

Taking Risks With God

by Albu van Eeden

The sermon encourages Christians to embrace change and take risks in their faith journey to experience spiritual growth and transformation.

Duration: 1:17:35

Scripture: Exodus 16:15-23

Topics: "Venture Of Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of change and the challenges that come with it. He uses the example of Israel in the desert after being freed from slavery in Egypt. The preacher emphasizes the importance of obedience and not holding onto the gifts that God gives. He also highlights the dangers of change and the tests that Israel faced during their journey. The sermon encourages listeners to trust in God and be prepared for the challenges that may arise in their spiritual lives.

Transcript

But I wanted to speak about change, changes in the Christian life. Looking at it from a specific angle, the Christian life is a life of changing. And the Christian life should be changing.

We should never stop changing in our Christian life. Up till the day we die, up till the day when we breathe our last breath, we must be changed and formed more and more into the likeness of Christ. And friends, change means risks.

And human nature does not lay like risks. We don't like to be changing and we don't like taking risks. And it can happen so easily in your Christian life that you start shying away from changes and risks.

And then to that we start stagnating. The other day I read about the disease called Alzheimer's. We know it's a physical disease that affects the brain in old people and makes them confused.

And you find that people with Alzheimer's, when they get it, they want to do the same thing every day. They want to sit in the same chair every day. They want to have the same food at the same time every day.

They don't want to go to unfamiliar areas. They want to live in the same room, with the same settings, everything stays the same. They don't want to go to unfamiliar areas.

But you know, I read something and it was so interesting to me. They say if you stimulate a person with Alzheimer's to think in a new way, the disease, the progress of the disease actually slows down. Of course you must do it in a gentle way.

But if you can stimulate that person, confront him with new surroundings and new things, you stimulate the person to think new again. This changes the outcome of the disease and makes the disease less serious. You know, you get people suffering from spiritual Alzheimer's.

They want to settle down in life. They don't want to stop the trials and temptations of life. Trials that confront you with something new and you've got to look for a new way out of this and you've got to see God's face and plead with God to save you out of this situation.

Blessed is the person that allows God to save him from spiritual Alzheimer's. So at the beginning of this year, a new year is a time of change. I want to look at Israel during a time of change.

And just get some lessons out of Israel. And this big time of change was the change when God, after 400 years in slavery in Egypt, the change came and God took them out of Egypt on the way to the Promised Land. And let us just look at the dangers of change.

The positive side of changes and the dangers of change. Because brothers and sisters, there's a very good chance that this year you and me are going to be confronted with challenges with which we've never been challenged before ever in our spiritual lives. You just reach the point in life where you think, well, now I've got things sorted out.

Now I've got my life arranged. Now I'm ready for everything. I've experienced, I've learned how to deal with everything.

And God lifts his little finger and he makes something happen that throws you totally off your feet. God's got to teach us. He's got to teach us how to live our lives, how to live our world.

God's got to lift his little finger and he makes something happen that throws you totally off your feet. And God lifts his little finger and he makes something happen that throws you totally off your feet. Israel thought, now that they're out of Egypt, they're on their way to Canaan, now things will get along.

Things will settle down and they'll just travel on to Canaan now. But friends, on the way to Egypt, they met up with challenges which they had never met before. Some of these challenges hurt them.

Some of the tests they failed. So let's just look at a small portion of this time and just look at the tests and the changes and how they dealt with it. We will be reading from Exodus chapter 16.

The 16th chapter of Exodus. And we will be starting to read from verse 15. But before we read, let us just pray together again.

Lord Jesus, thank you that we have you. In a life where nothing is certain, there is virtually nothing we can be sure of. Even our very existence, we know that tomorrow some of us might have passed away and we've got nothing to know it.

Our possessions, our dear ones, our jobs, nothing is certain. But Lord, we thank you that there is one factor that is certain and that is you. You are our anchor in life.

And Lord, at the beginning of this year, we want you to be our anchor for the rest of this year. We don't know the storms that lies ahead with us this year, Lord. We don't know the size of the waves that are going to wash over us.

But Lord, as long as we hold on to this anchor, we do not fear. Thank you for that. And Lord, use this morning to increase our grip on this anchor which is you.

To train us and to instruct us how to hold on to this anchor. Open the eyes of our minds. Speak to us through your Spirit.

Amen. So we will be reading from Exodus chapter 16 from verse 15. So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, What is it? For they did not know what it was.

And Moses said to them, This is the bread which the Lord has given to you to eat. This is the bread which the Lord has given to you to eat. This is the thing which the Lord has commanded.

Let every man gather it according to each one's need. One omer for each person according to the number of persons. Let every man take for those who are in his tent.

Then the children of Israel did so and gathered some more, some less. So when they measured it by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.

And Moses said, Let no one leave any of it till morning. Verse 19, Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses, but some of them left part of it until morning. And it bred worms and stank, and Moses was angry with them.

Verse 20, So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need, and when the sun became hot, it melted. Verse 21, Then he said to them, This is what the Lord has said, Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath for the Lord. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil, and lay up for yourselves all that remains to be kept until morning.

So they laid it up till morning as Moses commanded, and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord. Today you will not find in the field.

Then Moses said to them, This is what the Lord has said, Tomorrow is a Sabbath to the Lord. Today you will not find in the field. Verse 27, Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day together, but they found none.

Verse 33, And Moses said to Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the Lord to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony to be kept. And then just listen to these amazing words, And the children of Israel ate the manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land.

And they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. Verse 35, We'll just read thus far, Friends, I said that life is a changing life, and things in the world are changing all the time. And in this changing life, there's only one stable factor, and that's God.

And there's only one thing to go that's going to make you and me stable, and that would be to hold on to this God and to be obedient to him. We hold on to God in faith, by faