdom needs you. There's never been a greater day or a greater age to preach the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior than this day and in this age. And we have to disabuse ourselves of the fact that it is too late. So many of us are like those in Gideon's day. We're just waiting for Jesus to get here. We're singing, "Hold the Fort." No, there's not one shred of Scripture that says we cannot have a mighty revival in these days. But we will not have it if God's people don't believe it. When you talk about revival in these days, most Christians today just give a sympathetic smile. The word revival is a shopworn word, and many don't think it is really possible. And, on top of that, they don't think that God can use them to be a part of it. Gideon said, "God, if you're with us, where are all of the miracles that You did yesterday?" Now, evidently, God's not what He used to be yesterday. Evidently, God is getting old, sick, tired, worn out. God's hand is palsied, that He cannot save. God's ear is heavy, that He cannot hear. God's eyes are dull, that He cannot see. Poor God. He's not what He used to be. Friend, I want to tell you that God is alive and well, and God is able to do in this day and this age what He's done in any day and in any age, and we ought to believe it. We ought to believe it. We ought to stop making excuses, hunkering down.

Now, what has happened is this: that Gideon is threshing wheat, not on the threshing floor, but down in the winepress. Why? The threshing floor is up high so the wind will blow the chaff away. But Gideon is afraid of the Midianites. He's a coward. He has hunkered down. He's down there secretly threshing wheat. He's a fearful farmer. And God comes to him, and God says, "Gideon, I want to use you." Five things I lay on your heart. Probably I'll only get to four of them and preach the fifth one tonight.

I. God Uses Common People

Number one: God uses common people—God uses common people. Now, look again at the Scripture—verse 14: "And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy

might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent thee? And he said unto him, O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Now, God calls him a mighty man of valor. But he was not a mighty man of valor at that time. He was afraid. Here's the point. God saw him not for what he was, but God saw him for what God could make of him. Now, don't look at yourself and say, "This is what I am." Say, "What could I be by the grace of God?" Look down in verse 34, if you will. The Bible says, "But the Spirit of the Lord came on Gideon." That literally means, in the Hebrew language, that God clothed Himself with Gideon. God put Gideon on like a suit of clothes. Sometimes you see somebody who is doing so much, and you say, "Look what he's doing for God." He's not doing anything for God; God is doing something through him. It is not the man; it is God in the man. Would you like for God to wear you like a suit of clothes? You say, 'Not me. I'm not worthy.' None are worthy. Gideon wasn't worthy. He said, "Who am I? Why, I'm the least in my father's house." And yet, God wanted to use him.

Put this scripture in your margin—1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 26—Paul, speaking in his day to the church at Corinth, he says, "For ye see your calling, brethren, that not many wise men after the flesh—that means not many PhDs—not many mighty—that means men who are physically strong; the word means not many athletic champions—not many noble—that means people of high birth—are called." Now, he doesn't say, "Not any." He just says, "Not many." "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world—that's the word we get our word moron from—the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world—this word means anemic, sickly—and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty." That is, God takes ordinary people for extraordinary jobs. Listen to me. You may not have a PhD. It is not scholarship; it is relationship. You may not have ability. But it is not ability; it is availability. You may not have fame. But it is not fame; it is faith. "According to your faith be it unto you." God wants to take ordinary people and do extraordinary things.

Some years ago in New Jersey, a man advertised, and he was a concert violinist, that he was going to play a concert with an extremely rare and valuable violin. The people came. The place was packed. The man took the violin and began to play. And, as he moved the bow up and down those strings, it was amazing. The room was filled with incredible music. You could hear the laughter of children. You could hear the birds singing in the trees. You could hear babies crying, as he played all of this incredible music. And the people applauded and applauded. He stood up there with the violin and the bow and bowed. Then, he took the violin and broke it on his knee. They gave a

gasp. Why would he do it? Then he just smiled and said, “People, this is not the violin that I advertised. This is just a cheap fiddle I bought for a few dollars.” He said, “I just wanted to show you that it is not primarily the instrument; it’s the man that draws the bow that makes the difference. You may only be a cheap violin, friend, but God is the master musician. And, in His hands—in His hands—there’s the difference. Now, put it down big, plain, and straight: God uses common people. And, if you are a common, ordinary, run-of-the-mill person, God can use you. And, again I say, don’t you dare insult God by saying He cannot.

II. God Uses Cleansed People

Number two: not only does God use common people; God uses cleansed people. Now, Judges 6, verse 25: “And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father’s young bullock, even the second bullock—that’s a young bull—of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father have, that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down.” Very interesting thing—there was idolatry in the land, and it was the worst kind of idolatry. It was the worship of Baal. Do you know who Baal was? Baal was the fertility god. Do you know how they worshiped Baal? By fornication, by adultery, by lasciviousness. Do you know what they did? They would sacrifice their children to Baal, the god of lust. May I tell you that Baal is not dead. That demon god is alive and well in America today. The false god of sex rules America today. But old gods get new names. And so, God says to Gideon, “Look. You get two of the finest oxen. Go out there and take one ox and pull down the altar of Baal. And then, cut down the grove where he is worshiped, and take another ox and offer him. Make an altar and offer the other ox as a blood sacrifice for your sins.” And Gideon did it. What is the point? God uses common people, but God uses cleansed people. May I tell you that God will not—listen—God will not use you, if there’s an idol in your life. You say, “Well now, wait a minute. Idols? That was yesterday. I don’t worship an idol. I don’t bow down before sticks and stones and carved images.” May I tell you what an idol is? Listen carefully. An idol is anything that you love more, serve more, value more, or fear more than God. Is there anything that you love more, that you value more, that you serve more, or that you fear more than Almighty God? It may even be your job. It may be your bank account. It may be some relationship. But God will not take second place. The Bible says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” And it is time that some of us pulled down some idols and built some altars, if you want to be used of God. The Bible says, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.” God will not use a dirty vessel. Many of us just say, “Well, Lord, bless me

anyhow.” He’s not going to do it. And there’s no reason that any of us should not be clean and pure, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. That’s what that sacrificed ox represents, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. God will not use a dirty vessel. I don’t even like to wash my feet in a dirty vessel. Do you think God’s going to use you, if there’s unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your life? That’s not a hard requirement to be clean. You want to be used of God? You will not—you will not—be used of God, if your life is not clean.

III. God Uses Courageous People

Number one: God uses common people. Number two: God uses cleansed people.

Number three: God uses courageous people. Look now, if you will, in verse 12: “And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor.” Now, again, I want to tell you he was not a mighty man of valor at that point. God was going to make one out of him. That’s the whole point of the story.

Go to Judges chapter 7, verses 2 through 3: “And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, saying lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.” May I put a parenthesis here and say that Gideon blew the trumpet and called for an army, and he had 32,000 volunteers to come. What a big army—32,000. But God looks at them, and God says, “The people are too many. If I give you the victory with 32,000, you’ll think that you got the victory without me.” So God is going to whittle the army down. He’s going to get it down to another size, so it’ll be clear that God has given the victory. Now, notice what He says in verse 3: “Now, therefore, go to proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.”

Gideon says, “Everybody listen to me. I have an announcement. We’re about to go into battle. Any of you who are afraid, you may go home.” After the stampede, Gideon dusts himself off. He has lost two-thirds of his army; two-thirds of them go home. Only 10,000 are left. The rest have gone home because they are afraid. God cannot use cowards. God uses courageous people. Now, if you are afraid of what might happen to you, or what it might cost you, then you’re not going to be used of the Lord. Fear is infectious. Notice in Deuteronomy chapter 20 and verse 8: “And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren’s heart faint as well as his heart.” When a person is afraid, he makes others afraid. He becomes the devil’s ambassador of fear. As I looked at some of the things that were accomplished by this

church as I looked up there on the screen, and we saw some of the adventures that God has led us through, friend, I'll tell you that those were things that required courage and faith—courage and faith.

One preacher was talking to another preacher, and he said, "Do you have committees in your church?" He said, "Oh, yes, we have all kinds. He said, "I bet you don't have a Bucket Committee." He said, "What is a Bucket Committee?" "Well," he said, "that's the people who have cold water. Anytime you decide to do something, they come and pour cold water on it." "Oh," he said, "yeah, we have one of those. I can tell you who the chairman is." God deliver us from the bucket committees, those who are afraid, those who say it can't be done. That doesn't mean that we can dream up anything and ask God to rubberstamp it. But when we have something from God, a plan from God, a will from God, a way from God, then we need to believe God, and do it, because the Bible says, "The people who know their God shall do exploits." We serve a mighty God. And God forgive our fearfulness. Second Timothy 1:7 says, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." What does God do? He endues us with power. God wants you to live with power. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." You say, "Well, Pastor, I'm weak." Yes, but He is strong. That's the whole point. God infuses us with power. I had rather be sentenced to death than to be a preacher without the conscious anointing and the power of God upon my life. But power is not merely for the pastor. It's for the layman, for the salesman, for the homemaker, for the high-schooler. How do we get rid of fear? He endues us with power.

Friend, He enriches us with love. "God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love." What does love have to do with getting rid of fear? Well, you may be normally fearful, but if there's someone that you love, or something that you love, and you see that thing being threatened, you'll find how much your courage will grow. If you to attempt to harm my wife, and I'm present, or harm one of my children, you would see a very bold man. I'm not bragging on me. But you're looking at a man who would burn with courage. Why? Because I love them so much. Is that not the way you feel about your loved ones? You see, listen. The question is not, how brave are you; the question is, how much do you love? God has given us not the spirit of fear, but of power. He endues us with power. He enriches us with love and of a sound mind.

He enlightens us with a sound mind. Do you know what that means? A mind that sees things in its proper perspective. The devil would like to haunt you. The devil would like to intimidate you. The devil will insinuate things. But, in the Word of God and the power of God, you see things as they are, and you are not intimidated and stampeded with the spirit of fear by that sinister minister of fear, who is the devil. God has not given us the spirit of fear. And you will never, no, never, no, never be worth much to God if

you have the spirit of fear.

You could teach, but fear paralyzes your mind. When you stand up, your mind sits down. Some of you have good voices and could sing, but the icy fingers of fear grip your throat. Some of you could be soul winners, but you're afraid of what people might think. God uses common people. God uses cleansed people. God uses courageous people.

IV. God Uses Cautious People

Next, friend, let me tell you that God uses cautious people. You say, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor—I thought you said courageous, and now you're saying cautious." There's no contradiction. Notice God said, "You still have too many. I'm going to pare the army down a little bit more." Look, if you will now, in Judges chapter 7, verses 4 through 8: "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many. Bring them down unto the water, and I will try them—that means I will test them—for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I shall say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought them, brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise everyone that boweth down on his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; and let all the other people go every man unto his own place. So the people took victuals—or food—in their hand and their trumpets: and he sent all of the rest of Israel, every man, unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley."

Now, it's very interesting. Here's the host of Midian out there. They are, perhaps, looking at Gideon's army. Gideon says, "All right, guys, lets come down here to the brook Harod. It's time to refresh ourselves to get a drink." And there are legitimate needs. We all have them. We have need of food and rest and refreshment, water and clothes and all of that. God knows that. So Gideon says, "Lets all get a drink." And the people begin to divide themselves. There were some who got down there by the brook's edge, put one hand in the mud here, another hand in the mud, put their mouths down into the water, and began to suck up the water like that. Now, can you imagine how vulnerable to the enemy a man would be like that? With his head down, he can't see a thing, his neck bare, his armor over here somewhere or there, completely, totally vulnerable to the enemy; and the enemy was there. But there were others, 300 of them, that drank water this way. They got down and put it up to their mouth, and lifted the

water to their mouth, as they're watching for the enemy. Three hundred did that. God said, "Tell the rest of them to go home. Only that 300 that remain are the 300 that I want." Why? Because they're cautious. Now, God said, "Let the cowards go home," and God said, "Let the careless go home. I want the courageous, and I want the cautious." Do you think, friend, that there's a contradiction between the two? Of course not! The Bible says, "In nothing be terrified by your adversaries," but the Bible says also, "Watch and pray, for your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour."

Now, don't you be careless about your life. Friend, have no trifling with sin. Never underestimate the devil. He is waiting for you to let up, to slack up, to be careless. You watch your associations. You young people going off to college, don't you compromise. Don't you let down the bar. Don't you fail to hold the standard high. You consciously be cautious. When I was in college, I had a motto on my desk, "He who would not fall down ought not to walk in slippery places." Be careful. I heard Billy Graham say one time, "I stay frightened." It didn't mean he was afraid of the devil, but he knew what the world, the flesh, and the devil could do, if he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul said, "I buffet my body. I keep it under subjection, lest when I preach to others, I myself should become a castaway." The movies you watch—you think you can watch naked women, sir, on some rental video? You call yourself a Christian. You say, "Well, it doesn't affect me." Oh, it doesn't? Maybe you ought to see your doctor. You're either a no man, a Superman, or you're a liar—and I believe the third one is true. You can't put garbage in your mouth like that and it not affect you. I'm telling you we need to be careful; we need to be cautious. Winston Churchill said, concerning the enemy, "We must be ready at our weakest moment to meet anything the enemy brings against us at his strongest moment. God uses cautious people."

V. God Uses Confident People

Now, next, God uses confident people. I love this. This is wonderful. Look, if you will now, in Judges chapter 7. God wanted to build confidence in the heart and mind of his man Gideon. And we'll be finished in a moment, but look at this—Judges 7, verse 12: "And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, and the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the

telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshiped, and returned unto the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.”

Now, what’s all of this about? God says to Gideon, “Gideon, you’re clean, you’re courageous, you’re cautious, but I want to build your confidence. Gideon, I want you to get a buddy, and I want you to be some special ops. I want you to go down there and reconnoiter. I want you to sneak in past the enemy lines, get on the inside, and do a little eavesdropping.” Gideon and his buddy go down there, and they find themselves outside a tent. Two guys are inside the tent, and one of them said, “I had a nightmare.” “What was it?” He said, “It was a strange dream. I saw a loaf of barley bread come tumbling down a hill, barley bread,” and he said, “it hit one of our tents, and the tent just collapsed and just lay down flat on the ground. What do you think my dream meant?” And his friend said, “I’ll tell you what it means. That loaf of barley bread that you saw was a man named Gideon, and we’re done for—we’re done for. I mean, we’ve lost. That’s Gideon.” Now, you think about it. Barley bread—do you know what barley bread was? Friend, that’s the poorest, the coarsest, of bread. That was the poor man’s bread. That’s not whole wheat, vitamin-enriched—barley bread. That’s Gideon. That’s the nobody. But God is using him. It is Gideon’s nothing infused with God’s greatness. And, when Gideon heard it, he knew what happened. He knew that God had given him the victory.

Do you know what we need to do, dear friend? We need to open the Word of God and find out that God has given us the victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to stop praying for victory, and begin to pray from victory. We have the victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. You know the problem is that the devil already knows it. I mean, these people knew it before Gideon knew it.

I want to ask you a question: What does the devil think about you? You say, “Well, I’m not afraid of the devil.” That’s not even the question. Is the devil afraid of you? What does the devil think of you? Does the devil know your name? These people knew his name. They knew Gideon’s name. How they knew that I don’t know. They said, “Why, look—this is Gideon.” Listen. You know what I want of me? I want the devil to know me by first name. I want my name to be posted in hell’s post office. “Watch him. He’s dangerous—he’s dangerous.” Are you dangerous to the devil? I mean, listen. Do you want your name in the Hall of Fame? Well, it’s also got to be in the devil’s post office as dangerous. They said, “This is Gideon. We are afraid of him.” And Gideon, when he heard that he already had the victory, he had confidence.

Now, I don’t want to make you confident when you’ve got no reason for confidence. If you’re a moral worldling living in sin, don’t you sally forth to fight the Midianites.

A tiger met a lion as they sat beside the pool,

*Said the tiger to the lion, "Why are you roaring like a fool?"
"That's not foolish," said the lion, with a twinkle in his eyes,
They call me the king of all beasts because I advertise.
A rabbit heard them talking, ran home like a streak,
He thought he'd try the lion's plan, but his roar was just a squeak.
A fox came to investigate, had luncheon in the woods,
And so, my friend, when you advertise,
be sure you've got the goods.*

Confidence—confidence; but not confidence in yourself. Gideon sees himself as barley bread, but he sees the mighty God who has clothed Himself with Gideon.

Conclusion

God uses common people. God uses courageous people. God uses cleansed people. God uses cautious people. God uses confident people. And God will use you. And, if there were ever a day, an age, a time, when God's people need to rise up like a mighty army, this is the time. And, if you don't let God use you, one of these days you're going to give an account at the judgment.

Now, God may not use you the way He'll use me or somebody else. We don't choose the way He's going to use us. But God will use you. God will use you.

Bow your heads in prayer.

The Good Fight of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 11, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32–34

“Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

HEBREWS 11:34

Outline

Introduction

I. The Principle of Courage

- A. Fear of the Father
- B. Fear of Failure
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II. The Principle of Commitment

III. The Principle of Confidence

IV. The Principle of Compliance

V. The Principle of Confession

Conclusion

Introduction

And so we read here in Hebrews chapter 11, beginning in verse 32: *“And what shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens”* (Hebrews 11:32–34).

Now we want to think today of *“the aliens.”* Now we want to think today on this subject: “The Good Fight of Faith”—“The Good Fight of Faith.” And we’re going to be studying the first one mentioned in this series, Gideon. Notice in verse 32: *“And what shall I more say? For time would fail me for me to tell of Gedeon.”* And this morning, when I tried to tell of Gideon, time failed me also, and I preached overtime. So you pray for me today, that I’ll just be able to stay within the perimeters of time, because there are so many exciting things that we could say about the faith of this man Gideon.

Now you remember that Gideon was one of the judges that ruled over Israel in a

certain period in time in the history of Israel when they were without a king. And the Israelites had sinned, and they had gone off after false gods—one particular god, a fertility god whose name was Baal. And they worshiped Baal with licentiousness and with sexuality and sensuality. And the judgment of God fell upon them. And as a part of the judgment of God, God sent a fearsome, warlike people named the Midianites. And the Midianites were pressing Israel in on every side, and it was a terrible time, a horrible time for Israel. And there was a man who had a heart for God. This man's name was Gideon. He was just a farmer. He was an ordinary man. And he was trying to eke out a little living there when the angel of the Lord appeared to him.

And the Lord said something strange to him. The Lord said to Gideon, this ordinary man, "Hail, thou mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:12). And when the Lord said that to Gideon, I imagine that Gideon looked over his shoulder to see to whom the Lord was speaking, for he was certain that it wasn't him. But the Lord made it clear that Gideon was the man to whom He was speaking, and the Lord said to Gideon, "Gideon! You're the man that I'm going to use to deliver my people from the oppressive heel of the Midianites." And Gideon began then to argue with the Lord, and to tell the Lord that he was not worthy, that he was not able, and all of the rest of it. And the story is that God revealed to him that through His power and through His race and through His strength, that Gideon was able to fight the good fight of faith (Judges 6–7).

Now our world is seething with wars right now. There's a war in Yemen and South Yemen. There's a revolution that has just taken place and is still taking place in Iran. China has invaded Vietnam, and the world is seething. Idi Amin seems to be under pressure there in Africa. And South Africa and Rhodesia are having guerrilla warfare. It seems like all over there's war—"*wars and rumours of war*" (Matthew 24:6; Mark 13:7).

"Well," you say, "thank God, Brother Rogers, it's not on American soil!" Well, I want to tell you there is a war that's being fought now on American soil. It is a spiritual war; the unseen war between darkness and light, between good and evil, between heaven and hell. And the stakes are high, and our enemy is Satan. And Satan is letting loose with all of the artillery of the pit. I believe that Satan is fighting like a cornered animal, because he can see the signs of the times, and "he has great wrath, for he knoweth that he hath but a little while" (Revelation 12:12).

And you're going to be drawn into this battle. Ladies and gentlemen, there's no way that you can escape. If you're a child of God, you're also to be a soldier of the cross; and if a soldier, then a warrior. So you'd better learn to fight. And many of us have enemies, real enemies. These enemies are marshaled against us, and we're called not to a playground, but to a battlefield. And this thing called a church is not a showboat; it's a battleship. And I want you to learn, ladies and gentlemen, that there is a war that's being fought. But we are to fight the good fight of faith!

And so what God told Gideon to do so long ago is mentioned in the New Testament as an illustration to Christians. So I'm not just reading into it when I say there are applications for our lives. Remember the Bible is not just what God did say; it is what God is saying. And remember the little formula that I've given you so many times. If you want to understand a passage of Scripture, you must ask three questions. Number one: What did it mean then? Number two: What does it mean now? Number three: What does it mean to me personally? Have you got that? Friend, that will unlock so much of the Bible to you. What did it mean then? Make sure you understand what it meant. See it in its context, in its historical setting. But then, ask another question: What does it mean now? But then, narrow it in just a little more, and say, "What does it mean to me personally?" Well, I believe it means to me personally today that as Gideon overcame by faith so long ago, I can overcome by faith today.

And so I want to give you the principles now in the life of overcoming; the principles of conquest: "How to Fight the Good Fight of Faith."

I. The Principle of Courage

Principle number one is the principle of courage. Turn to Judges chapter 7 and see what happened so long ago in the life of Gideon. Now remember that God has called and commissioned Gideon. And He says to Gideon, "Gideon, I want you to call an army, conscript an army." So Gideon sent out the call and gathered all of the people, and they came, and he had a pretty good-sized army. There were 32,000 soldiers marshaled there before Gideon. And with that as a background, I begin to read in Judges chapter 7, verse 1: *"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me."* God says, "Israel's not going to get the glory for this battle, and they're not going to say they did it because they had too many soldiers." *"Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying,"*—now underscore this— *"Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand"* (Judges 7:1–3).

Now here's what happened. Gideon said, "Ladies and gentlemen, we're going into battle. And all of you men of war, listen to me. If anybody is afraid, he should go home." And after a herd of thousands of people left him, after just an unbelievable number, 22,000, went past, Gideon got up, shook the dust off of him, and looked around to see how many had left. I mean, when he said, "Those of you who are afraid, go home!" 22,000 left.

Now what was God showing? God was showing that the first principle of conquest to fight the life of faith is this: There must be the principle of courage. God can't use cowards! Are you a coward? Well, being a coward and being afraid will make you fitted for failure, but it will not fit you for fighting. The Bible says we're not to be afraid. "*God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:5–7).

You know, it's a terrible thing when people have a spirit of fear. One of the worst things about fear is that fear is infectious. And there's the ability to make others afraid when you're afraid. I was reading in Deuteronomy chapter 20 and verse 8: "*And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart*" (Deuteronomy 20:8).

Now what God said again in the Book of Deuteronomy, friend, "If you'll be afraid, please go, because what you're going to do is to make others afraid." You remember when Joshua sent those 12 spies out? Ten of them came back with an evil report, and said, "Oh, it's a beautiful land. It's full of milk and honey. And it's everything that you've said. But there were giants there. The sons of Anak were there. And we were in their eyes as grasshoppers" (Numbers 13). They had a grasshopper complex.

I've tried to pastor for a long time now, and I've found out that it's a wonderful thing when you propose a program to God's people, and they say, "By faith we can do it." But it's a terrible thing when there are some people who are not walking close enough to the Lord to hear the voice of God, and they take counsel with their fears, and they say, "It can't be done." And those kinds of people are infectious. They infect other people, and they cause God's people many times from entering into the blessings that they ought to have.

Oh, dear friend, let me tell you there is a principle that I call the scarecrow principle. And it is this: Whenever you see a scarecrow, you know there's some good grain around, or there are some good strawberries around, or there are some good tomatoes around. A farmer puts a scarecrow in the middle of his field to scare the crows off. Now he doesn't put the scarecrow in the pasture. He doesn't put the scarecrow in the highway. He doesn't put the scarecrow in a vacant lot. But he puts it there wherever there's something good around. The devil puts up his scarecrows to scare you off because God has some blessings for you. And some people are just not afraid of the devil's scarecrows. You know, the devil can scare you, but if you're walking in the Spirit, friend, he can't harm you. And you just don't need to let the devil scare you away from a blessing.

A. Fear of the Father

Let me tell you three kinds of fears that keep some of you from serving the Lord as your God. Did you know that some of you are afraid of God Himself? You really are afraid of God. Now I'm not talking about the reverential fear of God. The reverential fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The Bible says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*" (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). But let me tell you something else. There are certain people, because their lives are not right and because they're not walking in faith, they're afraid of God.

Do you remember when Adam hid in the Garden? And God said to Adam, "Where are you?" And he said, "*I heard thy voice...and I was afraid*" (Genesis 3:9-10). The first words that man uttered after his sin were these: "*I was afraid*"—"I was afraid." And the deeper man goes into sin, the more he is in enwrapped in his fears.

Do you remember in that parable where the man of the Lord gave to certain of his servants certain talents? He gave one man five talents, one man two talents, one man one talent. And the man that had five talents took it and invested that five and got five others. The one that had two talents invested that talent and got two others. But one man took his talent, buried it in the ground, and when his master came and asked for an accounting of that talent, he said, "Well, I was afraid, for I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you haven't sowed; and so I hid my talent in the ground." And do you know what the Lord said to him? "Oh, wicked and slothful servant!" (Matthew 25:14-30). There are some of you who are hiding your talents in the ground. And do you know why? Because you're afraid of God. You're afraid of God.

Now it's a strange thing that people would be afraid of God, but they are. They don't think that God loves them enough. Did you know there are some of you who are afraid to come down this aisle and give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ? You're afraid of what God would do to you. You really are. You think that you're safer out there in the devil's camp than you are under God's provision. You think if you confessed your sin to the Lord that somehow He would scold you for it. Friend, it's the unconfessed sin that's going to get you in trouble.

Don't be like ole Bill and Tom were, a couple of drunk brothers out there. And Bill prayed to the Lord. They got in a thunderstorm, and Bill prayed to the Lord. He said, "Lord, save me and my poor drunk brother, Tom." Tom said, "Gosh, don't tell Him we're drunk. Tell Him we're sick!"

Now there are a lot of people who are like that. They don't believe that they can just come to God in love and confess their sins. Let me tell you, friend, God doesn't love you because you're lovely; God just loves you. The Bible says, "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). God loved us. Oh, how God loves you!

You know, I used to read that verse in the Bible that says, “*Perfect love casteth out fear*” (1 John 4:18). And that sounds so beautiful. It sounds so poetic, doesn’t it— “*Perfect love casteth out fear,*” there in 1 John? And I used to think, “You know, that’s so wonderful! If I just had perfect love, I wouldn’t be afraid of anything!” But you know, then it didn’t become much of an encouragement to me, because I’ve never done anything perfectly except sin. I’ve never loved perfectly. Have you? You never have. And so I got to thinking, “Well, how could I have perfect love?” Then one day I read it in a good translation, and here’s what it says: “We have no need to fear someone who loves us perfectly.” Isn’t that beautiful? “We have no need to fear someone who loves us perfectly.” It’s not my perfect love for God that cast out my fear. It’s His perfect love for me. Isn’t that wonderful that God loves you perfectly? In spite of your sin, in spite of your failures, God loves you! Hallelujah! He does! He does! He does! I say, He does! God loves you. Don’t be afraid of God.

Oh, listen. There’s the reverential fear of the Lord, but not the cringing fear of the Lord. And the Lord is good. God is a good God.

B. Fear of Failure

But you know, some have fear of the Father. Others have fear of failure. There are some of you who could sing, but you won’t try. There are some of you who could preach, but you won’t try. There are some of you who could teach, but you won’t try. You stand up, and the icy fingers of fear grip your throat. Your knees turn to water. There’s a yellow streak that goes up and down your spine. And you’re just afraid you’re going to fail.

Some churches fail because they’re afraid they’re going to fail. Some people I know look like an accident going somewhere to happen. Have you ever gotten behind someone driving a car and they approach every light like it’s going to turn red? And sure enough it does. There are people like that. There are people like that. They’re just so afraid they’re going to make a mistake their entire life becomes one beautiful mistake.

C. Fear of the Future

And then there are some who just have fear of the future. They’re just afraid of tomorrow—what’s going to happen. They’re afraid to build a house because they’re afraid, you know, so-and-so. They’re afraid to buy something, afraid to sell something, afraid to do that—what might happen. Friend, the Bible says, “He that considereth the wind will not sow” (Ecclesiastes 11:4). A farmer never would have a crop if he says, “Well, we might have a drought, or we might have a rain, or we might have this, or we might have that.” Fear of the future.

Let me tell you something. *The future has two handles: one called fear and one called faith. And you can take hold by either handle.* Take hold by the handle of faith.

And don't let the fear of the Father or the fear of failure or the fear of the future or any other kind of fear be the devil's scarecrow that's going to keep you from fighting the good fight of faith.

First of all, God says in this battle, "Those of you who are cowards, just go on home!" There's no excuse for being afraid. God doesn't want cowards in His army. Look in Judges chapter 6. We're in Judges chapter 7. Look in Judges chapter 6 for just a moment, and begin reading in verse 7. *"And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD because of the Midianites, that the LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am the LORD your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice"* (Judges 6:7–10). *"I am the LORD your God; fear not."*

Did you know at least 365 times in the Bible, one time for every day in the year, God has said, "Fear not." *There are three* classes *of people in America: those who are* afraid, *those who don't know enough to be afraid, and those who* know *their* Bibles. Oh, friend, listen. "Fear not!" "Fear not!" "Fear not!" "Fear not!" over and over again the Bible tells us. And so principle number one is the principle of courage.

II. The Principle of Commitment

Principle number two is the principle of commitment—the principle of commitment. Now go back to Judges chapter 7 and begin reading with me, please, in verse 4: *"And the LORD said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there:"*—now that word *try* means "I'll test them for you there"—*"and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the LORD said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the LORD said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place"* (Judges 7:4–7).

Now here's the second test. You see what God is doing is separating the men from the boys. He said, "Now it's refreshment time, Gideon. Call them all here to get a drink of water." And so he brings 10,000 people down to a little stream there to get a drink of

water. Incidentally, I've gotten down on my knees and gotten a drink of water out of this same stream. It's a very beautiful spot there in Israel. And so he brought them down there in the valley, and he says, "All right, it's time for everybody to get a drink." Well, there were certain of the people, 9,700 of them, who got down on their knees, put their hands in the mud, put their nose down in the water, just as an animal would, and began to suck up the water. But there were 300 very valiant men and very careful men who kneeled down, perhaps, on one knee with their shoulders and head erect, looking around, watching for the enemy, because the enemy was all up there in the balconies—watching for the enemy. And as they would drink, they would just lap the water with their hand, like this; just reach down and get a little water and drink it.

Now these people I call the committed—the committed. You see, they were men who meant business. The others were so careless that God couldn't use them. They were so careless. They just put their head down, and had the enemy attacked at that moment, well, all of them had their nose in the water; there would have been a real massacre. And so God said, "You tell that 9,700 that they can go home too."

You see, they were interested only in their own pleasure. They were interested not in the battle. They were interested in satiating their thirst. They were interested in getting a drink of water. Now look. Listen. Pay attention. God knows you need a drink of water. He was the One who said, "Come drink." God knows that you have needs in your life. You need clothes. You need food. You need shelter. You need rest. You need recreation. Sure, you do. You need fellowship. You need all these things, and God knows that you have a need of them. But friend, they can't come first—they can't come first. And these men who got down on their hands and knees were putting their sensual, selfish desires first. That's all.

There's nothing wrong with getting a drink. Both groups got a drink. But here were some who were saying, "Yes, I know that I have needs, but also the Lord has called me to be a soldier." And when a man is called to be a soldier, he must "*endure hardness, as a good soldier of [the Lord] Jesus Christ*" (2 Timothy 2:3). Now friend, if you're not committed enough, if you're not committed enough to put Jesus Christ and the battle of faith first, you'll be defeated. God can't use you.

Now I want to say something else while we're on this point. The opposite of faith is not carelessness. You know, you talk to some people about getting their lives in order. "Oh," they say, "well, I don't have to worry about that. I'm trusting God." Oh, are you? Well, friend, if you're trusting God, you're going to keep your life in order. Do you know what Peter said? Simon Peter said, in the New Testament, in 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 8, "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

And what some people call *courage* is just plain foolishness.

Some people pick up snakes and handle snakes and kiss rattlesnakes just to show how much courage they have. They've got rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished. Some people drink poison to show how much courage they have. That's not courage. It's foolishness.

Let me tell you something, friend. You go over here to Vietnam or one of these battlefields and you see some man who gets out there—and all of you men who have been in the Army know there is a certain type, brother, when there's a hill to be taken, he puts a rifle in one hand, a hand grenade in the other hand, a bayonet between his teeth, and he goes screaming at the top of his voice up the hill. Somebody says, "What courage!" That's not courage. He's sick. There's something wrong with him.

Now, I'll tell you, there's another man. Boy, his heart is beating. He's scared to death. His palms are wet with perspiration. But he knows that somebody has to go, and in spite of all of it, he goes. That's courage—that's courage.

Let me tell you something, friend. Faith, on the one hand, is not being afraid; but faith, on the other hand, is not being foolish. You see, God can't use the fearful, and God can't use the foolish. God can't use the cowards, and God can't use the careless. But here on the one hand were those who were afraid, and they went home. On the other hand, there were those who didn't have enough sense to be afraid, and they went home too. And in between were 300 people who were committed. And God said, "I can use them."

Now if you think, ladies and gentlemen, that there's not a devil out there who wants to harm this church, and harm your home, and harm your family, and harm your children, you're wrong. And we'd better learn to be sober. We'd better learn to be vigilant. And we'd better learn to be so committed in Christ that we serve Him in His cause first.

III. The Principle of Confidence

Now let me say, number one—number one—in the fight of faith is courage. Number two in the fight of faith is commitment. Number three in the fight of faith is the principle of confidence—confidence. Continue to read here in Judges chapter 7, and I begin reading now in verse 9: *"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him,"*—that is, unto Gideon—*"Arise, get thee down unto the host;"*—now what it means by the *host* is not the person who's having you for dinner. But it means here that army out there, the army that's against you—*"for I have delivered it"*—the army— *"into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: and thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host."* That is, he just kind of sneaks up there to the

enemy's army and does a little eavesdropping. *"And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand of the sea side for multitude. And when Gideon was come..."*—now remember, Gideon has just got 300 soldiers. How do you like those odds?— *"And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along."* That is, it just fell down on the ground. *"And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian"* (Judges 7:9–15).

Now what happened here was this: that Gideon goes out to reckon or just to find out what's happening. He goes on a little spy mission under the inspiration of the Lord. And he infiltrates the camp and he hears two of the Midianites talking. And one of them says, "Say, boy, I really had a weird dream last night. I want you to see if you know what it means." He said, "I dreamed that a loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the camp and it went right through the armies. And it hit a tent. It went down into that tent, and the whole tent just collapsed and fell flat on the ground. What on earth do you think that means?" And the other fellow said, "I know what it means. That loaf of barley bread was a man named Gideon. And God is going to use him to defeat our army." And when Gideon heard this, he was so excited that he worshiped the Lord, and he went back and told his 300, "Hallelujah! God has given us the victory!"

Now what changed him? Well, you'll have to understand the principle here. Barley bread was the poorest, the coarsest, the cheapest of all of the bread. I mean, if a man couldn't get anything else to eat, he'd eat barley bread. And here's a little ole barley bread loaf that rolls into this mighty army and destroys a tent. Now what God said to Gideon is, "Gideon, you are that loaf of barley bread. You're that loaf of bread."

Do you remember when the Lord said to Gideon, "Hail, thou man of valor. I want you to deliver my people"? Do you remember what Gideon said to the Lord? He said, "Lord, Lord, my family is the poorest in Manasseh, and I'm the least in my father's house" (Judges 6:15). That is, "Of all of the tribes in Israel, Manasseh's the worse. Of all of the families in Manasseh, my family's the poorest. And of all of the kids in the family, I'm the runt of the litter. You reached the very bottom of the barrel when you got me, Lord. Surely, you don't want me!" But the Lord is saying to Gideon, "You may be like a loaf of barley bread. You may be very poor. You may be very unrefined. You may be very coarse. But I want to use you."

I'm going to do something kind of silly now, but I'm going to do it. I did it for my Discovery Class this morning. But I just want to show you something here. What I'm talking about, you know, this passage here in the Bible says in one translation that "the Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon" (Judges 6:34). I want to show you my coat. I don't generally do this in the pulpit, but I just want to show you what a great coat I have here. I want to show you, it's sort of a—well, it's an unusual coat. I want to show you what it can do. You've never seen a trained coat before. Now, "Coat, stand erect!" Well, it's not so good at standing erect; but watch this: "Coat, wave your arms around! Come on, coat! You're embarrassing me in front of all these people. Coat, would you hold a Bible aloft, high? Oh, please, coat!"

Well, you know, the coat doesn't seem to be able to do anything. But let me show you something. I'll show you a little secret I've learned. Now watch this. Watch what a coat I have. "Coat, stand erect! Coat, wave your arms! Coat, hold the Bible aloft!" You say, "Wait a minute, Preacher. That's not the coat. That's you in the coat." You learned a great lesson. You learned a great lesson.

Friend, it is not the man; it is God in the man—God in the man. The Bible says, "The Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon." Wouldn't you like God to wear you like a suit of clothes? Paul said, "It is not me, but Christ that liveth in me; and the life I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Oh, what a difference it makes when God is in the man!

And here was just an ole loaf of barley bread. But God was showing him a great secret. It is not your ability; it is your availability. It is not your fame; it is your faith. It is not your scholarship; it is your relationship. It is not who you know; it is who you are that counts with God. "*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*" (1 Corinthians 1:27). God just takes ordinary people.

Look, folks. When we read the Bible sometimes, when we read the Bible, and we read about a man named Gideon, we say, "Oh, that was Gideon. That's not me." Friend, if you take time to do what I did last week and read the whole story of Gideon, you'll find out that Gideon wasn't such a sharp guy. I mean, he blew it on a number of occasions. He was a fellow who failed in many ways. And there are some bad things written about Gideon. But aren't you glad that when God comes to write the record, He doesn't write the bad things, because his sins He remembers no more, but He never forgets our faith? Isn't that great? He won't remember our sins, but He can't forget our faith. And it's faith that made Gideon the man that he was. Gideon was an ordinary man. Gideon was a loaf of barley bread. And if God can use Gideon, God can use Adrian. And if God can use Gideon, God can use Jim, and God can use you, soldier boy. He really can. He can use anybody—anybody who is just willing to let God wear him like a suit of clothes, an ordinary man.

There are some people, you know, they just say, “Well, I just serve God in my poor little old weak way.” Well, quit it! He doesn’t want you to serve Him in your poor little old weak way. He wants you to serve Him in his mighty, dynamic way. Because God takes ordinary people and gives them extraordinary power.

Now there must be therefore a life of confidence. Don’t you insult God by saying that God cannot use you. I tell you, those people in the host of Midian, they were afraid. They were afraid before Gideon got there. Did you know that? Did you know what there is in hell right now? Let me tell you. We speak of the regions of hell, or let me say in the kingdom of darkness. That would be better terminology. Do you know what the kingdom of darkness feels right now? The kingdom of darkness, Satan and all of his minions, are afraid that one of these days you’re going to awaken to the power and the authority that God has given you. Did you know that? There is a trembling in hell that Christians will awaken to the power and their authority over all the powers of darkness.

IV. The Principle of Compliance

Now the next thing I want you to notice, an ingredient in the fight of faith, is not only the confidence that God can use us, but the principal of compliance or obedience. Notice here now in chapter 7, beginning in verse 15, Gideon tells them to do a strange thing: *“And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian. And he divided the three hundred men into three companies,”*—so good so far; three companies of a hundred each. Now watch this— *“and he put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon”* (Judges 7:15–20).

Now if you were going off to battle, I mean, if out there there’s an army, I mean, there are so many of them they’re like the sands of the seashore, you can’t count them, they’re all out there, fierce, warlike people, you’ve only got 300 in your side, so you’d want a few flame throwers, atomic bombs, bazookas, M-1 rifles, and jet airplanes, would you not? I mean, to go with you. Now how would you like to have this for an arsenal?

Three hundred men—here’s their arsenal: clay pitchers, oil lamps, and a trumpet; and off we go to battle! Oh, listen. You know, the Bible says, *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”*—*“mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”* (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Now I imagine that if the Midianites had seen them coming, if they had known that they were coming with clay pitchers, if they had known that they were coming with little oil lamps and with trumpets, they would have laughed them to scorn. But I’m so glad that Gideon had 300 people that he could count on who did not question God but they simply obeyed God.

There must be the compliance of faith. Do you want your life to grow? Friend, read this book. Believe it. Quit trying to explain it away. If it doesn’t make sense to you, that doesn’t mean it doesn’t make sense. God had a plan. Leonard Ravenhill said, “One of these days, somebody’s going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves.” Now the world has one way; God has another way. And so this was God’s plan. And what a plan it was: a life of compliance, a life of just trusting the Lord!

Would you like a promotion? Would you really like a promotion? Well, let me tell you how to get a promotion. Look in Psalm 75, verse 6—here’s the secret of a promotion: *“For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge”* (Psalm 75:6–7). Now what on earth does that mean? Promotion doesn’t come from the east. It doesn’t come from the west. It doesn’t come from the south. But God is the judge. What direction is left out? North. Well, why north? It is hard for me to say this, being the Southerner that I am. And I always felt that if it hadn’t have been for the Yankees, the South would have won the war, and I’ve never gotten over that.

But what is he talking about here, the North? Well, if you read in Leviticus chapter 1, verse 11, the north side of the altar was the place of sacrifice; that’s where the blood was poured out (Leviticus 1:11). I think what God is saying is that promotion comes through people who are willing to obey and to sacrifice. The Lord Jesus went out of Jerusalem to Calvary through the north gate of sacrifice. That’s the reason He’s coming in through the eastern gate of victory, when He comes again. Oh, dear friend, when we trust the Lord, when we obey the Lord—“Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey!” (John Sammis). Friend, there can be no conquest without compliance.

Now you’re saying, “Brother Rogers, I want to live a life of faith. I want God to be real to me.” You want God to be real to you? All right, listen. Get this book and start obeying it. Now is that hard to understand? Somehow you think God’s going to give you faith when you don’t obey the Word of God. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the*

word of God” (Romans 10:17). That doesn’t mean hearing it read; that means hear it.” Do you ever tell your children, “Now, you do so and so,” and then you say, “Do you hear me?” What do you mean? You don’t mean, “Did you hear me?” You meant, “Do you hear me!” All right now, what God is saying, *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”*—taking the Word of God, obeying the Word of God.

Some people say, “Well, Jesus isn’t real to me. When I pray, it’s like I’m praying to a brass heaven. When I read the Bible, it’s dry as dust. When I pray, my prayers are like dry oatmeal.” Okay, you want Jesus Christ to be real to you? Jesus said in John 14, “If you will obey my words, I will manifest myself to you” (John 14:21). You obey me, and I’ll be real to you. That’s it. It’s so simple.

V. The Principle of Confession

Listen. The fight of faith is a fight of compliance. I wish I had more time there, but let me go on and mention next, and very quickly: It’s a life of confession also—the principle of confession. Notice here in chapter 7, and beginning in verse 18, and very quickly. Now Gideon said, *“When I blow [the] trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon. So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three hundred companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow the blow withal: and they cried, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”*

Can you imagine this? Can you imagine what it was? Here are 300 men. They circled the camp of the Midianites. At just the right moment, Gideon, who has an earthen pitcher, it’s turned upside down, inside that pitcher is a little oil lamp that’s burning. But you can’t see the light. It’s pitch-dark, because the light is burning inside the pitcher. But just at the right moment, he smacks that pitcher. It breaks. It crumbles. The light is lofted high. He puts a trumpet to his lips and he gives a mighty trumpet blast. Not one man, but 300 men break their pitchers, hold high their torches, blast with their trumpets, and then they give a great shout, *“The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”* Three hundred voices like one voice. Can you imagine what happened in the host of the Midianites? All of a sudden, the place is ablaze with light, and there is the ecstatic sound of a trumpet. There is a shout of victory. I tell you, there went a thrill of terror through the camp and the host of the Midianites. These men obeyed the Lord.

Now why did God say do it that way? Was God just simply capriciously choosing a method? Oh, no, ladies and gentlemen. There’s a great spiritual lesson if you would just learn it. What does this speak of? Trumpets in the Bible always speak of testimony. First

Corinthians 14, verse 8: *“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself [for] battle?”* (1 Corinthians 14:8). Oh, dear friend, the blast of the trumpet speaks of a sure testimony—a sure testimony. Not an uncertain sound. And what did the light speak of? Jesus said, “You’re the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men” (Matthew 5:14, 16). Light also speaks of testimony. But watch it—watch it. There are two kinds of testimony: what we say—that’s the trumpet; what we do—that’s the light. Oh, friend, both must be sounded. There must be a sure testimony. Every Christian is to be a light and sound production: what we say and what we do.

But watch—watch. It was easy to blow the trumpet, but the light wouldn’t shine until the pitcher was broken. Now what does the pitcher stand for? The pitcher stands for these lives of ours. You see, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4—just put this down in the margin, 2 Corinthians 4, and beginning in verse 6: *“For God...”*—now pay attention, 2 Corinthians 4, verse 6—*“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels”* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

What does he mean by that? All of us have the light of God in us. The Lord Jesus has shined into our hearts, and there is a light within my life. The light of my life is Jesus. He lights up my life—the Lord Jesus. He’s the light of the world, and He lives in me. But you’ll never see that light until, first of all, this earthen vessel is broken. We have this treasure in an earthen vessel.

Conclusion

Do you know what the average Christian needs? Do you know what the average church needs? A spirit of brokenness. Do you know why we don’t have revival? We sit in our churches, heady, unbent, unbroken, unbowed, unbloodied. The Bible says, “A broken and a contrite spirit thou wilt not despise, O God” (Psalm 51:17). But the Bible says, *“They stood every man in his place”* (Judges 7:21).

Now you think about it. There was a sure testimony, because it was like a trumpet. There was a sacrificial testimony because of the broken pitchers. And there was a steadfast testimony, for *“they stood every man in his [own] place.”* What would happen in the city of Memphis tomorrow if every Christian would do the same thing? I mean, living a broken life. I mean, letting his light shine. I mean, sounding the clarity and call of the trumpet of the Lord Jesus Christ. And standing, so help me God, regardless of what the enemy might do.

When Faith Seems to Fail

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 8, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 11:32–40

“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

HEBREWS 11:39–40

Outline

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Introduction

I want you now to take your Bibles and turn again to Hebrews chapter 11, and we're going to begin reading in verse 32—Hebrews chapter 11, and we'll begin reading in verse 32. Now you know that Hebrews chapter 11 is God's Hall of Fame, where God lists the heroes of the faith. And He just recounts the Old Testament victories of all of those who've loved the Lord and who've gone on to heaven. And now they're sitting in the heavenly grandstand looking down on us. And this is what he says at the end of this chapter: *“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others...”*—now, watch the change here—*“and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had a trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they*

wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:32–40)

I want to ask you a question. We talked this morning about faith. We talked this morning about what faith could do. We talked about the prerequisite of faith, hearing the Word of God. We talked about the patience of faith while waiting for the work of God. We talked about the power of faith, how Noah was delivered and saved. And we talked about the reward of faith, the profitability of faith, when he received the inheritance and became an heir of righteousness. But I want to ask you a question: Have you ever prayed and asked God, and tried to believe God for something, and the thing that you asked God for evidently didn't please Him, or wasn't in His schedule, or evidently you didn't believe just right, or pray intensely enough, or whatever, and you just didn't get your prayer answered? I mean, you needed a miracle and you didn't get it. You asked God to do something special, and He just didn't do it. Has that ever happened to you? Let me see your hand. That's all of us.

And, you know, these preachers stand up here and preach, “Just trust God. Just believe God. Whatever you want, just ask Him. Pray. Believe and you'll receive.” So we plan a Sunday School picnic, and we say, “Dear Lord, give us a beautiful day,” and it rains cats and dogs; I mean, a stump-floater, a frog-strangler, and here we have been praying for a beautiful day. Has that ever happened to you? I guess there's nobody who's been in the ministry who hasn't planned a Sunday School picnic at one time or another and just asked God for good weather and just didn't get it.

You young people, have you ever seen a gal or a guy, and you just looked at them when you were there at that youth fellowship or at that party at school, and there was just something about that gal? She had class. She had style. And your little old heart started to vibrate and say, “That is the one, dear Lord. Dear God, I want to tell you about that young lady over there. That is the one, Lord, I know you've chosen for me; and please, God, would you cause her to love me.” And she falls in love with the captain of the football team and marries him. And you prayed and you asked God, and you just didn't get your prayers answered.

Or even more seriously, if you had a loved one that was sick—I mean, a loved one that was ill—and you went to God and you said, “O God, heal my husband; Lord, save my child; God, be merciful to my wife; please, God, please,” and you tried to believe God, and you got your heart right with God, and you confessed every known sin, and as best you knew how you asked God, and your loved one died, or the illness was not taken away, the infirmity and the pain and the suffering and the anguish and the

heartache were still there—where is God? Where is faith? What about all these wonderful promises the preacher seemed to make when they preach on Noah and how Noah was delivered through the flood? What about those who pray and don't get their prayers answered, and they love God as much as you love God, and they need a miracle, and they just don't seem to get it?

I want us to talk tonight on this subject and think on this subject: “When Faith Seems to Fail”—“When Faith Seems to Fail.” Now, faith does not fail. Faith cannot fail. Faith will not fail. It never has. It never will. It never can fail. That is, the God of faith, real faith—not faith itself, but the God of faith—does not fail.

I. The Exciting Victories of Faith

Well, I want you to notice the scripture that I just read to you. First of all, it speaks of those exciting victories of faith. And if you begin to read in verse 32, you'll find out that he mentions here in Hebrews chapter 11 some exciting victories. He's already mentioned the victories of faith beginning in the beginning of this chapter, and he just runs out of time. And he comes to the end of this sermon on faith, and he says, “What more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and of Samson and Jephthae and David and Samuel, and of the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again...” And if we were to stop there, we'd have a distorted picture. I mean, if we just stopped right there and just put a period there, we would have a distorted picture of life. And we would have a distorted picture of faith, because indeed God does work this way.

And all of us love those stories, those Old Testament stories, of how God delivered, for example, Daniel. It tells about Daniel in the lion's den. And you remember how Daniel was thrown in the lions' den and God gave the lions lockjaw. And old Daniel just got his Bible and used a lion for a pillow and started to read between the lions. He was just having a good time right there in the lions' den. And how God delivered Daniel—we love that story. There's not a boy or a girl who's not heard the story of Daniel and the lions' den. (Daniel 6)

Or Moses and the Red Sea—how God led the children of Israel there into that cul-de-sac, and there comes Moses with the children of Israel, and Pharaoh behind with a sword in his hand and a gleam in his eye, and cursing the God of Israel. And Moses is between the devil and the deep blue sea. And how he prays to God and stretches out the rod of God, and God opens a forty-eight lane superhighway right through that Red Sea, and piles the water up on one side, and piles the water up on the other side, and

Moses goes through, and the water comes back down and drowns the Egyptians—a wonderful story! We love the story. (Exodus 14)

And it's recorded of David and Goliath, how a little teenage boy with a little peach fuzz on his chin went out against Goliath of Gath, almost ten feet tall, and with a sling and a smooth stone he winds up and lets old Goliath have it. And as Billy Sunday said, "He hit him on the coco, and he went down for the count of ten." You know, old Goliath was amazed. And you know why he was so amazed? It was the first time anything like that ever entered his head. There he was. That stone hit him right there on the forehead, and down he went. And David took Goliath's sword, and with Goliath's sword he cut off Goliath's head. A wonderful victory of faith! And how we love that story. There are so many wonderful stories in the Bible. (1 Samuel 17)

We think of Peter, Simon Peter, when he was in prison. And old Herod was going to execute Simon Peter. And you remember that Simon Peter there is asleep. And the angel of the Lord walks into the prison. And, incidentally, why do you think Simon Peter was asleep? If you knew that there was a wicked king who wanted to behead you and execute you the next morning, do you think you could sleep that night? Simon Peter slept so soundly that the Bible says that when the angel came in to wake him up, the angel had to shake him. The Bible says the angel smote him and said, "Peter, wake up!"

Now you talk about a sound sleeper—he was sleeping so soundly that the angel had to shake him and wake him up. Do you know why he wasn't upset? Do you know why he slept so well? Well, he was a young man at this time. And the Lord had said, "Now, Simon, when you're old, they're going to lead you around." (John 21:18) He knew he was going to be an old man. He didn't worry about Herod. There he is in prison asleep, and the angel says, "All right, Peter, wake up! Wake up! Wake up!" And he finally gets him awake. And then he just says not only "Wake up," but "Dress up." Now, if you're going to make a jailbreak, friend, you're going to go out in your pajamas if the door is open. But here's Peter. He wakes up. He puts on his clothes. I mean, look. No hurry. He's strolling out. I mean, God's in control. (Acts 12:1–10) We love those stories—those stories in the Bible.

And I think there's not a one of us, including Dale Palmer and many of these young people in the choir, and these two gentlemen sitting over here, and myself, and many of you, who could not stand up here and give testimony after testimony of direct answer to prayer. I can. There may be times when we pray, and things happen, and it could be counted coincidence. Or somebody might say, "Oh well, that would have happened anyway. I mean, I'll give you that much." But, folks, I want to tell you, I have lived long enough and prayed enough to know that I know that I know that God has answered my prayers. God has answered my prayers in ways that cannot be accounted coincidence, in ways that are inexplicable and unexplainable apart from the dynamic and wonderful

intervention of Almighty God—a great prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. And I say praise God, praise God, for the exciting victories of faith.

II. The Enduring Virtues of Faith

But I want to say that our scripture goes on, and not only does it speak of the exciting victories of faith, but it also speaks of the enduring virtues of faith. Now, verse 35 says, *“Women received their dead raised to life again:”—*fine, but continue to read—*“and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had a trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”* (Hebrews 11:35–38) They loved God too. They were God’s children too. They prayed too. And you’ll not tell me that these people did not say, “O God, deliver us! O God, help us! God, make a way for us! God, you opened the prison for Peter. Open the prison for me! Lord, you healed this man. Lord, heal me! God, You gave this man victory over the enemy. Give me victory!” It seems like that they didn’t receive it.

Now I want to tell you, friend, you call the roll of some of God’s prophets, some of God’s preachers, and some of God’s saints, and some of God’s godliest, and you’re going to find out they suffered, and they loved God too. Zechariah the prophet—don’t you love to read the prophecies of Zechariah? He was stoned to death. Who do you think the greatest prophet was? I think Isaiah, don’t you? But you’ll love Isaiah, the prince of the prophets. Do you know what happened to Isaiah? They put Isaiah in the hollow trunk of a tree. This is what strong tradition tells us—and we have reason to believe it. And, you know, he mentions here others were sawn asunder. They put Isaiah in the hollow trunk of a tree and then took a saw and sawed Isaiah in half. This was God’s prophet. That’s the one who wrote the beautiful prophecies of Isaiah. And how we love that book, one of the sweetest, most precious books!

Early Christians, people like you, who loved the Lord, many of them were fed to the lions. Many of them suffered martyrdom. Terrible things happened to them. I have visited in Rome, as some of you have, and been to the Coliseum and seen where they made sport of these Christians and enjoyed watching them die. We’ve been to the Circus Maximus where so many of these early Christians reddened the ground with their blood and sated the appetite of ravenous lions. They prayed too. They loved God too. But they were not delivered.

“Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance...others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they

were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword.” History tells us of some of the ways that these early Christians died. It’s unbelievable that man could do to man what they did to these early Christians. Nero took some of them, tied them on poles, poured oil over them, and lit them on fire to provide lights for his garden while he had a party. Some of them were taken and sewn up in bags with poisonous serpents. Others of them were put in bags with hungry rats that would gnaw away at their vitals. Others of them were tied to the beach at low tide so that they would drown as the water crept higher and higher. The devil has been very ingenious in causing God’s saints to suffer.

And don’t tell me they didn’t love God. They loved God, but they would not accept deliverance. I mean, many of them could receive deliverance. All they would have had to say is, “I deny Jesus Christ.” “Guard, let him up. Untie him. Release him. Give him something cool to drink. Send him back to his family.” But they would not accept deliverance, *“that they might obtain a better resurrection.”*

There are others who loved the Lord just as much as Daniel loved the Lord in the lions’ den; loved the Lord just as much as Moses loved the Lord at the Red Sea; loved the Lord just as much as Peter loved the Lord when he was in prison. They did not enjoy the exciting victories of faith. Rather, they had the enduring virtues of faith.

I want to tell you something, friend. You had better not get your theology from circumstances. If you do, you’re going to come to the conclusion that God doesn’t love you. Don’t get your theology from circumstances. You’re going to find out that in the wisdom and the knowledge of God, He’s not always going to deliver you.

I was reading recently the eleventh chapter of John, there where it tells of the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Now I want to ask you, did Jesus love Lazarus? Well, indeed, Jesus loved Lazarus. The Bible says in John chapter 11 and verse 5, *“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”* (John 11:5) No ifs, ands, and buts about it, as plain as black print on white paper can tell you, Jesus loved Lazarus. But I want you to go on down to John chapter 11 and verse 14: *“Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead.”* And verse 15 says, *“And I am glad.”* (John 11:14–15)

Now, you think about it. How do you like that? *“Lazarus is dead, and I’m glad.”* That’s what Jesus said: *“Lazarus is dead, and I’m glad.”* Now, the sisters of Lazarus said, *“Lord, if you had been here,”*—implying, *“if you’d cared enough to come”—**“Lazarus wouldn’t have died.”* (John 11:21) But Jesus knew what He doing. *“Lazarus is dead, and I’m glad,”* Jesus said, because Jesus had another plan that nobody else knew that day. But Jesus knew.

I want to tell you something, friend. If Mary and Martha just had their eyes upon circumstances at that time when Lazarus died, they would have said, *“Jesus doesn’t love us.”* But the Bible says clearly Jesus loved them. But then He said, *“Lazarus is dead, and I’m glad.”* They sent for Jesus. And Jesus deliberately delayed so that

Lazarus might die. That's an amazing thing.

That's the reason I say to you, ladies and gentlemen, if you get your theology from circumstances, you may come to the conclusion that God doesn't love you, when He does love you. And I'm so glad that this book of Hebrews tells us about those others. I mean, if all we hear are those great tales of victory; I mean, if that's all we hear, that's true, and I thank God for it. And who would not praise God for the exciting victories of faith? But, oh, my dear friend, we had better learn something about the enduring virtues of faith. You see, God loves us even when terrible things happen to us.

Let me give you another verse—Romans chapter 8, beginning in verse 35. You may wish to turn to it. Here's what the Apostle Paul asks in a rhetorical question: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"* Now, right away, he's saying that Christ loves us. Regardless of what happens, He loves us. *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things"*—notice, not without all these things, but in all these things—*"we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Romans 8:35–37) And, friend, when distress and persecution and peril and sword and nakedness come to you, don't you let the devil tell you that God doesn't love you.

If you work for International Harvester, and lose your job, the devil's going to say, "God doesn't love you." You go to the doctor, and he gives you a bad report: the devil's going to say, "God doesn't love you." You have a problem, and you don't get it solved, and you pray and ask God, and God doesn't seem to move and answer as you think He ought: the devil will say, "God doesn't love you." But Paul says, *"Who shall separate us from the love of God?"* These things cannot separate us from the love of God. Jesus loved Lazarus, but He let Lazarus die.

And I want to tell you there are people here in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews who did not receive deliverance. The Bible calls them "the others"—"the others." And they loved God just as much as those who were delivered. You see, if you have difficulty in life, it does not mean that God has abandoned you.

Let me give you another scripture—Hebrews chapter 13. You're in chapter 11; just turn to chapter 13. Look in verses 5 and 6: *"Let your conversation"*—that literally means "your behavior"—*"be without covetousness;"*—that just simply means "be content"—*"and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."* (Hebrews 13:5–6)

Now he doesn't say that men will not do something to us. It doesn't mean that we'll not have trouble. It does not mean that we'll not have tribulation. But notice what it says. *"He hath said...that we may boldly say."* And, friend, let me tell you, whatever He says,

you can boldly say. That's the basis of faith. The basis of our boldness is the fact that God has spoken. Now, what has He said? Has He said that we'll not have tribulation? Has He said that we'll not have trouble? Has He said that we'll not have sickness and sorrow and death? No, He's not said that. What He has said is, "I will never leave thee."

And the Greek scholars tell us that this verse literally has five negatives in it. Now we say it's bad to use a double negative. We say, "Not never"—that's bad English. But what he literally said here is, "I will never, never, never, never, never leave you, even in a time of peril, a time of suffering, a time of heartache." Even when we pray, and God doesn't seem to answer our prayers, He said, "I'll never leave you." "In all of these things, we are more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37)—not in the absence of these things, but in these things.

Many of you know that Joyce and I have a little boy who died, a little baby boy. His name is Philip. He's in heaven. He died on Sunday afternoon on a Mother's Day. And it was a sudden thing, one of those crib deaths. Joyce and I were had just graduated from seminary, taken our first little church as a graduate from seminary down in Florida. Of course, we were grief-stricken. Of course, we were heartbroken. We turned to the Word of God, and immediately God began to give us comfort.

But I thought of that as I was preparing this message, because as we left our little parsonage, which was right next door to the church—just about as far as from here to that wall from the church was our parsonage. As we left that little home, the church went on with the services that Sunday night. And they called in an educational director from a sister church to try to preach as best he could in the absence of their pastor. And we were going to our home in West Palm Beach to be with our loved ones and our parents to make plans for Philip's funeral. And I'll never forget as we backed out of the driveway and went around the corner of that little white, cement-block church, and the yellow light was streaming out through the windows, and they were singing, "He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. No, never alone; no, never alone. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone."

I remember when our little boy was there in my arms and I rushed him to the hospital. And I got down on my knees in the corridor of that hospital. And I didn't care who saw him. And I said, "O God, I want you to save the life of this baby. Please, God, please!" And God had a higher plan. But I want to tell you something, friend. I know that I know that I know that God was never more real to Joyce and myself than through that experience. And He did not leave us.

"He hath said, that we may boldly say, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.'" Faith does not mean that we will judge God by circumstances. If you live by circumstances, if you get your theology from what happens, I say you'll come to the conclusion that God doesn't love you.

Remember John the Baptist? Now, John the Baptist was a great man. And Jesus said of John the Baptist, “What went you out in the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? No, I tell you a prophet, and more than a prophet. There’s not a greater born among women than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:7–11; Luke 7:24–28) I tell you, that’s pretty high compliment coming from the Son of God, amen? John the Baptist was a mighty man. He was the forerunner of Christ. He was the one who preached there in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord and make straight His paths.” (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4) Old John out there by that river Jordan had a brook for a choir and a stone for a pulpit. Dr. Lee said, “He ate honey, but he didn’t preach it.” Boy, he preached the Word of God. He said, “You bunch of rattlesnakes, who told you to flee from the judgment to come?” (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7)

Bold was old John the Baptist. A man of God John was. But time came when John was arrested. And John was put in prison. And old John, who is an outdoorsman, a man with a leather girdle, a man who lived a life of a rugged individualist, is now in a musty, damp, dingy, dirty prison. And he just seemed to stay there and molder there in prison. And he started getting his theology from his circumstances.

And, finally, old John got some of his buddies, and he said, “I want you to go find this man Jesus. I want you to ask Him a question for me. You ask Him, is He really the Messiah, or should we look for somebody else? Is He really the coming One, or should we look for another?” Do you know John’s problem? John knew how to stand on Jordan and give it, but he didn’t know how to stay in prison and take it, see? And John thought he’d been preaching a victorious Christ, a Christ who would purge His threshing floor, whose fan was in His hand, and who would burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. And now, here’s old John in prison. But I want to say to John’s everlasting credit that John had an honest question, and he took it to Jesus. And Jesus gave him an honest answer. I thank God for that kind of a Savior.

You know, when anybody ever asked Jesus a trick question, do you know what He did? He never answered the question. He just asked another question. He’d always turn it on them. They’ll try to hem Jesus up. They never could. You never got a straightforward answer from Jesus if you asked Him a trick question. He’d say, “What do you say about that?” or, “Let me ask you a question, then I’ll answer this question.”

But here John the Baptist, because John wanted to know—John wasn’t being a smart aleck; John really wanted to know—he said to Jesus, “Are you the one who should come, or do we look for another?” And I want you to hear what Jesus said to John the Baptist, who had been in danger of getting his theology from circumstances. In Matthew chapter 11, beginning in verse 4 and going on through verse 5, here’s what Jesus said: *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers*

are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” (Matthew 11:4–6)

Now, that’s beautiful. He said, “John, I’ve got power to raise the dead. I’ve got power to unstop deaf ears. I have power to open blinded eyes and to loose dumb tongues, to set captives free. But I don’t always do it, John. You just tell him I have the power, but you tell him also, blessed are they who are not offended in me. John, if I want you in prison, that’s my business. And don’t you get your hackles up, John.”

Let me tell you what faith is. Friend, listen to me. Faith is not so much receiving from God the things that we think that we need and want as it is accepting from God the things that He gives us—not receiving from God the things we want, but accepting from God the things He gives. Now, that is really faith. I mean, when you say, “The Lord gives, the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. (Job 1:21) If God wants me out of prison, fine; but if God wants me in prison, I’ll have a greater faith than the man who has enough faith to get out of this place: I’ll have enough faith to stay in this place and not be offended at Him.” There were others who were not delivered from prison; others who did not escape the scourging; others who did not escape the trials and all of these things.

You see, dear friends, you’re going to have to understand that God does not always plan to deliver you. He plans to be with you. He’s not going to forsake you. But, you see, your faith has to have a little *if not* clause in it.

Now, let me explain what I’m talking about when I say an *if not* clause. **You remember those three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? I heard of a preacher who never could remember those names, so he wrote them on a little card and put them in his pocket. And he said, “You remember those three Hebrew children, Hart, Schaffner, and Marx.”** You remember those three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? And the king said, “I’m going to make an image. And you’re to bow down and worship this image. And if you don’t bow down and worship this image, I’m going to throw you in the fiery furnace.”

Now I want you to notice the answer that they gave in Daniel chapter 3, beginning in verse 16. It’s classic. It’s classic. Listen to it: “*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter...*”—that is, “We don’t have to have a long time to think about it. We already know the answer.” And they say—“*we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.*” But now, watch this. “*But if not...*”—now, that’s the *if not* clause—“*But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*” (Daniel 3:16–18)

A. A Settled Faith

I love that. I want you to notice it was a settled faith. They'd already thought about it. The king said, "I'll give you some time." They said, "We don't need any time. We're not careful to answer you in this. Our faith is settled."

And, friend, you'd better make up your mind before you face some king and a fiery furnace. You'd better make it up tonight, so when it comes, you don't have to say, "Give me a couple of days to think about it." "We're not careful to answer thee in this matter." Theirs was a settled faith.

B. A Sensible Faith

And theirs, dear friend, not only was a settled faith; it was a sensible faith, because they knew that God was able: "*Our God...is able.*" And if you're sick, and God doesn't heal you, it's not because He's not able. If you need a job, and He doesn't give it to you, it's not because He's not able. If you're in prison, and He doesn't set you free, it's not because He's not able. Our God is able! He was able to get John out of prison. He was able to raise Lazarus from the dead. The same God who gave all of these other people deliverance in Hebrews chapter 11 was able to give the rest of them deliverance, the others. He's able.

C. A Steadfast Faith

They had a settled faith. They had a sensible faith. But I want you to notice, dear friend, they had a steadfast faith. Here's what they said: "He's able to deliver us. But if He doesn't, we still *ain't a'going* to serve you. We're not going to bow down to your gods. We're not going to deny Him. If He makes a piece of crisp bacon out of us, we're still not going to bow down to your image." Don't you like that? "*But if not...*" See, that, dear friend, is the kind of faith that we need: a settled faith, a sensible faith, and a steadfast faith; the faith that says, "I'm going to serve God, no matter what."

You know, old Habakkuk, he was a great prophet. Read that little book of Habakkuk some time. Habakkuk lived in a day that's very much like our day. I mean, you talk about an economic, chaotic condition; you talk about runaway inflation and high unemployment and all kinds of problems: that's what Habakkuk lived in. And it seemed that there was a heathen power that was looming against God's people. And Habakkuk went to the Lord, and he got a little perplexed, and he got a little confused, and he said, "God, I really don't understand how you're running things." And God spoke to Habakkuk, and He had a great time of faith, and then he wrote a beautiful poem of faith. It's found in Habakkuk chapter 3 and verses 17 and 18.

Here's what he said. Listen to it: "*Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:*"—

sounds pretty bad, doesn't it? Notice what Habakkuk went on to say—*“yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* (Habakkuk 3:17–18) That would be a good verse for us. See, Habakkuk said, “I’m going to find my joy not in things, not in circumstances; I’m going to find my joy in the Lord.”

God’s ways sometimes, friend, are hard to understand. I mentioned Acts 12. I want you to turn to it for a moment. It’s very interesting. Just turn to it—Acts chapter 12 and let’s begin in verse 1, and I’m going to read ten verses very quickly, so you just follow along: *“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread). And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel: but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.”* (Acts 12:1–10)

Now, the reason I read that is there were two men there that day: James and Peter. James was killed with the sword, and Peter was miraculously delivered. Now, which one did God love the most? Was Peter God’s little darling? Was it just that Peter had more faith than James? Not at all! I just want to tell you, dear friend, that God’s ways sometimes are past finding out. James went to the executioner’s block, and Peter went from prison to a prayer meeting.

You’re going to have to let God be God, folks. That’s all I can say. Just let God be God. And you’re going to have to see that many times there are the exciting victories of faith, and many other times the enduring virtues of faith. And I want to tell you again that faith is not so much getting from God, receiving from God the things that we want, as it is accepting from God the things that He gives.

III. The Eternal Vindication of Faith

Now, the third and final thing I want us to see: Not only the exciting victories, and the enduring virtues, but I want you to see the eternal vindication of faith. Go back here now to Hebrews chapter 11, and let's look, if you will, for a moment, beginning in verse 39—Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 39: *“And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.”* (Hebrews 11:39) Now, notice, not some of them; all of them, *“having obtained a good report through faith.”* The ones who were delivered were trusting God. The ones who were not delivered were trusting God.

Now, the Bible says they *“received not the promise.”* These verses do not mean that God did not keep His promise; it just simply means that the time was not yet, that God's time had not yet come. You see, God runs according to His own time, not Central Standard or whatever it is. God lives in eternity. And so the Bible says these all died, having received not the promise. Now, that doesn't mean that God is not going to keep His promise: *“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”* (Hebrews 11:40) What this means is that God is going to keep His word, and God is going to fulfill His promise in His own time.

Now I want to ask you a question. Who does that land belong to over there in the Middle East where all the wars are going on? Who does it belong to? It belongs to Abraham—it belongs to Abraham. How did Abraham get it? God gave it to him. How much of it belongs to Abraham? I'll tell you how much of it belongs to Abraham: It belongs to Abraham from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, and from the river of Egypt to Lebanon. It all belongs to Abraham. God gave it to him. It is his. Has Abraham got it? Nope. Do Abraham's children have it? Nope. Abraham and Sarah are wrapped in their shrouds, buried there in the cave of Machpelah there at Hebron. Will Abraham receive that land? Did God give it to him? Yes sir. Will he receive it? No ifs, ands, and buts about it. Folks, God gave that land to Abraham. He has not yet possessed it. He will possess it.

Have you ever read in the Bible where the Bible says, *“The meek shall inherit the earth”*? (Matthew 5:5) Will they? Indeed, they will. And when they do, I'm going to be the sheriff of Shelby County—when the meek inherit the earth! We're going to rule and reign with Jesus for a thousand blessed years. (Revelation 20:6) And don't you think for one little moment just because God has not yet kept His word that God will not keep His word; or at least, when God has not yet fulfilled His promises, that He will not fulfill His promises. He always keeps His word.

You see, sometimes you pray for your mother, and you say, *“God, heal my mother,”* and you trust God to heal your mother, and your mother dies. Does that mean that God did not heal your mother? No. It means that God really healed your mother. It means that your mother is absolutely, perfectly whole. You know, sometimes we're just not

willing to wait on God and let God give us the better thing. God knows what He's doing, friend.

I've noticed sometimes in prayer meetings, as I've told you before, we're praying for the sick—we'll seem more concerned sometimes for the sick of our church than the lost of the world; we're more interested in keeping the saints out of heaven than we are the lost out of hell. I'm not saying that we ought not to pray for the sick, but I'm just telling you sometimes God will just step back and say, "I'm going to really heal her. I'm not just going to do a patch-up job. I'm going to bring him home to heaven. I'm going to really heal that loved one."

Conclusion

Friend, if I could just say anything tonight, I would just say this: Even when it doesn't look like it, and even when circumstances don't seem to fit what you'd like, never let the devil tell you that God doesn't love you.

*Have faith in God, He's on His throne;
Have faith in God, He watches o'er His own.
He cannot fail, He must prevail;
Have faith in God, have faith in God.*

—B. B. MCKINNEY †

How to Run Like a Champion

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 8, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1–2

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is a Purpose to Pursue
- II. There Is a Person to Prepare
- III. There Is a Price to Pay
- IV. There Is a Promise to Plead
- V. There Is a Prize to Possess

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, to be like Jesus. What a beautiful song! It could not fit better. No other song, I think, could fit any better with the message for today: “Run like a Champion.”

When you think of a runner, what do you think about? When a person is, with every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every sinew, running a race? Well, watch this for a moment, and I think this is probably what you think about. There’s a young man who is getting his start. Every muscle is tense. He’s running now. He’s looking straight ahead; complete, total concentration. Every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, he’s pressing to the goal. Notice he’s staying in the lane. He’s not moving to the right. He’s not moving to the left. And notice he’s not running against anybody else. He’s running against himself. He’s running against the clock, and he’s headed toward the finish line. Now, we’ve seen runners run like that, and that may be what you’re thinking about this morning. When the pastor is going to teach you to run like a champion, you say, “Well, I’m out of it because I’m in a wheelchair,” or, “I can’t run because I’m tied to a sick bed. I can’t run because I’m 90 years of age. I can’t run because I have twisted limbs. I can’t run.” Well, you can run, and you should run, and you will run, if you’ll listen to our scripture today.

Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1: “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne

of God.” Well, according to this scripture, if you’re saved, you’re a runner. You are in the race. Now, you may not be able to run athletically, but you can certainly run spiritually, and that’s what we’re talking about.

Sports were a big thing in Paul’s day. Did you know that? In the day of our Lord, sports were a big thing. They had three great games, almost like the Super Bowl today. There were the Olympic games, and they were run at Mount Olympus; therefore, we get the name, the Olympic games. There was also the Pythian games, and these were run at Delphi. And then there were the Isthmian games, and they were run at Corinth. And they staged them through the years so, if you were rich, or a patron, you could go from one game to the other. The athletes of that day were so admired, again, very much like our day. They had everything laid at their feet if they won the game for their country. Their name was praised. Poetry was written about them. Statutes were carved and chiseled in their honor. They had the rest of their way through life: their room, board, food—all of that was paid for. The emperor would praise the runner that brought glory and fame to him and to his country.

Well, times haven’t changed a whole lot, have they? It won’t be long till football season gets here. A man said to his wife, “Now, before the football season starts, is there anything you want to say to me?” We love sports. But many of us are saying, “You know, Pastor, I can’t run,” and that’s true. Our youth, our vigor, leaves us. We’re not like that young man.

I remember the first time I realized that I couldn’t run like I used to run. I had always, around Thanksgiving, or New Year’s Day, or something like that, would get the boys in the church, and the young men out, and say, “Let’s play football. Let’s play touch football,” because that was the only sport, football, that I had any expertise in. And I’d say, “Let’s play football.” I loved to get the young deacons out and knock them around, and I loved to outrun those fellows, and they’d say, “Boy, look at the preacher. Look at the preacher. Man.” And that felt so good. I said, “Man, I’m really out here showing off.” And then I can remember the day like it was yesterday. I had a bunch out there by the church in Merritt Island. I was 33 years of age. and we were playing football, and Larry Freshhour got the ball. And he was about as far away as from here to the front row, and I said to myself, “Self, run him down and tag him.” And you know, the closer I got, the further away he was. The last time I saw him, he was clean out of sight, and I realized I was not going to run this man down. He was younger than I was, and my legs were not what they used to be. And, at 33, I said to myself, “You’re no longer a boy; you’re a man. You’re a man. You cannot outrun the youngsters. You’re now a man.” But, friend, in this life, no matter if your mind makes contracts that your body can’t fulfill, in this life, if you’re a child of God, you’re in the race. I don’t care how old you are. I don’t care how

feeble you are. I care not how rich, how poor, you are. There is a race for you to run, and God wants you to be like a champion. So we're going to think here about how to run like a champion. And let me teach you some things from this passage of Scripture.

I. There Is a Purpose to Pursue

First of all, there is a purpose to pursue, and that purpose is for you to run. Look, if you will, in verse 1: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Now, there's a race that's set before us, and that is our purpose in life. Now, notice he begins with the word "Wherefore." Well, what is that wherefore there for? What does it represent? Well, in chapter 11, we have been preaching Sunday after Sunday after Sunday about champions, champions who ran, and they ran the race of faith, and they succeeded, and they got their name put in God's Hall of Champions, God's Hall of Heroes here in Hebrews chapter 11. Now, is He doing that just to entertain us, or even to inspire us? No, to challenge us, that as they ran we are to run. There is a purpose to pursue.

Now, here they are, rank upon rank, these heroes of the past. They're up there in the glory. People say, "Pastor, do you think people in heaven know what we're doing down here?" I do. I think that they know what we're doing down here. I think they're watching us, and they're not criticizing us. They're here to cheer us on. Sidlow Baxter, when he was here, said, "I believe they are praying for us." He said, "They're one with Jesus, and He ever lives to make intercession, so why should they not even be praying for us as they watch us run the race?" We're compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.

You ought to see those great stadiums that they had in those days. You think a football stadium is big? They had stadiums that were six times the size of a football field. And the people would come and watch the different kinds of exhibitions. There would be foot races. There would be relay races. There would be distance races. There would be sprints. There would be the javelin, the discus, all of these things very much like a modern track meet. And Paul picks up the figure. I believe Paul wrote Hebrews. He may not have written it, but I think he did write Hebrews. We know it's the inspired Word of God. But the writer said we're very much like that. We are now on the playing field, and these heroes of the past are up there in the stands, and we have a purpose to pursue. We are to run the race that is set before us.

Now, listen to me. We're not running in order to get to heaven. God forbid that you should ever think that somehow, if you win the race, you're going to heaven. Heaven is

not the goal at the end of the race. Salvation is not the goal at the end of the race; it is the gift that puts you in the race. But there is a course set for Adrian. There is a course set for Mark, a course set for Jim, a course set for Scotty, and a course set for you. Look at the Scripture again: “Let us lay aside every weight...which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Now, each of us has our own particular race. The apostle Paul came to the end of his race. He said in Acts 20, verse 24: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course—that I might finish my course.” You have a course to run. You have a race. Your race is not the same as my race, and your wife or your neighbor, whomever, we don’t need to compare ourselves with one another. We are not running against one another. We’re running against sin, against Satan, against self, and we have a race to run. So I need to get my eyes off of you how you’re running your race, and concentrate on my race. You know, there are people who say, “You know, if I had the talent of thus-and-such a person, this is what I would do. If I had the money that he has, this is what I would do,” and you start trying to run somebody else’s race.

Two boys were sitting on the front porch, I’m told. One was a very big, brawny fellow. The other was a very small, fragile guy. The little man said to the big man, “Do you know what I would do if I were as big and strong as you are?” He said, “What would you do, little brother?” He said, “If I were as big and strong as you are, with the muscles that you have and the strength that you have, I’d go out in those woods and find the biggest bear I could find and wrestle that bear, if I were as strong as you are.” The big man looked at the little man, and said, “Have you ever thought about this fact—there are some little bears out in the woods?” Now, maybe God has a little bear for you to wrestle. Maybe God has a different kind of a race for you to run. But there is a purpose to pursue. Now, look at your pastor, and let me tell you something. If you’re not in the race, you’re sinning against yourself, you’re sinning against your church, you are a disappointment to angels, and you’re rebellious against your God. You have a race, and you’re not exempt. We’re to run the race. There is a purpose to pursue.

II. There Is a Person to Prepare

But now, here’s something else. Not only is there a purpose to pursue, but there is a person to prepare. I mean, you, if you’re going to run the race, you’ve got to get ready to run the race. Look at it again in verse 1: “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Now, how do you prepare yourself? Well, first of all, if you’re going to run a race,

you've got to lay the weights aside. You notice our athlete up there on the screen. Do you notice how he ran? He ran in briefs. He ran in a very light shirt. He ran with track shoes on. The less weight the better. One thing I don't think you'll ever see, and that is someone in the Olympics running a race wearing an overcoat. It's not going to happen. They get down as light as they possibly can and still maintain some modicum of modesty. You have to lay aside every weight.

Now, the Greek word weight does not mean something that's sinful. It just means something that burdens you, something that holds you down. There are some things that are not bad in themselves. Nothing wrong with an overcoat; you just don't wear an overcoat when you're running a race. Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 12: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." Now, what does that word expedient mean? Well, when you think of expedience, you think of another word, expedition. An expedition is you're going somewhere. Paul said, "Something may be lawful for me, but, if it's not expedient; that is, if it doesn't speed me on my course, if it doesn't boost me on my way, then I need to leave it alone. Friend, it may be some recreational habit you have. It may be some cottage in the woods. It may be some acquaintance. It may be some hobby that you have. It may be too much television or sleep, or whatever it is. If it is keeping you from winning the race, you lay it aside. Good things become bad things when they keep you from the best things. And so he says, "Get down; strip down; lay aside every weight."

Now, I'm not here to tell you what it is that may be holding you back, but ask yourself this question all during this message: Is there something in my life that's hindering my walk with Christ? Is there something that's holding me back? Is there something that is excess baggage? Is there something that is keeping me from being all that I ought to be for the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, if you want to win the race, then lay it aside. "Lay aside every weight—now, watch this—and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Now, he's not talking about good things that may be bad things. He's just talking about bad things. The word beset means to tangle you up. Can you imagine a person trying to run a race with a long flowing robe that's tangling him up, or some rope around his feet, or something that has enmeshed him? No, he wants to be free so that he can run. Now, what is the sin that so easily trip us up? You see, weights load us down; sin trips us up. And either one can make you a poor runner and keep you from running the race—the sin that doth so easily beset us.

Now, what Paul is talking about in chapters 11 and 12 is faith. The whole race that we're running is the race of faith. The Book of Hebrews says we live by faith; therefore, we run by faith. Now, most of us say, "I wish I had better faith. I wish I had stronger faith." Do you know the reason that you don't have any more faith than you have? Sin.

You say, “Now, wait a minute, Pastor.” No, friend, the Bible says, “Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” Unbelief is not a mental sin; it is a moral sin. It doesn’t come out of the head; it comes out of the heart. “Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.”

Have you ever noticed how God puts things in sequence in the Bible? For example, the Bible says, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.” It never says peace and grace; always grace and peace. Why? You’ll not know peace until you know grace, amen? Have you ever notice the Bible says, “Believe and be baptized.” It doesn’t say, be baptized and believe. If you were immersed or sprinkled before you gave your heart to Jesus and truly believed, you haven’t been baptized at all. True baptism follows true belief. You say, “Pastor, what are you heading at?” I’m going to tell you another order that God has put in the Bible. Not only grace and peace, not only belief and baptism, but repentance and faith; always in that order, repentance and faith. If you’re having difficulty with faith, try repentance. There’s nothing so damning, so debilitating, so stultifying to faith, as sin in the heart. “Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” The writer here is talking about running a race, and he says, “Get rid of that excess weight, and lay aside every sin that doth so easily beset us.”

III. There Is a Price to Pay

There is a price to pay, also. Not only a person to prepare, but a price to pay. Look, if you will, again, in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 1: “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us—now, watch this—and run with patience the race that is set before us.” Now, that word patience doesn’t mean the ability to thread a needle. That word patience literally means endurance. It means bearing up under some load, some challenge. Are you looking for an easy way, a cheap way, a lazy way, to serve God? All honey and no bees, a life of ease. You just want to just say, “Oh, I’m so happy in Jesus.” Listen again to your pastor now. This business of running this race means that you’re going to be at it with all of your heart.

Did you notice the young man on the screen running? Did you notice how intense he was? You may be on a sick bed hearing this later on television, or you may be here, with some aid to help you to walk. There are some here this morning in wheelchairs. But none is excluded. We are to run. We are to run with endurance. If you’re in this race, you need to pray over it, you need to weep over it, you need to study over it, you need to work over it. And, if we possess it, it must possess others. What I’m trying to say is this matter of being saved and running the race is a full-time occupation. God does business with those that mean business.

Do you pay a price, I mean, some extra time in the morning, to get into the Word of God? Do you pay the price of being ridiculed because you keep your Bible on your desk in the office, and bow your head and thank God for His gracious goodness to you when He gives you a meal? Are you willing to be different from the crowd? You're going to find out that, when you're running this race, you're running right against the grain. Don't get the idea that there's the broad road and the narrow road, and the narrow road runs alongside the broad road, and over here a bunch of people going this way, and over here you're going this way—no, no. Here's the broad way, and here you are right in the middle of it going the other way. What we believe starts at a different source, it follows a different course, it is ending at a different conclusion, and there is a price to pay. Very frankly, modern Americans don't like that idea of a price to pay. We say, "Well, Pastor, I'm saved by grace, and so I'm just going to just float on into heaven on flowery beds of ease." No. A disciple is one who follows his master, who obeys his master, and there is a price to pay.

So many people run, and then they quit running. Some of you used to run, but you don't run anymore. You say, "Well, the church is doing fine now. It's time for me to pull back the throttle." It is never time for you to pull back the throttle. You say, "Well, I don't need to give now like I used to give." No, you're right. You need to give more. Listen, my friends. You are to finish your course. I don't care how far ahead you are in any race—if you stop running, you're going to lose the race. I don't care how far ahead you are. You are to finish your course. Jesus bowed His head on the cross, and said, "It is finished." The apostle Paul said, "I have finished my course." And I'll tell you something for the man, Adrian. When I take my last breath, my race will be over—not until then—and I want to finish, I want to go across that line with a burst of energy, I mean, with every part of my body pumping for the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to finish that way. Don't you want to finish that way? Don't quit. Don't slack up. I don't care how far ahead you are—if you stop running, you're going to lose. There's a price to pay.

IV. There Is a Promise to Plead

Next, there's a promise to plead. I thank God for this. This is the good part. Look in verse 2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." You say, "Pastor, I don't see the promise there." The promise is, if we will look to Jesus, Jesus will be the author and finisher of our faith. He is the author of our faith. The word author there literally means in the Greek language, example, or leader, or the originator. Jesus is the example of faith, but He's also the originator of our faith. Faith comes from beholding the Lord Jesus Christ, looking at the

Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, all of these other heroes of the faith that we mentioned there in Hebrews chapter 11, they can cheer us on, but they're not really our chief example. Our chief example is one who never sinned, who never failed. His name is Jesus. And, if you want faith, not only get the sin out of your heart and life, not only lay aside the weights, but fix your eyes upon Jesus Christ.

I spoke this morning to our New Members Breakfast, the Discovery Class. I told them, "If you come to Bellevue Baptist Church looking for something to criticize, you can find it starting with the man in the pulpit. But, if you come looking for a blessing, you can find a blessing." It all depends on what you come looking for this morning what you're going to see. But I'm going to tell you something else. You can find fault with Mark Dougharty, Adrian Rogers, or these other fellows, especially Jim Whitmire. You can find fault with them, but nobody's going to find fault with the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do, you're insane. Looking unto Jesus. Take your eyes off the faults of those for whom Jesus died, and put your eyes upon Jesus Christ, and I'm telling you, your faith will grow. The more you behold the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to find out that He is the author and the finisher. He's the one who originates the grace. He's the one that fires the gun. He's the goal toward which we run. And He is the coach who runs alongside us, and gives us courage, and gives us strength to run the race. It is Jesus all the way—looking to Jesus. Keep your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, and your faith will grow.

You know, it's really not a compliment to us to call ourselves a great person of faith. Now, you ought to be great in your faith, but don't boast about your great faith. I've often used this illustration: I have a wife, a lovely wife, a beautiful wife. I love her with all of my heart. Someone may ask me this question: "Adrian, when you're out of town, who keeps an eye on Joyce for you?" "Well, what do you mean?" "Well, how do you know she doesn't have a boyfriend?" I'm not worried about that. "How do you know she's not misusing your money?" I'm not worried about that. "You mean you don't have somebody to watch her every minute while you're gone to make sure that she's behaving?" No, not at all. "Wow, what a great man of faith." I say, "No, what a great wife—what a great wife." You see, friend, I can't boast that I have faith in Joyce. I can boast in Joyce that I have faith in. It is not so much great faith in God that we need as it is faith in a great God. What a wonderful Savior we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look to Jesus. Lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us. Fix your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This word, look to Jesus, literally means, looking away from everything else, and looking at Jesus.

The youngster who was running the race was not looking up and around, and looking over his shoulder. He was looking straight ahead. Keep your eyes upon Jesus.

Don't even look at your look. Don't put faith in faith. Put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. There Is a Prize to Possess

Next, not only is there a promise to plead, and I'm telling you this promise is that, if you'll put your eyes upon Jesus, you're going to find He's going to be the author and finisher of your faith, but there's a prize to possess—there's a prize to possess. When you run, you run to win a trophy, a prize. Look, if you will, here in verse 2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him"—what is the joy that is set before Him? It's winning the race—"endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Jesus is our example. He is a champion who, when He ran His race, received a crown of joy. And it was that crown, according to this scripture, that gave Him the ability to endure. Remember I said there's a price to pay? Well, you'll pay the price if you keep the crown in mind. And, if you keep the crown in mind, you can bear the cross. But you cannot have the crown if you despise the cross. We're crucified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, I remind you that, in the Olympic games, if a man won the Olympics, his name was proclaimed, his family was announced, his country was called out, friends admired him, and would cover his path with flowers. He was presented with costly gifts. Poets with national reputations wrote hymns about this young man. You can see why back in this day people wanted to win in the Olympic or the Isthmian Games, because of the crown that they would receive.

Now, I've watched the Olympics. I love to watch the Olympics. I love to watch those runners. When I watch those people, or those gymnasts, do you know what it does to me? It makes me want to be a better Christian. I think of that verse that Paul said, "they for a corruptible crown...."

I have a few trophies that back in my olden days I won. We had a championship team. I got a gold football. And I lettered in sports, so I got a letter sweater with PB on it, Palm Beach. Should have stood for Poor Boy. I got a silver cup like this. Somebody broke in the house and got the gold football. I don't know who has that, but it's gone. The old sweater—the moths had a camp meeting in it. It's gone. There are no more letters on that letter sweater. I don't know where that is. The trophy—I haven't got the foggiest where it is. What happened to it I don't know. I had a football. It was a great game we won, and I was captain of the team and got the football. I made the mistake of letting some boys play with it. It's gone. It's gone. Friend, they for a corruptible crown; we for an incorruptible. Jesus, running the race, had the joy that was set before Him, and He endured the cross. He despised the shame. There is a prize to possess. Here's

what Paul said to those in Thessalonica—1 Thessalonians 2, verse 19: “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” You know what Paul was saying? “When Jesus comes, my crown is going to those that I’ve led to Him.” Now, that’s a crown that doesn’t corrupt. When you die and go to heaven, are you going to take somebody with you, or are you going to heaven alone? Must I go and empty-handed, must I meet my Savior so; without one soul with which to greet Him, must I empty-handed go?

Conclusion

Now, I don’t want to hurt your feelings, but I want you to look up here at me. I’m not mad at you, but I’m concerned because most of the people in our church are not active soul winners. That’s tragic. You say, “But, Pastor, I give my money.” I don’t care how much money you give, if you’re not endeavoring to bring souls to Christ, you’re not right with God. You say, “Well, I teach.” I don’t care how eloquently you teach, if you’re not trying to bring souls to Jesus, you’re not right with God. You say, “Well, I attend faithfully.” I don’t care how much you attend, if you’re not trying to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you are not right with God. Well, you say, “I live a clean, moral life.” I don’t care how circumspectly you walk, if you’re not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you are not right with God. Andrew Murray said, “There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders.” You’re one or the other. If you don’t have a passion to see people come to the Lord Jesus Christ, I wonder if you know the Jesus that I know. Now, we cannot win people every time we try, because that’s the work of the Holy Spirit, and, also, they must yield their hearts to Jesus Christ, and you cannot control what they do. But I am telling you, my dear brother, my dear sister, there is a crown. It’s the soul winner’s crown. I want to be standing at the feet of Jesus, and this may sound syrupy or sentimental, and it may not be just this way, but I’d like for somebody to take me by the hand, and say, “Adrian, lets go meet Jesus. I want to tell Him you’re the one that led me to Him.” It won’t be just like that, but I want a crown. I want the soul winner’s crown. I want the victor’s crown. Notice, again, Philippians 3, what Paul says in verses 13 and 14: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended—that is, I haven’t finished yet. I haven’t just left nothing else to do—I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do—now, notice this is the way a runner runs—this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Now, when did Paul say this? Late in his ministry. Here’s the apostle Paul writing, and saying, “I am running a race.” Now, certainly, you wouldn’t look at him as a physical specimen. He had weak eyes, most likely. He had been beaten with rods and stones, left for death.

He'd been pickled in the Mediterranean. He had vegetated in jails. I see little old Paul out there, and that bald pate, that sunken chest, those knobby, wobbly knees, and he is saying, "I'm running. I'm running. I see the goal. I'm pressing toward the goal. I'm not there yet, but I am running." That's the reason he said over there in the Book of Acts, "I have finished my course."

In a few years—I'm looking at you right now—in a few years, most of you will be gone and out of here. And some of you younger ones are going to die untimely deaths. But I'm talking about people—you're 40, 50, 60, 70—you're going to be gone. All the soul winning you're ever going to do you're going to do in this world, in this life. All of the sacrifices you're going to ever make for Jesus you're going to make now. Finish your course. Friend, finish your course. There is a prize to possess. Listen to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 24: "Know ye not that they who run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." Do you want the prize? That's the reason why I said, look, you can be an athlete. You're on a sick bed? You can be an athlete. No money? You can be an athlete. Debilitating disease? You can be an athlete. No matter who you are, where you are, what age you are, whatever you have, you can be like the apostle Paul, and say, "I've finished my course."

There's old Paul. He's in that Mamertine Prison ready to die, and Paul said, you know, he said, "It's heads or tails for me. For me to live is Christ; to die is gain. Heads I win; tails I win. It makes no difference." About that time, the jail door rattles. The jailer says, "Get up, Paul; let's go." Already Paul's perhaps heard that executioner sharpening his ax outside his cell door. "I hate to tell you, Paul, but this is your day. They're going to take off your head." "Oh, that's all right, brother; you're just doing your job. Let's go." Paul starts out of that prison. They're walking along, and the guard says, "Are you humming a song?" "Oh, I didn't know you could hear me. I'm sorry. I was just humming a little song that Jim Whitmire taught me: It will be worth it all when we see Jesus." "But, Paul, aren't you afraid?" "No, brother, I die daily. I've done this many times; not physically, but my life has been given to the Lord a long time ago." They bring him there down by the Tiber River that's going to drink up his blood. They put his head on the executioner's block. The ax is gleaming in the air. "We always give a prisoner some last words, Paul. Do you have any last words?" "Yes, friend, I do. Jesus is Lord—Jesus is Lord." The ax falls; the head falls in a basket. The next scene is heaven, and there's Paul. He's looking into the face of Jesus, the same one he met on the Damascus Road. What do you think he said? I don't know what he said, but I'll tell you what I think he said: "Lord, I wasn't big. I wasn't strong. But, Lord, I sure did run. And, Lord, I have finished my course—I have finished my course." And what did Jesus say to him? Well, I don't know, I wasn't there, but I think I know. It was something like this—Jesus said,

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You’ve been faithful over a few things; I’ll make you ruler over many.”

I want to remind you that salvation is not a gift at the end of the race, or a prize at the end of the race; it’s the gift that puts us in the race. But I don’t want to get the booby prize when I get to heaven, do you? And don’t you count yourself out. No matter how young, how old, how rich, how poor, God has a race for you to run. And, if you’ll run it, you’ll say, “It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus.”

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you ask the Lord to make you a spiritual athlete. Remember, you don’t have any excuse. Paul ran a race when he was in prison. Paul ran a race, when he had nothing, when he had plenty. Would you pray, God, make me a champion of faith, and help me to run like a champion. Now, how many in this building could say, “Pastor Rogers, I am absolutely certain, if I died today, I would go to heaven, not because of my good deeds, not because of the way I’ve run the race, not because of what I have given; I am confident that I would go to heaven because I have repented of my sin, trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, and that has made a difference in my life that has resulted in me becoming a new creature; I have been saved by grace, but I have the evidence of a changed life? If you can give me testimony like that, would you just lift your hand and hold it up where I may see it. Thank God for it. Now, take it down. If you couldn’t lift your hand, I’ve got some wonderful news for you. The Lord Jesus Christ wants to save you, He will save you, and He’ll save you right now. May I lead you in a prayer. And, if you say, “Pastor Rogers, I could not lift my hand, but I wish I could, I want to know for certain that I’m saved,” let’s get it settled right now. Would you pray this prayer: Dear God, I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. I need to be saved. Lord Jesus, You died to save me. You shed Your blood for me. You were raised from the dead. You are the Son of God. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray it. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Were you sincere? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And now, Lord Jesus, I’m at the starting block, and I’m going to run the race of life for You, because You’ve saved me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. I’m going to ask you, if you prayed that prayer, to do something wonderful. I’m going to ask you to declare your faith in Jesus Christ by coming forward in this service. We call this the invitation time. We sing a hymn. A minister of our church stands at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front. And for those in the balcony, someone will be under that banner to my right that says Redeemer in that

corner, or this one up here that says Messiah for those of you in the balcony. We're going to sing this song that says, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive, Lord, I confess You now." If you believed, and if you received, and said, "Lord, save me," the next step is for you to make it public, and I want you to leave your seat, and come forward, and tell the minister, say this: I'm trusting Jesus. We'll rejoice with you, give you some Scripture to stand on, and seal it in prayer. Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. If you confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father in heaven." So I'm going to ask you to come and do that. Others of you who need a church home, I want you to come also. If you know that you're saved, but you don't have a church home, or you're looking for a new church home, you believe as we believe and want to be a growing Christian, you know Christ as your Savior, then you come, and say, "I want to place my membership here." If you're with a friend that needs to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus Christ. Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave until the benediction. It'll be just a few moments. Lets pray one more time. Lord Jesus, I pray now that You would touch the hearts of people, that they would obey You and follow You. In Your holy name. Amen.

Lets stand together.

How to Run Like a Champion

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 8, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1–2

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is a Purpose to Pursue
- II. There Is a Person to Prepare
- III. There Is a Price to Pay
- IV. There Is a Promise to Plead
- V. There Is a Prize to Possess

Conclusion

Introduction

How wonderful.

Take your Bibles and turn, please, to Hebrews chapter 12. And this is the last message on Champions of Faith. We've come all the way through Hebrews chapter 11, of those who ran the race, and now a challenge comes to us. Let me read to you Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: "Wherefore...—now, the wherefore refers to everything that He's already given us in chapter 11 and this wonderful Hall of Heroes, Champions of the Faith—Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

I want you to watch a young man run here, and see what lessons we can learn as he comes up there on the screen. He's getting set. He's full of anticipation. Every muscle is tense, and he starts. A good start has a lot to do with it. Now, he's running. He's running with all of his might. And notice, he has a lane to run in. And so he's straining now every muscle, every sinew, every corpuscle. He's working toward the goal. He's breathing hard. Actually, right about now, he's beginning to hurt a little bit, but he's running, and he will not slow down, because the goal is before him. Look at his face. See the determination, and there he finishes the goal. It's an interesting race. Nobody else on the track but him. He has his own race to run, and so do you. Well, you say, "Pastor Rogers, I wish I were young like that young man. I would do some running." You may be 90—I'm talking to you. You may be in a wheelchair—I'm talking to you. You may be on a sick bed—I'm talking to you. You may have disease—I'm talking to you. You may

have palpitations and flutters—I'm talking to you. There's not a mother's child in this building that I'm not talking to about running the race.

Now, it is true that sometimes physical things keep us from running as we ought. Former athletes look back on the olden days. And I can remember playing football in high school, and went to college on a football scholarship, and I thought, well, that's a good game to play. I don't play any football anymore. But I can remember that as a younger preacher when we would have holidays, maybe it would be Thanksgiving, or maybe the 4th of July, or maybe it would be New Year's Day, or Labor Day, or whatever, I would ask the young men in the church to meet me out on the football field, and we'd play touch football. Now, remember, I was a much younger man, and I loved to get the deacons out and knock them around, and loved to get the youngsters out and outrun them, and they'd say, "Look at the preacher—look at the preacher." And, well, that was good for my ego, and a chance for me just to kind of show off. And I can remember, like it was yesterday, we were playing touch football and Larry Freshour had the football. It was about as far as from here to that—Larry. And I decided I would run him down and tag him. But do you know what? The closer I got to him, the further he was away, and the last time I saw him, he was clean out of sight. I realized that these legs were not what they used to be, and my mind was making contracts that my body could not fulfill. Now, that happens. That happens in life. But, friend, in your spiritual life, you're to be forever an athlete—forever now. The Bible says, "Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day." And you can run for Jesus from a sick bed. You can run for Jesus, no matter what your physical or emotional condition is, if you will run.

Now, whoever wrote Hebrews—and I believe it was Paul—lived in a world that was enamored with sports, very much like our day is enamored with sports. They had three great events that were comparable to Super Bowl. They had the Olympic games that began at Mount Olympus; they had the Isthmian games, and these were run at Corinth; and they had the Pythian games that were run at Greece. And they were staged throughout the year, so those people who were sports fanatics could go from one to the other, and to the other, very much like our day.

A man said to his wife, "Now, before the football season starts, is there anything you want to say to me?" We love sports. And Paul, evidently, loved sports, because he talked about running. He talked about wrestling. He talked about boxing. He was savant and aware of sports. And he uses the analogy here—or whoever wrote Hebrews—of the Christian life, and he says, "It is like running a race." So, look up here, and let me tell you, folks, you're the one now on the field. The heroes of the past are gone. And now the Bible speaks to us, and he tells us that the heroes of the past are in the stadium.

They're watching us. Now, we are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. There they are from the heavens peering down. Now, there are some commentators who say no, that's not what it means. It's not that they are witnessing us running; they are witnessing to us. I think it's both. They witness to us, but the Bible says we're compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses. And so, there they are. They're watching us. People ask, "Do people in heaven know what's going on here on earth?" Why should they not? Why should they not? They're made one with our Lord. He knows. As a matter of fact, when Dr. Sidlow Baxter was here, he said something that shocked me, but I thought about it, and I think perhaps he's correct. He said, "Those in heaven are praying for us." He said, "We are made one with our Lord, and He forever intercedes." And so He intercedes for us, the Heavenly Father. Why should not the saints up there in heaven, as they look down at us on the track running the race, cheer us on, and move us on with their prayer?

So, look up here. Those of you in the balcony, you and you and you—and if I didn't point my finger at you, you—all of you are called to run a race. You are called to be a spiritual athlete. "Wherefore, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run." So let me tell you some things about how to be a champion, and run like a champion, because this Book of Hebrews is not written just to inform us as to what others did, but to encourage us to do what we ought to do, because he says, "Wherefore..." Because they did what they did, now, wherefore, let's see what God wants us to do. All right, let me give you some points. Are you ready to jot them down?

I. There Is a Purpose to Pursue

First of all, friend, there is a purpose to pursue—there is a purpose to pursue. You're not just here to draw your breath, draw your salary, just endure. You are to be a spiritual athlete, and there is a race for you to run. Look in verse 1: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses—there they are, rank after rank, in the stadium—let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run."

Now, God has a race for you to run, and you never get over the race until you draw your last breath. There's no way for you to retire. There's no way for you to quit. There's no way for you to move aside. Now, we're not running to make it to heaven—no, no, no—salvation is what puts you in the race. You have to get saved even to get at the starting block. You have to be born again to qualify for this race. No man could run in the Olympic games—that's what our writer is referring to, I believe—unless he was a citizen of that country for which he ran. You have to be a citizen of heaven to get in this race. No one is excused. The apostle Paul, when he was late in life, said this, in

Philippians chapter 3, verse 14: “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” That is, I’m running for the tape, and I’m pressing with every inch and every ounce of me. And then, he said, in Acts chapter 20, verse 24: “that I might finish my course with joy.” Paul said, “I’m not going to stop running until the race is over.”

Now, the young man that we watched was running against himself. He was trying to do his best. Do you know we’re not in a race with one another? As far as one another is concerned, we’re in a pilgrimage. I’m not trying to outdo you and outrun you, but I am in a race; I am in a race today against sin, against Satan, against self. You know, it’s kind of bad in a church where you have people trying to outdo somebody else. I’m not in competition with you. You don’t need to be in competition with me.

I heard about two men who were out hiking, and they looked behind them, and there was a giant grizzly bear sniffing at their tracks. One man sat down on a log, took off his hiking boots, and began to put on his running shoes, and his friend said, “Well, why are you doing that? You can’t outrun this bear.” He said, “I’m not going to outrun the bear. I’m just going to outrun you.” We’re not in that kind of a race. We’re in this thing together. And I’m not racing against you, and you’re not racing against me, but God has put me in a race, and there is a purpose to my life. And God have mercy on you, if you don’t have a purpose for your life, just drawing your breath, and drawing your salary. No, you are in the race. There is a purpose to pursue. Do you have a purpose for your life? Do you? We’re going to be talking a lot in the coming months about a purpose for your life. But there is a purpose to pursue.

II. There Is a Person to Prepare

Number two: If there is a purpose to pursue, there is a person to prepare, and that person is you. Now, no athlete can run a race who does not prepare to run that race. And so, how do we prepare? Well, look again in verse 1: “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Now, he says, “In order to run a race, first of all, you’ve got to lay aside every weight. These are the things that would slow us down.

Now, you notice the young man that was running in the film that you saw. One thing you noticed about him was that he had stripped down to be as light as he possibly could. His shoes are track shoes. His uniform, every unnecessary part just taken away. Nobody runs a race in an overcoat; at least, I’ve never seen one run a race in an overcoat. Why? Because an overcoat would weigh you down. Nobody wants to run with pockets full of lead. Now, what he is saying is there are certain things that may not be

wrong in themselves; but if they are weights, get rid of them. I think that we have a lot of people in our congregation today who are living fairly good lives, but they're just dragging around a lot of excess baggage. They can't do what they ought to do for the Lord Jesus Christ because of the excess baggage. It may be a hobby. It may be a vacation home. And if you have one, I'm happy for you, until it keeps you from running your race. It may be some friendship. It may be some reading material. Not bad in itself. You just don't wear an overcoat when you're running a race.

Listen to me, folks. Life would be simple if it were a choice between good and bad. It's a choice between good and best, and good things become bad things when they keep you from best things. Good things become bad things when they keep you from best things. Lay aside every weight. And, in my life, I've had to come up against some things that I really wanted to do, things that I loved and would enjoy doing, but I said, "No, that's not for me." Now, there's no law in the Bible that said I can't do it. That's what the apostle Paul meant, when he said, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient." That's a word we don't use a whole lot, isn't it? Expedient. When you think of expedient, what do you think of? What's another word like it? Expedition. If you're on an expedition, you're going somewhere. Paul says, "Everything may be lawful for me, but, if it doesn't help me in my expedition, if it's not expedient, if it's an anchor that keeps me out of the harbor, then I've got to lay it aside." Now, I can't tell you what it may be, but is there something that is hobbling your influence for Christ? Is there, perhaps, a job in the church that you could do, or perhaps some witnessing that you could do, or something else, but there's something competing there, and you're not running as well as you ought to run? You lay aside every weight.

And then, "the sin that doth so easily beset us." And the word beset is a word which literally means, in the Greek, to entangle. Now, there are some things that weigh us down, and we need to get rid of them. There are other things that trip us up. Sin will trip you up. You lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us.

Most of us want more faith, right? May I tell you the most deadening thing to faith is sin. Faith and sin are antithetical. And you say, "Well, why don't I have more faith than I have?" Well, it's because you've got sin in your life. You say, "Pastor, you ought not to talk to me that way." Well, you come up after the service and apologize to me, and I'll forgive you. Sin in your life keeps you from believing God. That's the reason the same writer of Hebrews said, "Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." You say, "Well, I have intellectual problems." No, you've got dirty, rotten sin, an evil heart of unbelief. You say, "Well now, wait a minute. I know some intellectuals who don't believe." Well, I know some intellectuals who do. You say, "Well, I know some very plain and uneducated people who believe." I know some plain and uneducated people who

don't. What we believe is not contrary to reason; it just goes beyond reason. Unbelief never comes out of the head; it comes out of the heart. "Beware, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." The Holy Spirit is come to convince the world of sin, because they believe not. Unbelief is not an intellectual problem. It may show as an intellectual problem, but down in the heart it is sin. And, if you're going to run the race, and the race is the race of faith, you have to get rid of those things that weigh you down, and get rid of those things that trip you up.

Now, I don't know what your sin is. People have a besetting sin, something they come back to, and fail at over and over and over again. Now, I can't look at you. You all look holy this morning. You all just look so sanctified. But look into your heart. Is there a besetting sin, something that you wrestle with over and over and over again, and you wonder why you don't have the faith that you ought to have? Lay aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us. What I'm trying to say is this: if you're having difficulty with faith, try repentance. Did you know that God puts certain things in order in the Bible? For example, the Bible says, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you." Grace always comes before peace. It never says peace and grace—always grace and peace. Again, here's another order: "Believe and be baptized." The Bible never says be baptized and believe. We don't baptize little babies. They can't believe. The Bible teaches believers' baptism: "if thou believest with all thine heart." Now, if you were immersed or sprinkled or something before you were saved, that doesn't count as baptism. That's like having your funeral before you die. God's order is believe and be baptized. You say, "Well, Pastor, what are you driving at?" Well, just as the Bible speaks of grace and peace, belief and baptism, it speaks of repentance and faith; in that order, repentance and faith. If you're having difficulty, I say, with faith, try repentance. There's nothing more debilitating, more stultifying, to faith in your heart as a harbored sin, sin that doth so easily beset us. And so, if you're going to run a race, there's got to be some conditioning. There is a person to prepare. You lay aside the weights, and you do away with that sin by confession and repentance that would trip you up and cause you to fail in your race. There is a person to prepare.

III. There Is a Price to Pay

Now, next thing I want you to see. There is a price to pay. One thing you noticed about that young man was he was straining. He was breathing. I've done enough running, and so have some of you, to know that, in a sprint like that, when you get to the finish line, your lungs are like they're on fire. You say, "If I can just reach that finish line," but you're taking that one more step. You pay a price to be an athlete. Now, look at it again here in Hebrews 12:1: "Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so

great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us—now, here’s the price—and run with patience the race that is set before us.” Now, the word patience here doesn’t mean the ability to thread a needle. The word patience is a much heavier word than that. It means endurance. Endurance is a chief factor in running a race. Now, listen. I don’t care how far ahead you may be in any race—if you quit running, you’re going to lose. You’re going to lose. I don’t care how far ahead you are, you’re going to lose, if you quit running. “Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” Are you looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way, to serve God? Forget it. You’re not going to find it. We’re called on to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We’re called on to run with patience, endurance, the race that is set before us. If you possess it, it must possess you. You must weep over it, pray over it, work over it, concentrate on it. Nobody just ambles over the finish line. You set your heart, your mind, and you finish your course. Second Timothy chapter 4, verse 7—Paul said, “I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course—I have finished my course.” He did not quit running until the course was finished. John 19, verse 30: “When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” They endured. So must you endure. One of these days, we’re going to cross the finish line. I’m looking at this congregation, and I daresay, in 50 years, hardly any of us will be alive; 25 years, a great number will be gone; and, if we meet again next year, by God’s mercies, some will have already gone on. You will have come to the end of the line. We don’t know when that’s going to be. You may be a teen, but you might be at the very end of your course. One of these days, however, I’m going to breathe my last breath, and I’m not going to stop running, God helping me, until I do. I don’t want to stroll over the finish line. I want to hit the finish line with a blaze of energy and power, going for the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, you’ll be an old coot.” It makes no difference—it makes no difference. “Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day.” That’s the reason you ought to be an athlete, no matter what your physical condition is, no matter what your economic condition. You are in a race, and that race is not over until you bow your head like the Lord Jesus, and say, “It is finished. It is done.” There is a price to pay.

IV. There Is a Promise to Plead

And next, there’s a promise to plead, because it may sound difficult to you today, and many of you are saying, “Well, I don’t think I’m able to do what the Pastor is preaching about today.” Well, the Lord God who calls you is the Lord God who enables you. Notice verse 2. We’re to be “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Now, this passage of Scripture says that we’re to be looking unto Jesus. Why? Because He is the author and the finisher of our faith. He is the originator of our faith, and He is the goal of our faith. You see, our Lord has not just told us to go out and do our best. If the Lord Jesus Christ wants me to have faith, He is the author. That word means file leader, example, originator. He is the author of the faith. Faith is not something that I can conjure up. I can’t make myself believe. Jesus gives me faith—Jesus gives me faith. He is the author of my faith, and He is the finisher of my faith. That is, He’s the one to whom I am running. He is the goal, as well as the coach, as well as the one who fires the gun at the starting block. From A to Z, He is the author, the finisher of our faith. Faith comes by looking to Jesus, looking unto Jesus. Now, that doesn’t say, looking at Jesus. There’s a subtle thing here, but I want you to notice the difference. Jesus is not merely our example. He is our example; but this says, looking unto Jesus. Suppose now that I get into trouble, financial difficulty, and I come to Mark, and Mark’s got gazillions and billions of dollars. Don’t you, Mark? All right, so I come to Mark. I say, “Mark, I am in a deep trouble.” And he says, “Look to me. I’ll take care of it. Just look to me.” It doesn’t mean, look at Him, but look unto Him, depend upon Him. That’s what this verse means when it says, “Looking unto Jesus.” “Jesus, I look to You. You’re the one who is going to put faith in my heart. You’re the one who’s going to encourage me along the way. You are the author and the finisher of our faith.” That’s the reason I frequently say that it’s really not a big compliment to call somebody a great man of faith. Now, I hope that you’re a great man of faith, and I hope you’re a man of great faith, or a woman of great faith. If you are, that’s wonderful, but you can’t boast about it, because Jesus is the author and the finisher of your faith, isn’t He? And He’s the one that you gain faith from by looking unto Him.

I often use this example. People say, “Pastor, do you travel?” Yes, some. “Well, does Joyce always go with you?” Not always. “Well, when you are away from home, who keeps an eye on Joyce? Who watches her for you?” I say, “What do you mean?” “Well, how do you know she doesn’t have a boyfriend?” or, “How do you know that she’s not going down to the casinos or whatever while you’re gone?” I’m not worried about it. “Not worried?” Not worried. “Not at all?” Not at all. “Not even a little bit?” None, nada, none. Don’t worry about it. “Oh,” you say, “what great faith.” I said, “No, what a great wife.” Amen? What a great wife. So, if I have faith in God, I really shouldn’t take a lot of credit for it. Although I want faith, I don’t say, what a great believer I am. I say, what a great Savior I have, you see. “Looking unto Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of our faith.” Now, the God who calls us to run this race is the God who empowers us, and Jesus is the one, if you will keep your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this word looking unto is a Greek word, a technical word, that means looking away from everything else unto Jesus. Don't let the devil sidetrack you. Remember the young man running? His eye is on the goal. Anything that takes your eyes from Jesus is wrong for you, and foolish if you're running a race.

V. There Is a Prize to Possess

Now, there is, therefore, friend, a promise to plead, but also there is a prize to possess. When you run a race, you run for the prize. Jesus was running a race. And you see, Jesus is not only our example, but He is our empowerment. And notice here in chapter 12, verse 2: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who...—watch it—who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..."—remember we're supposed to run with endurance. Jesus was running a race from that cross, and He bowed His head when He hit the finish line, and said, "It is finished"—"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." You know, Jesus was running the race because He saw you and He saw me today. This is the joy that was set before Him, to have those like us, who believe in Him, who worship Him, who praise Him, and Jesus endured the cross, and paid that price on bloody Calvary, that we might be here today and enjoy what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there's a crown for everyone who wins the race. And remember, we're not in competition with one another. It's a different kind of a race.

Back in Bible times, in the natural realm, when a man would win the race, his name was proclaimed, his family was honored, his country was called out, friends would scatter his path with flowers, he was presented with costly gifts, hymns were written about him, his hometown was honored, famous sculptors would do sculpturing of him, and his way was paid through life, if he were to win the Olympic games. You can see why they strived so hard to win that kind of a game. But, oh, how much more we, when we see the Lord Jesus Christ and receive the crown. I was looking at these scriptures. The apostle Paul said to those in Thessalonica—1 Thessalonians 2, verse 19: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" Do you know what he's saying? "Look," Paul says, "one of these days I'm going to see Jesus face to face. When He comes, at His coming, I'll see Him." Now, Paul didn't know he was going to die and go to heaven even before Jesus came, so he's anticipating Jesus coming. And he said, "I want a crown." And he said, "What is my crown? You saints at Thessalonica that I won to Christ. You are my crown. You are my joy."

May I ask you a personal question? Thank you. Have you ever led anybody to Jesus

Christ? When you meet Jesus face to face, will there be some people of which you can say, "Lord Jesus, this is my crown; this is my joy." Won't anybody take you by the hand and lead you to the throne and say, "Lord Jesus, this is John, this is Suzy, this is Mary; They're the one that introduced me to You"? Must I go and empty-handed, must I meet my Savior so; without one soul with which to greet Him, must I empty-handed go?

Don't leave this service this morning without promising yourself by the grace of God that you will become a soul winner. You say, "Pastor Rogers, I'm not trained." Well, get trained. You say, "Well, I can't win an adult." Then win a child. You say, "Well, I can't win somebody in my family." Then win somebody in somebody else's family. Folks, there is a crown. There's a prize to possess. Now, you say, "Well, what do you want with a crown, Adrian?" I'll tell you what I want. I want a crown to lay at Jesus' feet. That's what I want: I want a crown to lay at Jesus' feet. I don't want to go prancing around heaven with a crown on my head. That's not it. I want a crown to lay at the Jesus' feet.

You know, the apostle Paul said, "I've finished my course." He's writing from prison, a musty, dusty old prison, the Mamertine Prison. And, in just a little while, they're going to cut off his head. Perhaps outside that prison he can hear the executioner sharpening his lethal ax. And so, Paul is writing to young Timothy, and he says, "The time of my departure is at hand. I'm ready to be offered. I've fought a good fight. I've kept the faith. I've finished my course." He sees the tape now. He knows he's coming to the end. They rattle the jail door, the cell door. A Roman guard says, "Paul." "Yes." "Come, it's your time." Paul says, "All right. Be right there. Just a moment. Thank You, Lord Jesus." They open the door, and out he goes. We don't have any photographs of Paul, but I just kind of imagine him as a kind of a little stooped-shouldered, hollow-chested, bald-pated man with poor eyesight. I mean, you consider what his body has been through. He's been stoned and left for dead. He's been beaten with rods. He's been whipped with a cat-of-nine-tails. His body has been pickled in the Mediterranean. He spent many, many days in prison. He's been abused and scorned. He's fasted. He couldn't be a great physical specimen at this time. Those knobby knees, and the guard behind him. He's making his way down to the executioner's block. And the guard says, "Is that you that I hear singing?" "Oh," he said, "I didn't know you could hear me. That's just a little song I learned that Jim Whitmire taught me: It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase, so gladly run the race till we see Jesus." Run the race, my precious friend, run. I don't know what happened exactly, but I think it happened this way. They said, "Paul, kneel. Put your head on that block. Now, Paul, do you have anything else to say before the ax falls?" "Yes, I'd like to say that Jesus Christ is Lord." The ax falls. The head topples in the basket. His blood runs down to the Tiber

River. The next scene is heaven. Paul is face to face with Jesus Christ. What did Paul say? I don't know what he said. I'll tell you what I think he could have said. "Lord, I wasn't much. I wasn't big. I wasn't strong. But, Lord, I fought a good fight. I kept the faith. I have finished my course." And what did Jesus say? Well, I don't know for certain, because I wasn't there. I'll tell you what I think He said, something like this: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a few things. I will make you ruler over many." And there in the glory, Paul is singing eternal praises to God, and glad that he ran the race, and that he did not quit, and that he finished his course.

And that's what we all need to do. We need to finish our course with joy, run the race that is set before us. We're not in competition with one another. I can't do what you can do. You can't do what I can do. But there's one thing we can all do is look to Jesus and be faithful. He is the author and the finisher of our faith.

What a tragedy it would be, what folly it would be, for us to study these champions of faith, and then to go on living the same way that we live. There is a race to run. There is a price to pay. There is a prize to possess.

Conclusion

Now, you say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I don't like that kind of preaching, because I just kind of want to coast on into heaven on flowery beds of ease. I just want it to be all honey and no bees. I just want to have it easy." Well, friend, one of these days, you'll wish that you'd been faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. We're not saved by works, but we're rewarded according to our works. Don't you want to hear the Master say, "Well done?" Don't you want to hear Jesus say, "God bless you, son. Here's a crown, a soul winner's crown?"

Would you bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. How many in this building could say, "Pastor Rogers, I'm in the race because I've been saved, God has saved me, and I am assured by His Word and by His Spirit in my heart that I have eternal life; I know that I know that, if I died today, I would go straight to heaven? Would you lift your hand. That's wonderful. Take them down. Now, how many could say, "Pastor Rogers, I'm not saved, or at least I'm not certain that I'm saved like some of these folks; I would like to be certain; I would like to know that I'm saved; if there's any way to have that assurance, I want it"? Well, friend, there is a way to have it, and that is to trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. And the Bible says—an absolute promise—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." And then, the Bible says that whosoever will do that will be saved, whoever believes on Him, whosoever, shall not perish. Now, it doesn't mean intellectual belief; it means trust. When you trust Jesus, every sin is forgiven, Christ comes into your heart to give you

joy, peace, power, purpose, and guidance. And then, when you die, or when Jesus comes again, He takes you home to heaven. Let me guide you in a prayer and help you to receive Christ. If you're not certain, let's get certain right now. Lord Jesus, I am a sinner, and I'm lost, and I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me and shed Your blood to pay for my sin. God raised You from the dead, and I believe that You are the only Savior of the world, and I trust You only right now to save me. I don't ask, Lord, for some emotional feeling. I don't ask for some sign. I just trust You right now. I stand on Your Word. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Friend, pray that from your heart. Save me. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then pray this way: Thank You for doing it. I believe You have, and I thank You for it. Now, give me the courage to make it public. Help me never, ever to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage now to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

“Pastor Rogers, why did you put that last part on there—give me the courage to make it public?” Because God's plan is for you to believe, to receive, and then to confess. Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now. We're going to sing that, and the ministers of our church are going to stand here at the head of each of these aisles all the way across...

Looking unto Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 7, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1-2

Outline

Introduction

I. The Person

II. The Place

III. The Preparation

A. The Weights That Slow Us Down

B. The Sin That Trips Us Up

IV. The Plan

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VI. The Power

A. Jesus Is the Author

B. Jesus Is the Finisher

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Introduction

Now take your Bibles and turn to Hebrews chapter 12—Hebrews chapter 12. Today we begin a brand new series of sermons, and while we are we're turning to Hebrews chapter 12, let me remind you about the evening service. At night here we're continuing the studies in the life of David, and the studies have been a real blessing to my own heart.

Tonight the title of our message is "Beauty and the Beast"—"Beauty and the Beast." It has nothing to do with Bob and Linnie. But we're talking about Nabal and Abigail and their relationship to God's anointed king, David. And we're going to find out something about our own lives, something that will reveal your character and show you what kind of a person you are. If you want to have a litmus test for your character, come tonight as we study this message in the life of David.

But now today in the Book of Hebrews I want us to turn Hebrews chapter 12. We're going to have this sort of a keynote message and then we're going to go back to the beginning of the Book of Hebrews and come back through it and look at some highlights in Hebrews under the heading, "Looking unto Jesus"—"Looking unto Jesus"; a series entitled "Looking unto Jesus" from Hebrews.

Now let's look here, if we will, in chapter 12, verse 1: *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,"*—and here is our key phrase—*"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God"* (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Now the first century was very much like our century. The Apostle Paul was a very sports-minded individual. He had figures and allusions in his writing to boxing. He said, *"So fight I, not as one that [boxeth] the air"* (1 Corinthians 9:26). That is, "I'm not shadow boxing; this is real." And then he said, *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, [and] powers"* (Ephesians 6:12). And he spoke of other things that were figures from the sports world. And I believe if he wrote this, or whoever wrote it, he certainly is definitely talking about the sports world, because he is taking the figure, really, of the great athletic contest of that time.

They had three major games in that day. They had the Olympic games. We still have the Olympics. They were held on Mount Olympus. Then they had the Isthmus games that were held in Corinth. And then they had the Pantheon games at Delphi. And these were great games, very much like our World Series, very much like our Super Bowl, very much like the basketball playoffs; big things, very big things, and people got excited about them. As a matter of fact, they staggered these games so that the rich could attend; they could go to one, the Olympic games here, and then they could go the Isthmian games and the Pantheon games, and they could go to one and the other. And every town had its huge stadium. The stadiums were bigger than our stadiums, sometimes six times as long as a football field, and multiplied thousands of people would come, and they would have all kinds of races. There would be the javelin throw, and the discus, and wrestling, and boxing, and chariot races, and foot races; and many of the same events that we have today they had back there, and the people went. Now the writer of the Book of Hebrews is taking this as a background, something that his people could relate to and make a spiritual application.

Now the winner of the Olympic games, or whatever games they may have been, was the most popular figure of that day, more popular than the politician or any other person. He was the idol; he was the star. Cicero wrote and complained that the athletes and the winning athletes were accorded more honor and given more adulation than a victorious general coming back from a war. So times haven't changed, have they? Not very much at all. We all have our superheroes that we follow after.

And so these athletes would train. And oh, how they would train! A very rigorous diet; day after day after day they would exercise. They went through certain religious rituals,

because religion was wrapped up in athletics in a very real way in this day, and they went through a certain rigorous discipline, and certain earthly pleasures they denied themselves, and they got themselves ready mentally, physically, and spiritually.

And then they would come to the field and there would be the thousands of spectators filling the bleachers. There would be the emperor, his king, his lord, his master, up in his velvet box. This athlete would go to one end of the field and there would be an altar there flowing with blood. He would bathe his hands in that blood to symbolize the sincerity of his purpose. And then he would be questioned as to whether he had kept the rules, and he would pledge that he had kept the rules, and he would pledge that he would run faithfully and true, and that he had disciplined himself, and that there was nothing against him that would keep him from running in the race. And then the time for the race would come, and he would take his mark there on the line. Every nerve would be trembling, and every muscle would be taut, and his eye is fixed on the goal. And there the people round about him, and the race is ready to begin. And let me say this: to that athlete at that moment, winning that race meant everything—everything. It was absolutely the most important thing in his life.

I. The Person

Now Paul takes that figure and he applies it to those of us who are Christians. The person on that field is you. If you are a Christian, you are the person that is represented here in Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. You are God's spiritual athlete. There is a race for you to run, and Paul is speaking of you—or whoever wrote the Book of Hebrews is speaking of you—as that person. It is the race of life itself, and you, my friend, are the runner. Many of you may be ladies who are rather elderly, who say, "Well, no, my time of running in a race is passed." But he is not talking about running a physical race; he is talking about running a spiritual race. And every one of us—men, women, boys, and girls—we're all included.

II. The Place

The person: you. The place: not in some stadium somewhere, but here in life. You see what he says—he says, "Seeing we also are compassed about with a great crowd of witness." See these people in the balconies; it's always a thrill to me to see these people here down in front. Did you know that most beautiful view of this sanctuary is right from here? Did you know that? Seeing this place filled with people like it is today, it's a beautiful sight. But in heaven, up in heaven, and stand upon grandstand upon grandstand. This is what Paul is saying, "*Seeing we...are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.*" Who are these witnesses? He has already referred to them; he has mentioned them in chapter 11. They are

the heroes of the faith who have already died and gone to heaven. They are up there in the grandstand; they are watching us.

You say, “Brother Rogers, do you believe those people in heaven know what’s going on down here on earth?” I really do—I really do. I believe old Dr. Lee is looking over my shoulder right now, saying, “Preach it right, son. Preach it right.” They know. They’re up there watching, and they’re looking down at us, for this is what this verse says: *“Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.”* They are up there cheering us on; they are up there watching. You know when Sidlow Baxter was here, he said that he would not be a bit surprised but what they in heaven are praying for us in heaven. That’s interesting. I’m not sure whether that’s so or not. I’m not sure it’s not so. It’s just interesting that. But I know this: that they are cheering us on, they are watching; heaven is intently interested in on what is going on here on earth.

They are up there in the grandstand, and so this world is like a stadium, and we are the runners, and they are the spectators up there. There they are from their home in the heavens, the heroes of the past; they are bending down, watching us. What a crowd they are! The Bible says in the Book of Revelation, *“Lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues”* (Revelation 7:9). And I tell you, if the runners of that day back here were inspired when they ran their race, how we ought to be inspired as those who are cheering us on, and those who are yearning and watching with keen anticipation, how much greater should be our effort!

III. The Preparation

So the third thing I want you to notice: not only the people—that’s us; not only the place—that is here in life; but I want you to notice the preparation, therefore, for running. Look at what he says: *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,”*—here’s the preparation—*“let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”* Now it mentions two things here: first of all, weights; and then, sins.

A. The Weights That Slow Us Down

I used to like to go scuba diving. I don’t know how many of you ever did any scuba diving, but one thing, I love Memphis, but I really do wish Memphis had an ocean. I want to tell you the truth, I do. I miss the ocean. My blood’s about 75% salt water, and I was born and raised down in West Palm Beach, Florida, and grew up on the east coast of Florida, and loved to go in the ocean. But when you go in the ocean, you put weights on to hold you down. You buckle on lead weights around your waist and put them on to make you sink to the bottom so you can get down. And that’s fine if you’re scuba diving, but no athlete would go around with a lead weight on if he’s going to run in a race. I hope not. Or no athlete is

going to run in a race if he put on fireman's boots. No athlete is going to run in a race and put on an overcoat. They just don't do that. As a matter of fact, if you will notice these athletes, they strip down to almost indecency. And sometimes it's not almost. They want to get as light as they can. They don't want to be carrying any excess baggage if they're going to run a race. Now there is nothing wrong with a lead belt. You just don't wear it if you're running a race.

Now when Paul says, "*Lay aside every weight*," he's talking about the things that would slow us down, things that in themselves are not necessarily wrong; but they're just wrong for us because we're in a race. You see, other people can do things that we may not be able to do, and whether they're moral or immoral doesn't have anything to do with it. Just for us they're wrong, because they weight us down. You can't run through life carrying excess baggage.

You know, so many times people say, "Just show me in the Bible where it's wrong: 'Thou shalt not do this.'" Well, some things I don't have to show you in the Bible, where it says, "Thou shalt not wear a lead belt if you're going to run in a race." If it keeps you from doing what you ought to do, for you it's wrong; even though it may not be illegal, immoral, or fattening, it's still wrong.

You know, Paul says over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 12, "*All things are lawful [for] me, but all things are not expedient*" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Now what does that mean: "*All things are lawful...but all things are not expedient*"? What does the word *expedient* mean? Well, when you think of *expedient*, you think of another word that sounds very much like it: *expedition*; an expedition—the word *expedient*, *expedition*. What is an expedition? It is a trip. When you go on an expedition, you're going somewhere. So what does the word *expedient* mean? It means, "something that speeds you along; something that helps you to get to where you are going."

Now everybody is to have a goal for his life. And anything that slows you down, anything that weights you down, anything that pulls on you, for you it is wrong. It may be some pleasure. It may be some hobby. It may be some business. It may be some friendship. It may be some recreation. It may be some study. Anything that keeps you from doing what God wants you to do, no matter how good it may seem, if it is a waste, it is wrong, lay it aside. I want you to think, Are there some things keeping you from doing what God wants you to do? It may not be stealing, lying, adultery—just a weight. Nobody runs a race with an overcoat. Nothing wrong with an overcoat—you just don't run a race in one.

B. The Sin That Trips Us Up

“Let us lay aside every weight,”—and now watch it— *“and the sin which doth so easily beset us.”* Now here he mentions something else: not only the weights that slow us down, but the sin that trips us up. Now this word *easily beset* really means in the Greek “to tangle oneself around, or to tangle itself around.” That’s what *easily beset* means: “to trip up.” So Paul is mentioning two things that every athlete is careful of: number one, he doesn’t want anything that’s going to slow him down; number two, he doesn’t want anything that’s going to trip him up.

Now what runner, again, is going to run with his shoelaces not tied on each foot, but tied together? Can you imagine a fellow gets down on his knees, he’s tying up his track shoes, and rather than tying each shoe individually, lacing them up, he ties them together. Now that’s dumb, isn’t it? Can you imagine what’s going to happen in the starting block if he’s got those shoelaces tied together? He’s going down; he’s entangled.

Now Paul speaks of sin as that which is just going to cause you to fall. It’s going to easily beset you. It’s going to wrap itself around you. It’s going to entangle you. And there are two things that every spiritual athlete has to watch: number one, the things that slow him down; number two, the things that trip him up.

Now ladies and gentlemen, listen to me, because I am dead serious now. You’d better pay attention. There are some of you who have made friendship with sin in your life and you don’t think very much about it. You say, “Oh well, I’m going to heaven; I’m saved.” The sin that trips you up is going to cost you, and cost you dearly, and you’d better be clean. Do you know the missing note in the modern church? It is holiness—holiness. God has called us to be a holy people. And God will not tolerate any sin—any.

Oh, I’m not saying that we’re sinlessly perfect. We’re not. Every day I have to come to God and say, “Oh, God, forgive me. I’ve failed. But Lord, have mercy on me, and God, cleanse me.” And praise His holy name, He does. But as I stand before you this morning, there’s no unconfessed, un-repent-ed-of sin my life. There’s no sin that I cherish. There’s no sin that I say, “Well, this will be my sin.” Oh no, friend, I’d be a fool to be that way. You’d be a fool to be that way. The Bible says, *“Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD”* (Isaiah 52:11). You will never win your race if you’ve got those things that weight you down, if you’ve got those things that trip you up. God help us to lay aside every weight and the sin that does so easily beset us.

IV. The Plan

Now here’s he’s talking about the preparation for the race, but now let’s look at the plan of the race. Look at it again: *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a*

cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us,”— now watch this— *“and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”*

God set one race before me. He set another race before you. Every man must run his own race. We are not racing against one another. We are not in a race against each other; we are in a pilgrimage together. I’m not trying to outdo you. You are not trying to outdo me. God has set before me a race that is peculiar to me. God has a plan for my life. God has a plan for your life. God has a racecourse that He wants me to run. I am to get on it. I am to stay on it until it is over.

Now a while back when I mentioned expediency, and I said an expedition was something that was going somewhere. And you need to have a God-given goal in your life. And if there’s anything that keeps you from reaching that goal for you, it is wrong—if it holds you back. If it is not expedient, don’t do it. And immediately, some said, “Oh me, I don’t know what my goal is. So I don’t know whether this thing is expedient or not. I don’t know where I’m going. I’m drawing my breath, I’m drawing my salary, but I don’t know if this is God’s will for my life.” You see, just as sure as I’m standing here, God has a will for your life. Just as sure as I’m standing here, God has a plan for your life. *“The very hairs of your head are...numbered”* (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7). Not a single sparrow falls without His knowledge of it (Matthew 10:29). And the God who programmed the mighty planets into orbit has a plan for your life.

But how are you going to know that plan? Is God just one day going to unroll His scroll and say, “Here it is”? On May, this month, you are going to do so-and-so, and in December you are going to do so-and-so, and by the time you are 50, you are going to do so-and-so, and by the time you are 70—oh, no, no, no! God’s never shown His will to me that way. I’m glad He didn’t, for it would have scared me to death if I’d ever known as a young shirttail preacher that one day I would be the preacher of the church at Bellevue. I would have died right then. He doesn’t. God just unfolds His plan a day at a time, a moment at a time. “The path of the just is like a shining light that shines more and more unto a perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18). He just keeps revealing it. It’s like the sun that comes up. And as you walk in the light, you just keep on stepping in the light, God reveals His plan for you. The way to know God’s will for the rest of your life is to do God’s will for the next 15 minutes.

Now pay attention to the preacher. Listen. Let me tell you something, friends. The way to know God’s will for your life is not to try to have some great big long plan that reaches way out yonder. No. Get right with God. Obey the Holy Spirit and you will find out that God will guide you. It’s hard to steer a ship that isn’t moving. You get into the stream of the Spirit and just say, “Here I am, Lord; right now, what do you want me to do? Today, what do you want me to do? After the service, what do you want me to do? This afternoon?” And

you just keep on doing that all through your life, and you will look back, and you will say, “Hitherto, the Lord led me.” You will look back and say, “Hitherto has the Lord led me.” If you don’t see God’s will this way, then you look another way. You just live a day at a time, obeying the Lord, and you will find out that this is going to turn into God’s will and God’s plan for your life.

So the Apostle Paul could come to the end, as he said in 2 Timothy chapter 4, “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:7) —“I have finished.” He finished. Oh, thank God for that. He had finished. His course wasn’t an easy course. It led him through a Philippian jail. He had a revival there. It led through a Roman jail, and he found a runaway slave named Onesimus and he brought him to Christ. It led to Caesar’s household as a prisoner there, but he started a church right there on the steps of Caesar’s palace. And he could say, “I have finished my course. I didn’t quit.” Paul didn’t shut up or back up until he was taken up. He stayed on the racetrack. He finished the course that God had given him to do.

And so dear friend, God has a plan for your life. He has a will for your life. God has a way for your life. Are you on the course? Are you on the racetrack? Are you saying, “Lord, here I am; what do you want me to do?; I am willing to do it; I do it moment by moment”? And then you will know God’s will one step at a time.

Now we have talked about the person—that’s you. We have talked about the place—that’s here. We have talked about the preparation; we have said get rid of those things that will slow you down, get rid of those things that will trip you up. We have talked about the plan—that is, you find the will of God for your life. Not everybody is to be a preacher; not everybody is to be an evangelist; not everybody is to be an evangelistic song leader. Sure, it’s God’s will for you to be a schoolteacher. Sure, it’s God’s will for you to be a lawyer. Sure, it’s God’s will for you to be a butcher. Sure, it’s God’s will that you be a clerk. Sure, it’s God’s will that you be a student. All of these things are good and perfect, and if that’s God’s will for you, and if that’s God’s place for you, then it’s just as holy as what I’m doing. God’s will is God’s will, and to do God’s will is to give Him glory. You find God’s will for you; find God’s place for you.

V. The Perseverance

But wait a minute. Not only the plan; but I want you to look at the perseverance. I’m reading here in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 1: “*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with*”—now what’s that next word?—“*patience the race that is set before us.*” “*Let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*”

Now this word *patience* does not mean what our English word *patience* means. That is the ability to work a jigsaw puzzle, or the ability to do needlepoint, or something like that. That's a good quality. I'm not putting that down, but this word means, "to bear up under tremendous pressure." It literally means, "endurance"; it means, "perseverance." We are to run with perseverance. In the physical realm, there is no easy way to be an athlete. Do you know what makes one athlete better than another athlete—other than just native ability? There are a lot of people who have the same native ability. In athletics, one athlete is willing to hurt more than the other one. It hurts.

Listen. You just don't know how it hurts, and those of you who have been in athletics know what I'm talking about. I mean, when you can't take another step, and you take it; I mean, you can't do it, and you do it, because that other guy is doing it, and it just, everything in you, it hurts. It hurts to get in shape, and those muscles are sore; and it hurts to do this. But there is something about bearing up under that pressure, and it develops character. That's one of the reasons I believe in sports, because it develops character in a person, and it teaches something of discipline that so many youngsters never know of—this matter of endurance, this matter of bearing up under pressure, and going when you don't want to go. If you're looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way, to serve God, forget it. We are called to a fight, not a frolic. This is a race, not a Sunday afternoon stroll. And if you would be the kind of a Christian you ought to be, you're going to have to weep over it, you're going to have to work over it, you're going to have to pray over it. In order for you to possess it, it must possess you. And you're going to have to run with endurance.

Some of you are hurting. Some of your children have broken your hearts. Some of you are hurting. You have lost your job. Some of you are hurting. You went to the doctor, and he gave you a bad report. Some of you are hurting because your home is broken up. Some of you are hurting because people where you work have been unfair to you, and that promotion you should have had went to someone else who doesn't deserve it. Run with patience—run with patience. Just keep on the track no matter what happens, no matter how it hurts, and no matter what the opposition; you run the race with patience.

I was watching the television the other day, a sporting event, a triathlon, I think they called it, over in Hawaii. I don't have all the details. I wish I had gotten the name of the little lady who ran. The men and women were in this race—maybe some of you saw it. First of all, they started out, and they plunged in the ocean, and they swam miles in the ocean. Then they came out of the ocean and immediately got on bicycles and bicycled for miles. And then after that, they got off the bicycles and ran literally for miles and miles and miles, hour after hour after hour after hour after hour, and finally, they started early in the morning, late at night, and this one young lady was leading the bunch. She was out ahead of

everybody, and she was about as far as from here to the front step to the finish line, and she fell. She tried to get up, but her legs were like spaghetti. She tried to get up, and she fell again. She crawled away, and she got up. She walked, then she got her strength back under her, and she started to run, and she fell again. And she got up, and she fell again. And her arms were like this, and her legs were like this, and her eyes, I wept as I saw it. Finally, she got right about as far as from here to that front row, and she fell. She would have been the winner, but she fell. I mean, just within 10 yards of the goal, she fell. And then, she literally clawed on the ground, and writhed like a snake over that line. By that time, another athlete had come past. She wasn't first. She wasn't first; but she was first. She won a victory because she finished.

And when I saw that, I said, "Oh, God, I want to be that kind of a Christian. I want, if they for a corruptible crown will do that; I mean, if they, just to have their name in the newspapers, will do that, if they, just for some award, some bauble hung around their neck, if they will do that." And ladies and gentlemen, we're dealing with life and death, heaven and hell, the glory of God. God forbid that we should be such spiritual athletes as we are, with a soft underbelly, knowing nothing of discipline, knowing nothing of endurance, paying no price. Many people absolutely think they've done God a favor because they come to church on Sunday morning. That's right. I mean, you say, "Boy, what a good boy am I! I sang all the hymns, put a little money in the plate. Look at me." Friend, we are to run with endurance the race that is set before us—the persistence, the price that needs to be paid. God help us to be that kind of a person.

VI. The Power

Now I want you to notice not only the persistence, but I want you to notice the power, because when I talked about that little lady running that way, you were feeling inadequate. You say, "Yeah, but I can't do that. I'm not made of that kind of stuff, Lord." Well, neither am I. But here's a wonderful thing. Look at it. Here's the power to run the racecourse: "*Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*"—now watch it—"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith..."—now here's your power. How does it come? By looking unto Jesus. Why should we look unto Jesus? Two reasons: He's the author and He's the finisher.

A. Jesus Is the Author

Now the word *author* here does not mean author like someone who writes a book; it means "the leader," or "the example; the one who has gone before us." You remember, He's given here as an example. You see—"looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith;

who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

You see, Jesus had His eye on the goal. And Jesus paid the price, because Jesus could see you saved. Jesus could see people being born again. Jesus, by faith, could see the Church. He had His eye on the goal and He paid the price. So number one, He is our example—that’s one thing. Everybody needs an example. Do you want to know how to run the race? Jesus is the example. He is the example. But also He is the author. He is the example.

B. Jesus Is the Finisher

But also He is the finisher. Now this word *finisher* literally means, “perfecter,” or “that which brings into completion.” You see, Jesus gives you the strength to run the race. He is the person who not only shows you how to run the race, but then He enters into you and runs it in you and through you. He is the perfecter of your faith; He is the one who makes you what you ought to be. That is what it is saying—the same thing Philippians 1, verse 6, is saying: *“He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it”* (Philippians 1:6).

Listen to me now—some of you may misunderstand. You think I’m saying, if you just get in this race and run and win, then maybe you can go to heaven. No, dear friend, you have to be going to heaven before you can ever get in the race. Understand what I’m talking about? Listen. Salvation *is not a reward at the end of the race. It is the gift that puts you in the race.* You can’t even start to run, you can’t even come to the starting line, until first of all you receive Christ as your personal Savior. And when you receive Christ as your personal Savior, at that moment He becomes your example; but more than your example, He becomes your strength. He does what no other coach can do: He comes in you; He possesses you; He lives within you; He is the perfecter of your faith. It is *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27). And therefore you have a strength that no one else has.

Now don’t you tell me that you can’t run the race, because when you said that, you just blasphemed. What you said, therefore, is that Christ is not adequate; He can’t do it with me. But He can. He wants to. He will. And there is no race that he has set before you that He Himself will not enable you to meet and run it. You’d better find out what the race is He’s given you, and then look to Him for the example, then draw upon Him for the strength. He, ladies and gentlemen, He is the example for your race. But He is also the strength that you draw on. Jesus Christ is the One that you ought to rest on; you are to draw your strength from Him.

Now I want you to see something else. Look here in verse 2. I want you to notice that it says, *“looking unto Jesus.”* Now it doesn’t say, “looking at Jesus,” but *“looking unto Jesus.”* If you look at Jesus, all you can do is get discouraged. I mean, you look at Him and you see

how great His life is, and you look at you and you see how weak you are, and you say, “Well, there is such an infinite distance between His strength and my weakness; all that does is just reinforce my inferiority complex.” But it doesn’t say to look at Jesus; he says to look unto Jesus.

Now suppose I need some money. Let’s suppose I get bankrupt and I come to Tom Clayton over here, and he looks like, doesn’t he look prosperous to you? Look at Him. And so I come over here to Tom Clayton and I say, “Tom, look man. I am in a financial situation. I mean, they are about to repossess everything I’ve got. I need help. What am I going to do?” Well, what if Tom says, “Well, don’t worry about it, Pastor; I’ll take care of it. Look to me—look to me.” It doesn’t mean, “Look at me.” “Depend upon me—depend upon me.” “Look unto me,” he would say; “I’ll take care of it.” Wouldn’t you? Nod your head. Yeah, okay, all right. “I’ll take care of it. Look to me.”

Now this is what the writer of Hebrews is saying. We’re not just to be looking at Jesus. We are to be looking unto Jesus. The devil doesn’t want you to look unto Jesus, because Jesus is all you need. So get your looking to something else. Literally, this word *looking unto Jesus* means, “looking away from everything else to Jesus.” It’s a Greek word that has a very special meaning; it’s a technical word, *aphorao*, which means, “looking off from everything else to Jesus.” Martin Luther translated it, “off-looking unto Jesus.” That is, “looking away from something else to Jesus.”

And oh, how the devil would love to get us looking at him! I know some people have a Satan complex. I mean, always talking about Satan—what’s the devil up to? Well, we need to know what the devil’s up to. Paul said, “*We are not ignorant of his devices*” (2 Corinthians 2:11). But don’t you get your eyes on Satan. You get your eyes on Jesus. The devil will come as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) and try sure as a roaring lion to terrify you (1 Peter 5:8). But whether he tries to entice or terrify, put your eyes upon Jesus, not on Satan. I know some people looking for a demon under every bush. They need to put their eyes upon Jesus Christ: “*looking unto Jesus.*”

Don’t be looking at your friends. The best of friends will fail you. The best of people will disappoint you. Don’t get your eyes on your pastor or anybody else. The Bible says, “*It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man*” (Psalm 118:8) ... “*whose breath is in his nostrils*” (Isaiah 2:22). What does that mean? He’s just a two-legged man. He is made of the same stuff that you’re made of. And so many people fail because they’re not looking to Jesus. They’re looking at church members; and there are some hypocrites in the church, or some saint has feet of clay, and so they dissolve.

Some people spend time looking at themselves. They’re always examining: “Do I have the right emotions?” “Brother Rogers, I’m just afraid I’m not saved because I just don’t have

a want feeling, or I'm afraid I'm not saved because..." and they do what I call morbid introspection. They take themselves apart by little pieces, always just digging in here, and pulling this out, pulling this out, pulling this out, and looking at themselves: "Wonder if I'm..."—then stick it all back in. That's non-productive, friend. You just take one look at yourself, enough to know that there's nothing there, that you're insufficient, and then just put your eyes upon Jesus. You say, "Well, I'm surprised at myself." Well, God's not. He knows what's in you. Don't look at yourself. Don't look at circumstances.

Peter was walking on the water, and he was doing fine until an unkind wave slapped him in the puss, and he started to go down, because he got his eyes off of Jesus and got his eyes on that water and he started to sink. And if he had looked unto Jesus as his example walking on the water and as his strength to walk on the water, he would have made it right on to Jesus.

You say, "But you don't know my circumstances." But God knows your circumstances. "*Looking unto Jesus.*" Listen. Don't even look at your look. You say, "What does that mean?" The devil's very clever. I'll tell you what he did to me once, and he may do the same thing to you. The devil will start agreeing with you so he can trip you up. He'll say, "Sure, you're saved by faith in Christ. Sure, Jesus died to save you. But how do you know that your faith is good enough? Sure, you're saved by faith. But how do you know you've got the real thing? How do you know you really believe? How do you know your faith is strong enough? What if your faith is too weak? What if you don't make it? Sure, it's by faith in Christ." But that's, you know, what he's trying to do; he's getting you to look at your look rather than to look at Jesus. He's trying to get you to put faith in faith rather than faith in Christ.

Now I got on an airplane and came back to this city yesterday from where I was off speaking. When I got on that airplane, I walked out that ramp to get on the airplane. Now if that ramp had been made of 24-carat gold, it wouldn't have helped the airplane anymore. The airplane, if it had been made of wood, or been made of straw, wouldn't have made any difference, just as long as it would hold me up. Just get me on the airplane. See, it's the airplane that brought me here, not the ramp.

Now look. So many times we talk about saving faith. There's not such a thing. There's no such thing. You see, in the Bible, if you can find anywhere, it says "saving faith." It's Jesus who saves, not faith that saves. Jesus saves—Jesus saves. Now don't look at me so puzzled. You look like a cat looking at new a gate. Listen. It's Jesus that saves, not faith. You're saved by grace through faith—through faith (Ephesians 2:8). Don't put faith in faith. The devil tried to tell me, "Your faith's not good enough." I got on to him, and I said, "You're right. But isn't Jesus wonderful?" Amen? "And I'm not putting faith in faith; I'm putting faith in Jesus.

What are you going to do about that, devil? I'm trusting Him. I'm not trusting me, even the quality of my faith. My faith is in Christ."

Don't look at your looks. Don't look at your circumstances. Don't look at self. Don't look at Satan. "*Looking unto Jesus*" means looking away from everything else. How we need to put our eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ and look to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

I want to tell you something, friends. In this day when these words were written, when that athlete would win that race, I want to tell you, he became the number one man. Do you know what happened? The government would commission artists and sculptors to make statues of him. The great poets would write poetry about him. When he would go down the streets, they would literally throw flowers in his pathway. They elevated his family. They gave the name of his city-state; they gave him wealth; he had won, and he would receive the honors, the spoils, the victory—how much it meant to him to win! Therefore it was the most important thing of his life that he win.

I want to tell you something, friend. One of these days we're going to come to the end of our race and we're going to face Jesus. And there may be a crown of gold; there may be a laurel; they may be a reward; but for me—and I mean this from the depth of my heart—when I finish my race, I want to smile with Jesus. That's going to be my reward. I want the One who died for me to put His hand on my shoulder and look into my face and say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25:23).

I want to tell you something. We may be so close to the end of the race. You know what some of you are thinking? "Yeah, you're right, Pastor. I do too. And as a matter of fact, one of these days, boy, I'm going to get in the race. I'm thinking about several days ago, and I'm buying some spiritual track shoes." Listen. The race may end this afternoon. You don't know; I don't know. One of these days, sooner than we think, we are going to look into the face of our Savior, and I want to say with the Apostle Paul, "*I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*" (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Looking unto Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 8, 1979

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1–2

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

HEBREWS 12:2

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you would, to Hebrews chapter 12. We’re thinking today on this subject: “Looking unto Jesus.” Hebrews chapter 12—and the message this morning is a climax to a series of messages that we have preached in Hebrews chapter 11 on “God’s Hall of Fame,” and the roll call of the faithful, those who trusted the Lord. And perhaps Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, could be a part of chapter 11. As you know, the chapter divisions were not inspired, but have been added by men later in order to make it convenient for us. And so I want to read Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and*

let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1–2)

Our generation is a generation that loves sports. And so was Paul’s generation and the time of the Lord Jesus. Now we are a sports-minded people. I was reading something in a magazine the other day where a husband said to his wife, “Now before football season starts, is there anything you would like to say to me?” I think maybe some of you women can identify with that. We love sports in this day and in this age. But in Paul’s time, sports were a very big thing.

They had three great games that were known around the world. There were the Olympian Games that were held on Mount Olympus. And we still have today the Olympic Games. And then there were the Pythian Games that were held at Delphi. And then the Isthmian Games that were held at Corinth. And these games were staggered in times so that the wealthy and the elite, the jet set of that time—however, they had to go in chariot or whatever—could make all of the various games. And they had wrestling. And they had boxing. And they had javelin throwing. And they had discus throwing. And they had chariot races. But the major thing was the foot race, what we would call today a track meet. And that was the big thing of that day. And the most popular figures of that day, as in our day, were the athletic figures, those men who had done such a marvelous job in athletics.

Cicero complained that these athletes were accorded more fame and more honor than a conquering general coming back from the war. And it was just an atmosphere of sports. Every city back in that time had its amphitheater. Every city had its coliseum. Every city had its circus, or a place where the chariots would race. We think our stadiums are big. Their stadiums were six times the length of a football field, and they were packed and jammed with thousands of people, tier upon tier. And there they were, watching these games.

And incidentally, I believe Paul did write Hebrews. The Bible doesn’t say who wrote it. I think Paul wrote it. You don’t have to agree. This is America; you have a right to be wrong. But anyway, I think that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews, and I’m going to say Paul. Paul, when he was writing the book of Hebrews, uses this figure of the Olympic Games, or the Isthmian Games, or the Pythian Games. He’s using this figure to illustrate a spiritual truth for us. And Paul gives us a figure. Down on the field is a single athlete. He has trained and worked for months and months: rigorous training, severe discipline, a diet. He has denied himself the legitimate pleasures that other people have. And now he is down there on the field. The stadium is jammed. And there are the people with the better seats up close. And there is the emperor in his velvet box. And there’s one lone athlete now getting ready to run.

First of all, he goes to one end of the field where a blood sacrifice has been made, and he dips his hands in that blood. And then he swears that he has kept the training rules. He swears that he is morally pure. He swears that as he runs the race he will run the race fairly and cleanly, that he will participate as an honored athlete, and there will be no cheating. And then he comes down and gets himself set, and he is ready to run the race. Every nerve is tense. Every one of those finely toned muscles is taut. His mind is centered on one thing: to win! to win! to win! And there he is, ready to run.

Now Paul takes that figure and he applies it to the Christian. And this is the spiritual application he makes, that we too are in a race. It is the race of life. And there are thousands and thousands of spectators watching us. Paul tells us how to run that race. And so, ladies and gentlemen, I want you to imagine that you are in that race—you are the one down on the field—because that’s the application that Paul makes for us.

And there are three things I want you to learn in these two verses. First of all, I want you to see the spectators in life’s race. Then, secondly, I want you to see the strategy for life’s race. And, thirdly, I want us to learn of the strength for life’s race.

I. The Spectators in Life’s Race

Now, first of all, let’s look at the spectators in life’s race. Notice here in chapter 12, verse 1, Paul says, *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”* (Hebrews 12:1) A *“great cloud of witnesses”* means a grandstand full of people who are watching us. There they are, all around us—and they are watching us. And we are down there on the field. We are that single athlete—and thousands of eyes are upon us.

Now, what is this *“great cloud of witnesses”* to which Paul refers? He’s talking about the saints of yesteryear, those people who have already gone to heaven. And they’re watching from the heavenly grandstand. They’re looking to us from the past. Do you remember he’s already talked about these witnesses? In Hebrews chapter 11, there’s Abel, who’s cheering us on, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and Joseph, and Jacob, and Moses, and Rahab, and Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthae, and David, and Samuel, and so many others up there, bending out of the heavenly grandstand, watching us, cheering us on, looking at us, and telling us to *“run with patience the race that is set before us.”*

You see, in these ancient games there were so many who would watch, and these athletes were inspired by the crowd. They say that a big crowd helps an athlete to do better, and that when an athlete is sagging, and when his strength is flagging, the crowd cheering him on encourages him.

Now the Bible seems to indicate here that the saved in heaven are beholding us and

cheering us on. They're looking down. I imagine Dr. Lee is looking right down and saying, "Adrian, preach it right! Preach it right!" as he's watching me stand in this place, and cheering us on. "Well," you say, "do the saved in heaven literally behold us and watch us here?" I believe that Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, tends to teach that, and also in the book of the Revelation where the Bible says, "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.*" (Revelation 22:17) "*The bride*" are those who have already gone to heaven, and they're saying to you, they're saying to me, "Come! Come on to heaven with us!" But whether Paul is just using this as a figure, or whether he's using it as a literal truth, still the truth is there that we have a great cloud of witnesses round about us, and they are cheering us on.

¶ A little nondescript lady had gone to a high school football game. She was a very quiet sort of a little lady sitting there. No one would have noticed her, and she'd not said a word throughout the entire game. But then there was a fumble on the field, and a little substitute cornerback, a little scrawny kid, picked up the ball, and he started to make his way past the other players toward the goal. And this little lady exploded. She jumped up and said, "Run, baby, run! Run, baby, run!" It was her boy. And she could be heard all over that stadium. That's what Paul is saying to us today: "Run, baby, run! Run!" That's what he's saying. That's what the saints of the ages are saying as they behold us. ¶

¶ Lou Little was coach at Fordham University, and he had a player who was not a particularly good player. But this player had a father who would come and sit in the stands, hoping his son would be put into the game. This particular father, however, died before one of the biggest games. Lou Little said he did not even expect the player to dress out and come to the game, but he was there dressed out. He came to the coach and said, "Coach, I have a request to make of you. I've never started a game, but may I be a starter? May I be in the starting lineup in this game?" The coach said, "Well, son, that's very unusual. You know, this is our biggest game." He said, "Coach, it would mean so much, under the circumstances, if you'll just let me for this one game, please, start." The coach said, "All right, I'll let you start." But he said, "Son, you must understand that the very first mistake that you make, I'll have to pull you out and put in the regular player." He said, "That's all right, Coach, I understand." And the game was started, and this young man blocked and ran and tackled and played like an All-American. He stayed in for the full sixty minutes. He was one of the chief factors in that victory. And after the game, they carried him away on their shoulders.

The coach couldn't understand it. He went to the young man and said, "Son, I've never seen you play such an inspired game before—and especially after your father had just died. Would you explain it to me?" He said, "Coach, there was something about my father you did not know. While my father came to every game hoping that I would

play, he never literally saw me play at all, because my father was blind. But now he's gone to heaven; and, Coach, this is the first game he's ever really seen me play." †

I think that's what Paul is talking about when he's saying that we're "*compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.*" And so there are, first of all, the spectators in life's race. And there are others who are watching us. And we're the best Christian someone knows. So many spectators! So many people who are watching us in this life! O God, help us to so run; God, help us to so live that we'll not disappoint them! And may we receive encouragement as thousands and thousands of eyes are upon us, cheering us on.

II. The Strategy for Life's Race

But the second thing I want you to notice: Not only the spectators in life's race, but I want you to notice with me, if you will, please, the strategy for life's race. For read it in verse 1: "*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.*" (Hebrews 12:1)

There are three things in our strategy that we need to learn:

A. Discipline

The first is discipline—discipline. Notice what Paul says: "*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*" Now, what's he talking about when he says "weight"? He's talking about things that are not in and of themselves bad; they're just weights. Now there's nothing wrong with an overcoat. But no sprinter is going to run in an overcoat. There's nothing wrong with a pair of hip boots. But no runner's going to wear a pair of hip boots if he's going to run. There's nothing wrong with a diver's weight that he puts around his waist to sink him to the bottom. But what high jumper would have a diver's weight around his waist? Well, you just simply lay these things aside.

There's a certain discipline that belongs to the child of God—and here's what it is: The child of God does not have time to participate in good things, because there are too many best things. People tell me sometimes, "Oh, Brother Rogers, have you read thus-and-such a book, thus-and-such a novel, thus-and-such a thing?" I say, "No, I haven't." "Oh, I read it. I just enjoyed it." And I think to myself, "Where on earth did you ever get time to read that? How did you have enough time to read that?" Friend, I don't have time to read good books. I haven't even read the best books yet. How am I going to get time to read good books?

Now, granted, there is a certain legitimate recreational reading, and so forth, but I'm amazed at how many people spend so much time doing good things. *Good things are bad things when they keep you from the best things.* Do you understand that? Life

would be simple if life were a choice between good and bad—it's a choice between good and best.

And how we need to learn the best! We need to lay aside every weight. There may be some friend that's harmless, innocuous. But if that friend keeps you from fulfilling what you ought to fulfill for Christ, he has become a weight, a drag anchor on you. There are some ambitions; there are some activities; there is some recreation that does not serve to speed you on its way. You do need recreation, and there are legitimate pleasures. But when they become weights, they must go if you want to win in this race.

Television—there's nothing wrong with television, but many of you spend far more time with television than you do with the Word of God. And you wonder why you're not growing. Television has become an anchor. It has become a drag weight in your life. You watch television till your brain is the size of a pea and your eyes are big as coconuts, and you do not study the Word of God.

There are certain weights that an athlete just lays aside. They are not bad for other people, but they are bad for the athlete. He cannot do it. And in the spiritual realm, because we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, do you remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 6: "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient*"? (1 Corinthians 6:12) What does that word *expedient* mean? When you think of *expedient*, you think of the word *expedition*. And when you think of *expedition*, you think of a trip. Now, you see, Christians are going somewhere. If something doesn't speed you on its way, it's excess baggage, and you need to get rid of it. You see, we lay aside every weight.

I want you to pray and ask God, and say, "God, are there legitimate, lawful things in my life that are still keeping me from running the race of life?" It might be that cabin in the woods. It might be that friendship. It might be that job. It might be that hobby. It might be some recreation. And, in and of itself, it is not bad. But you're going to have to make a judgment: If that thing keeps you from maximizing your life for the Lord Jesus Christ, there must be the discipline to lay it aside.

But not only does he say that we should lay aside every weight, but he also says, "*And the sin which doth so easily beset us.*" (Hebrews 12:1) And the Greek construction of the word translated "*doth so easily beset us*" is very interesting. It has the idea of something that very stealthily and very craftily wraps itself around us. That's what the word means. I think the idea is of a runner who's running in a long, flowing robe, and the robes get around his feet and trip him up. You see, while weights may slow us down, sin will trip us up. I suppose the only thing worse than being weighted down, as a runner, would be to fall, to be tripped up.

And how sin would trip us up! And, friend, if you would run this race of life, if you would be that kind of an athlete that God wants you to be, you must lay aside every sin.

Have you done that? Have you done that? As you sit in this house of worship this morning, can you say, under God, “There is no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in my life”?

You had better learn to treat sin as sin would treat you. Sin will be merciless to you, and you need to be merciless to sin. Many Christians have come to the point where they say, “Oh well, no one is perfect. Everybody has his little vice, so this one will be mine.” Oh, my friend, what a tragedy for you to take that approach! The Bible says, “*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*” (2 Timothy 2:19) “Be ye clean, for I am clean”: (Isaiah 52:11; 1 Peter 1:16) That’s what the Lord said. And there is a certain discipline—a certain discipline.

B. Direction

Now we’re talking about strategy. And the first strategy is discipline. The second strategy is what I call direction, for verse 1 says, “*Let us run...the race that is set before us*”—“*the race that is set before us.*” (Hebrews 12:1) God has given me a race, and that’s not your race. God has given Dan a race that’s not my race. God has given these gentlemen a race that’s not your race. Every man has a race that he must run. Every woman has a race set before her. God knows the course, and God is not going to ask you anything you cannot do. And everything God commands of you, God empowers you to do. All of God’s commands are promises. They are promises. Everything that God asks of you, God enables you to do.

The apostle Paul came to the end of his life, and he said, “*I have finished my course.*” (2 Timothy 4:7) And he’s using the same language: “*I have finished my course.*” That is, “I’ve stayed on the track.” His course was an unusual course. It led through a Philippian jail, but there was a revival at midnight. It led through a Roman jail, but there he ran. He won a runaway slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. It led him to a jail in Caesar’s household. But there, right by the throne of Caesar, he established a little church of believers who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, God has a plan for my life, and God has a plan for your life. Do you know God’s plan for your life? Do you? Are you on the racetrack? Listen, friend. You’re wasting time if you’re wandering around out there on the infield. You’re wasting time if you’re up there sitting in the grandstands. Time is short. And God has a course for you. God has a plan for your life. I don’t care whether you’re a minister, an evangelist, whether you’re a church business administrator. We thank God for Bob Sorrell who is coming. You say, “Isn’t it wonderful that God has a plan for Bob’s life?” God has a plan for your life. I don’t care whether you’re nine or ninety, young or old, rich or poor—God has a plan for your life. God has a race He wants you to run, and you cannot be just simply going around in circles, for the Bible says you’re to run the race that is set before you.

Have you ever taken time to get alone with God, first of all, and make your life a sheet of blank paper, sign your name at the bottom, and say, “God, you fill it in; whatever your will is, I’ll do it”? The will of God: nothing more, nothing less, nothing else, nothing but—that’s the strategy for running. Do you know the will of God for your life? Are you willing to do the will of God for your life?

C. Determination

Now, listen. First of all, there must be discipline. Secondly, there must be direction. And, thirdly, there must be determination. The Bible says that we are to “*run with patience the race that is set before us.*” (Hebrews 12:1) And this word *patience* is not used in the sense that we use the word *patience*. It literally means “endurance.” Everybody knows that a runner is going to win or lose, primarily, by his endurance. You cannot quit. When it hurts, you cannot quit. When your lungs are on fire, you cannot quit. When your feet are like lead, you cannot quit. When your sides ache, you cannot quit. When your head throbs, you cannot quit.

You can tell the size of a Christian by what it takes to stop him. I’m amazed at how some candy-legged soldiers fall away. I’m amazed at the little bit that it takes to stop some people. You’ll never be a spiritual athlete if you’re a quitter. You cannot! You must run with patience the race that is set before you. There must be determination. This thing of being a Christian is not a Sunday afternoon stroll. This matter of being saved, this matter of leading others to Jesus Christ, is a full-time occupation. We must pray over it. We must weep over it. We must study over it. We must work over it. If we possess it, it first must possess us.

Every great athlete is possessed with a desire to win. I look sometimes at the Olympics; I watch some of these young people as they have trained. I watch the swimmers and the runners, and sometimes tears come to my eyes, and I say, “O God, I want to be that kind of a Christian. I want to live in the spiritual realm as these people are willing to live in the physical realm!” They are a people possessed. But not so many Christians: We get up on Sunday morning and sit in an air-conditioned, upholstered, streamlined church and feel we’ve done God a favor. We’re flabby, undisciplined, with no direction and no determination.

Paul says that this matter of being a Christian is a matter of determination. *God does business with those who mean business.* Do you mean business? Many Christians don’t mean business. Many Christians would give up going to church before they’d give up getting a new television set. Do you mean business?

III. The Strength for Life’s Race

Listen. Paul talks, first of all, about the spectators. And then he talks about the strategy.

And the strategy is, dear friend, very simple: It is discipline, direction, and determination. And then Paul talks about the strength for life's race. Look again here in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2—and here is the strength for life's race: "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*" (Hebrews 12:2) And that's the strength of our race.

A. **Jesus Is the Author of Our Faith**

Now, you see, dear friend, the only way that you can run the race is to look unto Jesus. He's the author: He's the One who begins the race. He's the finisher: He's the goal to which we run. Why do we look to Jesus? Because He's the author of our faith. This word *author* means the "file leader." It means the "example." He's the One who ran the race before us. He's the One who endured the agony of the cross. He's the One who kept on keeping on because of the joy that was set before Him. And all of these other examples of faith that we've read about in Hebrews chapter 11 pale into insignificance as we see the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the chief, supreme example of our faith. He is the author of our faith.

And do you want me to tell you how to have faith? You say, "Brother Rogers, I can't help it. I just don't have any faith." Well, I'll tell you how to get it. You look unto Jesus; you keep your eyes upon Jesus. And faith is engendered and inculcated and produced in your heart as a by-product of keeping your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't have to work up faith. Study about Jesus, learn about Jesus, look to Jesus, and you'll find faith growing in your heart and in your life.

† Suppose I needed to cross this Mississippi River bridge over here, and I wasn't sure whether it could hold me up or not. Well, I could do one of two things: I could stand on the banks of the Mississippi, and try to screw up my courage, and try to make myself believe in that bridge, and very temerarily walk over that bridge. Or on the other hand, I could just simply look at the bridge, observe the bridge, and I could see that semitrucks go over the bridge. I could see the mighty foundations; I could see that it's made of steel, and concrete, and so forth. And then faith is the by-product of looking unto the bridge and beholding the bridge. †

You see, *it's not primarily great faith in God that you need; it is faith in a great God.* When you see who Jesus Christ is, when you become acquainted with Jesus, when you look unto Jesus who is the chief example—He is the file leader—and, dear friend, that gives you strength for the race.

B. **Jesus Is the Finisher of Our Faith**

But not only is He the author of our faith; the Bible also says He's the finisher of our faith. And this word *finisher* means He is the "completer." He is the "perfecter." He is the One who gives you the strength to run the race. He is the author of our faith. He puts us

in the race, and then He gives us the strength.

You say, “Brother Rogers, when you talked about determination, when you talked about discipline, when you talked about direction, you just counted me out, because I don’t have it.” That’s right, friend. You don’t. And I don’t. But Jesus does—and He is the perfecter. And the Bible says, “*He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.*” (Philippians 1:6) It is Jesus Christ who gives you the strength to run this race. Learn this, and learn it well: *Salvation is not a reward that you receive at the end of the race; it is a gift that puts you into the race.* Did you hear that? Salvation is not a reward that you win at the end of a race; it is a gift that puts you into the race.

The reason that some start and fall away is that they have never received salvation; they’ve never been born again. And that’s why they get off the racetrack. They are back in the stands eating a hot dog. They have never been put into the race by the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Lord Jesus who puts you into the race, the One who is the author of our faith—bless His holy name—is the One who is the finisher of our faith. When you keep your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re going to find out that Jesus is going to give you strength.

C. **Look unto Jesus, Not at Jesus**

Now, let me say something else. How are you to look unto Jesus? Notice what the Bible says. It says, “*Looking unto Jesus.*” It doesn’t say, “Looking at Jesus.” Looking at Jesus isn’t going to do that much good for you unless it ends up in your looking unto Jesus. Perhaps you have to look at Him before you can look unto Him. But what he says here is that you must look *unto* Jesus.

¶ You say, “What’s the difference?” Well, let’s suppose that I borrow ten thousand dollars from Dan. That’s all right, isn’t it, Dan? All right, let’s suppose that I borrow ten thousand dollars from Dan, and then I can’t pay it back. And Dan is on to me. He says, “Adrian, if you don’t pay it back, I’m going to foreclose on you.” Would you do that? He would. Okay, so he’s going to foreclose on me. I’m in a terrible condition. So I go over here to Tom, and I say, “Tom, I borrowed ten thousand dollars from Dan, and I can’t pay it back. Tom, I need some help.” And Tom says, “That’s all right, Adrian. Look to me.” Now he doesn’t say, “Look *at* me.” “Look *to* me. Look *unto* me. I’ll handle it.” See: “Depend upon me.” That’s what the Bible means when it says, “*Looking unto Jesus.*” It means look unto Him for whatever you need. It means depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Look unto Jesus for every need. That’s what it means. ¶

Now, let me say, dear friend, there are a lot of people who are just looking at Jesus, but they’re not looking unto Jesus. Have you ever really looked unto Him? You see, “the devils believe and tremble.” (James 2:19) You can believe every word I say about the historical Christ, but you’re not saved by facts about Christ; you’re saved by faith in

Christ. You see?

All right now, look. This Greek word is a very interesting word that says, “look unto Jesus,” because what it literally means is “look away from everything else to Jesus.” Martin Luther translated this “*off-looking* unto Jesus,” or “looking off unto Jesus.” What he means is that you don’t just look to Jesus, but you look to Jesus by looking away from everything else. That is, you put your eyes upon Jesus.

When a runner is running toward the goal, he puts his eyes on the goal. He doesn’t look at the grandstand. He doesn’t look at the other runners. He doesn’t examine himself. He has his eyes on the goal, and he looks away from everything else. And he looks at the goal. And that’s exactly what we’re to do. We’re to *off-look*, or look away from everything else, and look unto Jesus, depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reason that many Christians fail in the race is that they have not learned to look away from other things. They are trying to look in both directions at the same time. And the Bible says that “*a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” (James 1:8) But the Bible says, “If your eye be single, then is your body full of light.” (Matthew 6:22; Luke 11:34)

D. **Don’t Look at the Devil**

For example, the devil has gotten some folks to be looking at him. I know some people who are so devil-conscious they see a demon behind every bush. They see the devil in everything, and they just have a devil-consciousness. And they think they’re good Christians. Well, you need to be aware of your enemy, the devil; but you need a Christ-consciousness. And the devil doesn’t even care if you’re looking at him and preaching against him, if you’re not looking to Jesus and preaching Christ. Did you know that? You need to have your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Satan will do one of two things: either terrify you, or entice you. He will come either as a roaring lion, (1 Peter 5:8) or an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14) But you need to keep your eyes upon the Lord Jesus.

† Most Christians I know are terrified by the devil. I heard about a little boy who was up late one night reading a murder mystery in a big old house with creaky stairs and the windowpanes rattling. And he was reading that murder mystery, and there was a villain in that book. That villain was doing all kinds of dastardly deeds. And there was a heroine in that book, and the villain was plotting her murder. This little fellow had fallen in love with that heroine, and he was afraid of what might happen to her. And it looked so bad, and this villain was so clever, and so cruel, and so cunning. The little fellow said, “I just can’t wait”—and he read the last chapter. He wanted to see how it would end. And he read the last chapter before he ever even got halfway finished with the book. It was a melodramatic sort of a thing. And he read there where the villain got it in

the neck. He read where the heroine, you know, was married and lived happily ever after, and all of these things. And then he went back with a great relaxed state of mind to read that book. And every time this old villain would try some of his evil, wicked machinations, and his dastardly deeds, this little boy would just sit back and smile, and he'd say, "Oh, you old rascal! If you only knew what I know, you wouldn't be so proud. You wouldn't be so cocky." You see, dear friend, he'd read the last chapter. ¶

Those of us who are Christians have read the last chapter, amen? We've read the book of the Revelation, and we've seen where "*the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.*" (Revelation 11:15) And it looks like Satan is having his day now, but I want to tell you he cannot win.

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Look away from Satan, and look to Jesus.

E. Don't Look at Circumstances

And let me say, dear friend, don't look at circumstances. Oh, if you look at circumstances, you're going to fall. Do you remember Peter, when Peter was there in the boat and the waves were so boisterous? And Jesus came walking on the water, and Peter saw Jesus and said, "*Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water,*" and the Master said, "*Come.*" (Matthew 14:28–29) And do you remember Peter got out of the boat and started to walk on water through those boisterous waves? And I can imagine Peter's heart was jumping with joy. And he said, "This is wonderful! This is wonderful!" And then, an unkind wave slapped him in the face, and he looked around at those waves, and he said, "This is impossible." And it was. And he started to sink. What happened to Peter? He simply failed to look unto Jesus. He looked at circumstances—that's all.

Listen, friend. There are plenty of waves around us, but you'd better get your eyes off of them and put them on Jesus, because I want to tell you, everything that threatened to be over Peter's head was already under Jesus' feet. Don't you forget it: Jesus was walking on that water.

¶ I ask some Christians, "How are you doing?" They say, "Well, I'm doing pretty well, under the circumstances." How did you ever get there? Circumstances are like a mattress. You're supposed to be on it, not under it. Under the circumstances, you suffocate; on them, you rest pretty well. Now, let me tell you something, friend. We're not to be under the circumstances. Take your eyes off of circumstances and put them

on the Lord Jesus. †

F. **Don't Look at Your Brethren**

I want to say, take your eyes off your brethren and put them on the Lord Jesus. Look away from your brethren. The best of men will disappoint you. Don't you be a preacher follower—not per se. You follow the Lord Jesus. Don't you put your confidence in anybody or anything. The very best of people will disappoint you. And any Christian is headed for a fall who takes his eyes off of Jesus Christ and puts them on the sins of those for whom Jesus died. We are all imperfect. And so we are to look away from our brethren. The Bible tells us in Psalm 118 and verse 8, *“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.”* (Psalms 118:8)

G. **Don't Look at Creeds**

I want to say something else: Don't spend your time looking at your creeds—at your creeds. Somebody says, “Oh, look. I know this theology. I know that. I know this thing.” Friend, you're not saved by some creed; you're saved by Christ. You're not saved by a plan; you're saved by a person. I know Christians who are just as straight as a gun barrel theologically and just as empty spiritually, because they have never really looked to Jesus. I don't care how much of the Bible you know: If that has not caused you to look at Jesus, you have misread the Bible. And look unto Jesus Christ.

H. **Don't Look at Yourself**

And don't look at yourself. I know Christians who are always looking at themselves, always examining themselves, taking themselves apart by little pieces and putting themselves back together again. I call it morbid introspection. They're always worried about this thing and that thing. Friend, look. Just take one glance to see that you're no good, and that's enough—that's enough. And then, from there on, look to the Lord Jesus.

It's amazing the kind of things that the devil will try to do to get you to examine yourself. And you say, “Well, I know I'm saved.” And the devil says, “No, you're not saved.” “Why? Why am I not saved?” You say, “I believe in Jesus.” He says, “Oh, yes, you're saved by faith in Jesus, but your faith is not good enough.” Has the devil ever pulled that on you? “You don't believe enough. Your faith is not strong enough. Sure, you say, ‘By faith in Christ.’ But your faith is such a low-class faith, if it's faith at all. It's not going to get you there, because you're not a true believer.”

Now, how are you going to argue with the devil over that? Look, friend. Here's the way to deal with the devil on that. The devil tells me, “Adrian Rogers, your faith is no good.” I say, “That's right. But isn't Jesus wonderful?” See? “Isn't Jesus wonderful?” I'm not putting faith in faith; I'm putting faith in Jesus.

You know, sometimes we hear sermons on “saving faith.” The Bible never mentions saving faith. There’s no such thing as saving faith. Faith doesn’t save; Jesus saves. You’re not saved by faith; you’re saved by Christ. Now faith is necessary for salvation, but it is Christ that saves you. How much faith does it take? Just faith enough to say, “Lord, I trust you.” And listen, friend. That’s all there is.

I. **Don’t Look at Your Look**

Do you know what the devil would do? If the devil can’t get you to look at self, and if the devil can’t get you to look at Satan, and if the devil can’t get you to look at circumstances, and if the devil can’t get you to look at your brethren, he’ll try to make you look at your look. Do you understand what I’m saying? He’ll try to make you look at your look. He’ll try to get you to put faith in faith, rather than faith in Jesus.

Now, look, friend. It’s not the quality of your faith that’s the issue; it is Jesus—it is Jesus! That’s the reason I said it’s not so important that you have great faith in God as that you have faith in a great God. You look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Look to Jesus! When the devil says, “Your faith is not any good,” you say “I’m looking to Jesus, devil. Now you’re not going to get me to examine myself and take myself apart a little piece at a time.” You look to Jesus! Look away from everything else.

That is the strength for your race. You look to Jesus, not look at Jesus. Look unto Jesus. Look to Jesus crucified for your cleansing. Look to Jesus raised for your power. Look to Jesus coming again for your encouragement—for indeed He is.

Conclusion

You cannot imagine—you cannot imagine—the amenities and the praise that a winner of the Olympics gained in that day. Why, friend, they would strew his pathway with flowers. His name would be announced. His parentage would be honored. Why, if he were from Athens, his livelihood would be supplied for the rest of his life. The government would pay poets to write national hymns about him. The sculptors would put him in marble and stone. People would speak his name with praise. But, oh, my friend, all of those things will pale into insignificance to the man who runs for the Lord Jesus Christ.

*It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,
It pays every step of the way.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

Brother Jim Whitmire had the choir do a song, a long time ago in Merritt Island. When I first heard it, the tears popped out of my eyes—and this is what that choir sang that Sunday morning that moved my heart; this is what they said. They sang,

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,

*Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrows will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.*

—ESTHER KERR RUSTHOI

† Tigranes was an Armenian king, and he was captured by the Roman army. And they took Tigranes in chains with his family, his lovely wife and his beautiful children, to stand before the Roman general to receive the sentence of death. Tigranes was a very brave and courageous warrior, but when he came before the Roman general, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. And he said to the Roman general, “You may take me and do with me what you will, but spare my wife, and spare my children. They’ve had no part in this. Do with me as you will, anything you want; but I plead with you, spare my wife, and spare my children.”

That Roman general was so moved by the plea of this Armenian king that he released them all: the king himself, the wife, and the children. Later on, Tigranes was speaking to his wife, and he said, “Did you notice in the Roman’s throne room the beautiful tapestries upon the wall?” She said, “I didn’t see them.” He said, “Did you notice the ivory throne?” She said, “I didn’t see it.” He said, “Did you notice the look on his face?” She said, “I didn’t see it.” He said, “Woman, where were your eyes?” She said, “My eyes were on the man who was willing to die for me. I had eyes for no one else but him.” †

Would to God we could say, “My eyes are on the One who did die for me, Jesus Christ; and I have eyes for no one but Him. I will bravely run the race, looking unto Jesus and nothing else, because He is the author and He is the finisher of our faith”! †

@ God does business with those who mean business., 9

@ Good things are bad things when they keep you from the best things., 6

@ It's not primarily great faith in God that you need; it is faith in a great God., 10

@ Salvation is not a reward that you receive at the end of the race; it is a gift that puts you into the race., 11

"How are you doing?" "Pretty well, under the circumstances.", 13

A quiet little lady is heard all over that stadium
"Run, baby, run!", 4

Facing the sentence of death, Tigranes, an Armenian king, pleads to save his wife and children., 16

Father sees son play football for the first time., 4

Little boy to villain
"If you only knew what I know, you wouldn't be so proud.", 12

Suppose I needed to cross this Mississippi River bridge, and I wasn't sure whether it could hold me., 10

Suppose that I borrow ten thousand dollars, and then I can't pay it back., 11

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Running Your Race

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 20, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1–2

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

HEBREWS 12:1

Outline

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- I. Get In the Race
- II. Never Get Discouraged
- III. Don't Let Anything Slow You Down
- IV. Don't Let Anything Trip You Up
- V. Don't Let Anything Turn You Aside
- VI. Don't Quit Running
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Conclusion

Introduction

Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 and 2, I want to speak to you today on life's race. You know, the world is occupied with two things; you know what they are? Number one: the war in the Middle East, and number two: the Super Bowl. That's right. And, there are some who are more interested in the Super Bowl than they are the war in the Middle East. Strange, but that is true. There're some whose life is sports. I mean, their life revolves around sports. Whether its football, taking a bag full of something up and down a pasture, or whether it's baseball, taking a limb off knocking a piece of cork over a wall, it's just their life. I mean, they are driven by sports and really, there's nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, I think most of the men here, if not a few of the women, enjoy participating or watching sports.

I believe the Apostle Paul did because he makes so many illustrations to sports in what he wrote. And, you have that here in Hebrews chapter 12 verses 1 and 2. Now, whether or not Paul wrote Hebrews is academic, there's no part in the scripture that says he did. Many scholars believe he did. Some scholars believe he didn't. I personally think Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. But, whoever wrote it has an incredible lesson.

Now, they had a Super Bowl back in that day, only they didn't call it the Super Bowl, they called it the Olympic Games. And, the Olympics were held on Mt. Olympus. They also had the Pithean Games. These were held in at Delphi, and then they had the Ismeian Games, which were held at Corinth. So, they didn't have one Super Bowl, they had three. And, they were so important that they had them staggered throughout the year so that the wealthy could attend all three. And, the athletes who participated, they were the crown jewels of society of that time. More important than generals, more important than philosophers, more important than businessmen were these athletes. As a matter of fact, Cicero, who was a historian of that day, complained. He said, "Why, these athletes are accorded more claim than a conquering general when he comes back." And, Joe Montana would tell you that's true. I mean, the people almost worshipped the ground they walked on.

And, there was a great stadium and amphitheater in almost every major city. And, we think our stadiums are large, but their stadiums sometimes were six times as long as a football field. Of course, they had those great lengths because of other things like the chariot races. There are many things that they participated in. Of course, there were those hand-to-hand combat things. There was the boxing. Boxing is an old sport. Paul said, "So fight I not as one that boxeth the air." He said, "I'm not shadow boxing." And, then, they had wrestling. The Apostle Paul said, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*" (Ephesians 6:12). They had the discus. They threw the javelin. They ran the races. They had all of these things and the people would come, thousands and tens of thousands came to cheer on these athletes.

Now, the athletes in these games were rigorously trained. They were trained mentally, physically, and spiritually. That is, they ran for the acclaim of their god. Now, of course, they worshipped pagan gods, but it was a religious experience for them. They denied themselves the niceties of life and the delicacies of life. They were hardened men. They put themselves on strict diets, they participated in a great physical regimen, and when time to participate came, they met at the end of a field where there would be a priest. And, many times a blood sacrifice would be made and the athlete would wash his hands in that blood sacrifice and lift his hands and swear that he had kept the training rules; that he had lived according to the laws of his religion, and that he would perform in the race according to the rules of the race, or whatever it is. He swore by what he thought to be holy, he would keep the laws, he would keep the rules and that he would run and primarily he would run for the glory of his emperor. And, that's the way these games went in that time, in the first century. And, that's where we pick up our reading here and see in Hebrews chapter 12 verse 1: "*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and*

the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Now, that’s the background and I want to talk to you about the race that God has put you in. Because, my dear friend, if you are saved, you are in a race. So, I want to give you eight things and I want you just to jot them down, eight things that will help you one day to be exceedingly and gloriously happy that you did them. I’ll promise you, and I just promise you if you’ll do these things you’ll be so glad, so everlastingly glad that you did them.

I. Get In the Race

Number one: get in the race. Now, the only way to get in the race is to be saved, or to be born again. Now, salvation is not a prize that you gain by winning the race. Salvation is the gift that puts you in the race. You had to be a citizen of the country before you could run. And, you must be a citizen of Heaven before you can run. You need to get in the race, and you need to be saved. Know beyond the shadow of any doubt that you’re saved. Don’t be a “hope so” Christian, be a “know so” Christian. Don’t be a question mark with your head bent over, be an exclamation point saying, “I know that I know that I know that I’m saved.”

Now, I want to remind you that lest some of you will come to the end of this message and think “Oh, if I could only live that way, then maybe God will save me.” No, my dear friend, you have to get saved even to get in the race. Romans chapter 9 and verse 16 says, “*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy*” (Romans 9:16). What that means is it’s not your determination; it’s not your striving that saves you it’s the mercy of God. So, number one, get in the race.

You know Peter said on the day of Pentecost to those people who were listening to him, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Do you know what that means? It means this group of people not going anywhere. Get in the race folks! Make certain absolutely certain that you know God through Christ personally.

II. Never Get Discouraged

Secondly, never get discouraged. Why? “*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us*” (Hebrews 12:1). Now, what are these people encompassing the arena of life doing? They’re cheering us on to keep us from getting discouraged. Who are these up there in the grand stand? Well, if you read Hebrews chapter 11, you would find out that these

are the faithful who have run the race before us.

You see, there's Football Hall of Fame, a Baseball Hall of Fame, and there is a Faith Hall of Fame. It's in Hebrews chapter 11. And, the writer of Hebrews lists all of those who are in the Hall of Fame, great heroes of the faith. And, then he says, "They're up in the grandstands; they've already gone on to Heaven." They've already run the race. They're the old athletes sitting up there and they're looking down out of the Heavenly grand stand, they're peering through the clouds, they're watching you and they're watching me and hey folks, they have their eyes on you right now. And, just as the emperor was up there in his velvet box, so the Lord Jesus is also watching you right now.

By the way, young lady, he sees you writing that note to your boyfriend; right now they're watching you. They know, mister, whether you're taking notes or cooking up a business deal. Right now, they know, lady, whether you're planning your potato salad, or whether you're listening to your pastor right now. Hey, they know that. They're watching. Those in Heaven watch us. And, they're looking down right now, but why they're there is not to criticize, but to encourage. And, it just blesses me to think of it.

Some of you are just about ready to quit, you say, "I've been in this race so long, I'm so tired." And, Enoch says, "Keep on Running! Heaven's just a step away!" Some of you say, "Oh, if you only knew the calamity that I am facing right now." And, 'ol Noah is saying, "Hey keep running, no disaster can stop you. I came through the flood by faith." And, then some of you are saying, "But pastor, you just don't know my circumstances. You don't know what I'm up against." And 'ol Abraham says, "Keep on running, with God nothing is impossible." The Father of the Faithful. You say, "Well, I'm getting too old. I'm tired and I'm gonna hang up my cleats. I'm not going to run anymore." And, Sister Sarah just laughs. She says, "Hey, you never get too old for God. I had a baby according to a promise when I was very very old." You say, "I've got foes that've come against me." Moses lifts up his rod and he says, "Run on! No foe can stand against you and no Red Sea can drown you."

They're up there in the glory, cheering and pushing you on. Some of you are saying, "Well, that's all right for all these religious folks, but you don't know me. My life is maimed and scared with sin." There's a prostitute named Rahab whose name is listed also in chapter 11, and she says, "You run on. I had a face that was scared a marred with sin. I had a broken and wasted life and the Lord saved me and put me in the race." Run on! I don't care who you are, run the race! My dear friend, don't you get discouraged, there's nothing can stop you if you'll trust our Lord. Nothing. All right? Get in the race. Number two: don't get discouraged.

III. Don't Let Anything Slow You Down

Number three: don't let anything slow you down. Now, look at it, it says, "let us lay aside every weight." Now, nobody runs a race in an overcoat with a suitcase in each hand. When you run a race, you get as light as you can. Lay aside every weight.

You know the problem with most twentieth century Christians is excess baggage? Now, nothing wrong with an overcoat, you just don't run a race in it. There is nothing wrong with a steamer trunk, but you can't win the Olympics with that thing on your back. You see, one of the greatest lessons in life I have learned is this: good things become bad things when they keep us from best things. Okay? Good things become bad things when they keep us from best things. Most of the members of the churches where I have had the privilege of pastoring have not been so much ruined by bad things as they have good things that have kept them from the best things. For example, there's some young men here today who are athletes and you spend all your time pumping iron. Well, you ought to keep your body in shape, but if you're spending so much time in the gymnasium keeping your body in shape that you fail to pray and have a quiet time with God, then for you a good time has become a bad thing.

Some of you kids are great at Nintendo. I mean you and Mario all the way. Oh, you play too, huh? Okay. There's nothing wrong with that as far as I can tell. But, you see, listen, if you know all the moves in Nintendo, but you don't memorize the scripture, do you know what's happened to you? Harmless recreation has been used by Satan to keep you from winning the race. Could it be the beauty shop? Could it be the mall? Could it be the business corporate office? All of these things are legitimate. Could it be that friendships and fellowships and things that in themselves are not bad? But, they become bad because good things that keep you from best things are bad things. That's what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*" (1 Corinthians 6:12). That is the authority of any.

You see, let's take a thing, there's no law against it, nothing wrong with cutting your grass, or nothing wrong with a business deal, or nothing wrong with recreation or vacation. All of these things are good and fine, but when they grip your life and when you are brought under the power of them, then, my dear friend, you are not a person with a burning desire to be a winning spiritual athlete. An athlete has to say, "If he would be a champion this one thing I do. This one thing I do if he would be a champion in the athletic world and so it is in the spiritual world, so it is in the spiritual world." The Apostle Paul says, "*This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 3:13-14). I just do this one thing. Have you done that? Have you narrowed your interest?

Somebody said, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” Well, I think the Bible would not agree with that. I think the Bible would say, “Put all your eggs in one basket and watch that basket.” Dear friend, just say this one thing, “I do.” Don’t let anything slow you down. Don’t let legitimate pleasures, legitimate business, legitimate fellowship, and legitimate interests keep you from serving the Lord. All of those you can do if they help you on their way.

For example, recreation can help you. I’ve just come back from teaching the Bible on a Caribbean cruise. I went down there Monday came back Friday. Well, did that help me or hurt me? I think it helped me. I think it helped to sharpen my focus because I was teaching the Bible on this cruise. And, we had a wonderful time. I don’t feel guilty for going. I look forward to going next year. I think it was good. I’m not trying to tell you that you can’t go fishing, I’m not trying to tell you that you can’t play games, and I’m not trying to tell you that you can’t have fellowship and fun and parties. I’m just simply saying that all recreation, all relaxation, and all business will either sharpen you or dull you, it will speed you up, or it will slow you down. If you don’t have the sense to know which is which, you’re in trouble.

Now, dear friend, if it won’t make you a better person, if it won’t speed you on your way, all things are not expedient. You know what “expedient” means. Expedient deals with an expedition. An expedition is something that’s going somewhere. Do you have a goal in mind? Are you aiming for something? Then anything that keeps you from your God given goal to you it is wrong. My friend, get in the race, don’t let anything discourage you; don’t let anything slow you down.

IV. Don’t Let Anything Trip You Up

Number four, don’t let anything trip you up. Now, it’s bad enough to be slowed down, but it’s disastrous to be tripped up. You see what he says here, “*let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us*” (Hebrews 12:1). Do you see the word “beset”? It’s a Greek word which means, “entangle.” You see, it’s terrible to be running with a suitcase under each arm, but it’s even worse to be running with your ankles in chains. That’s what sin does to you. Good things can become bad things if they slow you down, but sin just trips you up. My heart is broken, I mean literally broken. I wept like a baby, uncontrollably here a while back when I heard of a man of God that fell into sin, and his race is just ruined. It broke my heart, the sin that trips you up.

My friend, be afraid of sin. Fear sin. Sin murdered Jesus. It was sin that nailed Him to the cross. Never pity sin. Never laugh at sin. Never become familiar with sin. You treat sin like sin would treat you. Did you hear that? You treat sin like sin would treat you. Your sin will have no mercy on you. You have no mercy on sin. Just don’t do it. My friend, get in the race. Don’t get discouraged. Don’t let anything slow you down and

don't let anything trip you up. "The sin which doeth so easily beset us."

V. Don't Let Anything Turn You Aside

Next thing I want you to consider is this, my dear friend. Don't let anything turn you aside. Now, it doesn't matter if you're running fast and running light, if you're running in the wrong direction, you can't win the race. Look at it again here, it says in chapter 12, "wherefore seeing we also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doeth so easily beset us..." Now, watch it! "...and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Now, anytime a man runs a race, he has certain perimeters in which he runs. If he doesn't stay between the lines, if he doesn't stay on the track, if he cuts across the field, or if he goes in the wrong direction, he's just disqualified. He cannot run out of bounds and win the race. Now, God has set a race before you. And, God has set a race before me. And, I must not let anything turn me aside. The race that God has given me is this: He's called me to be a preacher and a proclaimer of the Word of God. I believe God called me as teenage boy and God set me on a track. Now, I've often thought about what I might do if I were a preacher; sometimes on Monday mornings, especially. The only thing worse than Mondayfied is being mummified. But, I'm hooked. I'm trapped, I can't get out of it, don't want to get out of it. I'm thrilled that God called me to preach, I really am. But, I know that God has given me a track to run on. I feel a great peace in my heart that I'm where God wants me to be as pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church.

Now, God didn't just show me the race track all the way, but He showed me the starting place and He told me to get on and to listen to Him day by day. Now, God knows my abilities, God knows my needs, and God knows my opportunities. He knows your abilities, He knows your needs, He knows your opportunities, and God has given you a track to run on, and don't you get off of it. You say, "You mean He wants me in the ministry?" No, if you're a mother and you've got little children and you're thinking about leaving those little children and you're going downtown to get a job, when you don't have to; that is to put food on the table, a roof over their head and clothes on their back, you don't have to. You are doing it so you can have a bigger house, different vacation, or maybe you just want to dress up, put on high heels and pile your hair up on top of your head and go down and flounce around a little and be somebody. You're making a mistake. You see, you say, "Who are you to tell me what to do?" Well, I I'm really not trying to tell you what to do I'm just trying to share something from my heart. You will have no greater privilege than to raise those babies, those children for Jesus Christ. My hat is off and my heart is out to a woman who has to work to provide because maybe her husband has deserted her, or circumstances are beyond their ability and she in order to help does this. But, my dear friend, there are always the

devil's diversions to keep you from the track that God has put you on. And, what has happened is this: you've lost a sense of direction and you're being blown about your being driven about rather than staying on track.

Now, my dear friend, I don't know what God's goal for you is. I don't know what God's track for you is, but if you're going to win the race, you cannot run out of bounds. God has a will and God has a plan and God has a way for you to win the race, to run the race. And, by the way, we're not racing against one another. I'm not in a race with you and you're not in a race with me, we're partners to encourage each other in the race. We're racing against sin, self, and Satan, and we better learn how to win. Don't turn aside. Now, here's another thing, if you'll listen to what I have to say today, you'll be glad one day that you did.

VI. Don't Quit Running

The next thing that I want to tell you, my dear friend, is don't quit running. Now, you can be as light, you can be as unencumbered as you need to be, you can be on the straight and narrow, running the race, you can be a child of God having been put in the race, and then you can make the terrible, terrible decision that you've run long enough, it's time for you to rest. You can never, never quit until you finish the course. I don't care how far ahead you are. You may be a world-class Christian, I mean, just like a world-class athlete.

Now, let's suppose you're running the mile. Let's suppose that you are a physical athlete. And, you're running the mile race. And, you come out of the blocks and you sprint out ahead and you're ahead of everyone else; you're leading the pack. And, you're running and running and running and you're further ahead than you've ever been before. As a matter of fact, let's say that you're fifty yards ahead of everybody! Nobody's ever run the mile this fast. You are a world-class athlete. Everybody is behind you. But, I'm gonna tell you one thing, if you quit, you'll come in last, no matter how good you run. If you quit, it doesn't matter how far you've run, it doesn't matter how fast you've run, it doesn't matter what style you've run in, if you quit, you'll come in last. You can't quit!

Some of you say, "Well, I'm retired pastor." You might be retired from downtown, but you're not retired from Jesus mister. All that does is just give you more time to serve God. I mean some of you ladies, I talked to some ladies here in the church, talked to a sweet row of ladies back there before the service, well, you know what they are. I know those ladies; they're athletes. They're athletes, boy, they're runners, and they're prayer warriors. They're serving Jesus. As a matter of fact, I believe they're serving Jesus, I believe I believe they're just hitting a stride right now. They may not be able to do some of the things that some of you sweet young little things can do, but I tell you they know God. They know where the track is and they know how to run the race for the Lord

Jesus Christ. You can't quit, I don't care how long you've served.

You say, "Well, I've done mine, now it's time for these young people." The devil told you that mister. The devil told you that lady. You can't quit. The Bible says, "...run with patience..." Do you see the word "patience"? Just take it in your Bible and put a ring around it, a circle around it, put a star by it. The word "patience" means endurance. There's never been an athlete who's been worth his salt who didn't endure. That's what makes the difference. You're playing ball, you're playing football, you get out there, everything hurts and what doesn't hurt doesn't work, you're mouth is dry and every breath feels like you're breathing fire, that's when it really counts. That's when it counts. You run with patience. Never, never, never, never quit. You just can't do it.

VII. Keep Your Eye on the Goal

Now, next let me tell you something friend, you must always keep your eye on the goal. You must keep your eye on the goal. Look at verse 2: "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...*" (Hebrews 12:2). Now, there's a goal. Every athlete knows that he must become goal conscious. He must keep his eye on the goal. You cannot run looking over your shoulder. I heard about the Sunday school teacher who was telling the story of Lot's wife and he told how Lot looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. He said, "That's nothing. My mamma was going to the grocery store and in a car; she looked back and turned into a telephone pole."

You can't run looking over your shoulder. You're to be looking unto Jesus who is the author and the finisher of your faith. Now, the word "author" there in the King James Version literally means, "file leader," or "example." If you want to run, He is your example. He's already run the race. He ran the race and so he is your example. But, you see, if Jesus Christ is just an example to me, hey folks, I'm in trouble. No one can run like He can run. I mean, how can I follow Jesus? After all, He was God in human flesh. He was not a sinful man like I am. Yes, He's my example, but thank God He is more than my example, He is the author and the finisher of my faith. You know what the word "finisher" means? It means "perfecter."

You see, the Lord Jesus says, "Adrian, here's the way to run. I am the goal and the example." But, he also says, "I am the one who will do it in you and through you. I am the perfecter of your faith. I am the one I am the one that put you in the race, I am the goal toward which you run and the strength with which you run. I am the author, I am the example, and I am the perfecter of your faith." Now, many of you think that I'm talking today about some super people, you know they're some people just like in the natural realm that are better athletes. I mean, there're some people, you might as well face it, when they come out of their mother's womb, they've got the genes, the chromosomes to be better than the rest of us, isn't that right? I mean, athletically.

They're just they're big, they're coordinated, and some folks when they're born you know they just know coordination. Some folks I know can't chew bubble gum and walk at the same time. I mean, there's no coordination. Other people, that's a gift from God. They're just coordinated.

But, now dear friend, in the spiritual realm, it doesn't work that way. May I tell you, spiritually, you have all of God you want. All of God you want. And, you see, the reason is a natural athlete, well, he's slowed down by age. A spiritual athlete, he gets stronger with age. A natural athlete depends upon what he got from the first birth, but a spiritual athlete depends upon what he got with the second birth.

You know, the Bible says, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5). We are re-gened and regenerated. We get new genes! We're made partakers of the divine nature and Jesus Christ is not only the example, the author of my faith, but He is the finisher of my faith. He is the one who puts His life into me and the life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. And, friend, that's good news. And, so there's not a one of you who's can say, "Well God can't use me." That's an insult to deity. It's not humility when you say, "Well, I'm just nothing. I can't be used, I haven't got any gifts." It's a lie! Jesus is the perfecter of your faith mister. It's Christ in you who is the hope of glory.

Don't you tell me there's not a mother's child here who cannot run this race, because the Savior is there. He is your coach, He is your example, He is your energizer, and He is your strength. My dear friend, He is your Gatorade. He's the one who'll keep you on the track. He's the one who'll give you strength, day by day. Don't you insult God by saying, "You can't do it." You keep your eye on the goal and listen to the coach.

VIII. Never Lose Sight of the Prize

Last of all, and this is so very important, my dear friend, never lose sight of the prize! Why do these guys play in the Super Bowl? Well, they want the fame, they want the ring, they want the money, and they want the contract, that's what they want. Why did people run the Olympic Games so long ago? Well my dear friend, when a man won in the Olympic Games, his name was proclaimed, his family became famous, his country was called out, his friends and admirers would stroll his path with flowers. The poets, national poets would write poems about him, epics about him and the country commission a statute to be carved and his statute would be on pedestals, and if he were a citizen of Greece, and he won the Olympics, all of his expenses would be paid for the rest of his life. I mean he had a prize. He had a prize, and he's running for it. He wanted all of that, and that's what impelled him and motivated him.

Now the Bible says, "We're to be looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set

before Him..." who for the joy that was set before Him, "...endured the cross, despising the shame..." (Hebrews 12:2). You see, Jesus, when He went to Calvary, and dear friend, He never quit running until he bowed His head and said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). I've finished the course. Jesus, going to Calvary, Calvary was horrible, Calvary was terrible, but the Bible says, "He looked beyond Calvary and He saw our salvation" That was the joy that was set before Him. That's what the Apostle Paul meant when he told the Phillipian church, he said, "...my joy and crown..." (Philippians 4:1).

Conclusion

Oh, dear friend, Paul said, "I press toward the prize." What is the prize? What do you want? Friend, I'll tell you what Adrian Rogers wants. I want someday to meet the one who died for me. And, hear Him say, "Well done good faithful servant." And, I want the soul winners' crown and I want to take it off and lay it back at Jesus feet. I do. You know one of my favorite songs is this. "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase, so bravely run the race 'til we see Christ." Amen?

Running to Win

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 10, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:1–4

Outline

Introduction

I. The Contest

II. The Crowds

III. The Conditioning

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about what you see on either wall, that banner that says, “Running to Win”—“Running to Win.” Now, the world of our Lord, and of Paul, was a world just like our world and our ages that makes much of athletics. And you are going to find a lot in the Bible about competition and athletic endeavors. As a matter of fact, they had three great games. We call the games that were played; they were events in that ancient world. There were the Olympian games, and, we get the Olympics from that. Those Olympian games were run in Athens and played in Athens. And then also, there were the Pythian Games, and they were at Delphi. And finally there were the Isthmian Games, and they were at Corinth. And, actually, they were staggered so that the wealthy could go here to these games, and then go to the other place for the other games, and get them all in. And they watched the sports that we watch today, many of them. They had boxing. They had wrestling. They threw the javelin. They threw the discus. They had chariot races; we don’t have those anymore. But we have, of course, the races at Indianapolis Speedway, and so forth. And then, they had the foot races. And what the writer of Hebrews is talking about, right now, are those foot races.

Notice chapter 12, verse 1: “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience—literally, with endurance—the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Now, in that day, to be an athlete was an incredible opportunity and privileged. As a matter of fact, these athletes who competed in these games were the most popular

people in the country. And Cicero complained that many times an athlete would receive more accolades, more praise, than a general who was returning home from the war. Now, they have great amphitheaters, and stadiums, bigger than our stadiums. As a matter of fact, sometimes where they would compete, the stadium would be six times the size of one of our football fields—very large.

And the athletes would begin to train. They would put themselves on a rigor of diet, and exercise, and abstinence from earthly pleasures, and then also, there would be a religious ritual that would be a part of this. And at the end of the field where they would participate would be an altar. There would be a blood sacrifice, on that altar, to some pagan god. And they would come and bathe their hands in the blood of that animal, lift them to the heavens, and swear by the god that they serve that they would play by the rules, that their lives were pure, there was nothing against them that would keep them from running fairly, and then the time for the race would begin. And these athletes would line up. Every muscle stretched, every nerve is ready, and the race begins.

Now, there is a tremendous application, and a tremendous correspondence for Adrian, and for you, because whether you understand it or not, we are all in the race. And so, I want to give you seven secrets to run this race. Now, I want you to listen very carefully.

I. The Contest

First of all, let's think of the contest. God has a race for you! Now, this is not talking about somebody else. Say to yourself—don't say it out loud, but—God has a race for me! He is not just talking about to whom it may concern. The idea is that all of us, every one of us, every mother's child, tonight, is in the stadium. The stadium is packed and jammed with people. And, in that day, the Emperor would come. The Emperor would have his velvet box, his room where he would sit and look down at the games. And just as the Emperor was looking down at these runners so long ago, our Lord from heaven is watching us as we run this race. And the crowds were there. Thousands and thousands and thousands of them, tier upon tier upon tier, rank upon rank, they are there; and the contest is about to begin.

Now, in the spiritual realm, we are runners, and there is a goal for each of us. I want to make it clear that we are not running against one another. As far as one another is concerned, we are not in competition, we are not in a race with one another; we are in a pilgrimage with one another. What are we racing about? Well, we are racing against sin, against self, and against life itself to win the prize. I want to say something else. The goal is not heaven. We're not running to try to get into heaven. Salvation is not a reward at the end of the race. Salvation is what puts you in the race. Salvation is not a reward

for the righteous. It is a gift for the guilty—we just come to our Lord and trust Him. You have to be born again to qualify to get into this race. Romans chapter 9, verse 16, says, “So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” Thank God for that: that God had mercy upon me, and God has mercy upon you, to put you in the race.

Now, the word here for race is the word *agon*—A-G-O-N. It’s a Greek word. It’s the word we get what word from? Agony. He’s talking here about a marathon. He’s not talking about a stroll. He is talking about a race that is grueling and agonizing. So here is the very first, this here that I want you to notice, verse one: God has a race for you. There is a contest.

II. The Crowds

Now, here is the second thing I want you to notice: not only the contest, but the crowds. There are those in the grandstand to cheer you on. Now, we are in chapter 12, and in chapter 11, you hear about all of the heroes of the faith—a gallery of the great. There they are—all of the saints are up in heaven. And they are what is called “a great cloud of witnesses.” And they are watching us. They are looking down upon us. My mother, I believe, who stepped into heaven yesterday, is watching me preach tonight. Does that bother you that those up in heaven are watching you? Well, the Lord is watching you. They’re made one with Him.

When J. Sidlow Baxter was here and preached to us, he said, “I rather think they are praying for us. For our Lord ever lives to make intercession for us, so why should they not join Him in praying for us down here?” They are aware of us, just as those runners were running there so long ago, there were countless eager eyes watching them—these heroes of the past. And I wonder if there was a multitude watching them. What a great multitude are watching us!

III. The Conditioning

Now, here is the third thing. There is the conditioning. Look, if you will again, in verse 1: “Wherefore seeing we are so compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin, which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”

Now, you cannot, if you are running a race, afford to let anything slow you down. There has to be discipline if you are going to run to win. Now, he mentions two things. First of all, there are the weights that slow you down. Then, there is the sin that trip you up. Now, either one of them are bad. First of all, he mentions the weights that slow you down: “Let us lay aside every weight...” *Onkos* is the Greek word. These are things that

are not necessarily bad in themselves. Nothing wrong with an overcoat, but if you're going to run a 100-yard dash, don't wear one. What does a runner do when he runs? He strips down to the bare necessities. I mean sometimes almost to the point of indecency. If you see a runner run, he is running stripped down to the very bare necessities. And we are to "lay aside every weight"—every weight. Now, here is the point: good things are bad things, if good things keep you from best things.

There are a lot of things that are not necessarily wrong, but they are wrong for you if they slow you down. First Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 12—do you know what Paul said? "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." Now, what does that mean? What does he mean—expedient? When you think of expedient, you think of an expedition. An expedition is something that is going somewhere. And what he's saying is, if this thing doesn't help me to go to the place I am supposed to go to, for me, it's wrong. There are certain things that I have laid aside in my own particular life, not because they are bad in itself, just simply because they are excess baggage—you know, the newspaper, the television, a lot of things that may be harmless. I am talking about worthwhile television, or so-called worthwhile television, or books. You see, I don't have time to read good books because I haven't read the best ones. Now, a good book may be a recreational book, because God wants you to have recreation. But so many times we are just simply wasting time. We lay aside every weight that is the good things, that may be bad things, if they keep us from the best things.

Would you think about some things in your life right now? What is there in your life—I mean, right now—what is there that, if you eliminated that, you can run the race better? Why don't you write it down on a scrap of paper, and put it in your pocket, and then tomorrow, when you are having your devotions, pray over it. What is there right now in your life, right now, that you are doing? What are you spending time on? What are you spending money on? What are you spending thought on? What are you spending energy on? That if you laid it aside, you could get down the track. Good things become bad things when they keep you from best things. Life would be simpler if it was a choice between good and bad. It is not: it is a choice between good and best—between good and best. "Let us lay aside every weight..." That is, strip down to the bare necessities, if we are going to run. There are the good things, the weights that must be laid aside. And then, there are the sins that must be laid aside.

Look again: "Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us." Now, the word literally is a Greek word, which means entangle. It means to trip you up. And there are things that would entangle you, and trip you up. And you have to deal with sin as sin will deal with you.

Let me tell you something, friend: your pet sin is no friend. You need to treat sin as it

will treat you. Be ruthless with your sin—ruthless! Have no mercy on that sin—none! Because I am going to tell you that sin will have no mercy on you. It will entangle you, and you will fall, you will fail to win the prize. And so, there is the conditioning; there are certain things that have to be laid aside.

Now, here's the fourth thing I want you to notice, the course. Look again, if you will, in this verse. There is the course; you must never turn aside. Notice it says, "wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with go great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience, the race that is set before us." God has set before this young man over here, Mark, a race. He is now our Associate Pastor. God, in His infinite mercy, and His wonderful gift to this church, set this man aside for a race. Moise Lister has been set aside. God said, I want you to run the race in the field of music, and writing music, blessing thousands, millions, with music. That is the race that is set before him. I am looking at a medical doctor tonight—that is the race that's set before him. I am looking at a student—that's the race set before you. I am looking at a homemaker—that is the race that is set before you. I am looking at a widow, at home now, her husband gone to heaven, one of the sweetest men I ever knew—Brother Bill, that's the race that is set before you. God has set a race before me. God has set a race before you. My race is not your race. We run the course that is set before us. The Apostle Paul, when he came to the end of his life, said: "I fought a good fight. I have finished my course"—my course. There is a course. There is a race, and you must never turn aside. Thank God, Paul didn't quit. His course was a strange course. It took him through a Philippian jail, and there was a revival at midnight. His track took him to a Roman jail, and he brought a slave to Christ. He found himself in Caesar's prison, and he set a little colony of Heaven right there in Caesar's prison. Don't you complain about the race that is set before you. He knows where you are. He allowed you to be there, or He put you there, and anyway, you run the race that's set before you. If you get off course, you are going to be disqualified.

Now, notice also, not only the course, but I want you to notice the continuance. Notice in verse 1 again—look at it: "Seeing we are also compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us—now watch this—and let us run with patience." You know what the word patience means? That's not the ability to thread a needle. That's not the ability to build a model airplane. What it literally means is endurance. It means to bear up under pressure. Again, we're in a race! When I was in high school, I was on the track team. I know what it is to run until your lungs are aflame! Your muscles ache. It hurts! That is the word that Paul is using here: it is the *agon*! The agony! If you are looking for a cheap way, easy way, a lazy way, to serve Jesus Christ, forget it. Many of us are. I mean there

are folks—absolutely, folks—they think they’ve done God a wild favor when they get here on Sunday morning and listen to a sermon. They really do. I mean, they call this “the service.” This is not the service. The service is out there—this is a filling station. But we don’t understand it. Listen. This thing of serving the Lord Jesus costs. You must pray over it. You must study over it. You must weep over it. God does business with those who mean business. You will never, ever win a race unless you mean business. And I am talking to each one of us. You say, well, I’m a little lady. I’m not supposed to be in a race. Yes, you are, madam. There is a race set before you. Now, physically, you may not be able to run. But you are running a race you must never turn aside.

I was with my dear mother yesterday. She stepped over into heaven, but I can tell you, I believe with all my heart, she finished her course. She finished her course! She did not turn aside. She was true to the Lord Jesus Christ. Don’t complain about the race that is set before you. The continuance—finish your course!

Moise Lister is a composer. If he has a song right now that is unfinished, and he dies, that’s an unfinished song. I believe that while we may leave some sermons unfinished, and we may leave some songs unfinished, and we may leave some houses unbuilt, and some flowers unplanted, and some needlework undone, we are immortal, until our work on earth is done—until God says, “That’s enough,” if we are walking in the Spirit. The continuance—run with patience! Don’t quit! Don’t quit! Don’t quit!

Listen to me. I don’t care how far ahead you are—if you quit, you’ll lose the race. No matter how far ahead you are, if you quit, you will lose the race. Run with endurance the race that is set before you!

Next I want you to notice, not only continuance, but I want you to notice the coach. Verse 2: “Looking unto Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of our faith.” Now, why do you look unto Jesus? Number one, He is the Author of our faith. And that word “author” actually means “example.” He is the example. Faith comes by beholding Jesus Christ. If you are having difficulty with your faith, it is because you haven’t really seen Jesus. It is not primarily great faith we need; it is faith in a great God. We have a great Savior. Put your eyes upon Jesus. He is the Author of our faith, and He is the Finisher of our faith.

The word “finisher” means the “perfecter”; it means the “completer.” It means He’s the one who gives you the strength for the race. Remember that salvation is a gift at the beginning of the race; He gives us strength to run the race. I am convinced that the reason that many start the race and never finish is they’ve never received the gift at the beginning. They never have met the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Author. He is the Finisher. If you know Him, you are going to finish. That’s the reason I believe in eternal security of the believer.

Now, notice, what’s our relationship to this coach? “Looking unto Jesus”—it doesn’t

say, “looking at Jesus.” “Looking unto Jesus.” What’s the difference? Well, suppose you are in financial difficulty, and it looks like that you have some debts you cannot pay, maybe they’re going to foreclose on your house, and a friend says, “look to me”—“look to me.” Now, he doesn’t mean “look at me.” “Look to me. Depend upon me. I will see you through. I will take care of you.” That’s what he is saying: “look unto Jesus.” It is faith in Jesus, not facts about Jesus. It is looking unto Jesus, not looking at Jesus, that saves. And this Greek word that says “looking unto Jesus,” as many of you’ve already heard, is a word that means looking away from everything else, and looking at something else. You see, it’s not looking at Jesus and other things. You look away from everything else, and you put your eyes upon Jesus. Don’t put your eyes upon Satan—he will terrify you, or entice you. Don’t put your eyes upon the sins of those for whom Jesus died. Get your eyes off of hypocrites, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Don’t put your eyes upon yourself. So many people are guilty of morbid introspection. They just open themselves up, and are pulling the innards out and stuffing them back in again. That gets you nowhere. That’s just morbid introspection. Take your eyes off of yourself. Take your eyes off of your sin. Confess your sins. Put them in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ. And quit saying “what a fool I was.” Start saying, “what a fool I am, for what a fool I was.” Get your eyes off of all of that, and put your eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ. I’ll tell you what the devil will do. The devil is so dirty. The devil is so diabolical and deceptive. He will get you to look at anything other than Jesus. You know what he will get you to do? He’ll even get you to look at your look. That’s right. He’ll say, you will be examining your faith. You say, “well, my faith, I wonder if my faith is strong enough.” Forget about your faith. Look to Jesus. Don’t put faith in faith; put faith in Jesus. Look to the Lord Jesus. The devil used to say to me, “well, your faith is not good enough.” I learned how to deal with him. I’d say, “That’s right, but isn’t Jesus wonderful?” Just look away from everything else, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Coach. The Lord Jesus is the Author of our faith. The Lord Jesus is the Finisher of our faith.

And, last of all, think about the crown. Oh thank God for the crown, because these runners so long ago would win a crown. Look in verse 2: “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross.” There was a crown for the Lord Jesus, and you know His crown? You. You are the prize that He ran for. And we have a crown. You know in these old days when an athlete would run in the Olympic games, if he won, his name would be proclaimed throughout the whole country. His family, his kinfolks, would be announced and honored. The country, his country, would be called out. There would be a parade. They would scatter his pathway with flowers. He would be presented with costly gifts. If he was from

Athens, his expenses would be paid for the rest of life, if he won the race. Poets, with national reputations, would write poems about him. Sculptors, at government expense, would do statues of this runner who'd run. Every runner runs to win a prize. Friend, I am running to win a prize. I hope you are. The Bible says, "We are to run that we might win." Listen to these verses. Paul was talking about his prize. First Thessalonians 2, verse 19: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye at the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

Last week I was in Lynchburg, preaching. A young man came up, put his arms around me, and gave me a bear hug, said: "You've never seen me, but I gave my heart to Jesus listening to you preach. God saved me, and He's called me into ministry." Well, friend, that's a joy to me—that's a joy to me. That means more to me than winning a football game. It means more to me than winning some laurel to be on my head, or a gold medal. Paul says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye at the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Must I go in empty handed? Must I meet my Savior so without one soul with which to greet Him? Must I empty handed go? I asked you a question! When you go to heaven, are you talking anybody with you? Don't answer it out loud, but I want you to answer seriously, soberly, somberly: do you have a crown? A soul-winner's crown? There is a reward when we meet the Lord. He says, "Behold, I come quickly. And my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his works."

Conclusion

Are you in the race? I say, are you in the race? Have you laid aside every weight—weight that would slow you down? Have you put aside every sin—sin that would trip you up? Brother Jim knows one of my favorite songs says, "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus. Life's trials will seem so small, when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will erase. So bravely run the race, till we see Christ."

Janice, will you come up here for a moment? This is my daughter Janice. She's one of the most godly people I know. I can say that without equivocation. Janice has gone through some deep water in her life, and out of that she wrote something. And I said to her, "Janice, would you just come and share that with the congregation tonight?" and she said she would. So I want you to do that sweetheart.

Janice Rogers: It was June of 1989, and I call it the dark night of my soul. I was out at the old Chicks baseball stadium, and I was outside with my little girls, and we were outside catching foul balls outside the stadium. And I had really been into running lately, and the Los Angeles Olympics had not been too far back. And I was looking at the stadium, and I was just looking at it—it was not really very full. But I imagined myself

that I had been a runner in the race of life, as a marathon runner, and as in the Olympics. And I pictured myself running, and that I had been tripped up in the race of life. And I was laying broken and bloodied on the track, and not even able to get up and to run. And as I had really been meditating on the verse that Daddy's been talking about tonight, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with endurance the race set before us, and as I was picturing myself, bloodied and bruised on the track, all of a sudden, in my mind's eye, the stadium became filled with people. And they were standing up, and they were wildly cheering, and I looked, and it seemed as if they were the saints of all the ages, the great heroes of Hebrews chapter 11. And there was Moses, and there was Jacob, and there was Abraham, and there was Sarah. And as I had just been watching the Los Angeles Olympics, I remember when the United States would do things, and everybody would start going, "U.S.A! U.S.A!" This is going to sound silly, but as I listened, it was as if they were saying, "Jan-ice! Jan-ice! Jan-ice! Get up and run the race! We are cheering you on!

And so, a couple of years ago, this has been on my heart as I thought of the heavenly grandstand, and God gave that to me, because God knew the very next day, my life would truly be shattered, and fell apart. And I believe He gave it to me, because He wanted to encourage me that the heavenly grandstand was cheering me on. A few years ago, He gave me the words to this poem that is about the experience I told you about.

"I was running the race of life, and the wind was at my back.
There was never a fairer day to run, never a smoother track.
So with my head held high, as the miles raced by, I ran with careless ease.
I would run this race, I would win first place, so my Master I would please.
Then an unforeseen hand rudely pushed me down,
And I fell with a thud to the cold cruel ground.
And broken and bruised, I began to cry,
As the other runners all passed me by:
"Lord, help me please. I can't run anymore.
I am broken and battered. I am tired and sore.
I don't think I can make it. I just want to die.
I don't even have what it takes to try."
And as I lay bleeding upon the ground,
A vast cloud of witnesses gathered round.
They were heroes of old; all the saints of the ages.
Who through weakness were strong, and through faith made courageous.
They started to cheer and to wildly applaud.

Their voices rose up giving glory to God.
And then, to myself, I said: "How can this be?
For the saints of the ages, were cheering for me?"
Then Abel cried out: "There is POWER IN THE BLOOD!"
And Noah said: "He'll keep you safe through the flood."
And Jacob said: "Weary one, lean on the Lord."
And Moses cried out: "CHILD, LOOK TO THE REWARD!"
Then Sarah stepped forward holding Abraham's hand.
And they both said: "Trust God when you don't understand.
And God's promises, child, you must always believe.
For sometimes, He'll do things, you just can't conceive."
Come on, you can do it! Get up off your face!
And run with endurance the rest of the race!
And remember, my child, when your strength is all gone,
The saint of the ages, are cheering you on.
So I rose to my feet amidst thunderous ovation,
And started to run with great determination.
And that's when I saw Him, my Savior and Lord.
And I knew in my heart I must win the reward,
To cast down before Him the crown that I'd won.
And to hear Him say to me: "Well done, child, well done."
Singing: "It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus. Life's trials will seem so small,
when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all sorrows will erase. So bravely run
the race, till we see Christ."

Dr. Rogers: Some, perhaps, have strayed from the course. Others have dropped out of the race. But, tonight, I want you to make a brand new resolve that you're getting in the race. And, if you've fallen on the track, get up. If you've strayed from the track, come back. If you've never gotten in the race, tonight, give your heart to Jesus Christ.

We're going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to be standing here.

The Loving Chastening of God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 1, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:5–15

“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

HEBREWS 12:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Motive for God’s Chastisement
- II. The Manner of God’s Chastisement
- III. The Results of God’s Chastisement

Conclusion

Introduction

Hebrews chapter 12. Have you ever felt like just quitting, giving it up, perhaps what the Bible would call, in this passage, fainting? Have you had a fainting spell? If you have, it is because you have forgotten something that you ought to know. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 5: “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” Now, sometimes we’re chastened, and, sometimes when we’re chastened, we just want to throw in the towel and quit.

I want to talk to you tonight about chastening, which is a Bible word, which means child discipline. God loves you enough to discipline you. Now, you may not appreciate it now, but, according to the Scripture, the time will come when you will bless the Lord that He loved you enough to chastise you.

Christians suffer for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes, we suffer just because we’re part of the natural world. I mean, let’s face it, we live in a world that has been cursed with disease and sickness and trouble and thorns and briars. One lady in her 80s was bedfast, and the pastor came to visit her, and she said, “Pastor, can you tell me why I’m suffering?” He said, “Yes, ma’am, I can.” She said, “Why?” He said, “You’re getting old”—“You’re getting old.” Hey, folks, hang on, hang on—you’ll wear out. We’re just a part of it. That’s natural suffering. And then, sometimes we suffer because we’re godly, and the kind of suffering that we suffer is persecution, for the Bible says, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” If you’re not being persecuted, try to

keep it a secret because it's just simply a sign that you're not living godly in Christ Jesus, for the Bible clearly, plainly says, without stutter or stammer, "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And, if you read over here in the 11th chapter of the Book of Hebrews, say about verse 36, of some of these people, and it says, "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and cave of the earth." Had they done anything wrong? No, they had done something right. They stood up for the Lord Jesus Christ and they suffered for it. Others suffer, perhaps like Job, as a trial of their faith. Job was tempted. Satan was allowed to tempt Job, not to show that Job could sin, but that Job would not sin. Some of us may be allowed certain sufferings, sickness, distress, reverses to shut the devil's mouth, because the devil says, "Well, the only reason he serves God is he's never had any trouble. Now, God, You've bribed him; You bought him off." God says, "No, you don't know my servant. Let him suffer, and he will still praise me, and say, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.'" But there's another kind of suffering, and that's what we call chastisement, where we, like Jonah, who disobey the Lord, and we get into trouble because of our disobedience. And, many times, when this chastisement comes, we fail to remember the exhortation that God had already given us in the Old Testament, and sometimes we tend to want to hang it up, to faint, to quit.

I. The Motive for God's Chastisement

Well, lets think tonight about chastisement, and, first of all, the motive for it. Why, what is God's motive for chastisement? Well, lets begin here in verse 6: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth—now that's a good one for you to remember—for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, where of all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure"—that doesn't mean they enjoyed it. Sometimes I thought my dad did, but that's just old English saying that that was their desire, their will, to do it for our good. After their own pleasure, they did that—"that we might be, but he—God—does it for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless...."—by the way, I have a motto in my

office that just has that one word in it—nevertheless—“nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Now, in these verses you have God’s motive for chastisement, and God in these verses contrasts the chastisement of our heavenly Father with that of an earthly father. Did your dad ever tell you, “This hurts me more than it hurts you?” How many of you had a dad said something like that? Let me see your hand. Most. That’s amazing. But you know what, kids? It’s true. I think one of the reasons that sometimes parents don’t chastise a child is this: it hurts the parent too much. They say, “I love him too much to chastise him.” But they’re really selfish. They love themselves too much to chastise the child.

Now, our earthy fathers chastised us, and all of our dads had different ways of doing it, or our moms had different ways of doing it. How many of you have ever gotten a spanking you didn’t deserve? Now, don’t lift your hand this time. I never got one I didn’t deserve. I got some for things I didn’t do, but I did so many things that he never found out about, I was just way ahead of the game. I never got one I did not deserve. And the Bible says that God’s chastening is always for our profit. Let me show you some profit that comes out of this.

First of all, this chastening is going to confirm your sonship. It’s going to confirm that you are a son or daughter of God. Notice again in verses 6 through 8: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth and scourgeth every son—just underscore the phrase every son—whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, where of all are partakers, then are ye bastards—that means illegitimate—and not sons. God said, “If you disobey, if you transgress My Word, and I do not chastise you, it’s a sign that I never fathered you. Had I fathered you, I would have chastised you.” Now, God does not whip the devil’s children. Sometimes when our children were little, they’d be playing in the front yard, maybe they’d be as many as a half a dozen, and Joyce would call some of them in, or I would call some of them in, and dust their britches because what they’d been doing. Now, I’ll guarantee you we never did that to the neighbor’s kids. That’s a good way to get in trouble—isn’t it?—to spank the neighbor’s kids. Now, not that we did not want to, but we never did, because we knew that that’s really none of our business. “Whom the Father loves he chastens.” Chastisement reveals sonship. You could tell whose children were whose by the chastisement. And so, if you are living high, wide, and handsome, careless about the Word of God and the will of God, and God is not chastising you, read verse 8, and classify yourself. I’m not trying to be mean about it, but God said, “If you were mine, you’d never get away with that.” Chastisement is a blessing in that it confirms, reveals, our sonship.

And not only does it reveal our sonship, or confirm our sonship; it compels our

sanctification. Now, look again in verses 9 through 11: “Furthermore, we’ve had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and life? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he—underscore this now—for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless it, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” The key operative words here are holiness and righteousness.

Did you know that God is more interested in your being holy than He is your being healthy? Did you know that? Did you know that God is more interested in your being holy than He is your being happy? God is more interested in your being holy than He is your being wealthy? God’s plan for you, primarily, is not even to take you to heaven. I’m going to heaven, but that’s a fringe benefit. God’s plan is for you to be holy. Do you have a desire to be holy? If not, He may carry you to the woodshed and develop that desire in you, and that will be for your profit. Chastisement confirms sonship. Chastisement brings sanctification.

And, thirdly, it cleanses sin. Now, only one thing can really take away our sin, and that’s the precious blood of Jesus Christ; but it’s chastisement that makes us sometime cry out for that cleansing. Notice again in verse 11: “Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous.” Did you ever, when your dad was applying the board of education to the seat of knowledge, did you ever just say, ‘Oh, this is wonderful; thank you, Dad, you’re such a great dad; I love you, Dad?’ No, you never did that. You felt sorry for yourself, and wished you would die so they would feel sorry that they’d done that to you. Have you ever done that? You know, and you just pout, and so forth, but afterward you say, “You know, my dad was a great dad. My mom was a great mom.” Why? Because there is a fruitfulness; there is a profit there. It is the profitable fruit of righteousness.

That’s what happened to Jonah. Jonah tried to run from the Lord. You can’t do that. You remember the story. He spent the night on a foam-blubber mattress, but when he came out of the belly of the whale, he hit the ground running. Did you know that the most miserable children in America are those children whose parents don’t love them enough to chastise them? Those are the unhappy children. And I’ll tell you something else. The most miserable man in the world, or woman, is not an unsaved man or woman. The most miserable person is a saved man or a saved woman out of fellowship with God. And God loves you too much to let you be miserable, and so God will bring you into the woodshed, as it were, because He loves you. He wants you to know that He loves you enough to chastise you, that you’re His son. God wants to perfect in you holiness, and God wants you to be clean. And so, that’s His motive.

II. The Manner of God's Chastisement

Now, think with me just a moment about the manner of His chastisement. How does God chastise you? Sometimes it may be a simple rebuke. Look at the last part of verse 5 there: "don't faint when you are rebuked of him." You know, sometimes that's all it takes is a rebuke. Joyce and I have five children, one little boy in heaven, but we have four here on this earth. Now, some, I won't tell you which ones because I'll get in trouble when I get home, but, some of our kids were mulish, and some were sensitive. I have one child, all you have to do is just rebuke them, and the tears would pop out of their eyes, and they'd humble right down. Others—don't misunderstand this metaphor—but you have to hit them between the eyes with a 2-by-4. Now, mama, I don't really do that, okay? What I'm trying to say is there are some that a rebuke is all that's necessary, because they're tender. That's what you need to stay. You know, that's where you need to stay. You could save yourself some pain if you would just take God's rebukes with it and have a tender heart. But sometimes there in God's method the rebuke doesn't help, and so He moves on to the next thing that is called chastening. Now, this chastening—if the word rebuke is there, let's put by the word chastening, restriction. God may chastise you. How do you take a child when you speak to the child and the child will not listen? Well, if you're a wise parent, the next thing you do is you restrict him. As we learned this morning, you may get grounded, and, as Russell O'Quinn was grounded. You may say, "You can't go to the party. You can't have friends over. You can't use the automobile. You cannot do this or this." Depending upon the age, there are restrictions.

God restricts us. Sometimes we don't get our prayers answered. Sometimes God withholds the joy and the blessings, and He restricts us. Did you know that there are a lot of people in this building tonight who are living restricted lives? God has to discipline, and the word chastening literally means child training. Well, suppose there's a rebuke, and that doesn't work, and then there's a restriction, and that doesn't work, then there comes a scourging. Now, the word scouring is a severe word. Sometimes people are so stubborn that God has to take greater measures.

Not rebuke, not restriction, but the rod. And God has to lay the rod on. And sometimes, folks, even though you're a child of God, don't get the idea that God's going to pamper you. It can be very serious, even deadly. Did you know that you can die prematurely under the discipline of God? Now, this may shock you. Did you know God may kill you? You say, "Oh, no, Pastor." Well, let me give you some scriptures:

Notice, for example, in verse 9: "Furthermore, we had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. How shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits—and notice the next two words—and live—and live?" You see, the Bible teaches that there is a sin unto death. Put in your margin 1 John chapter 5 and verse 16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he

shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; I do not say he shall pray for it.” That is, God’s not going to back away if a person has crossed that deadline, though he be saved and is going to heaven.

There was a man in the church of Corinth who was a brother, but he was living in open, flagrant immorality. Paul said such immorality was not even known among the pagans, and this man was a professing Christian. Paul wrote a recipe for this man’s discipline in 1 Corinthians 5:5, where he said, “Deliver such a one to Satan—listen—for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Turn him over to the devil. See what the devil will do to him. Deliver him to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Some people think that means the old fleshly nature, but that’s not the sense in which it is used here.

Did you know that the Bible talks of people who’ve died prematurely? Moses—how did Moses die? At the hand of God. Moses was a child of God. He loved God. One of the greatest men in all of the Bible, and yet Moses failed to give God the glory. He sinned a great spiritual sin when he struck a rock that pictured the Lord Jesus Christ, rather than speaking to the rock. And I don’t want to go down too deep in that, because you’ll miss the point I’m trying to make. Just put it down that Moses sinned against God. And Moses was supposed to lead the children of Israel into Canaan, into the Promised Land. But Moses went up on Mount Nebo, and he looked over there at Jordan, and he saw the Promised Land, but he never got to lead the Jewish people into the Promised Land because of his sin. And up there God took his life. Moses walked to his own funeral. He didn’t die of sickness, nor did he die of old age, because the Bible said his eye was not dim nor was his strength abated, but he died a child of God. Such a shame!

One of the strangest people in the Bible is a man named Balaam. Maybe you’ve familiar with him, maybe you’re not. But Balaam was sort of a strange character. He wanted to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. He wanted to play both sides of the fence. He wanted to serve God and rake off some profits, and so forth, on the side, and he wanted to go on a mission against the people of God for pay. And he was on his way to do this, and, actually, belligerently transgressing his own conscience, he’s going on his way, and Balaam was riding on a donkey, and out there in front of him was the angel of the Lord with a drawn sword. Now, Balaam’s riding the donkey, and the donkey can see the angel, but Balaam can’t see the angel. The donkey is frightened, and that donkey runs off in the field. Balaam whips him, and tries to get back on the road. And they’re going through a narrow place, a narrow passage, with walls on either side. Again, there’s the angel of the Lord. The donkey moves this way and crushed Balaam’s leg against the wall. Balaam is furious. He begins to beat the beast, and the donkey talked to him. He said, “Why are you beating me? Haven’t I been your faithful animal all these times?” Do you believe a donkey talked? I even know what language he used—

He-bray-ic. The donkey talked. He said, “Why are you doing this to me?” And God opened Balaam’s eyes, and Balaam saw the angel of the Lord standing there with a drawn sword, and the angel said to Balaam, “Had you come one step further, I would have killed you—I would have killed you.” There’s a sin unto death. Don’t get the idea that you can just do whatever you want.

Let me illustrate to you mothers. Lets say you have a five-year-old, a six-year-old, and his name is Jimmy. And Billy, or Susie, is having a birthday party. And so, you take Jimmy to the birthday party. Now, Jimmy is not always the best little boy, so you’ve said, “Now, Jimmy, be nice, because, if you don’t, I’m going to ask Mrs. Smith to send you home, or I’m going to come get you.” Now, let’s say that Jimmy goes to that birthday party, and he’s pulling the girls’ hair, he’s sticking his finger in the cake, he’s just opening the presents that are not his, he’s just being a little brat, and his mother comes to the party and sees what he’s doing. What does she say to him? You know exactly what she’d say. She’d say, “Come on, Jimmy, you’re coming home. You’re not going to stay here and embarrass me this way. You’re not going to stay here. I told you, son, that if you act this way, I’m going to bring you home,” and she takes him home.

I wonder how many Christians have gone home from the party early, because God says, “I’m not going to leave you here and let you embarrass me this way and live this way. It’s time to come on home.” It doesn’t mean these people don’t go to heaven; it just means they go there a little early. Somebody said, “Can you smoke and go to heaven?” You might get there sooner. God says, “You can’t live this way and I not chastise you.”

So, what does God do? Sometimes the chastisement is a simple rebuke. God says, “Don’t do that.” You say, “Oh, Lord, I’m so sorry.” That’s where you ought to be. Sometimes it is restriction. God says, “Your prayers are not answered now. Your joy is gone. Your victory is gone. Your understanding of the Word of God is gone. You lost all of that, and you’re miserable.” Sometimes God may have to deal with you severely.

Now, we’re going to take the Lord’s Supper tonight. And Paul was rebuking the way the Corinthians took the Lord’s Supper. They had a feast in conjunction with the Lord’s Supper in Bible times, and some people were getting drunk, and others were acting selfish, and gorging themselves, and not caring for the poor, and Paul rebuked them because of their irreverence at the Lord’s Table. And he said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 30, “For this cause many are sick and weakly among you, and many sleep,” and he didn’t mean, Now, I lay me down to sleep. He meant they were dead. First Corinthians 11:30—look at it. “For this cause—because of sin—some are weak, some are sick, and some are D-E-A-D—dead,” because of sin. Now, I’m not saying that everybody who is sick or weak is there because of their sin, and I’m not saying everybody that dies dies because it’s the chastisement of the Lord, but some do. There is a sin unto death. “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the

spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

III. The Results of God’s Chastisement

Now, let’s think thirdly—and then we’re going to have the Lord’s Supper—about the results of chastisement. What are God’s results in chastisement? First of all, there is what I want to call the comforting result. Look, if you will, in Hebrews 12, verse 6: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” And then, look, if you will, in verses 11 and 12: “Now, no chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.” Don’t go around like this. Listen, friend. If God chastises you, be wise enough to let God speak through it to give you comfort. And you can say, “I don’t like it. It’s painful. But thank God, I have a God who loves me too much to let me live this way.” There is the comforting result, the comforting message.

There is the correcting message. Look in verse 13: “Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.” Have you been off the pathway this way or that way? Get back on the pathway. There is the correcting message.

And, last of all, there is the cautioning message. And I hope God will use this message tonight as a word of caution to you. Notice again verses 14 and 15: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness—now remember, what God wants is holiness—and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” God says, “You be careful; you be diligent.”

Years ago, I heard a story. I shared it with you on another time, but it fits so well here I wanted to share it with you. There was an evangelist who had a godly father, and the evangelist told this story after he became an evangelist. This happened when he was a little boy. His mother was in the kitchen, and this boy, who later grew up to be a mighty evangelist, whose name was Elmer, sassed his mother. And, by the way, in the Rogers’ household, there are certain things you can get away with and we’ll kind of look the other way, but when our children were little, one thing I would never let them do is be disrespectful to their mama, or to me for that matter, and the other was to be deceptive, to tell a lie. We cut them some slack on some other things, but no disrespect, and no deceit, no deceiving. You just don’t do that. It’s the law of the Medes and the Persians. You’re just going to get in big time trouble. Well, this boy sassed his mother. What he did not know was his daddy in the living room heard it. He came in there and said, “Elmer, come here, son. Lets go outside.” And he said, “Elmer, I heard you sass your mother.” He said, “Elmer, that’s your mother. She went down into the valley of the

shadow of death to bring you into this world. I have watched her, when you were little, nurse you when you were sick, watch over you, spend sleepless nights cooling a fevered brow. I've watched her change your dirty diapers. I've watched her carry you around. I've watched her do without things, that you might have. I've watched her cook your meals, and clothe you, and iron for you, and tuck you in, and kiss you, and love you; and you sassed your mother. You sinned against your mother." But he said, "Elmer, not only did you sin against your mother; you sinned against Almighty God. For God said, 'honor your father and your mother.' God saw you do that. God heard what you said." Elmer said, "By this time, I was feeling about that high. I didn't realize all I had done when I sassed my mother." And he said, "Elmer, God is merciful. Let's ask Him to forgive you. I'm going to get down here on my knees, and I'm going to pray for you, son. And then, Elmer, would you cry out to God? Would you ask God to have mercy on you for sassing your mother?" He said, "Yes, I will." He said, "My dad prayed for me, and I got on my knees, and I said, 'O God, forgive me for what I've done.'" He said, "Now, Elmer, lets go back to the kitchen. I want you to ask your darling mother to forgive you for what you've done." And so, he went to the kitchen, and with tears he said, "Mama, I am so sorry. I sassed you, Mama. I am so sorry. Mama, will you forgive me?" And she said, "Darling, I forgive you," and took him, and hugged him, and kissed him. And his daddy said, "That's great, son; I'm so happy for you." And Elmer said, "My daddy then hugged me and kissed me." And then he said, "He took me upstairs and beat the daylights out of me." He said, "I never sassed my momma again."

Conclusion

You know, God loves us that way. God loves us that way. God is good. Whom the Father loves, He chastens.

Now, we come tonight to the Lord's Table, and I want to come with a clean heart—don't you? Not because I fear God, but because I love Him. But, if I cease to love Him, I've got good reason to fear Him also. Lets bow our heads in prayer. You search your heart, and let's make sure that your heart is clean, and we're ready tonight to take the Lord's Table. Just pray for a moment. And you don't have to probe around in your spiritual intestines to find some sin. If it's there, the Holy Spirit will put His finger on the sore spot. You just open yourself up. It may be a sin of attitude or action. It may be a sin of omission or commission. But name it and nail it. We're going to wait just a few moments. Amen. †

Bitterness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 5, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:14–15

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

HEBREWS 12:14–15

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Root of Bitterness
 - II. The Consequences of Bitterness
 - A. Physical Troubles
 - B. Emotional Troubles
 - C. Spiritual Troubles
 - D. Social Troubles
 - III. Dealing with Bitterness
- Conclusion

Introduction

When I was a high school boy, I was at Ridgecrest, North Carolina, and they were singing that song, “Wherever He Leads, I’ll Go.” I stepped out to surrender my life to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I’m grateful I did. And, I think the wisest thing that any of us could say to the Lord is this: “Lord, wherever You’re leading me, I want to follow,” because I’ll tell you this, He won’t lead you in the wrong path. You can trust Him, but yet, He’s not going to force you. He leads His sheep; He does not drive them.

Now, we’re going to prepare our hearts tonight to fellowship and commune at the Lord’s Table. But, before we do, we want to look into the Word of God. And so, I would like for you to turn to Hebrews chapter 12 tonight, if you would, and we’re going to talk about a problem that sometimes affects and infects our hearts. And it’s the problem of bitterness. Many Christians are bitter brothers and bitter sisters. They are soured saints. They are caustic Christians. And they need spiritual revival. As a matter of fact, these kinds of people are a blight everywhere they go. And, they do more, perhaps, to hold back the fire of revival and the blessing of God on a church and a family than drunkards or gossips.

Listen to the Word of God—Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 14: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and, thereby many be defiled.” Bitterness—the blight of bitterness—that blows the candle of joy out in so many lives.

Now, how is bitterness manifested? What is this thing called bitterness? Well, it may show itself up as a person who is harsh, judgmental, hypercritical. We all know people like this. And, if you peel them back deeply enough, you’ll find that underneath that harsh and critical and fault-finding personality is a bitter spirit. Or, bitterness may show up as someone who is sullen and morose, filled with self-pity, but they’re still, beneath the surface, a bitter person. Or bitterness may show up sometimes as a person who is cool and diffident and just sort of an iceberg. You can’t get near them. They are uninvolved in the things of God. Peel them deeply enough, and you’ll find out that they are bitter.

We’ve been talking about homes, and building intimacy in marriage. One of the things that keeps us from having intimacy in marriage is bitterness. The Bible says, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” Sometimes, rather than being the better half, a husband or a wife is the bitter half.

I. The Root of Bitterness

Now, what does God’s Word say about bitterness? Well, let’s look at it. First of all, look, if you will, at what the Bible calls the root of bitterness. What is the cause of this bitterness? What is the root of it? Well, bitter people are people who have been hurt. Now, the hurt may have been intentional, or the hurt may have been unintentional, but they’re still hurt. Or the hurt may be imagined. Nobody has really hurt them, but they think they’ve been hurt, and perception is the cruelest reality of all. And so, these are people who have been hurt. Well, you say, “Pastor, I’ve been hurt, but I’m not bitter.” That’s right. We’ve all been hurt. I’ve been hurt. I get hurt. You get hurt. To be a human being is to get hurt. And sometimes, when we get hurt, we react with anger. And that’s wrong, but it’s not bitterness. Sometimes we have a desire for revenge. That’s doubly wrong, but that’s not bitterness. A bitter person is a person who has been hurt—intentionally, unintentionally, imaginarily—and they take this hurt into them, and they don’t deal with it. It goes down deep, and they begin to harbor hostility. And it gets a lodging in their heart, and that hurt turns to bitterness.

Now, when a person is truly a bitter person, when they harbor hostility, then they begin to get very negative, because they’re looking for reasons to justify the way they feel. And so, when they’re around you, they’re searching you up and down for some fault that you may have. And if they look enough, they’ll find it, because you have some,

and I have some. Sometimes, when they come to church, they come to church looking for something to criticize. Now, let me say this very frankly. If you come to Bellevue Baptist Church looking for something to criticize, hey, you can find it. It's here. And you can start with the man standing behind the pulpit. You'll try to look over my life and find something about me that's not right. You just look long enough, you'll find it. If you come to any church looking for something to criticize, you can find it. But if you come looking for a blessing, you can find a blessing. But it's bitter people who are negative people. They have to have something to justify their feelings.

And bitter people are unusual people. They're pretty good little psychologists. They know where your hot buttons are. So they will begin to needle you until they can push your hot button, and get you to react the way they want you to react, which is negatively to them, which justifies their bitterness, and drives them deeper into their bitterness. Bitter people are hard to be around.

Now, a few people will admit, however, that they're bitter. You see, the Bible speaks of a root of bitterness, and the root is underground. They will deny it, or they will disguise it. And that's the cause of bitterness.

II. The Consequences of Bitterness

Now, let me talk to you about the consequences of it. Look again in God's Word here, and see what He says about this bitterness. He says that it defiles. Notice in verse 15: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness spring up, spring up trouble you, and many be defiled."

A. Physical Troubles

First of all, it will trouble you—it will trouble you. There are few things that will bring more trouble to you than to carry along this blight of bitterness, to carry this load of hate and resentment, desire for revenge and self-pity, in your heart. It will cause you physical problems.

I read, years ago, a book by Dr. S. I. Macmillan called, "None of These Diseases." Dr. Macmillan's a Christian doctor, and it's a wonderful book. I don't know whether it's still in print or not. But he says, essentially, in this book, that many people are sick because of bitterness. Now, he says you can be sick, and not be bitter, but he said it is doubtful that you can be bitter for a long time and not get sick. Physiologically, bitterness will catch up with you. It will bother you physically.

B. Emotional Troubles

It will bother you emotionally. It'll take all of the blue out of your sky. It'll lick all the red off your candy. You will not have joy, if you have bitterness in your heart, no matter what happens. You can have the most wonderful meal set before you, but you can't enjoy it.

Solomon, who had a bout with bitterness, said this: “Better a dish of vegetables with love than the best beef with hatred.” He called it a “stalled ox.” That is, a fatted calf. It’ll trouble you. It’ll trouble you physically. It’ll trouble you emotionally.

C. Spiritual Troubles

It will trouble you spiritually. Look, if you will, in verse 14. He says, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” Now, what he is saying is this: that if you are not right with other people, you can’t be right with God. Notice that he links together peace and holiness. A person who is bitter is a person who doesn’t have any peace in his heart. Hatred and holiness don’t dwell in the same heart. That’s what this verse is saying, verse 14—You can’t put hatred and holiness in the same heart. Your heart’s not big enough for it. And so, he says this bitterness will trouble you. But then, he goes on to say, not only will it trouble you—it would be bad enough if it just troubled you—but, “...many be defiled.”

D. Social Troubles

Bitterness causes a social chain reaction. Now, you might turn with me. Just put your bookmark there in Hebrews chapter 12, and turn to Ephesians chapter 4, for just a moment. Backward a little bit. And let me show you what bitterness will do.

Now, we talked this morning about husbands and wives keeping a short account. And here’s what Paul says again about this anger and this bitterness. In Ephesians chapter 4, verses 26, and following: “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” Now, what that means is, keep a short account. Don’t let anger become bitterness.

And then, he says, “Neither give place to the devil.” When you get sinful anger in your heart, and that sinful anger turns to bitterness, what you have done is to say to the devil, “You are welcome in my life.” That bitterness is the campground that Satan will occupy. You have given him a place.

And so, then, he goes on to say, in verse 31: “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.” Now, I want you to pay attention here, and I want you to see the chain reaction of bitterness—how bitterness defiles. Remember over there in Hebrews where he said, “...many will be defiled?” Now, notice these words—first of all, he says bitterness. Now, we’ve already talked about the bitterness. You’re wounded. Somebody’s hurt you. But then, what happens?

You keep that bitterness in there, and that bitterness turns to wrath. That’s the next word in this list. Verse 31: “Let all bitterness, and wrath...” The Greek word that is translated wrath has the idea of getting hot or something that burns. A bitter person is doing a slow burn on the inside. A bitter person is like a person who has oily rags in a

closet, but only that closet is his heart. And, as you know, by spontaneous combustion, those things get hotter and hotter.

And then, the next word he uses after bitterness and wrath is anger. What's the difference between wrath and anger? Wrath is that heat that's on the inside, but anger is when somebody opens the door of the closet, and those smoldering rags burst into flame, and you begin that outward burst of anger.

And then, what's the next thing that he mentions after anger? He mentions clamor. Clamor speaks of what happens in the mouth. First of all, we're bitter. Then, that bitterness turns to wrath. We begin to do that slow burn. That wrath erupts into anger, and we have that outburst of passion. That anger touches our mouths, and we begin this clamor. The word clamor means, "to become vocal." We get into a vocal contest. It may be shouting. It may be crying. It may be arguing. But that's what the Bible calls clamor. And remember what we said this morning about words, how you need to watch your words? Be swift to hear and slow to speak. But, when you begin to talk, something happens. Your tongue, the Bible says, is set on fire of hell, and sets on fire the whole course of nature.

And so, what happens after clamor? What's the next thing he mentions? Evil speaking. Now, what does he mean by evil speaking? What's the difference between clamor and evil speaking? Evil speaking has the idea of slander. It means to say things that are not so, and things that you know are not so. You turn to character assassination. You begin to say things that in your saner moments you would never say. You might say to your child, "I wish you'd never been born." You might say to your wife, "I hate you." You might say to your husband, "I never did love you." All of those things are lies, but you will say things. You might say to a mother or a father, "I wish you were dead." You say, "I could never say anything like that." You get bitterness in your heart. You let that bitterness turn to wrath. You let that wrath turn to anger. You let that anger turn to clamor. And that clamor will turn to evil speaking.

And then, the next thing is malice that's listed here. Now, what is malice? Malice—malice is the desire to hurt somebody, to do physical harm. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, neighbors, get into fights where there's shoving, where there's slapping, where there's shooting. Horrible things happen. And why? It begins with bitterness, a root of bitterness, a hurt that has not been dealt with. Listen to it now: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice." Now, what does he say about bitterness? First of all, it will harm you, and it will defile others.

III. Dealing with Bitterness

Now, how do you deal with bitterness? And we're going to think about that for just a few

moments, and then have the Lord's Supper. Look again at our verse. Our verse says you're to, "Look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." And so, what you're to do is to diligently look for bitterness in your heart. You're to ask God the Holy Spirit to search your heart, to try you, to know your heart, to see if there be some wicked way in you.

Now, bitterness is sometimes very deep down in your life. It's spoken of here as a root. It's underground, so it's so easy to disguise. It's so easy to alibi for. It's so easy to deny. So once you look diligently, and you find that root, you've got to take it out. You've got not just to pull the top off. If you've ever tried to get a dandelion out of your yard, and you reach up and you get those leaves, and you get that flower, and it breaks off, and the root is still there, all you've done is to make it look better for a while, but what you've done is literally pruned it, and it will come back stronger again. So, you've got to find out what it is that you're bitter about, and you've got to confess that bitterness as a sin, that it is the opposite of the grace of God, that you're failing of the grace of God. You're failing to receive grace, and you're failing to give it. And the person that has hurt you must be forgiven. It cost to forgive, but it is worth it. There are no bargain forgivenesses. It's worth it. Now, it takes two to forgive; both you and Jesus. You cannot do it without Him; He will not do it without you.

Some years ago, not too many years ago, I had a person to hurt somebody that I love very, very deeply, and that hurt me very, very deeply. And, this person was not repentant. As a matter of fact, they went deeper in their sin, their disobedience to God. I don't think I've ever been hurt in my heart and in my life more. And I had to make up my mind, how will I deal with this individual. Can I carry bitterness? Can I carry hatred? Can I carry hostility in my heart? I cannot! I will not! Well, can I forgive them? Well, how can I forgive somebody who's continuing to do the same thing and living in sin? How can I forgive a person who won't repent? I mean, even God doesn't forgive without repentance. Yet, can I harbor an unforgiving spirit? Have you ever been there on the horns of dilemma? On the one hand, you want to forgive, but on the other hand, the Bible says, "If your brother sin against seventy times seven, and come, and say, I repent," then you forgive. I'll tell you what I did. This may help you.

One night, way early in the morning, I sat down and just wrote a letter. And I put in that letter full and complete, total, 100% genuine forgiveness in that letter. But I've never mailed it! The letter is written. It is there. All that forgiveness is in the bank. It's in escrow. And whenever that individual repents, that forgiveness is already there. I have given it, whether it's ever received or not. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? As far as I'm concerned, it is a done deal. Now, it must be received, but, just as the Lord Jesus died for all, we must receive Him. But I've simply put that in the bank. It's off of

my heart. I refuse to carry around a load of bitterness and hatred, because, folks, it's not worth it. It's not worth it.

Conclusion

And so, what you have to do, you have to go down deep. You have to be honest with God, and deal with any bitterness that's there. Because, if you don't, springing up, it will trouble you, and many will be defiled.

Let's bow our heads for just a moment of prayer. And, I want you to just examine your own heart tonight, and see if there's anybody or anything that's causing you to be bitter, if there's any individual that you hate, there's somebody that you have a burning desire for revenge. If you do, why don't you tell God tonight that you're sick of it, that you're tired of it, and you want Him to take that root of bitterness out, because you want to be free! You don't want to fail of the grace of God. You don't want to trouble yourself, and you don't want to defile your family. Remember, the root may be deep, and it may be disguised, so the Bible says you have to look diligently. And, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper tonight, if there's any unconfessed, unrepented of sin, whether it's bitterness or anything else, confess it to the Lord. The Bible says, "If we confess our sin, He's faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What a wonderful promise! Thank God for that. Now, we're not talking about sin that's already been confessed and already been put under the blood. We're not talking about sin that will condemn you to hell. There's no sin that can take you to hell. Those were all paid for at the cross. But anything that comes between you and God that breaks fellowship with you and God, name it, nail it, confess it, and be clean tonight. We're going to wait for just a few moments, and then I'm going to lead us in prayer.

The Blight of Bitterness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 26, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:14–15

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

HEBREWS 12:15

Outline

Introduction

I. The Cause of Bitterness

II. The Consequences of Bitterness

III. The Cure for Bitterness

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding, please, Hebrews chapter 12, and let me share with you, as you're finding that, a portion of a letter I received this week, and really encouraged me to speak to you on this subject. But I've had this cooking in my heart for sometime. I got a letter from a man who is a preacher. At least an erstwhile preacher, I believe he's retired now. And this man feels hurt. He feels that he's been misused, abused, harmed. And he's not received rectification for the ill that he feels has been done to him. And so here's just one line out of this letter. I want you to listen to it. He speaks of an individual and something that individual has done. And, by the way, the other individual is also a professing Christian; both of these are professing Christians. And this man, who purports to be a minister, says of that other man, "Let him be accursed and burn forever with Judas' darkness upon his head." And then he signs it, "In Christ," and gives his name. "Let him burn forever with Judas' darkness upon his head."

When I read that I kind of shuddered and trembled a little bit. And I thought to myself, "What a miserable man that man must be." His problem is bitterness. Now, I want us to think, tonight, about bitterness and the blight of bitterness. More people are, are affected and infected with bitterness than we may dare dream. Hebrews chapter 12, begin in verse 14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, (and many) and thereby many be defiled." "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up

trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Bitterness is a problem, a terrible problem, that blows out the candle of joy and leaves the soul in darkness and the problem is bitterness is seen in many ways. Bitter people are not all alike. Sometimes bitter people are harsh and critical, judgmental and full of anger like the man who wrote me this particular letter. And by the way, I would not share that letter if it were not from another state and somebody that you would have no way of knowing because I don’t share personal mail and I would not embarrass that man. I just wanted to, you to use, to understand something about what I’m talking about tonight. And sometimes bitterness shows itself that way. Sometimes bitterness doesn’t show itself that way. Sometimes bitterness shows its way by an individual being sullen and morose and filled with self-pity. Or sometimes a bitter person may just be politely indifferent, cool, uninvolved in the things of God. The sad thing is that it’s not only unsaved people who are bitter. Sometimes Christians, God’s children, are bitter. They are bitter brothers, sour saints, caustic Christians. Sometimes these people defile a church. Sometimes bitterness breaks up homes. The Bible says, “Husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them.” And if you’re a person who’s heart is headquarters for hostility, if you’re harboring bitterness, don’t look down your nose at the drunkard, or the thief or the gossip. You’re probably doing as much, if not more, to hold back the power of God in the Bible than any of these.

I. The Cause of Bitterness

Now, think with me a little bit about the cause of bitterness. It has a root. It has a deep root. The Bible calls it “a root of bitterness.” A bitter person is a person who has, generally, usually, been hurt in some way. And this hurt is the dark soil in which the root of bitterness grows. Now, the hurt that he receives may have been intentional. Somebody may have deliberately and wrongfully hurt him or her. Sometimes the hurt may not have been intentional. It may have been unintentional, but the individual is still hurt and still bitter. Sometimes the hurt has only been imagined, the individual thinks he was hurt when he really was not hurt, thinks that somebody did something that they did not. Sometimes the hurt may come from God. As a matter of fact, the context of this verse is God’s chastisement upon His own child. And sometimes when God chastens people, rather than making them better, it makes them bitter, just like some children when they’re spanked or chastised, they become sullen and morose rather than broken and gentle before the father or the mother. And this bitterness is a terrible thing. Now, we’ve all been hurt. I’ve been hurt. You’ve been hurt. You can’t live in this life without being hurt. And sometimes when we’re hurt, we react wrongly. I have and I’m ashamed to say it, but I’d be a liar if I didn’t say it, but sometimes when I get hurt, I don’t always react as I ought to react. And sometimes we react with anger. And sometimes we react

with resentment. Sometimes we find welling up in us a desire for revenge. And then they Holy Spirit convicts us and we know we've done wrong and we confess that and we deal with it and we get it out and God forgives and the joy comes back. But a bitter person doesn't do that. A bitter person, when a bitter person gets hurt, he internalizes that hurt. He does not dwell with it. It becomes a root underground and, and he begins to harbor this hostility. He doesn't carry it to God. He doesn't ask for forgiveness. He doesn't get cleansing. He doesn't face it as he ought to face it. And then he is an individual who, because he has a bitter spirit, begins to look around to find even more things, more problems to justify the way he feels. He becomes a negative person. And the more he sees, the more bitter he becomes. And did you know that if you look for things to become bitter about, you can find them? Did you know if you come to a church like Bellevue Baptist Church and look for something to criticize that you could find it? Beginning with the man standing here behind the pulpit. But if you came here tonight looking for a blessing you could find blessings. You can find about what you look for. And a bitter person is looking for something to justify the hostility and the bitterness in themselves. They become a very negative person. And, very frankly, they're not much fun to be around. They brighten up a room by leaving it. These are bitter people and they have a way of bringing out the worst in other people. Bitter people know how to push your emotional hot button. They know how to get under your skin and wait for you to react. And when you react to their bitterness that further justifies their hostility and bitterness and makes them feel somewhat better in their perverted way that their bitterness toward you or toward life is justified. Now the sad thing is this that few people will admit that they're bitter. They may not even be aware of this hostility that they harbor, this root of bitterness that is down deep in their lives, they will deny it or if they don't deny it, they will at least disguise it. It is the root of bitterness.

II. The Consequences of Bitterness

That's the cause of it. Now, think a little bit about the consequences of it. Notice what happens when we get this bitterness in our hearts. Look if you will in verse 15, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." First of all, if you get bitter, it's going to trouble you. And then you're going to defile other people. Let's just talk about the personal problems of bitterness. If you have bitterness and you don't deal with, and, folks, I've been in the ministry long enough to know that there're a lot of people who have bitterness. Some of them may be deacons; some of them may be this man, the letter that I just read. Years and years ago, I got hold of a book called *None of These Diseases*. It was written by a doctor, a medical doctor, Dr. S. I. McMillan. And he talks about the emotional and physical illness that we have because we don't deal with sin.

And he talks about sometimes how the emotional illness causes physical illness. And here's what he said in this book. "There are more than fifty different diseases that can be triggered, brought on, by our emotions." And he talks about how bitterness and anger can cause us to be troubled physically. And he quotes, and I'm writing, "The famous physiologist, John Hunter, knew what anger could do in his heart." And then he quotes John Hunter as saying, "The first scoundrel that gets me angry will kill me." "Sometimes later at a medical meeting, a speaker made assertions that incensed Hunter. As he stood up and bitterly attacked the speaker, his anger caused such contraction of the blood vessels in his heart that he fell dead." This man knew that he had a heart condition. He knew that if he got excessively angry, it would kill him. And yet, bitterness put him in the grave. Now, you can be sick and not be bitter. If you're sick it doesn't necessarily mean you're bitter. But I doubt, very seriously, that if you have bitterness in your heart for a prolonged period that you can go without getting sick someday. It will sicken your body.

But not only will it sicken your body, bitterness will sicken your mind. Not only will you have physical trouble, but you're going to have emotional trouble. And Dr. McMillan went on to say this and I want to quote, quote, "The moment I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work anymore because he controls my thought. My resentments produce too much stress hormones in my body and I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now a drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. It may be a luxurious car that I drive along a lake, fringed with the autumn beauty of maple, oak and birch. As far as my experience of pleasure is concerned, I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain. The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I can't escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. When the waiter serves me porterhouse steak with French fries, asparagus, crisp salad and strawberry shortcake, smothered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it. King Solomon must have had a similar experience for he wrote, quote 'Better a dish of vegetable with love than the best beef served with hatred.'" Then Dr. McMillan goes on to say, "The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom, but more cruel than any slave driver, he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my inner-spring mattress becomes a rack of torture. The lowliest of serfs can sleep, but not I. I really must acknowledge the fact that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour the vials of my wrath." "I am a slave to every man upon whom I pour the vials of my wrath." The man who wrote me this letter is a slave the man that he hates. He's a man consumed with bitterness. Not only will there be physical trouble and not only will there be emotional, but there will be spiritual trouble. Look in verse 14, he says, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Now, if, if you

have this bitterness that takes away your peace, it's also going to take away your holiness. Peace and holiness are linked together. You cannot be right with God and be bitter toward any brother or any sister. And so he says, "Lest you be troubled..." Look at it, he says, deal with this "lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you." It will trouble you physically, emotionally, and spiritually. But not only will it trouble you, it will defile many. It would be bad enough if bitter people could only torment themselves. But bitterness defiles other people. Notice, again, the last part of verse 15, "...and...many be defiled." There is not only that personal trouble, there's that social defilement.

You know, bitterness, it causes a chain reaction. Put your marker there in Hebrews chapter 12 and turn to Ephesians chapter 4 and let me show you something here in Ephesians chapter 4. Begin in verse 26. By the way, it would do you good to turn to this one now. Just turn to it. Ephesians chapter 4 verse 26, "Be angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Now, what does it mean to be angry and sin not? Is it a sin to get angry? Not always. The Bible says Jesus was moved with anger; he never sinned. The sin is when you get angry at the wrong thing. The way to be angry and to sin not is only to be angry at sin and then to be angry in the right way. But if you're angry in the wrong way, the Bible calls that "wrath," and you let the sun set upon your wrath, that's just a euphemism for saying you harbor hostility. You let this anger internalize until it becomes bitterness. You go to bed with it. You let the sun set upon it. You don't deal with it as you ought to deal with it when it happens, as it happens. You don't deal with it. You don't keep a short account. You let the sun go down upon your wrath. Then what happens is this, if you'll go on down to verse 31, you'll see what happens. He says, "Let all bitterness..." Now, remember, we're on the subject of bitterness. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Now, here is a classic chain reaction. I want you to see what stubborn anger gets a foothold in your life. When you are angry sinfully, you let the sun go down upon your wrath, you have the wrong kind of anger and you don't deal with that wrong kind of anger, then it turns to bitterness. And let's just look at this chain reaction. Let's look at this progression. First of all, there's that bitterness. You're wounded. It may have been intentional. It may not have been intentional. It may have been imagined. It may have been God's chastisement, but you are wounded and you take it in, you don't deal with it. Then that bitterness turns to wrath. Now, look in verse 31 and look at it carefully. He mentions wrath next in this chain reaction. Now, the word "wrath," the very word itself has the idea of heat. It, it has the idea of getting hot. When a, when a person gets angry and bitter, then they begin to do what we would call a slow burn. There's that inside heat that comes. Then the next thing that comes is anger. Now, you see, the bitterness becomes

wrath, that slow burn, think of that slow burn as some rags that are smoking there in a closet and the closet door is closed. And then something happens. The closet door is opened. And the oxygen gets to those burning rags and they burst into flame. That's the anger. The wrath is the internal thing. But the anger is the external thing. The Greek word for anger speaks of that which is outward and that which is active. These smoldering rags burst into flame. It can happen at any time. You wonder what gets in to people. Sometimes you see people fly into a rage, you say, "What got into you?" Nothing got into them; something is coming out of them. It's been in there. They've had this bitterness that has turned to wrath that turns to anger when the right situation comes. And then what's the next word in this list? It is clamor. First bitterness, then wrath, then anger and then clamor. Do you know what the word clamor means? It speaks of noise. It speaks of loudness. It speaks of vocalizing what is in your heart. Do you ever notice that people when they get angry get clamorous? And you say to them, "You don't have to shout." They say, "I'm not shouting." They are shouting. They don't even know they're shouting. They begin to get very vocal and they begin to argue. They may be to cry, and when they hear themselves doing this, they feed on that because the, the bitterness turns to wrath. The wrath bursts into the flames of anger. And then that turns into clamor. Now, look at the next word, evil speaking. When you begin to cry or shout or get clamorous and you hear yourself, you begin to say things that you really don't mean. You begin to speak evil. You will say things to a wife or husband like, "I'm sorry I ever married you." "I'm sorry I ever met you." You may say to your children, "You will never amount to anything. I'm so ashamed of you." You may say to a friend, "I hate you." You may say to somebody, "I wish you were dead." You, and the devil will say, "Yes. And tell him this. Tell him that." And you'll get on a roll. And you begin with your tongue to assassinate. That's called evil speaking. We're amazed sometimes at what will come out of our mouth when we get into this chain reaction, first of all, of bitterness, then wrath, then anger, then clamor, and then evil speaking. And the devil's not finished with us yet. And look at the next word. It's malice. The word malice here has the idea of, of hurting somebody. It has the idea of a desire to injure the other person. You may slap a child. You may hit a wife. You may drive your car into somebody's other car. You may take a gun and harm somebody because there is coming up out of you this volcano of evil that began when you got hurt and you let the sun go down upon your wrath. You got angry and you sinned. You internalized it and that bitterness became wrath. That wrath became anger. That anger became clamor. That clamor became evil speaking. And that evil speaking became malice. And old smutty face, the devil, is sitting over in the corner laughing at you.

Down in your heart, beneath the ground, there's been a root of bitterness and now it springs up, troubling you and many be defiled.

III. The Cure for Bitterness

Now, we've talked about the cause and the consequence. Let's talk a little bit about the cure. What do we do about this bitterness? Notice, again, if we will, go back to our passage of Scripture in Hebrews, where we were. And, look again, if you will, please, ah, in, in the Scripture and it tells us, it tells us what to do in verses 14 and 15, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God." Now, friend, only the grace of God is going to be able to deal with bitterness. No psychiatrist, no psychologist has any remedy for bitterness; only the grace of God. "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." Now, ask God, by His grace, to reveal that bitterness. I say many people who are bitter do not even know they're bitter and others deny it and others disguise it because it is underground. Now, the, the, the shoot and the fruit are above ground, but the root is underground. And so, ask God, the Holy Spirit, to do some introspection on you. That's the reason the Psalmist prayed, "Search me, oh God, and know my heart. Try me and see if there be some wicked way in me." You may say, "The way I feel toward that individual is justified. They had it coming. They did wrong." Whatever. But you have a bitterness in you that is eating you alive. It is troubling you and defiling other people. Ask God, the Holy Spirit, by His grace, to reveal that to you. And, by the way, only the Holy Spirit of God can reveal that to you as, as He ought. Sometimes you may have a, outwardly, you're just doing fine, but inwardly you've got a problem of bitterness with somebody.

There's an old story about some men are out playing golf. There was a foursome and one of them was a preacher. And somebody said to the preacher, and, by the way, the preacher was a little bitter. But he was one of these smiley kind of back slapping preachers. And somebody said to him, he said, "Reverend, I have to hand it to you." He said, "When you make a bad shot, you don't curse and swear and throw your golf clubs like other people do." And the preacher, in a rare moment of honesty said, "Yes, but if you'll notice where I spit, the grass never grows again."

Sometimes it is internal. And sometimes we can hide it through a smile and through a put-on personality or whatever, so you have to ask the Holy Spirit, "Search me, oh God. Try me, know my heart and see if there be some wicked way in me." Ask God the Holy Spirit to reveal it and ask God the Holy Spirit to remove it. Now, how is it going to be removed? Well, it's going to be removed by God's remedy. Now, go back, you don't have to turn to it again; I'll quote it this time. In Ephesians chapter 4 verse 31 and 32, here's what he says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking and all malice be put away from you." And then he says this, "And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven

you.” Now, folks, that’s the grace of God, the grace that you have received is the grace that you’re going to give. It costs, it costs to forgive people who have wounded you. Ah, forgiveness is not cheap. When you, when you forgive, you taste of Calvary, ah, you suffer to forgive a debt. If somebody owed you a hundred dollars and you forgive the debt it just cost you one hundred dollars. It costs to forgive. There are no bargain pardons but it is worth it. Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, endureth the cross. And if you will have your own private Calvary, you’ll have your own private Easter. Because, you see, there are two who are set free when you forgive, the person you have forgiven and you, yourself.

Dr. S. I. McMillan said, “You are the slave to the person that you are bitter against.” I was hurt, deeply, deeply, deeply by an individual. Never been hurt more deeply in my life and I had to watch that God would not let that bitterness grow in my heart. I knew I had to forgive this individual, but how can you forgive an individual when that individual is continuing to sin? Continuing to do the same thing, ah, that, that caused the hurt to begin with? Ah, how can you forgive an unrepentant person? God does not forgive an unrepentant person. How can we forgive an unrepentant person? Jesus prayed that they might be forgiven when they were nailing Him to the cross but He didn’t say, “I forgive you.” He prayed that they may be forgiven. And the Bible says if a man sin against you seventy times seven and come and say I repent then forgive him. But what about the individual who does not repent? What about the individual who is still doing this thing that is hurting you and harming you. How do you deal with that? I had to face that because I did not want bitterness in my heart. And so I stayed up one night to the early hours of the morning and wrote a full letter of forgiveness, full acceptance, full pardon, expressing love. And completely, totally, freely, fully, finally forgiving this individual, signed my name to it but I have never yet given the letter. The letter is in escrow, waiting for that individual to write the check of repentance and acceptance and it’s there. Friend, I have given it, it’s just not yet been received. Do you understand what I’m saying? I cannot forgive an individual when the individual is continuing in sin, but I can do this. I can say, I do not harbor that hostility. I have unloaded it. I have forgiven and in my heart, ‘tis done, waiting to be received, and I pray, one day, someday, it will be.” But you cannot harbor that hostility. “Be ye kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven you.” And there’s only one way that you can do that, folks, and that is the grace of God. “Looking diligently lest any man should fail of the grace of God.” So, ask God, by His grace, to reveal it because it may be a root that is underground. Ask God, by His grace, ah, to remove it. Now, the hornet of memory may fly, but forgiveness has pulled out the sting.

Now, here’s the third thing, ask God, by His grace, not only to reveal it and remove it but also to replace it. Look in verse 14, “Follow peace with all men and holiness without

which no man shall see the Lord.” When you get that out let God’s peace and God’s holiness come in and, ah, and, and just replace that bitterness.

Conclusion

You know, it’s just a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful thing to be able to say, “Nothing between my soul and the Savior.” And to be able to say, “There’s no person on this green earth toward whom I harbor any hostility.” That is a blessing and that blessing comes not by your good intentions; it only comes by the grace of God, by the grace of God. “Lest any man fail of the grace of God.”

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Father, I pray that you will seal the message to our hearts and, God, that we will not allow bitterness and wrath and anger and evil speaking and clamor and evil speaking and malice defile many people. Dear Lord God, that our hearts will be filled with peace and holiness because of your grace. And God, I pray that homes that have been hurt by bitterness will be healed. I pray, God, that relationships that have been severed by bitterness will be put back together. Oh dear Lord, work in my heart and in our hearts. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

The Blight of Bitterness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 10, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:14–15

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

HEBREWS 12:14–15

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's precious Holy Word this morning and turn please to the book of Hebrews. We're going to read chapter 12 verses 14 and 15. If you don't have a Bible with you there is most likely one there in the pew rack before you. Would you take it out please and find the book of Hebrews? That is modestly close to the last of the Bible. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 14 and 15. Alright, let us read, *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”* (Hebrews 12:14–15)

Now, there is a terrible problem that can blow the joy of the candle of life out in your life and leave your soul in darkness. There is a problem that can hold back revival in this church. There is a problem—ladies and gentlemen—that can cause brokenness, divorce, and arguments in your home. There is a problem that can keep you from understanding the Bible. There is a problem that can keep you from being a vital,

vibrant, and victorious soul-winner. And, that problem is the problem of bitterness. And, the title of our message this morning is the Blight of Bitterness.

I'm going to explain to you in just a moment what bitterness is but I think most of us already know what bitterness is because we have been around bitter people. Or maybe we are a bitter person. Often a bitter person is hostile, caustic, critical, overloaded with resentment, faultfinding, and a person who is angry. Those are often frequently bitter people.

But, sometimes the bitterness doesn't show itself that way. Sometimes the bitterness shows itself by being a crybaby type of person—morose, sad, full of self-pity, and melancholy. Many times these people, when you pull the veil back, are really just bitter people. Or sometimes it shows itself in a person who is cool, aloof, disinterested, and not a participant, but inside they are a seething volcano of bitterness. Now, it is a terrible, horrible, hurtful, and hellish problem, the blight of bitterness. And, the Bible warns us about it.

Now, I want you to understand also that Hebrews is written to Christians. The Scripture here is written to Christians. And, so we need to make certain that we don't think that we're immune to this problem of bitterness. There are many sour saints. There are many caustic Christians. There are many bitter brothers. So pay attention as we think about the blight of bitterness.

I. The Root of Bitterness

The first thing I want you to see as we look at our text this morning is what I'm going to call the root of bitterness. Now, look at it in verse 15: *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”* (Hebrews 12:15).

What is the root of bitterness and how does this root find lodging in our heart and lives? Well a bitter person is a person generally who has been hurt. Something has happened to them. Life has not worked out as they thought that it should work out. Someone has hurt them. Maybe that one they perceive to be God Himself. They are bitter at God. Or they are bitter at society. Or they are bitter at specific individuals. They may be bitter at husbands or at wives. You know, the Bible says in the book of Colossians, *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them”* (Colossians 3:19). Sometimes the better half becomes the bitter half. *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them”* (Colossians 3:19).

Why this bitterness? Well these people have been hurt. And, that hurt turns to anger and hostility. Now, the hurt may have been intentional. They may have been intentionally hurt. Or the hurt may have been unintentional. Someone hurt them and was not even aware of the fact that they hurt them or the hurt may have been imagined.

Nobody did anything to them really. But, they feel that they have been hurt. They feel that they have been misused. They feel that they have been abused.

Now, we've all been hurt. There is not a one of us here that has not suffered some kind of hurt. And, when we are hurt our natural inclination is to react with anger—is it not?—to react with resentment. We have a desire to get even. We have a desire to hurt the one that has hurt us. But, if we are Christians we recognize that desire to be wrong. We recognize that to be of the old nature. And, we confess it, we deal with it, we get over it, and somehow it doesn't become a root of bitterness.

But, a bitter person is different. When a bitter person is hurt he doesn't deal with his bitterness. But, he takes it into his heart. He begins to dwell on it. He begins to mull it over and over again. And, then in order to justify this feeling that he has in his heart he looks for other problems to justify this feeling of bitterness. If somebody hurts him he begins to watch that person to see if he can find other faults in that individual. And, then he becomes a very negative person. And, he looks for all of the faults and the flaws that he can find in that other person. And, when he looks for them, he will certainly find them. Because we all have flaws and we all have faults.

As a matter of fact, you always find what you look for. If you came to this service this morning looking for a problem you can find it. If you came to Bellevue Baptist Church looking for something to criticize, hey folks, look long enough and you will find it. But, if you came looking for a blessing you'll find a blessing this morning too. You see you're to find what you look for.

And, the bitter person—this person who has been hurt—begins to look for these things. And, sure enough, they find them. And, the more they see the more that confirms them in their bitterness and the more bitter they become. I'll tell you something else about a bitter person—a caustic Christian, a sour saint—they have a way of bringing out bitterness in other people. You know they are very clever many of them. A bitter person because he becomes a student of this sort of thing, he knows where your emotional hot button is. And, he knows how to push that button and to get out of you the response that he wants. A bitter person really wants to get under your skin to see if he can get you to react with hostility to him. And, when he can or when she can, that only confirms the bitterness that they already have. It only pushes that down deeper into their sub-consciousness and gives them a right to justify that bitterness.

Now, let me say this. Few people will admit that they are bitter. This is an underground sin. The Bible calls it “...*root of bitterness*...” (Hebrews 12:15). And, the root is that which is unseen. It is underground. Few people will admit it. They will deny it, they will disguise it, or they will disregard it. But, you will find very few people who say, “Well I'm just a bitter person.” Every now and then you'll find one—but not many—because it takes a great amount of candor and honesty to admit that one is a bitter

person.

Anna Russell wrote these words. I enjoy them. She said, “I went to my psychiatrist to be psychoanalyzed. To find out why I killed my cat and blackened my wife’s eye. He put me on a downy couch to see what he could find and this is what he dredged up from my subconscious mind. When I was one my mommy hid my dolly in the trunk. And, so it follows naturally that I’m always drunk. When I was two I saw my father kiss the maid one day and that’s why I suffer now from kleptomania. When I was three I suffered ambivalence from my brothers and so it follows naturally that I poisoned all my lovers. I’m so glad I have learned the lesson it has taught that everything I do that’s wrong is someone else’s fault.”

And, this is the way the bitter person feels. He feels absolutely justified in his bitterness. And, so he is a negative person. He is looking for faults to reconfirm this feeling of hostility and pity that he feels in his own heart and his own life. And, so the root of bitterness grows in the soil of a hurt that has not been properly dealt with.

II. The Fruit of Bitterness

Secondly, I want you to notice not only the root of bitterness, but I want you to notice the fruit of bitterness. Look again in verse 15. The Bible says we’re to be: “*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness*”—now watch it—“*springing up*”—because every root has fruit, springing up—“*trouble you, and thereby many be defiled*” (Hebrews 12:15).

Now, you’re going to find out that first of all when you are bitter it is going to hurt you first. It’s going to hurt you. It’s going to trouble you. But, not only is it going to trouble you. Your bitterness will have a contagion about it. Many are going to be defiled. And, so first of all there is personal trouble and then there is social trouble that comes from bitterness.

A. Physical Trouble

Look first of all at this physical trouble. The Bible says, “that this root of bitterness will trouble you” (Hebrews 12:15). I want to recommend to you if you want a book to read. It is called *None of These Diseases* by S.I. McMillen. And, Dr. McMillen—a medical doctor—in that particular book lists over fifty diseases that are emotionally caused. There are people just sick, but they have physical disability because of some sort of mental, psychological, and spiritual stress.

In that book he told the story of some Physiologist whose name is Dr. John Hunter who knew enough about himself. Dr. Hunter said this “I am at the mercy of any scoundrel who can make me mad.” He said, “The man who makes me angry will kill me.” He knew something about his heart condition. And he said, “The man who makes me angry will kill me.”

Later on, at a medical meeting there was a man who stood up and said something about Dr. Hunter. He said something that was unfair and it indeed made him mad. Dr. Hunter stood up and with vindictive words on his lips castigated that man and fell dead. He prophesied his own death. He knew that the blood vessels when they would begin to constrict with the anger that he would have would kill him. He committed suicide, as it were by allowing himself to get angry. Now, it may not affect you that way particularly and I'm not saying that every sick person is bitter. But, I'm saying that every bitter person will eventually—if he doesn't deal with that bitterness—be sicker than he ought to be.

B. Emotional Trouble

Pay attention. There are the physical consequences and there is that physical trouble. The Bible says it will “trouble you” (Hebrews 12:15) but not only that physical trouble, that emotional physiological trouble. Dr. McMillen said this, and I want to quote from him. He said, “When you let somebody get you angry, when you get bitter toward somebody, you become their slave. You become the slave of the person with whom you are angry.” And, I want to quote an extended passage from him. He said, and I quote, *“The moment I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can't enjoy my work any more because he even controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too many stress hormones in my body and I become fatigued after only a few hours' work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. I may drive a new, luxurious car along a lake fringed with the autumn beauty of maple, oak and birch. But as far as my experience of pleasure is concerned, I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain. The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I cannot escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. When the waiter serves me porterhouse steak with French fries, asparagus, crisp salad, and strawberry shortcake smothered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and I swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it.”* King Solomon must have had a similar experience, for he wrote, “Better a dish of vegetables with love, than the best beef served with hatred.” (Proverbs 15:17)

He goes on to say, *“The man I hate may be many miles from my bedroom, but, more cruel than any slave driver, he whips my thoughts into such a frenzy that my innerspring mattress becomes a rack of torture. The lowliest of the serfs can sleep, but not I. I really must acknowledge the fact that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour the vials of my wrath.”*

C. Spiritual Trouble

Now, to the degree that you hold resentment toward anyone, to that same degree you are that one's slave. There will be physical trouble. Mark it down. There will be

emotional trouble. Mark it down. There will be spiritual trouble. Mark it down.

The verse before our verse, verse 14 says, *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* (Hebrews 12:14). Now, you can't have hellishness in your heart and holiness in your heart at the same time. You just can't do it. And, so he mentions peace with men and holiness in the same sentence. And, then tells us not to be bitter.

D. Social Trouble

So pay attention, dear friend. There is going to be that personal trouble. But, not only is there going to be that personal trouble, there is going to be that social defilement.

Notice on, he goes on to say, not only is it going to trouble you, but he says, *“...many be defiled”* (Hebrews 12:15).

Bitterness sets off a chain reaction. I want you to put your bookmarks there in Hebrews chapter 12 and I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 4. Here is a very significant passage of Scripture. Ephesians chapter 4 and I want you to begin reading with me in verse 26, *“Be ye angry, and sin not...”* (Ephesians 4:26). And, I want to say that it is not always a sin to be angry. Jesus was moved with anger at the moneychangers. Jesus was moved with anger sometimes at the hardheartedness of the Pharisees. But, his was a righteous anger. His was an anger that was properly directed and properly channeled and properly used. His was an anger that was not of bitterness. He never got angry at what someone did to Him personally.

“Be ye angry, and sin not—well, when does anger become sin? Well, listen—“let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26). That is, when it becomes bitterness. What does it mean, *“let not the sun go down upon your wrath?”* (Ephesians 4:26) It means, upon your anger, when you begin to live with that anger. When you nurse that anger, feed that anger, cherish that anger, and you go to bed with it and you get up with it. And, you go to bed with it and you get up with it. The sun goes down upon your wrath. Then what do you do? You give place to the devil.

Look in verse 27, *“Neither give place to the devil”* (Ephesians 4:26). When you get angry and you sin and you refuse to deal with that sin becomes bitterness. And, that bitterness in your life becomes that devil's campground—the devil's beachhead—the stronghold that we were talking about a few Sunday mornings ago when we talked about your thought life. Was it last Sunday? The thought life. The stronghold that gets there in your mind. That's what it is. It is the devil's place. It is that foul nest in which Satan takes up lodging to war on the rest of your life and to trouble you.

But, now I want you to notice not only how this begins to trouble you, but how it begins to spread. Look down to verse 31. Now pay attention. This is a very significant passage of Scripture and I want you to look at it. *“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and*

anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice"

(Ephesians 4:31). Now, here I want you to notice how this bitterness spreads. How it troubles others when you allow it to have a foothold in you and begin to trouble you.

Now look at it. First of all, bitterness. He mentions bitterness in verse 31. You're wounded; you're hurt, and you're angry. You're angry at God, angry at your neighbors, angry at your wife, angry at your husband, or angry at your parents. You're angry. And, you don't deal with it. You go to bed with it. You allow the sun to go down upon your wrath. It becomes bitterness and that bitterness turns to wrath.

Look at it. He mentions wrath next. The Greek word that is translated wrath has the idea of "hotness," internal heat. Now, what happens is when you get bitter you take it in and you do sort of a slow burn. You just smolder on the inside.

It's like taking a trash basket full of oily rags and dropping a match in there and just putting it in the closet. And, shutting the door and those rags begin to burn. That's what wrath is. It's that slow burn. Do you ever feel it? You have if you're normal.

First of all, there's that bitterness. That bitterness turns to wrath. Now, watch it, the wrath turns to anger. That's the next thing he mentions. Now, anger is that which is outward. Anger is explosive. It comes to the surface. Those smoldering rags now have burst into flame and you do on a temper tantrum. Somebody jostles you. You just explode. You say, "My goodness what got into me." I tell you, there were rags smoldering in the closet for a long time you just opened the door and fed it with oxygen. That's all you did. And, it burst into flames. There is that outward hostility. And, it is far out of proportion to the thing that seemed to cause it. There is anger.

And then what—clamor. That's when the old tongue gets loose. And, the word clamor means, "it now becomes vocal." You enter into a verbal contest. You get into a war of words. And, there is that harshness and that rancor and that clamoring. You let the argument heat up and then it moves into the next step. Boy this is a terrible one. Then it says evil speaking.

No longer is it clamor. No longer is it just an argument. But, now it becomes name-calling. You want to vilify the other person. You say things that you know are not true about the other person. And, you say things that you wish you'd never said, "I hate you," "I wish we'd never gotten married," "I'm sorry I ever met you," "I wish you were dead," or "You're a liar." Oh, our tongues.

We gave the devil a place. We got bitter. That bitterness turned to wrath. That wrath turned to anger. And, that anger turned to clamor. And, that clamor turned to evil speaking. And, then that evil speaking turns to the worse part of all, malice. Which means, "I want to do you harm," "I want to hurt you," "I want to injure you." And, we're filled with malice. That's what the writer of Hebrews is talking about when he says, "You watch that root of bitterness. It'll spring up. It'll trouble you" (Hebrews 12:15) physically,

emotionally, and spiritually. But, not only will it trouble you “many will be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). Oh, it’s a cancerous thing in a home in a church, in a society, and in a business. And, many are defiled by this root of bitterness.

III. The Pursuit of Bitterness

Now, the third and final thing I want to mention this morning. I want you to see not only what I call the root of bitterness and not only the fruit of bitterness, but I want you to see the pursuit of bitterness. Go back if you will to Hebrews chapter 12 and you’ll see why I said the pursuit of bitterness. Look in verse 15. The Bible says we are to be “*looking diligently*”—just underscore that looking diligently—“*lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you...*” (Hebrews 12:15).

You see a root is underground. You have to seek it out. You have to pursue it. You have to search for it. Because I know as I’m standing here preaching you’re sitting there saying, “I wonder if any of those old bitter people are hearing what he is saying.” Yeah? Now, could it be that the Holy Spirit of God wants to do radical surgery on you this morning. And, get down deep, deep, deep. And, reveal to you something about yourself that perhaps you’ve never known, never been willing to admit. And, with some of you it may go all the way back to your childhood. A root of bitterness.

A. Pursue It to Recognize It

You need to pursue it for three reasons. Number one, you need to pursue it to recognize it. When you recognize it, when you make a proper diagnosis you’ve done a big thing. See, so many people never recognize it. I mean they don’t admit it. They are bitter, but it would be the last thing. They would never say, “I am a bitter person.” They may hide their bitterness behind a mask.

A preacher and a deacon went golfing one day. And, the deacon said to the preacher, “Preacher you’re the most even handed person I’ve ever seen. You always smile. When I hit my ball in the water hazard, in the golf, in the sand, in the rough, or when I make a bad shot, hook it, slice it, boy it just shows all over me. But you do the same thing but you just keep on smiling.” The preacher says, “Yeah I know it.” But, he says, “everywhere I spit the grass dies.”

Recognize it. Sometimes you can hide it with a facade. I’ll tell you one of the worse things that can possibly happen in the realm of bitterness is for you to become a member of Bellevue Baptist Church in good standing, doing church work, and yet have bitterness in your heart. Because you know what happens? When you live outwardly a good life, but you have bitterness down beneath the surface, that outward life is just your way of pruning the limbs while you strengthen the root. And, the more you prune the limbs the more you strengthen the root. And, the more of these outward things you do that seem so good and the things that you give up, but if you don’t deal radically with

that root cause, it's going to trouble you and many are going to be defiled. You need to pursue it in order to recognize it.

B. Pursue It to Remove It

Then you need to pursue it in order to remove it, to root it out. And, there is only one thing that will root it out and that is to forgive the person who has wounded you.

Are you certain pastor? Let's get it from The Word of God. I want you to see what God's Word says in Ephesians 4 verses 31 and 32. Now, we dealt with verse 31 but I want you to listen to verse 32 now, listen: *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you"*—that is, remove it—*"with all malice"*—alright, how are you going to do it? Listen, here is how you do it—*"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted"*—listen now—*"forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Ephesians 4:31-32). Are you listening?

The only way that you can remove it is to forgive—fully and freely—that person who has hurt you. You say that is not fair. They deserve my wrath. No they don't. First of all, you don't know enough to punish them. *"...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord"* (Romans 12:19). But, I'm going to tell you something else friend, it's going to hurt you more than it's going to hurt them. But, I'm going to tell you something else. I'm going to tell you something else friend. The model for this is God forgiving you.

Is there anybody here who deserved to be forgiven when God forgave you? Anybody? Of course not. *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Ephesians 4:32).

The grace of God causes us to do this. That's the reason the writer of Hebrews said, *"Beware lest any of you fail of the grace of God and a root of bitterness spring up"* (Romans 12:15). You think of God's grace. You think of what Jesus Christ has done to you and the grace of God to you. And, then on the basis of that grace, *"...be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you"* (Ephesians 4:32). And, when you do God the Holy Spirit will root that bitterness out.

You say, *"That's going to be hard."* Calvary was hard. And, the person who deals with bitterness is going to have to taste of Calvary. But, it's worth it. The Bible said of Jesus, *"...who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross..."* (Hebrews 12:2). He suffered for the joy of forgiving us. And, we can suffer for the joy of forgiving others.

Mark Twain said that, *"Forgiveness is the fragrance the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it."* That's what it is. You say, *"Well, when I forgive them is that going to deal with these memories?"* No, the memory will be there. But, it will be different.

Somebody put it this way *"The hornet of remembering may fly again, but the sting of bitterness has been removed"* Oh you will remember it psychologically. But, the sting is

gone because you've put it beneath Calvary's blood. And, you've been "kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ' sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

C. Pursue It to Replace It

You are to pursue it to recognize it and you are to pursue it to remove it, but you are not finished yet. You are to pursue it to replace it. Now, it is not without significance that Hebrews chapter 12 verse 14 says, "*Follow peace with all men, and holiness...*" (Hebrews 12:14). That is, it is not just enough to get the bitterness out. We want to be right with our brother and sister. We want to be reconciled. Amen? That's what it is. Oh, we want that love of God in our hearts.

Conclusion

Edwin Marcum was a great poet. And, he lived a life till he reached the age where he thought he could retire. And, he had a lot of money laid up to retire. But, when he found himself in his sixties and got ready to retire he found out that his banker friend had defrauded him and had appropriated his money. And, the money that he thought he had, he did not have. His money was gone. And, there he was a man ready for retirement and he was penniless. And, he got bitter. How could a friend do something like this to me? And, he got bitter on life. And, he became censorious and cantankerous and full of spite and revenge. He said, "Now I've got to go back to work." And, he tried to go back to work but he couldn't work.

He would sit down at the desk to write his poetry and the words would not come and his heart was locked up. The candle of joy had been blown out in his life and all he could think about was the man who had harmed him and the man who had wronged him and how terrible it was. And, he became more and more bitter.

Marcum said, "I was sitting at my desk doodling, just kind of drawing circles on a piece of paper and thinking about this man." He said, "God the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said, 'Marcum, if you don't deal with this thing it is going to ruin you. You cannot afford the price that you are paying. You must forgive him,'" And, Marcum said, "Oh my God, I will and I do freely forgive." And, that root was pulled out. The joy started to flow again. And, then he wrote these words, "He drew a circle that shut me out: Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win: We drew a circle that took him in."

There may be somebody, dear friend, who has shut you out but I want you to take God's love and bring him. Just bring them in. For God for Christ's sake has done for you.

My friend, you listen to me now. Beware lest there be a root of bitterness springing up that troubles you and defiles many. Let's bow in prayer.

Rooting Out Bitterness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 16, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 12:14–15

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

HEBREWS 12:14–15

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Introduction

Find in God’s Word, would you, Hebrews chapter 12, and in a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 14. I’ve already told you that there’s a great problem, and that is

the problem of bitterness. And, it is bitterness that blows out the candle of joy and leaves the soul in darkness. And, I'm afraid more people have a root of bitterness than we dare think.

Look, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 14—Hebrews 12:14: *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God”*—now, here's our key phrase—*“lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”* (Hebrews 12:14–15)

Now, what is bitterness? Well, sometimes if you see a person who is bitter, they are a person who is very much like a porcupine: they may have a lot of good points, but they're hard to be near. And, they are harsh, they are critical, they are judgmental, they're sarcastic, and they are filled with anger. But, they're not always like a porcupine. Sometimes they're like an iceberg—very cool, very aloof, very diffident. They are politely indifferent to people. They go their own way. They have an air about them that “I don't need anybody.” But, like an iceberg, most of their problem is beneath the surface. And then, others who are bitter are not like a porcupine or like an iceberg; they're more like a crybaby. They're sullen. They wallow in self-pity. They are always filled with moroseness, and they're sad. And, a part of the problem is they are eaten up with bitterness.

Now, bitterness has done untold damage to communities. It has done untold damage to churches, untold damage to homes. The Bible says in Colossians 3, verse 19: *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”* (Colossians 3:19) Sometimes, rather than being the better half, they are the bitter half. *“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”* (Colossians 3:19) Some in this congregation are chained in a prison of bitterness. And, by the way, bitterness does more to hold back the power of God and revival, I am convinced, than liberalism. Bitterness does more to hold back the power of God and revival than does alcohol or pornography. It keeps the people of God from having the power of God and the holiness of God that they need in their hearts and in their lives. And, much of this bitterness, as I've already said, is found in the people of God. We have bitter brothers, sour sisters, caustic Christians. And, the Bible speaks of a *“root of bitterness.”* (Hebrews 12:15)

I. The Germination of Bitterness

Now, we're going to look at this—rooting out bitterness—under three headings. First of all, we're going to talk a little bit about the germination of bitterness. How does the root get there? How does it germinate? Well, two things are necessary for germination: one is the seed, and the other is the soil.

A. The Seed of Bitterness

Now, what is the seed of bitterness? A bitter person is somebody who has been hurt.

That hurt is the seed of bitterness. Now, the hurt may have been intentional. There are some mean people out there; they can hurt you. They're as mean as snakes, and the hurt may be intentional. Or, the hurt may have been unintentional: somebody hurt you; they did not mean to hurt you—as a matter of fact, they don't even know that they hurt you.

¶ I was preaching in Florida one time in a crusade, and a man came up to me; and he said, "I need to apologize to you and to ask you to forgive me." Well, I looked him over. I wondered, "Did I know him?" Then, I recognized him as an old college chum, but not a close associate, and I said, "Well, tell me what it is I need to forgive you for." He said, "Well, one day we were on the street of a city doing some witnessing, sharing the gospel, and we were sitting there together, and I suggested we do one thing, and you suggested the group do something else, and they all got up and followed you, and," he said, "I've been bitter at you about that ever since." Folks, I don't even remember the situation. I don't remember anything about it. But, here was a person—and I know I had no intention of hurting this individual—but he had been harboring hostility for years because I said, "Let's go over here and do thus and such a thing." ¶

Sometimes the hurt may be intentional; sometimes the hurt may have been unintentional. Sometimes the hurt is only imagined: nothing has been done to you, but somehow you feel that somebody has done something wrong to you. And, sometimes the hurt may be the very chastisement of God upon your life. That's the context of this particular verse of Scripture. The writer of Hebrews is talking about chastisement, and he says, "But when chastisement comes, don't be bitter. Don't have a root of bitterness." Now, what is the seed? What is the seed of bitterness? It is a hurt.

B. The Soil of Bitterness

But now, let's think about the soil. You see, we have all been hurt. Is there anybody here who's not been hurt? We have all been hurt. And, if we're not careful, when we get hurt, we get angry. Anybody here ever been hurt and gotten angry? And sometimes, if you're in a bad mood, you want to get a little revenge; you want to strike back. Maybe you have resentment because you've been hurt. But now—listen—you get over it; you deal with it. The grace of God comes in, and you say, "I ought not to feel that way," and you get over it. But, a bitter person doesn't get over it. That's the difference.

What is the soil? The soil is a heart that harbors hostility. It does not deal with this hurt with the grace of God. And so, you become a bitter person. It goes beneath, and it takes root; and it stays there, and the root grows deeper. And, the things that are seen in your life—those are just simply the fruit of that deep root. The seed is a hurt. The soil is a heart that harbors that hurt.

Now, let me tell you something about bitter people—and some may be here today,

and the world is full of them: once you get that hurt in your heart and once you harbor it there, then you begin to look for things to criticize, things to find fault with, to justify the way that you feel. Have you ever seen people who are hypercritical? Generally, they are bitter people. And, they know how to push your hot buttons. They will work on you, they will criticize, they will carp, they will find some fault until they can get you to react the way they want you to react to further justify their bitterness, and say, “Aha! I was right. I have a right to be bitter.”

And, some people come to church that way. You know, some people come to church to find fault. Let me tell you something: if you come to this church, or any church, to find fault, you’ll find plenty. You’ll find plenty if you want to find fault. There’s always something to find fault with. But, if you want to come to find Jesus, you can find Jesus. It all depends on what you’re looking for. People who harbor hurt in their hearts, people who have been hurt—that’s the seed. And they, in this soil, the soil of the heart, they harbor this hostility and bitterness; a root springs. Now, that is the germination of bitterness.

II. The Devastation of Bitterness

I want you to see the second thing: not only the germination of this bitterness, but I want you to see the devastation of this bitterness. Look, if you will, in verse 15. He speaks of a *“root of bitterness springing up.”* (Hebrews 12:15) It doesn’t just stay underground; it springs up. And, it says, *“Lest [a] root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and...many be defiled.”* (Hebrews 12:15) Bitterness will trouble you personally, and it will trouble society, all of those around you.

Now, we’ve talked about the seed and the soil. Let’s talk about the root and the fruit. Okay, now we’re going to talk about the root that is there and the fruit that comes from that root.

A. The Root of Bitterness

Now, remember that the root is underground. It’s easy to hide. It’s easy to camouflage. Seldom do you ever find anybody who will admit that they are a bitter person. They will either deny it or disguise it. Can we dig around your roots a little this morning—say “yes,” all right—find out whether or not you are really a bitter person?

1. Sensitivity

You know, a bitter person is a very sensitive person, a very touchy person. You have to be careful what you say and do around a bitter person because they are very sensitive and they’re very touchy. As a matter of fact, if they walk into a room and two people are talking and then it gets quiet, the bitter person feels they were talking about him.

2. A Lack of Gratitude

Secondly, a bitter person has little or no gratitude. I have never seen a person who was infected with bitterness who is truly a grateful person because you cannot be bitter and praise and you cannot have gratitude without praising.

3. Insincerity

And, I'll tell you another mark of this bitter root: a person who is bitter will either harshly criticize or vainly flatter. They are very insincere people. They will never deal with an individual on a truth level, or hardly ever.

4. Grudges

A bitter person holds grudges against people, often for a long time. They find it not only hard to be thankful; they find it very hard to forgive persons. And, you find them, therefore—bitter people—in mood swings. As bitterness takes over, they get into great depression. Then, they pull the top off the root, and for a while, everything looks fine; but the root is still there in the ground, and it will spring up again. Now, the sad thing, I say, about the root of bitterness is it's underground; it's so easy to hide.

B. The Fruit of Bitterness

But, let's think not only about the root of it; let's think about the fruit of it, for all root bears fruit of some kind. Now, notice the fruit of this bitterness. He says here, "*Looking diligently*"—verse 15—"*lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.*" (Hebrews 12:15) Well, what is the fruit? There's going to be trouble. There's going to be devastation in your life. It's going to trouble you. Bitterness is an acid that destroys its container.

1. It Will Physically Affect You

Bitterness is going to trouble you physically. By the way, you're body, soul, and spirit, and your body, your soul, and your spirit are going to be troubled by bitterness. If you're harboring hostility, if there is, in your heart, in your life, today, a root of bitterness, it's going to affect you physically.

A book that I've had in my library for many years is called *None of These Diseases*. It's written by a medical doctor, Dr. S. I. McMillen. And, he lists in that book more than fifty diseases—more than fifty—that can be triggered by the emotions, and he talks particularly about the emotions of bitterness and anger. And, I want to quote from that book. Here's what Dr. McMillan wrote. He said—and I quote: "The famous cardiologist John Hunter knew what anger could do in his heart: 'The first scoundrel that gets me angry will kill me.' This man knew his heart condition. He's a cardiologist. Some time later, at a medical meeting, a speaker made assertions that incensed Hunter. As he stood up and bitterly attacked the speaker, his anger caused such a contraction of the

blood vessels in his heart that he fell dead.” He said, “The first man that gets me angry will kill me.” A man got him angry. He’s filled with bitterness. He fell dead. Now, let me say something: you can be sick and not be bitter, but it is doubtful that you can be bitter for a long time and not get sick. It will affect you physically.

2. It Will Emotionally Affect You

It will affect you emotionally. Dr. McMillen went on to say—and I want to quote him again: “The moment that I start hating a man, I become his slave. I can’t enjoy my work any more because he controls my thoughts. My resentments produce too much stress hormones in my body, and I become fatigued after only a few hours of work. The work I formerly enjoyed is now a drudgery. Even vacations cease to give me pleasure. It may be a luxurious car that I drive along a lake fringed with the autumn beauty of maple, oak, and birch. As far as my experience is concerned, I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain. The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I cannot escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. When the waiter serves me a porterhouse steak with French fries, asparagus, crisp salad, and strawberry shortcake smothered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it.” You know, Solomon must have had an experience like that when he said, *“Better is a [dish] of herbs [with] love...than a stalled ox [with] hatred [therein].”* (Proverbs 15:17)

3. It Will Spiritually Affect You

You see, it will affect you physically. It will affect you emotionally. It will affect you spiritually. Look again in verse 14: *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”* (Hebrews 12:14) God will not be real to you. Why? Hatred and holiness don’t dwell in the same heart, and without holiness, you’ll not see the Lord.

Now, he says when this root springs up, it will trouble you. (Hebrews 12:15) But, if we could just lock all the bitter people up in the world and let them trouble one another, it wouldn’t be so bad. But, he goes on to say, *“and...many be defiled.”* (Hebrews 12:15) Now, we’re talking here about the devastation of bitterness—*“many be defiled.”* (Hebrews 12:15) Bitterness has a chain reaction. I’ve shared what I’m about to share with you before, but it’s so pertinent right now I want to share again. And, in Ephesians chapter 4... Just put your bookmark over here in Hebrews 12, and you may want to turn to Ephesians chapter 4 because you’re going to see how bitterness devastates; you’re going to see a chain reaction of bitterness. Here is an incredible passage of Scripture. In Ephesians chapter 4, look, if you will, in verse 26: *“Be...angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”* (Ephesians 4:26) That means “keep a short account.” Don’t fail to get that hurt out of your heart. Don’t let the sun set on it. Keep a short

account with God. “Be...angry, and sin not”—don’t harbor hostility—“Neither give place to the devil.” (Ephesians 4:26–27) “To give place to the devil” is just another way of saying, “let bitterness take root.” Now, watch this. Skip on down, if you will, to verse 30: “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”—now, watch verse 31—“Let all bitterness”—he’s talking about bitterness now, but notice what follows bitterness—“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.” (Ephesians 4:30–31) Now, just park right there on that verse, verse 31. That is an incredible verse that tells us the bitter fruit of this bitter root. The soil is the hurt. The seed is a heart that harbors the hurt. The root is bitter. Now, notice the fruit that is bitter.

a. Bitterness

First of all, he says, “bitterness.” (Ephesians 4:31) You’re harboring a hurt.

b. Wrath

And then, he mentions, in verse 31, wrath, because wrath follows bitterness.

(Ephesians 4:31) The Greek word for *wrath* has the idea of heat, “that which is hot.”

¶ If you were to take some oily rags, put a match to them, put them in a closet, and close the door, and have them packed down tight, they would sit there and smolder. They would get hotter and hotter but probably would not burst into flame. They would just sit there and smolder. That’s the idea.¶

Wrath is this internal heat, this smoldering, that people feel when the bitterness comes.

c. Anger

First bitterness, and then wrath, and then, notice, anger. (Ephesians 4:31) What’s the difference between wrath and anger? Anger is that which is outward. Wrath is that which is inward; it’s that slow burn.

¶ But, if those smoldering rags are in the closet, and somebody opens the closet door and the oxygen hits those rags, then they burst aflame.¶

Have you ever seen people—we say, “They fly off the handle”? Something happens, and they just seem to have this burst of anger. What you don’t realize is that that slow burn was there for a long time, and that slow burn was there because this person is bitter, this person has been hurt, and all that has happened is somebody’s opened the door and let a little oxygen there on that slow burn.

d. Clamor

But now, what’s the next thing? Watch it: bitterness, wrath, anger, and then he mentions, in verse 31, “clamor.” (Ephesians 4:31) The word *clamor* has the idea of speech. When we get angry, then we lose control of this thing in our mouths called the

tongue. The Bible says, *“The tongue is a fire...and it is set on fire of hell.”* (James 3:6) When that hellish fire begins to burn called anger, we begin to say things. We get loud, and we begin to lift our voices; and we express that anger. At that moment, we are in deep, deep danger because our tongue *“is set on fire of hell.”* (James 3:6)

e. Evil Speaking

And then, once we lift our voice and we began to speak to other people in a louder voice, or in a hostile voice, then—what is the next thing that he’s mentioned there? It’s “evil speaking.” (Ephesians 4:31) Once you hear yourself talking this way, the devil comes alongside and whispers in your ear, and he begins to coach you. And, he says, “Say this; say that,” and you can say things you never even thought of saying. And, if you have a child, you may say to that child, “I wonder why your mother and I ever even had you. You’ve been such a disappointment to me. You’re the most unthankful child I’ve ever seen. You’ve given us nothing but trouble since you’ve been born.” Or, a man might say to his wife, “Frankly, you’re stupid. I wish I’d never met you. It was a mistake when we ever got married.” Now, you don’t mean those things, but now you are doing evil speaking. She might say to you, “Well, why don’t we just get a divorce? I’m sorry I ever met you.” You may say, “I hate you. I wish you were dead.” And, you say all kinds of terrible, horrible things that you don’t mean, but you mean them in the moment.

f. Malice

First, bitterness; then wrath, that slow burn; then anger; and then clamour; and then evil speaking—but it doesn’t end there. What’s next? “Malice.” (Ephesians 4:31) What is malice? Malice is the desire to hurt somebody. That’s when a man will take his wife and shove her against the wall. That’s when a woman will take up a dish and throw it at her husband. That’s when a man gets in an automobile and begins to drive as fast as the car will drive because he’s so full of malice. It’s a terrible thing, the desire to hurt. Sometimes a father will slap a child. What do we call it? “Going ballistic.” Sometimes a man will walk into an office where he used to work, pull out a gun, and begin to shoot at people indiscriminately. What has happened? Bitterness has been there. There has been a root of bitterness. That bitterness begins to do a slow burn, which is wrath. And, that wrath becomes anger, and that anger becomes clamour; and that clamour becomes evil speaking, and that evil speaking becomes malice. You heard about the ad in the paper where this woman said, “For sale: a wedding dress, or will trade for a 38 revolver”? That’s somebody who has been hurt. Somebody’s hurt.

Now, we’ve seen the seed, and we’ve seen the soil. We’ve seen the root, and we’ve seen the fruit. You see, the root is underground, but the fruit is above ground. And, we wonder, sometimes, why do people act like they act? Why are they so sullen? Or, why are they so critical? Or, why are they so sad? All of that is just simply the fruit of that

bitter root.

III. The Eradication of Bitterness

Now, we have talked about the germination. We've talked about the devastation. Let's spend a few moments talking about the eradication. Every farmer wants to know how to eradicate weeds. What are we going to do? How are we going to get this root out? How are we going to root out this bitterness? Well, may I mention three things to you?

A. Let God Reveal It

First of all, let God reveal it. Now, the root is underground. I'm telling you, it's easy to deny and to disguise. And, many here may think I'm talking to somebody else when God is really talking to you. Let God reveal it.

When I was studying for this message, my mind went to Psalm 139, verses 23 and 24: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me"*—that means "test me"—*"and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* (Psalms 139:23–24) What a great prayer that is. I pray that prayer frequently. It's a great prayer from the Word of God. You want to jot it down: Psalm 139, verses 23 and 24. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart."* (Psalms 139:23)

You know, sometimes people say, "Well, if I know my heart, there's no bitterness in me." Truth of the matter is, you don't know your heart. *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* (Jeremiah 17:9) And, the deceitful heart can't diagnose a deceitful heart. You need to let God the Holy Spirit do radical surgery. Let God reveal it. Now, remember that the root is underground. It's so easy to disguise. Our feelings—all of our feelings—are easy to disguise.

† A preacher was playing golf with three other men. And, when these men would make bad shots, they would often say things they ought not to say, but the preacher was always so composed. He never said anything like that. One of the men said, "Pastor, I really admire you, the way you just control your emotions." He said, "Well, I may seem to you to control my emotions, but if you'll watch where I spit, the grass never grows again."†

Sometimes we can disguise it, but let God reveal it. That's the first step.

B. Let Grace Remove It

Now, here's the second step: let God reveal it; let grace remove it. Look, if you will, in this passage of Scripture: *"Looking diligently"*—this is verse 15—*"lest any man fail of the grace of God."* (Hebrews 12:15) Friend, if you lack of the grace of God, if you don't have the grace of God, you can never root it out, even when God shows you it is there, without the grace of God. First of all, the grace of God is going to have to forgive you for your bitterness. No matter what somebody's done to you, your reaction is wrong. And,

ask God to forgive you, and God will forgive you by His grace.

By the way, what is grace? Grace is both the desire and the ability to do the will of God. That's the best definition of grace I've ever heard—both the desire and the ability to do the will of God. When you have a desire, that's because of God's grace, because no good thing can come out of our old, vile hearts, so that desire's of God. But, not only does God put the desire there; God puts the ability there. And, only will God root it out. Let God reveal it. Let grace remove it.

¶ I was reading about Corrie ten Boom. And, Corrie ten Boom has written this wonderful book, *The Hiding Place*. You remember—she was a Dutch girl who hid some of the Jews during the Nazi atrocities. And, Corrie and her sister were finally taken and put in a Nazi concentration camp, and they were faced with cruel and heartless German guards. And, sometimes they would have all of their dignity taken away. These lovely young girls would be stripped, with no clothes at all, and be put by these German guards into the delousing showers. And, there was one guard who particularly loved to taunt Corrie and her sister, and she said he would just make all sorts of obscene remarks and would rape them with his eyes.

Later on, Corrie ten Boom was liberated. The sister died. And, Corrie ten Boom was lecturing in Germany when that same guard came up to her (who was now a professing Christian himself). And, he came up to Corrie ten Boom, and Corrie had his face so etched upon her mind she could never forget that face. And, he came up to Corrie ten Boom after she'd been speaking, put out his hand, and asked her to forgive him. I want you to hear her words. I've copied them down for you. She said, "I stood there with coldness clutching at my heart, but I know that the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. I prayed, 'Jesus, help me.' Woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me, and I experienced an incredible thing. The current started in my shoulder, raced down into my arms, and sprang into our clutched hands. Then, this warm reconciliation seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. 'I forgive you, brother,' I cried with my whole heart. For a long moment, we grasped each other's hands—the former guard and the former prisoner. I have never known the love of God so intensely as I did at that moment." May I suggest to you that was supernatural? That was a God moment. Do you know what that was? That was the grace of God. This Dutch girl who had received grace was getting grace, and she did not fail the grace of God.¶

Let grace remove it.

¶ I read Robert E. Lee—not Robert G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, but Robert E. Lee, the great general in the Civil War—after the war was over and the South had lost, he was visiting a woman in Kentucky. And, this woman was so filled with

bitterness over the war. She took General Lee out to the yard, and she showed him a great old tree that had been in their front yard. The limbs had been fragmented and broken by the Northern artillery, and there was that grotesque tree there. She'd brought Lee out to see that tree and to see what the Union soldiers had done. She was expecting him to give her some sympathy. She said, "General, what do you think about that?" He said, "Madam, cut it down and forget it."¶

Cut it down and forget it. May I suggest that, somebody's done you wrong, cut it down and forget it. Forget it. Bury it in the grave of God's forgetfulness. And, you cannot do that apart from the grace of God. Let God reveal. Let grace remove it. Do you know what grace is? You see, justice is God giving us what we deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. Let me illustrate that.

¶Awhile back, Joyce and I went out to lunch to a little restaurant, and the waitress who was waiting on us was very distraught, very upset. We could tell. Joyce and I spent perhaps a half an hour speaking with her, trying to share the love of God with this waitress. She was nervous. She was heartsick. And, we were just pouring out the love of Jesus to this waitress, and I know that God was working through us. But, she had to leave, and she said, "I'll put your bill on the table. I must go. It's my time to go."

So, when I picked up the bill, she'd greatly overcharged me. I know she didn't mean to, but she'd overcharged. Now, this restaurant would not take a credit card. I looked at that. I said, "Joyce, I don't know whether I have enough money to pay this or not. I'll just go and tell the owner that I have been overcharged." I said, "No, I can't do that. I can't do that. That would so embarrass her that, if he called her in and criticized her for this, that would be the straw that would break her back." I said, "We'll just pay the bill. That'll be all right." But then, I said, "But Joyce, if I pay this overcharge, I won't have enough money to leave a tip, and I want to leave a big tip to the person who overcharged me." I said, "What are we going to do?"

I said, "Well, Joyce, so they'll think we're not trying to slip out without paying," I said, "you sit here. I'll go get in the car, and I'll go home and get some money and come back so we can tip this girl." And so, I drove home, got some money, and came back to tip her. She never knows anything about that, unless she's sitting here today. She doesn't know anything about that at all. She doesn't know she overcharged me. She doesn't know. We didn't say anything about it. She doesn't know that I had to go home to get a tip. I could have paid the bill if I'd left the tip off. Now friend, not having to pay the bill that was an overcharge—that's justice. I could just have said, "This is not right. I want what's fair and right." That's justice. Not, however, saying anything about it—that's mercy. But, going home to get a tip to the person who overcharged me—that's grace.

That's grace—that's grace.†

You see, justice is God giving us what we deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. Now, you say, "Well, you're telling me that to make you sound like such a great guy." No, I'm not telling you that at all for that reason. I'm just telling you that gave me a lot of joy to do that—to drive home. That just gave me an incredible amount of joy. Rather than resenting something, let the grace of God remove it. Thank God for grace. It takes two to forgive—Jesus and you. And, you cannot do it without Him. I'm telling you that forgiveness is costly, but it is worth it. It is worth it.

C. Let Good Replace It

Now, here's the final thing. Look; watch it: if you're a bitter person, let God reveal it, let grace remove it, and let good replace it. Notice verse 14: *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* (Hebrews 12:14) Peace and holiness are linked together. Hatred and hellishness are linked together. You cannot—you cannot—have holiness unless you want to follow peace with men. It doesn't mean that all people are going to be at peace with you, but you can pursue peace. You can follow peace.

Conclusion

Oh, it's so much worth it when you forgive. You say, "I can't forgive them. I'm not going to let them off the hook." I want to remind you, you're on the hook with them. When you forgive, you set two people free, and one of them is yourself. Let God reveal it. Let grace remove it. Let good replace it.

†Some little children had gotten in a fuss (brothers and sisters), and the mother had to come down and quiet them down and scold them, put them to bed. In the middle of the night, there was a ferocious thunderstorm. (You know how those scare little children.) The mother went upstairs to check on the children. They weren't there. She heard a noise in the closet and opened the door and said, "What are you kids doing in the closet?" They said, "We're in here forgiving one another."†

Oh, listen, friend, you, we, need to forgive one another, even before the storm starts. Don't harbor hostility. Let God reveal it. Let grace remove it. Let good replace it. And, you're going to find out that your life is going to be so wonderful if you just get out that old root of bitterness. Remember, the seed is a hurt. The soil is a heart that harbors the hurt. The root is underground, but the fruit is above ground. And, only God can deal with that root.

Let's pray. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. You know, we've spoken here in this message about the grace of God. If God gave us justice, we'd die and go to hell.

Thank God for His mercy that says He'll not punish us, but thank God for His grace that gives us a brand-new life.

Would you like to receive the grace of God? The Bible says, *"For by grace are [you] saved through faith."* (Ephesians 2:8) Would you pray a prayer like this if you're not certain that you're saved. You can be saved today. You can become a child of God today. Would you pray this kind of a prayer? Pray it sincerely, precious friend: "Dear God, I am a sinner, and I'm lost. And, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved"—do you want to be saved?—"God, I want to be saved. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you, Jesus"—would you tell Him that?—"I do trust you right now, this moment, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus"—pray it sincerely from your heart. You don't have to shout. You don't have to cry. You don't have to beg. The Bible says just trust Him. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you'll] be saved."* (Acts 16:31) Pray it, and mean it—"Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Did you ask Him with all of your heart? Then thank Him. Pray this way: "Thank you for saving me, Jesus. I believe that you have because you promised. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. Because you died for me, I will live for you. And, I will never be ashamed of you if you'll just give me the strength. In your name I pray. Amen."✠

A New Year Without Fear

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 5, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 13:5–6

*“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper,
and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*

HEBREWS 13:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. We Have the Contentment of His Provision
- II. We Have the Companionship of His Presence
- III. We Have the Confidence of His Promise
- IV. We Have the Comfort of His Protection

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, amen. Take God’s Word, and turn again to the book of Hebrews, where we were this morning, and this time, chapter 13, and, when you have found it, look up here. You know, when the old cartographers were making maps, they did not know what we know. They didn’t have global positioning satellites. They could not see the world from outer space, and they would make maps of what they knew. But there was much that they did not know, and when they would come to the edge of their knowledge, they would often write something like this: “Beyond this, there may be dragons.” And, if you will look at some of the old maps, you will see the sea monster in the ocean. “Beyond this, there may be dragons,” because man has sort of an inbred fear of the future, and of the unknown. They could have said, beyond this are sparkling seas, and sun-kissed beaches, and lush forests, and majestic mountains, and grand opportunities. But man, by nature, has a dread of the future. He more or less fears the future. And the fear of the future really, in some ways, is a foe that we all face; whether young or old, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, we are wondering what is going to happen. Fear has no racial bias. It’s endemic to all people. And yet, God wants us to have a future without fear. As a matter of fact, God has not only admonished us, but God has commanded us, not to fear.

Now, in order to have a future free of fear, I think there are four things at least that you need. And I have listed these for you. Number one is contentment. Number two is

companionship. Number three is confidence. Number four is comfort. Now, I wanted you to see these things in the two verses that I am going to read to you—Hebrews chapter 13, verses 5 and 6: “Let your conversation”—and may I say the word conversation here, in the old English, doesn’t mean merely, what you say; it actually encompasses your behavior—“Let your behavior be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said,”—that is, God hath said—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

I. We Have the Contentment of His Provision

Now, let’s take those four things and see how we are going to find them in this verse, and see how we are going to face this year—this coming year, 2003—without fear. First of all, according to this verse, in this coming year, we are to have the contentment of His provision—the contentment of His provision. God is going to provide for you. Look at it again. Look in verse 5: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Now, often we have a fear that our needs are not going to be satisfied and we are going to live lives of discontent. Discontent is a disease that breeds fear. I don’t know how many contented people there are in this building tonight, but the secret of contentment is not wanting what we do not have, but being grateful for what we do have. Contentment is not having what we want, but wanting what we have.

Look at that verse: “Be content with such things as you have.” You see, contentment, real contentment, will make a poor man rich. Discontent will make a rich man poor. There was a naturalist, Mr. Muir, for whom Muir Woods is named, if you have ever been to California near San Francisco and seen those majestic redwoods named after this naturalist. He said to Mr. Harriman—Mr. Harriman was a railroad magnate; Harriman had millions; Muir did not—but Muir said to Harriman, “I am richer than you are.” Harriman said, “How is that?” He said, “I have everything I want, and you don’t.” “Be content with such things as you have.”

As a matter of fact, our Lord said, “having food and raiment, let us be content.” He didn’t say you have to have a house. Our Lord said, “Foxes have holes, and birds have nests; the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.” Do you have food? Have you got clothes? That’s it. “Having therefore food and raiment, be content.” Be content with such things as you have.

There were two tears who met one day, and one tear said to the other tear, “Who are you?” That tear said, “I am the tear of a girl who loved a man and lost him.” “Who are you?” That tear said, “I am the tear of the girl who found him and married him.” Just be grateful for what you have.

Now, we live in a day that has confused luxuries with necessities. Put this verse down—1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 6 through 8: “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us therewith be content.” The material things of this world—believe it or not—the material things of this world cannot meet the deepest needs of your heart.

It is not that the world is too big for us; we are too big for the world. God made us with something different. That is the reason that the Bible says so clearly, in Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and verse 10, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver.” If he gets silver, it won’t satisfy. To try to satisfy the desire of your heart with material things is like drinking salt water to slake your thirst. The more you drink, the more you want. That’s the reason, again, our Lord said, in Luke chapter 12 and verse 15, “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.” Learn this: that God is both the source and secret of true contentment. Look at the scripture again where He says very clearly, “Be content with such things as you have”—this is chapter 13, verse 5—“for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

Your true contentment is found in the Lord. There is a verse of Scripture over in Psalms—Psalm 37 and verse 4—that sometimes people misinterpret. It says, “Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desires of your heart.” Does that mean that if you love God, you can have an island paradise somewhere, a pink Cadillac, or a handful of diamonds, or whatever material thing you may want? No. Listen to it: “Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desire of your heart.” What is the desire of your heart? The Lord. Delight yourself in the Lord; and he will give you the desire of your heart. I don’t know how much of God you have, but you have all you want. Delight yourself in Him, and God will fill that void in your heart.

Now, everything else will change. Children will grow up and move away. Wealth may disappear. Somebody says, “Money talks: it says goodbye.” You may lose your home. You may lose your job. You may lose your health. Eventually, you will lose your physical life. And that is the reason the Lord says, be content with such things as you have, food and raiment.” Because God has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

Back in 1929, when the Stock Market fell apart, people got on buildings and jumped off of buildings because they had their heart, their life, attached to these things. Friend, the secret of a future without fear is contentment, the contentment of our Lord’s provision. He is going to take care of you.

Listen to Philippians chapter 4, verses 11 through 13. The Apostle Paul is in prison. Now, if anybody had a chance to gripe or complain, it would be the Apostle Paul in prison. But he says, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in

whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.” Some of you are abased. You are saying, I can hardly make it until next paycheck. Some of you are abounding. You have more right now that you ever thought or dreamed that you would ever have. And if you have that, I am happy for you. God bless you. See it as a gift from God, and enjoy it. For the Bible says, “God takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants.” And it is the Lord your God that gives you the ability to get wealth. Thank God for it. Don’t be ashamed of it. If God has blessed you with these things, fine; but listen to what Paul says: “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” One translation gives it, “I can do all things through Christ who is pouring his life into me.” He says here that, “I am content.”

The word content literally means self-contained; not self-centered, but self-contained. Like the space shuttle when they send it up, they put everything on board that’s needed. You can’t run down to 7-11 for a quart of milk. What Paul says: in Christ, I have a self-contained life. All that I need is in the Lord Jesus Christ. I don’t have to go outside of him for contentment.

I thought about this as I was preparing this message. I want to tell you—God in heaven knows this: I would not sell what I have in Jesus Christ for billions of dollars. I would not trade places with Bill Gates or any one else—I mean that, God listening—not one scintilla of an iota of any dishonesty. What I have in Jesus Christ is worth multiplied billions and more to me. So you are looking at a rich man. You are looking at a rich man, regardless of what I may or may not have in the bank. If you have Jesus, friend, you have something wonderful. Now, say amen.

You see, he says here, “be content with such things as you have, for he has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” So, as you face the coming year, if the Stock Market goes down, if the bottom falls out, okay, praise the Lord. “Once I was young, now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” So take away the fear of discontent.

II. We Have the Companionship of His Presence

And so, here is the next promise that we have in this verse: We also have the companionship of His presence. Now, we also fear being left alone, forsaken, lonely. Look in verse 5—Hebrews 13, verse 5: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said”—now, watch this—“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” How many of you believe that promise? Now, friend, you’d better get hold of it. That is the Word of God. “He has said, I will never leave thee

nor forsake thee.” That may be the most encouraging verse in all of the Bible. Why do we fear? We’re afraid of being forsaken. Our friends will leave us. Our compatriots may forsake us. A lack of love causes depression, and that brings fear. Psychiatrists say the greatest need that we have on this earth is not material but the ability to love and to be loved. And the Lord has said, “I will never leave you.”

Now, I took Greek; Greek never took me. I never have pretended to be a Greek scholar. I know just enough to be dangerous. But the Greek scholars tell us in this verse there are five negatives—five negatives that say, I will never leave thee. It is a compounding of five negatives. I read this in the Amplified Version, copied it out for you. I want you to hear what it says in the Amplified Version: “I will never, no not ever, no never, leave you nor forsake you.” Do you like that? Let me read it to you again. That is really just an amplification of what it literally says in the Greek language. Here is God speaking to you. Now, forget that Adrian is here. This is you and Jesus. And He is speaking to you. Are you listening to what your Lord is saying? This is God speaking. Okay. Not a sermon. I am reading right from the Scripture. Now, listen. He is saying to you, “I will never, no not ever, no never, leave nor forsake you.” Now, friend, that will take the fear out of the future. Amen? There is the companionship of His presence. It is a forever and ever. “I will never, ever leave you, nor forsake you.” Nothing can separate you from the love of God.

I heard of a young embryonic theologian, a young preacher-boy, who was studying Greek, who tried to explain this to an old lady in his country church. She just smiled, and said, “Sonny, God may have to say it five times for you Greek boys, but once is enough for me.” “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Now, when you face this coming year, His presence will see you through when you are discouraged. You are going to have some heartaches. There will be some funerals. There will be some sickness. There will be some hospital bills. But His presence will see you through. When you are lonely, His presence is going to cheer you up. And there will be some lonely times, but He will never forsake you.

Psalms 16, verse 11: “For thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy.” When you are worried, His presence is going to calm you down. That is what I preached last Sunday night. God said to Moses, “Moses, I will be with you.” Remember I told you this morning that worry is mild form of atheism. When you are tempted, His presence is going to help you through, and help you out. He has promised this coming year to be with you always, through thick and thin, good and bad, come weal, come woe, He is never going to forsake you. And that ought to remove a great fear from you, the fear of loneliness.

III. We Have the Confidence of His Promise

Now, here is the third thing I want you to see in this verse: We see also the confidence of His promise—the confidence of His promise. Look again in verse 5: “Let your behavior— your conversation—be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said,”—He hath said—“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Now, “He hath said” is emphatic. What that means is He Himself has said. This is the Word of God. His promise cannot fail. It is God who makes this promise, not Adrian. His omnipotence is the answer when you don’t have strength. His omnipresence is the answer when you are lonely. His omniscience is the answer when you don’t know what to do. This is God’s Word.

Leonard Ravenhill said, one of these days, somebody is going to pick up this book, read it, and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves. Listen to what He says: “For He hath said”—the confidence of His promise—God, who cannot lie. Now, most of us just kind of go window-shopping through the Bible. We take verses like this, and memorize them, and even put them on our refrigerator door. But do we believe them? Some people just sort of window-shop through the Bible. Oh, isn’t that a precious promise? What a sweet promise. Oh, that’s wonderful promise. But they never lay hold on it. Just kind of window-shopping.

One man said to his wife, “Why do you call it shopping? You never buy anything.” She said, “Why do you call it fishing? You never catch anything.” This is the Word of God. “He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” There is the confidence of His promise. “And He will not leave us.”

I have often told of the time when Joyce and I had a little boy that went to Heaven, one of those mysterious crib deaths. When we were driving away on that Sunday—he died on a Mother’s Day—we were driving away from our little church there, the church people had met for the evening service, the yellow light was streaming through those open windows, and Joyce and I let down the windows of our car—well, I actually didn’t let them down; it wasn’t air-conditioned—to listen to them sing; and they were singing that old song, Jim: “I have seen the lightning flashing; I have heard the thunder roll. I have felt sins breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. I have heard the voice of Jesus telling me still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. No, never alone; no, never alone; He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone.”

IV. We Have the Comfort of His Protection

Now, here is the fourth thing that will help you to face this coming year without fear, and that is the comfort of His protection. Notice verse 6: “So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do to me—what man shall do unto

me.” Now, most of us are saying, “What about Al Qaeda?” What about the terrorists? What about Saddam Hussein? What about this person? Listen, friend. God has said, “He will never leave you, He will not forsake you, and you must not fear what man shall do to you. The sum of all these is security; it is courage that comes from knowing that God is present.

Isaiah 41:10 comes to mind: “Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” The little boy is being picked on by a bully going to school. He may be frightened to walk to school, but if his big brother, or his daddy, is walking along side, then that fear is gone. I told you about that kid that used to pick on me when I was a little kid going to school—frightened me to death. One day, I just had enough. I turned around, I told her, “You leave me alone.” But if your dad is there, your big brother is there... What God is saying, look: I am with you. You don’t have to fear what man shall do. You say, “Well, what if they kill me?” They may. God may allow it. God has allowed His martyrs to die often. But what a privilege to die for Jesus. That doesn’t mean that God is out of control. Those times are the devil’s biggest blunders. And what a privilege to lay down our lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one fear that removes all other fears, and that is the fear of God. It was said of one great Christian: he feared man so little, because he feared God so much.

Now, these people were facing persecution. And the writer of Hebrews—as I have told you, I think is Paul—is trying to encourage them. And they were ready to throw in the towel. But He says, listen, God is going to protect you. He is going to take care of you. “The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, He will not, He will not desert to his foes; that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake, He’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”

I was raised in South Florida, kind of what you might call hurricane alley, West Palm Beach, Florida—also the voting capital of the world. When I came up here, I thought we were going north. Everybody calls this the South. Well, to me, this was the frozen North. The first time I saw snow, I thought it was grits all over the ground. I didn’t know. Moved up here. But down in Florida, we had hurricanes—and, by the way, give me an old-fashioned hurricane any time, above a tornado. A hurricane, you can see it coming a week away, and get ready for it. And a tornado, man, they come in twenty minutes or less. Sometimes you can’t get ready. And when we knew that a hurricane was coming, my dad would say, “Boys, go out there in the backyard and tie things down.” You know, you have patio furniture and stuff like that; you don’t bring it in the house, you just tie it down. Sometimes we would go out after a hurricane, and the thing we tied down was gone, and the thing we tied it to was gone. Now, friend, you’d better be tied to Jesus. He won’t blow away. I mean, you know, where is your hope? Where is your security? What

have you lashed your hope to? I hope it's in the solid rock, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

This is a great verse for a new year, is it not? These verses, two verses together. Let me just wrap this up, and I'll be finished. I don't know whether or not you have heard the name George Matheson or not. But George Matheson was a student at the University of Scotland. He was taken with an eye disease. He was losing his eyesight. A beloved professor came to him, and said, "George, the doctors have told me that it is my responsibility to tell you that in three days you will be blind. If there is any face that you want to look upon, I suggest that you do it within three days." George Matheson was shocked. He had a beloved girl that he hoped to marry. He wrote to her and told her the situation. He said, "Would you come to my side? I want to look into your face before I go blind." She wrote him back, and said, "If you are going blind, I don't want to be married to you. I don't want to be associated with you. I am sorry, but I want to break the engagement." George Matheson was crushed, but he went to the Lord, the Lord who wrote this passage, who said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And he wrote one of the most beautiful songs that has ever been written. I have copied out the words for you: "O love that will not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee; I give thee back the life I owe, that in its ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be. O light that followest all my way, I yield my flickering torch to thee; my heart restores its borrowed ray, that in thy sunshine's glow its day may brighter, fairer be. O joy that seekest me through pain, I cannot close my heart to thee; I trace the rainbow through the rain, and feel the promise is not vain, that morn shall tearless be. O cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly from thee; I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be." He went on to graduate from the University of Edinburgh and became a mighty minister of the gospel of Christ, though blind. And this crushing experience allowed him to touch the world, and touch our hearts tonight. The key to all of it is, "O love that will not let me go." "He hath promised, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Now, we are going to do something a little unusual right now. I am going to ask you, if you can, in just a moment, to get on your knees. Not everybody can do it. It is far more important to humble your heart than to be on your knees. But again, this is the first Sunday night of a new year. This is the first Sunday of our centennial, and we are praying for 365 days ablaze. And I want us to take these verses of Scripture, and I want us to apply them to our hearts personally, and to our church corporately. because none of us know what this year is going to bring. But we want to live this year with contentment, with confidence, with courage, because He has promised never to leave us, nor to forsake us.

Would you slip down to your knees, if you can? If you cannot, just bow your head there. I know it is very difficult to kneel in an auditorium like this. Get on the knees of your heart. And would you begin to pray back over these points? Let me just reiterate them to you for a moment. Would you say, "Lord, make me content with your provision? If I have food and clothing, I have enough. Forgive me, Lord, if I have the spirit of covetousness." And then, would you thank Him for the companionship of His presence? Know that you would not trade that for all of the wealth of the world. And then, would you thank Him for the confidence that you have in His promise. This is not what Adrian is saying. This is what God has said. "For He Himself hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And then, will you take comfort in His protection, and say, "God, no matter what happens, I will not fear what man shall do to me."

Take a few moments now for personal prayer, and then, I am going to lead us in corporate prayer for our church. Now, Lord, what we have done individually, now we do corporately. Lord, You have blessed us abundantly with material things and beautiful buildings. But Lord, should these buildings become devastated, should they be destroyed by earthquake or fire, Lord, our confidence is not in these material possessions. Our contentment does not rest there. Lord, we don't know what enemies may be marshaled against us. But Lord we will not fear, as we go into this New Year. We know Lord that You will go with us. You have promised never to leave us, nor forsake us. We know, dear God, that You cannot lie. And Lord, as we look back on 100 years of your faithfulness to the people of God, we know because of that, Lord, for us in these uncharted waters, not beyond this may be dragons, but beyond this is glory, because the future belongs to You. And Lord, now together, now solemnly and joyfully, we ask You to guide this church into a New Year. In the name of Jesus. Now, let's stand one more time, all of us. Brother Jim, I want us to sing one more time, "We are One in the Bond of Love." And this time, I want us to join hands, if we can, all the way across the aisles. Everybody just join hands symbolizing our oneness.

A New Year Without Fear

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 29, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 13:5–6

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

HEBREWS 13:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Contentment of His Provision
- II. The Companionship of His Presence
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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 13, and in a few moments we’re going to read verses 5 and 6, which will be the basis of our study today. Actually, today we’re talking on this subject: “A New Year Without Fear.” Most of us are afraid of the unknown. And we don’t know what this year is going to bring. We really do not.

I heard of some men years ago who were on a leaky old ship, in the middle of a rough and stormy sea, and they were actually fearful for their lives. They didn’t know whether they were going to sink or not. So one of them went in to see the captain, and said, “Captain, are we safe?” He said, “Well, I’ll put it to you this way.” He said, the boilers on this ship are very weak and may explode at any moment.” He said, “Also, the ship is very old, and she’s taking on water. So,” he said, “to be very honest with you, we may have an explosion, or we may sink.” He said, “We may go up, or we may go down, but at any rate, we are going on.”

And that’s the way we are, as we face this new year, dear friend. Jesus may come; we may go up. We may die, and go down, and then up. But at any rate, we are going on. Isn’t that true? We’re going on. We’re facing a brand new year, and we don’t know what it’s going to bring.

You know, the old map makers, before they had the modern instruments that we have, when they would draw maps, they would draw maps as far out as they had been, as far out as they had explored; and then, when they reached the nether point of their

exploration, they had not known what would be beyond, and you can see this on old maps—they would write on there: “Beyond this, there may be dragons.” Now they’d never seen a dragon; but, they didn’t know what was out there. And so, they would always think that what was in the future, “Beyond this, there may be dragons,” because they were afraid of the future; they were afraid of the uncharted; they were afraid of the unknown—beyond this, there’d be dragons.

Well, actually, beyond this, there were golden beaches, verdant fields, and rivers of gold, and beautiful things. But so far as they were concerned, it was uncharted and unknown, and, therefore, fearful.

And that’s the way many of us feel about the future. Folks, I’ve never seen things change like they have this past year. You know, it’s just incredible. Never in history, so far as I’m concerned, in my study of history, has there ever been a year like the year we’ve just come through—incredibly remarkable. And who knows what 1992 will bring?

With that in mind, look in God’s Word—Hebrews chapter 13, verses 5 and 6: “*Let your conversation be without covetousness;*”—now, the word *conversation* there literally means “behavior”—“*and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Hebrews 13:5–6). “The Lord is my helper, I will—I shall—not fear what man will do unto me.” “A New Year Without Fear.”

And in these two verses, there are four incredibly wonderful thoughts, as I face the new year, and I want you to apply them to your heart. And I would like you to face this new year by squaring back your shoulders, putting a smile on your face, and saying, “*The Lord is my helper...I will not fear.*”

I. The Contentment of His Provision

Now first of all—and here’s the first thought: We have the contentment of His provision—the contentment of His provision. Look, if you will, in verse 5: “Let your behavior—your conversation—be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have” (Hebrews 13:5).

Discontentment is a disease, and it takes away your joy, and it takes away your peace. And what is contentment? Contentment is not getting what you want, but it is wanting what you already have. You see, contentment will make a poor man rich. And discontentment makes a poor man poor.

One poor man said to a rich man, “I’m richer than you are.” He said, “Why’s that?” He said, “Because I have everything I want, and you don’t.”

You see, no matter how much you have, if you’re discontented, you’re really poor. Sometimes we want things we don’t need. Sometimes we need things we don’t need. And we get all mixed up.

I heard about two tears who met themselves along the river of life. Said one tear to the other tear, “Where did you come from?” “Oh,” this tear says, “I’m the tear of a girl who loved a man, and lost Him. And where do you come from?” She said, “I’m the tear of the girl who found him, and married him.”

Now many times, we think we want something, we need something, we really don’t. We get our luxuries and our necessities confused. Now in the margin of your Bible, jot down this verse—we’re talking about contentment; our verse says, “Be content with such things as you have”; put this verse down—1 Timothy chapter 6 and verses 6 and following: *“But godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1 Timothy 6:6). Friend, let me tell you something: You are so rich today, if you know the Lord, and if you’re content. I am telling you, that is great gain—if you know Jesus Christ, and you have contentment. And then, he explains it: *“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. But having food and raiment let us therewith be content”* (1 Timothy 6:7). If you’ve got something on your back, and something to eat, and you have Jesus Christ in your heart, my dear friend, you’re blessed.

You see, material things can never bring contentment, and the reason they cannot bring contentment, is that material things can never satisfy the deepest need of your heart. That’s the reason the Bible says, in Ecclesiastes chapter 5 and verse 10, *“He that loveth silver shall never be satisfied with silver”* (Ecclesiastes 5:10). Either you can’t get enough of it, or when you get it, you find out it doesn’t meet your need.

Do you remember the story of the little boy who loved pancakes so much? One day, his mother thought she would satisfy him, so she put him down to the table, and decided she would cook all the pancakes he wanted. She served him pancakes, and he ate the first ones with relish. And then, the others—well, not literally “with relish,” but with delight—maybe he ate relish—and he ate the others, and then some more, and then some more, and then some more, and she just kept cooking them, and he kept eating them. Finally, she asked him, “Johnny, do you want another pancake?” He said, “No ma’am. I don’t even want the ones I’ve already had.”

Now that’s the way it is with silver. “He that loveth silver shall never be satisfied with silver.” When you get it all, it doesn’t satisfy. And if you don’t get it all, you want more. You see, this round world will never fit in your three-cornered heart. I cannot satisfy the deepest longings of your soul.

Why is this? Why can’t material things bring contentment? Well, Jesus explained it in Luke chapter 12 and verse 15—He said, *“Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”* (Luke 12:15). How true that is! Your deepest needs will never be met by material things. Nothing wrong with material things, they just simply cannot satisfy the deepest longing of your heart.

Do you remember with the Bible says in Psalm 37 and verse 4? I love it. It says, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desire of your heart” (Psalm 37:4). Now that doesn’t mean that you’ll have every surface need met—every whim, every fancy—every lust of your eyes, and your flesh, satisfied. Oh, no! It means, when you find all in Jesus Christ, when you delight yourself in the Lord, what your heart has really been seeking for, it will find. That’s what that verse means. Delight yourself in the Lord, and you’ll have the desire of your heart. What your heart really yearns for is God. “Friends all around me are trying to find what the heart yearns for” (Harry Dixon Loes) — and only in Jesus can those things be found. The deepest need of your heart can be met.

Now he’s talking here about living a life without fear. Do you know why we have fear? We have fear, sometimes, because we think our needs are not going to be met; or, because we think that the things we think are meeting our needs are going to be taken away from us. Well, in this verse, he’s going to tell us that God will never leave us nor forsake us, and godliness with contentment is great gain; we have something that can’t be tampered with.

We’re hearing a lot of talk today about the *R* word—recession. Back in 1929 and ’30, when the stock market crashed, there were men who jumped out of skyscrapers—committed suicide. Why? Because the things they were trying to satisfy their heart with, they lost. That’s where their security was. Well, friend, you’d better have your security, and your sufficiency, and your satisfaction, in something that can’t be tampered with. In this Book of Hebrews, that we’re reading from—chapter 10, verse 34—talking to these people, he said, “Why, you took joyfully of the spoiling of your goods...” (Hebrews 10:34).

Suppose today soldiers were to come in, go into your house, and carry out all of your material possessions—could you still praise the Lord? If you’re delighted in the Lord, you could. “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He’ll give you the desire of your heart.” “Be content with such things as you have.” Do you know the word *content* literally means “self-contained.” It’s used in Philippians chapter 4, and Paul says, in verses 11, “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*” Now when Paul wrote this, he was in prison. But he said, “I’ve learned, in whatsoever state I’m in, therewith to be content.” “*I know...how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*” And then, he said, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Philippians 4:11–13). And that literally means, “I can do all things through Christ, who is pouring His life into me.”

You see, learn a life of contentment. Have the contentment, dear friend, of His provision—Christ Himself. The deepest need of your heart can be met in the Lord Jesus

Christ. You say, “Preacher, that’s just preacher talk.” Well, I’ll tell you this much: You’re looking at a rich man, because I would not sell the contentment that I have in Jesus Christ for any price that you can make—for anything. I am content in the Lord Jesus. That doesn’t mean I’m satisfied with myself. That doesn’t mean that I don’t have any ambition. I am trying to tell you, my dear friend, that I, along with the Apostle Paul, can say it, gladly and surely: “I can do all things through Christ, who is pouring His life into me”; and, “I have learned that whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content.”

Now if you would face a new year without fear, if you want the source of your satisfaction, and the source of your sufficiency, and the source of your security steadfast, find it in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, number one—number one—if you would face a new year without fear, know the contentment of His provision. Look at it again: *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.”*

II. The Companionship of His Presence

Second thing: Not only the contentment of His provision, but know the companionship of His presence—the companionship of His presence. Continue to read: *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5). I don’t know what I’m going to face next year. But there’s one thing I know: I know He will never leave me; I know He will not forsake me. Isn’t that wonderful? Isn’t that wonderful? In Him, I have all; and, He will never leave me nor forsake me. This may be the most encouraging verse in all of the Bible.

Now again, we fear because we’re afraid we’re going to have to face something we don’t understand, and we’re going to have to face it alone. I’ve talked to some people over this holiday season who felt so alone. I went out on Christmas Eve to talk to a person who was hurting so much. And I said to that person, “Why don’t you call a friend?” They said, “I don’t have a friend—I don’t have a friend.” Well, I said, “Oh yes, you do.” And I told her His name—and it is the One who said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

Dr. Abraham Maslow, famed research analyst said, “The truth is that the average American does not have a real friend in the world.” That’s what this psychiatrist said—analyst said. And psychiatrist Alfred Adler said, “All human failures spring from a lack of love”; and then, he named some of them: “alcoholism, workaholism, depression, suicide.” He said all of this springs from a lack of love. People need someone to love, and they need to be loved; and, without it, their lives are filled with fear and frustration. And so, our verse tells us that we can face a new year with the certainty of His provision, and with His companionship in our hearts and in our lives.

Now look at that verse—he says, *“I will never leave thee.”* Do you see it? *“Never.”* Now the Greek scholars tell us this sentence, *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,”* actually has five negatives in it. Now we say a double negative is bad English, but evidently it wasn’t bad Greek. And here’s what it literally says, “I will never, no, not ever, no, never leave nor forsake you.” Let me give that to you again: “I will never, no, not ever, no, never leave you nor forsake you.”

One preacher was visiting an old grandmother in his church, trying to give her comfort in her old age. I believe she knew the Lord better than he did, however. And he took out his Greek New Testament and was reading this to her, and explaining that there were five negatives there. The old grandma said, “Well, God may have to say it five times for you Greek boys, but once is enough for me.” *“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”*

Oh, my dear friend, there is the companionship of His presence. Look at the words *“leave...nor forsake.”* Do you see that—“I will never leave nor forsake you”? What it literally means is, “I will not abandon you.” It means, “I will not give up on you.” And it literally means, “I will not leave you a helpless orphan. I will not forsake you. You will not be forsaken.”

I’m speaking today to some women whose husbands have walked out on them. I’m speaking today to some children whose fathers have forsaken them. I am talking today to some men whose wives have left them; others who have felt abandoned and forsaken by whatever. But there is one, my dear friend, who will never leave you. And so, what does that mean to me, as I face a new year? When I’m discouraged, I know that He sees me through, because He’s there.

This Christmas season, I’ve been quite a bit in the hospital. I’ve been with those who are dying. I’ve been with those who are facing heartaches. Been to funerals, as you have, and I have watched those who know the Lord Jesus Christ, and I have seen a difference, my dear friend, in those who know Christ, and in those who do not know Christ. I spent some time in the hospital with a man who just in a few hours would step over on the other side. I held his hand. We prayed. I said, “Is everything right?” He said, “Pastor, everything is right.” He said, “I am ready. ‘For me to live is Christ, and for me to die is gain’ (Philippians 1:21).” How do you answer that? My dear friend, by the word of one who has said, *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”*

Psalm 116, verse 8: *“For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling”* (Psalm 116:8). When I am discouraged, His presence sees me through. When I am lonely, His presence cheers me up. Now you can be lonely; I believe that the holidays are the most lonely time of the year. People are told everywhere they’re supposed to be happy, and they realize they’re not. They see everybody else acting happy, and they feel so lonely. Death and divorce and

desertion—even travel makes you lonely. Success can make you lonely. You often hear it's lonely at the top. Old age makes you lonely. You can be lonely in a big crowd. You can be lonely in a mall. Loneliness, one of the chief maladies of our age—but, Jesus has said, *“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”*

What I am saying, my dear friend, is, when I am discouraged, His presence sees me through. When I am lonely, His presence cheers me up. And when, my dear friend, I am worried, His presence just calms me down. Do you know what worry is? Worry is a mild form of atheism. It's acting like God doesn't exist.

I was reading a report of David Livingstone, the great missionary of another century, who went to Africa and actually discovered and unlocked much of Africa—took the gospel to Africa. He lived a life of what some would call loneliness, and what others would call danger. And he was there. He wrote this in his journal, January the 14th, 1856. He was there surrounded by hostile people, in the very heart of darkest Africa. They were beating the war drums like they were going to attack the next morning. And this is what he wrote—and I quote: *“Felt much turmoil of spirit in prospect of having all of my plans for the welfare of this great region and this teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow.”*

Now he's sitting at his campfire, alone, in the heart of Africa. And he knows what's out there in the jungle beyond him. And then, he says this: *“But I read that Jesus said, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world’ (Matthew 28:18–20).”* And then, David Livingstone wrote in his journal this word: *“This is the word of a gentleman of the most strict and sacred honor. So that's the end to it.”* He just simply said, *“Jesus has said, ‘I'll never leave you.’”* And then, he wrote this—he said: *“I will not cross furtively as I had intended. Why should such a man as I flee? I shall take observations for latitude and longitude tonight, though it may be the last. I feel quite calm now. Thank God.”*

I'm so glad he wrote that in his journal. There's a man in the middle of the jungle, surrounded by wild animals and savage people, who has felt the presence of the Lord Jesus.

This is what he's saying—look at it: *“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”* When I'm discouraged, His presence sees me through. When I'm lonely, His presence cheers me up. When I'm worried, His presence calms me down. And when I am tempted—and oh, I'm going to be tempted this coming year, and so will you be—His presence will help me out.

You see, we need just to practice the presence of the Lord this coming year. You're going to be tempted, and, my dear friend, you cannot close doors. There are no locked doors with God. The thing that I think helps keep us all straight is to know that Jesus

Christ never leaves us, never forsakes us. And when the devil comes and knocks at our heart's door, we can just simply say, "Jesus, please go answer the door." The Lord is there with us to take care of us.

III. The Confidence of His Promise

Now here's a third thing. Watch it, dear friend; I want you to see it. His contentment—His contentment—I have the contentment of His provision. I have the companionship of His presence. And then, I have the confidence of His promise. I love this. Now watch it: *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*

Now we're going to zero in on that little phrase, *"He hath said."* Just underscore it: *"He hath said."* This, my dear friend, is the confidence of His promise. A promise is no better than the one who makes it. Again, in the Greek language, this is an intention. And what it literally says is, "He Himself hath said"—"He Himself hath said."

Now who is it that says, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"*? It is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God. This is the confidence of His promise. And so, His omnipotence answers to me. When I say, "God, I just don't have the strength for next year," the omnipotent God answers, and says, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* And when I say, "God, I'm afraid of what I have to go through the next year," the omnipresent God says, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* But when I say, "God, I won't know what to do," the omniscient God says, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"; I am with you.* And my dear friend, He Himself hath said it.

Years ago, when I graduated from seminary, and was called to the first church after seminary, the first church I pastored—little Parkview Baptist Church, in Fort Pierce, Florida—on Mother's Day, after I preached a message on the Christian home, our little baby boy Philip died. It was one of those sudden crib deaths—just an infant. And he died on Sunday afternoon of Mother's Day. Joyce and I had never faced death before. We never had a brother or sister to die, father or mother to die—certainly not a child to die. And our beautiful, beautiful baby—and what an incredibly beautiful baby he was—died suddenly.

Well, we did the only thing we knew to do: that was turn to the Lord. But as we left that church that Sunday afternoon to head to West Palm Beach where our parents live, our little church, which was absolutely right next door to the pastorium, decided they needed to meet and have a service, a prayer service. I can picture that in my mind's eye, as Joyce and I backed our car out and went past the little church that had already met to worship. They were singing a song. And I could see the light, the yellow light, as it came through the windows of that little white church. And I can hear, even now, my brothers and sisters in Christ inside, singing that song:

*I've seen the lightning flashing, I've heard the thunder roll.
I've felt sin's breakers dashing, [trying to] conquer my soul.
I've heard the voice of Jesus, [telling] me still to fight on.
He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!*

*No, never alone, no, never alone.
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone. (Ludie D. Pickett)*

He promised. He promised. And friend, He kept that promise to us. Joyce and I, all the way to West Palm Beach, were able to sing songs like “What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to Him in prayer!”

This is what he is saying—look: There’s the contentment—“*Be content with such things as ye have*”; there’s the companionship—“*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*”; and, there’s the confidence—“*For he hath said*”—He Himself hath said—“*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” Friend, this is not just advice from a Baptist preacher; this is a promise from the Word of God—the Word of God: “*He [himself] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*” Friend, put it down big, and put it down plain, and put it down straight: You can go into a new year with this kind of a promise.

IV. The Comfort of His Protection

And then, last of all, you’ll know the comfort of His protection. Because, my dear friend, when you have His contentment, and you have His companionship, and you have His confidence, then you must have His comfort and His courage. Look in verse 6: “*So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper.*” Now look at it, put it together. Verse 5: “*He hath said*”; verse 6: “*that we may boldly say.*” “*He hath said*”—“*He hath said...that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Hebrews 13:5–6).

So how do you face a new year without fear? Well, you find your contentment in Christ. You find your companionship in Christ. You find your confidence in Christ. And then, you’ll find your comfort in Christ: “*So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.*”

Now you’re going face some things. These Hebrew Christians—these in the Book of Hebrews, to whom this book was addressed—they faced some heartaches, some trials. I’m not trying to tell you that it’s going to be all honey and no bees. Oh, no. My dear

friend, this coming year may be a very horrendous year for you. But I am telling you that you can stand upon the promises of the Word of God, and say boldly, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do to me.”

Those to whom this was written were facing opposition from family, from friends, and from foes, alike. They were facing mockery and brutality and robbery. And yet, they could say, “I will boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.’” I hope you’ll say that—I hope you’ll say that: “The Lord is my helper; I will not—I will not—by the grace of God, I will not fear.” We don’t know what’s going to happen. We don’t know what this coming year is going to be. I just don’t know. But I do know that I can boldly say, “The Lord will be my helper.”

Conclusion

Alexander Maclaren was a great Scottish preacher, and in one of his sermons, he told about something that happened to him. He lived in Glasgow. He told about what happened to him when he was a boy about 16 years of age. He had a job, away from home—the first time he had ever gotten a job, away from home. Actually, they lived on a farm outside of Glasgow, really. And he went to Glasgow to work. And he didn’t have a horse to ride to work, and he couldn’t go back and forth. It was about six or eight miles from the farm, so he walked to his job.

First week away from home, and his dad said to him, “Alex, now, when Friday comes, I want you to walk home, because your mother and I will have missed you. This is the first time you’ve been away from home, and so, on Friday night, when you get off work, we want you to come home.” Between the city and the farm where they lived, there was a deep ravine, a chasm. And it was a bad place; it was dark and foreboding looking. And in there, robbers and muggers were known to exist. And some people had actually been murdered down in that deep ravine. And as a 16-year-old boy, he could imagine other things that had never happened. And he knew that, coming from the city of Glasgow to his home, he would have to go through that ravine, Friday night, and he didn’t want to walk through it at nighttime. So he said to his dad, “Dad, I’ll tell you what: I’ll be tired Friday night; so, I’ll just spend Friday night, and then, I’ll come Saturday morning.” And his dad said, “No, Alex, your mother and I want you to come home Friday night.” He said, “Yes sir.”

So Friday night when he got off work, he began to walk toward his farmhouse. His heart was just beating, thumping within his bosom, because he knew he was going to have to go through that dark ravine, through that valley, and he said that he began to whistle to make himself feel better; and, that didn’t seem to help very much. And then, he said, he started talking to an imaginary companion, just, you know, trying to make out like someone was there with him.

But when he got to that ravine, and he looked down into that dark valley, he just paused there, and did not want to go down into that deep dark valley alone. And then, he said, he heard someone, something down there, stirring. And he said he was so frozen with fear that he could not move. And he said, out of that darkness, a form began to come toward him. And he looked, and it was his own daddy, coming up out of that ravine. And he said, “Alex, I came to meet you. I was so lonely for you. I came to meet you; and, I just thought we’d walk home together.” And Alexander Maclaren said, “You’ll never know the difference that made.” He said, “With my dad there by my side, we walked through that valley, and I had not a fear in this world, because my own dear father was there by my side.”

Now friend, I don’t know what you’re going to have to go through this coming year. I don’t know. I don’t know what sickness, I don’t know what heartache, I don’t know what trouble; but, I know that I know that I know that I know that you can say, “I can boldly say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do to me.’”

When you face this new year, I want you to find your contentment in Jesus. I want you to find your companionship in Jesus. I want you to find confidence in Jesus. Then, you’ll find your comfort and your courage in Jesus. With all of that in mind, listen to it just one more time: *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear.”* †

The Power of His Presence

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 27, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Hebrews 13:5–6

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

HEBREWS 13:5

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Contentment of His Presence
- II. The Companionship of His Presence
- III. The Comfort of His Presence
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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s holy Word and turn to Hebrews chapter 13. I wrote a book one time called, “The Power of His Presence,” speaking of God. And what I have to say tonight was, is not in that book, but I couldn’t think of a better title for our study than, “The Power of His Presence.” And I want to talk to you about, what it means to know that every day in every place, awake or asleep, in trouble or in joy, here or there, that God is with us, and what is the power of His presence.

Well, let’s begin reading in Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 5. And I believe this will be a great blessing to you tonight if God will take what I have to say audibly and write it upon your heart indelibly, and that you will hear it and understand it, believe it and rejoice in it.

Now here’s what our Lord is saying not only to those to whom the book of Hebrews is written, but to those of us for whom the book of Hebrews was written. Hebrews chapter 13, beginning in verse 5: “Let your conversation...” And let me just pause right there and say He’s not talking about the way we talk with one another. That’s an old King James or an old English expression, which literally means let your behavior. “Let your behavior be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

I. The Contentment of His Presence

Now there are four things tonight in this passage of Scripture that I want to lay upon your heart. And, first of all, the contentment of His presence, the contentment of His presence. Now He's saying here the Lord says, I will never leave you (in verse 5). And as a result of that, we're to be content with such things as we have.

Now all of us, all of us have three basic needs. We want to be satisfied, and, we want to be secure, and, we want to be significant. Now let's talk about this thing of satisfaction here and see the contentment that we have when we know that the Lord will always be with us. Discontent is a terrible disease. Discontent will steal away your joy. It'll take away your praise. Contentment, the secret of contentment is not having what you want. The secret of contentment is wanting what you have. A great philosopher said, "To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough." So contentment will make a poor man rich, and discontentment will make a rich man poor.

Now Paul is talking to some people, as we're going to see, who really did not have much. But he said, "Be content with what you have."

Two tears met each other along the river of life. And one tear said to the other tear, "I am the tear from a girl who loved a man and lost him." The other tear said, "I am the tear of the girl who married him."

Now, folks, it doesn't matter what you have or what you don't have. Contentment is not found in luxuries, and, it's found, really, in having our necessities met. Put this Scripture down, and I've been blessed by it many times – 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 6 through 8. Oh God, help us to learn this: "But godliness with contentment is great gain." Listen. If you know Jesus, if you're godly and you're satisfied, you are so wealthy.

Paul goes on to explain this, and he says, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Now listen to this: "And having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." Friend, if you have food in your stomach and clothes on your back, you have no right to be discontent. No right. If you've just got food in your stomach and clothes on your back. Now Adrian didn't say that. God said it. The material things of this world can never bring contentment.

Bill Gates, he's got so much money. He's making more money than you can think of in fifteen minutes, but he's not satisfied. He's at war right now with the United States government saying, "I want more. I want a bigger share." He is not content.

You know, you have to understand that the things of this world can never ever satisfy the desire of your heart. I've got Scripture that proves that. Ecclesiastes 5, verse 10 says this: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver. He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, for he that loveth abundance with increase, for he that loveth abundance with increase, no he, rather that loveth abundance with increase. This also is vanity."

If you try to be satisfied with material things, that would be like trying to satisfy your thirst by drinking salt water. The more you get, the more you want. And that's the reason the Lord Jesus said in Luke chapter 12 and verse 15: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Now we all know that intellectually, but we, we have to, we have to get it down in our heart. Look at our text again. Ah, Hebrews 13, verse 5: "Let your conversation (your behavior) be without covetousness and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said (God hath said), I will never leave you nor forsake you." You see, God Himself, listen. God Himself is the secret, and God Himself is the source of contentment.

Have you ever wondered about that verse over in Psalm 37, I think about verse 4, where the Bible says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart?" You know, so many people get that so far out of whack. They think, *You know, if I just love God, I can have whatever you want, I want. If I love God, He'll give me a bigger house. If I live, love God, He'll give me a better job. If I love God, He'll give me good health. If I love God, He'll give me a pink Cadillac. If I love God, I can have the desire of my heart.* No, you miss it, folks. Listen. What He says is this: "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desire of your heart." What would be the desire of your heart if you delighted in the Lord? The Lord! The Lord! Delight yourself in the Lord and you can have the desire of your heart, which is the Lord Himself. It doesn't mean that you're going to have your, carnal wishes fulfilled or your surface wants. Ah, these things, cannot be contentment. They can't bring satisfaction, even the fine things: children, our home, our job, our life. You might as well face it. All of these things, they can pass away. They did from Job. Our economy is on a roll now.

I was born in the midst of the Depression. And there's nothing to say we cannot have another one. There were people who were multi-millionaires one day and paupers the next day. And, you know what they were doing? They were jumping out of windows. They were jumping out of windows, committing suicide. Do you know why? Because their contentment, they're trying to find contentment in things.

But if you delight yourself in the Lord, the source of your delight can never be taken away from you. This is what he says: "Be content with such things as you have, for He hath said, I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Now go back to Hebrews chapter 10 for just a moment and look, if you will, in verse 34. Look at it. He says, "For ye had compassion of me in your bonds..." That is, when, you had compassion of me in my bonds, rather. Paul said, and I believe Paul wrote Hebrews, he said, "When I was in prison, you, you took care of me and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance."

If, tonight, the Gestapo, the KGB or the military of the United States of America, whatever force it may be, were to come into your house and carry away all of your furniture, go to the bank, take everything that you have in the bank, take all of your security away from you, so-called security, could you take it joyfully? I mean, I have to ask myself that question. Well, I tell you, the only way I could take it joyfully is if I knew that there was something that they could not take away, and that would be the Lord. You see, what he says, he says, "Be content with what you have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

You know, you can tell a whole lot about a person by what makes him mad or what makes him sad. You can tell a lot about a person's character. You see, Satan cannot take away the joy of a man who is delighting in the Lord, who knows the contentment of God's presence. Now Satan loves to threaten you. And Satan will say to you, "You know, if, if you don't serve me, I'll take away everything you have." You can say to Satan, "Well, you know, I don't have anything. It all belongs to God." Well, he says, "If you'll serve me, I'll make you rich." And you say to Satan, "I'm already rich." What's he going to do with a man like that? Let me give you a verse that matches what I just said. Second Corinthians chapter 6, verse 10. He says, "As poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things." Isn't that great? A poor man can make other people rich. He can have nothing and possess all things. So Satan says, "I'll take it away." You say, "I don't have anything." "I'll make you rich." You say, "I'm already rich. I possess all things." What's the devil going to do with a man like that? You see, the word contentment, do you know what it literally means? It literally means self-contained. You remember over there when the apostle Paul was in the prison in Philippi? He's been put in prison, for preaching the gospel of our Lord. At least, he's written to the Philippians in, in Philippians chapter 4, verse 11. Now he's walk, he's, he's writing from a dark, dank, damp, dismal, dirty prison, and you would think, well, he would, he'd not be content. But listen to what he says. Philippians 4, verse 11: "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and how to abound." Paul wasn't afraid to have a good time, but he couldn't let sorry take the joy of the Lord out of his heart. "I know how to be abased and how, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." And here's the secret: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." You see, whether he's abounding or whether he's abased, he says, "Jesus is always there and so I'm self-contained."

When I was at Cape Kennedy, and I have some friends there that used to be members of my church when I was at First Baptist Church of Merritt Island. Many of those people were space technicians. And they took me out and let me get up there with the shuttle is and, and, lay hands on that thing and look at it. And the thing about

the space shuttle is this: That it's, it's self-contained. I mean, there are no 7/11's up there. And so they put everything on board that they think that a person is going to need till they get back to earth. And so they call it self-contained. That's exactly what the word contentment implies, that is, in Jesus you're self-contained. You don't need to go anywhere else for anything else. "He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And that's the only reason you can be content with such things as you have, because no matter what you have, if you have Jesus, you have enough. Now that's easy saying it into, ha, ha, ha. God may put me, God may put you there where we see it from a, a different way.

You see, when Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," it literally means I can do all things through Christ who is pouring His life into me. And I thought about it when I prepared this message. And I want to tell you something, and God knows I mean it. I would not trade the contentment I have in Jesus Christ for everything Bill Gates owns. I mean that with all of my heart. I would not. If you have contentment, you're rich. The Bible says, "Be content with such things as you have." And the Bible says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." So I don't know how much you've got in the bank, but if you're got Jesus, you're a plutocrat. You are. And, what is this? See, it is the contentment of His presence. That's the first thing that I want to write upon your heart.

II. The Companionship of His Presence

Number two: The contentment of His presence is linked to the companionship of His presence. Look again at, at this verse. "Let your behavior be without covetousness and be content with such things as, as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." This might be the most encouraging verse in all of the Bible. You see, He says, "I will never leave you."

Now never is, they tell us in Greek, and I was never very good at Greek, but it's the compounding this word of five negatives. And, and what, what it says in the expanded translation – listen to it. "I will never, no, not ever, no, never leave you nor forsake you." You like that? Let me read it to you again. "I will never, no, not ever, no, never leave you nor forsake you." What he's giving is a forever and ever. "I will never, never, never, never, never leave you."

I heard of a young.....Dr. Allison's here, our seminary president emeritus. And, you know, he's been teaching embryonic theologs for a long time. And I heard of a young preacher boy who went out to visit one of the old ladies in the church who knew the Bible far better than he ever thought about knowing it. But this young boy was trying to impress her a little bit. And he pulled this Greek out on her and, and tried to read that to her in the Greek and tell her all the nuances of the Greek. And she just smiled and said,

“Well, and God may have to say it five times for you Greek boys, but once is enough for me.” Ha, ha, ha, ha. “I will never leave you.” I say that may be the most comforting promise in all of the Bible. God will never abandon. I read it in, the Amplified. If you want a blessing. If you have an Amplified Bible, get this passage and read it in the Amplified. And it says something like this: “He will not abandon, give up on you, or leave you helpless, no, assuredly not.” Ha, ha.

Now maybe you’ve been forsaken by people. Maybe somebody’s done you dirty. Maybe somebody’s walked out on you. I’m meeting more and more women whose husbands are just walking out on them. I’ll tell you there’s somebody who’ll never walk out on you. His name is Jesus. He’ll never walk out on you.

Now what does this presence mean? Well, when I’m discouraged, His companionship sees me through. You’re not alone. In a funeral, a heartache, a hospital, He’s there. And He’s not just some impersonal force. Jesus is so real when we’re discouraged. So, when I’m discouraged, His presence sees me through.

When I’m lonely, His presence cheers me up. As a matter of fact, I look forward sometimes to being lonely. What I mean, not lonely, but alone so I can just be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We were just talking today with, one of our lovely ladies in our church whose going to be taking a trip. And she said, “Pastor, do you ever get together in an automobile and just drive.” I said, “Not often, but when I do, it’s such a treat just by myself,” because I’m not by myself when I do that. I enjoy being alone with the Lord. And, I like to take, sometimes get out by myself and take a walk with Jesus. Don’t you like to do that? Or just take a drive with Jesus. You know, you’d be surprised. When I get alone, Brother Jim, I even sing to Him. And, it’s just wonderful. And He walks with me and talks with me and tells me I am His own. You see, this is what the psalmist meant in Psalm 16, verse 11: “Thou will show me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy.”

When I’m discouraged, His presence sees me through. When I am, lonely, His presence cheers me up. And when I am worried, His presence calms me down. You know, do you know what worry is? Worry is just a mild form of atheism. It’s like saying, “God, You have forsaken me. God, You’re not able to see me through this thing.”

I was reading of David Livingstone, you know, the great missionary who went to Africa, spent sixteen in Africa. And one time in Africa, he was in the heart of the jungle. I mean, just this man in the deep jungle in his tent. And he was surrounded by hostile natives. He could hear them outside the camp and could tell that they were violent and wicked men. And his human instincts told him that he ought to get up and get out of there, slip away if he could, should he flee at night. But here’s what David Livingstone wrote in his diary: January the 14th, 1856. And I’m quoting now. Here it is: “Felt much turmoil of spirit in prospect of having all my plans for the welfare of this great region and

this teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow.” Now he’s still not even thinking about himself. He’s just thinking about his, you know, reaching that region for Jesus. And then he goes on to write in his diary: “But I read that Jesus said, ‘All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, (now watch this), and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.’” And then David Livingstone wrote this in his journal: “This is the word of a gentleman of the most strict and sacred honor, so.....that’s the end of it.” He said, “Lord, You said You would not leave me.” And then he wrote his conclusion in his diary: “I will not cross furtively tonight, as I intended. Should such a man as I flee? I shall take observations for latitude and longitude tonight, though they may be the last. I feel quite calm now. Thank God.” Now I don’t think he ever thought this would read in Memphis, Tennessee from a pulpit. This is a man alone in the jungle surrounded by wicked and vile people. But he refused to worry. “Quite calm now. Good night, Lord.”

You see, Psalm 16, verse 8: “I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right, I shall not be moved.”

So, friend, when I’m discouraged, His presence sees me through it. Friend, when I am lonely, His presence cheers me up. When I am worried, His presence calms me down. And when I am tempted, His presence helps me up or, or helps me out.

You know, people think it would be wonderful to be a preacher. You’ll never be tempted. No, I think that the devil aims his biggest guns at those in the ministry. And the ministry is not immunity. But I can give you this testimony: I’ve served the Lord now for more than a half of century. I have never called on Him for help in a time of temptation that He did not come instantly to my side, instantly! He has never failed. Now, I may not have called when I should have called, but I have never called upon my Lord in a time of temptation, and I bless His name for that, that He was not there.

III. The Comfort of His Presence

You see, He has promised, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” So, listen. There’s the contentment of His presence. There’s the companionship of His presence. And so it follows, as night follows day, there is the comfort of His presence.

Look again in this verse. “Let your behavior be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” That’s the confidence of His presence. And, again, and I don’t want to get too technical, but this is, is emphatic. It literally says, “He Himself hath said...” He hath said. But it literally, “He Himself has said...” That is, He is the presence behind the promise. And, His omnipotence is there to give me confidence. When I don’t have the strength, His om, omnipresence is there. His omniscience is there.

It's just wonderful to thank God for the comfort, the comfort of His presence. I've often told you about the time that Joyce and I had a little baby boy that died, one of those crib deaths, our son named Philip. And, he died on Mother's Day just after I'd preached on the Christian home. And, Joyce and I never had a family member to die, much less one of our children. We turned to the Lord. And God gave us His comfort, because God was so real, so real through all of that. But as Joyce and I were backing out of the driveway, our little church, I mean, our little house that we lived in was about as far from the church building as I am from those banners right now, just about that distance.

And, as we were backing out of the driveway.....it was Sunday night about 6:30 or 7. We were getting ready to go to West Palm Beach, which is about 65 miles from Port Pierce, Florida, to be with our parents, have the funeral for our baby. And he had only been dead for two or three hours. The little church, most of the church members had not even known what had happened, so they came for the evening service. And they got an educational director from the First Baptist Church of Fort Pierce to come over and hold the services. They didn't know what to do.

And as Joyce and I were backing out of the driveway....they had no air conditioning in that church. The windows were up. And this is the song that they were singing: *"I've seen the lighting flashing, I've heard the thunder roll. I felt sin's breakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul. I've heard the voice of Jesus telling me still to fight on. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone."* And then the chorus of that song that we've sung so many times. *"No, never alone. No, never alone. He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone."* Joyce and I felt the presence of Jesus in such a great way. That's exactly what this verse is saying, and that song was written on this verse. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

IV. The Confidence of His Presence

So there's the contentment of His presence. There's the companionship of His presence. There is the comfort of His presence. Now, I want you to know, folks, that we don't have to be afraid, whatever may happen. Look down again at verse 6. God does this so that, "We may boldly say, The Lord is my helper." We don't have to, we don't have to be afraid. We don't have to fear. Why? "He hath said, that we may boldly say...." He hath said, that we may boldly say...."

I went to the hospital today to visit a boy who may be dying of leukemia. By the way, I'd like for you to pray for him. You know what his name is? Adrian Rogers Skaggs. That's his name. Adrian Rogers Skaggs. He's named after me. His daddy is a country preacher. And pray for Adrian Rogers Skaggs. But I stood by that boy's bed and I quoted Isaiah 41:10: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee. Be not dismayed, for I am thy

God. I will strengthen ye; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness. Don't be afraid, for I am with you."

You can't be afraid if you know that the Lord is, is with you. *The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose, He will not, He will not desert to its foes. That soul, though all hall should endeavor to shake, He'll never, no, never, no, never forsake.*

Now all of us have storms and all of us have difficulties. I was born and raised in, West Palm Beach, Florida. And, every so often a hurricane will blow through Florida. And it seemed like we had more than our share when I was a youngster. Of course, my brother and I always loved them. A hurricane put a lot of excitement in town. And, we always loved to go out and salvage things on the beach after a hurricane. All manner of evil would blow up on the beach. And we used to go, love to go and watch the waves when the storm was coming in, mountainous waves sometimes, looked as high as that balcony back there. And we just loved to go and lean in the wind. And, you know, a hurricane is a whole lot nicer than a tornado. A big, old hurricane, you can kind of watch it come and watch it go. Tornado gets here in the middle of the night and you don't get a chance to look at it. And I'm not really being too kind on a hurricane, but there was an excitement to boys.

And we would, you could get ready for hurricane. And, they'd tell us when it's coming. And so we'd board up the windows. And we get some rope, go out in the yard and tie things down, things..... You couldn't bring the lawn furniture in the house, so you just tie it down. And you get some rope and tie things down.

I can remember some storms that were strong enough, when you would, come out, the thing that you tied down would be gone and the thing you tied it to would be gone. You see, what kept it safe was not the rope, but the mooring. And if the mooring doesn't hold, it doesn't matter what the rope is like.

Now, friend, it's Jesus who will never move. It's Jesus who will never move. Listen to this verse again. "Let your behavior be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Conclusion

So you have the contentment of His presence. You have the companionship of His presence. You have the confidence of His presence. You have the comfort of His presence all in this verse.

Let's just bow our heads together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Why don't you right now just ask yourself this question: Is Jesus Christ real to me? Is Jesus Christ real to me? You see, the companionship of a sermon is not going to help you. The comfort of a sermon's not going to help you. The contentment of a sermon's not going to help you. It's Jesus. Is Jesus Christ a bright reality to you?

I want to give you this testimony: And I say it not braggingly, but I say it thankfully. Jesus Christ is real to me tonight. I don't know Him as well as I ought, and I don't believe I know Him as well as I'm going to, but Jesus Christ is as real to me as, as the, the men on this platform and, in many ways, more real.

Now is Jesus Christ real to you? I'm not talking about some sort of an emotional ecstasy. I'm talking about the reality of His presence in your life. Through Him do you know that contentment? Through Him do you know that companionship? Through Him do you know that comfort? Through Him do you have that confidence where you can say, "I will not fear what man shall do to me. He will never leave me, never forsake me."

Now, if you don't have that confidence, I want you to do what a man did in my office this afternoon. I want you just to pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart. And I want to help you to, to pray that prayer right now.

Pray like this: This is the way he prayed. "Dear God. I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. God, I am a sinner, and my sin deserves judgment. But I need mercy. Jesus, I believe You've the Son of God. I believe that You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe it. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now by faith I receive You into my life as my Lord and my Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me. I don't ask for a feeling. I don't look for a sign. I stand on Your Word. Thank You for saving me. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And, Lord Jesus, I will live for You all the days of my life, and I will never be ashamed of You if You will only help me. In Your name I pray."

Now pray that prayer in your heart. You don't have to use all those words. If that represents the desire of your heart, you can just put it in one sentence – "Lord, save me! Save me, Lord Jesus!" Why don't you do it right now? Friend, this may be the last church service you'll ever be in. This may be God's final public invitation to somebody here tonight. And I beg you don't go away without Jesus. Don't go away without His presence in your life. You give your heart to Him, and I promise you He will never leave you. He will never forsake you.

Father, I just pray that there'll be those tonight who will say yes to Jesus. In His holy name, amen.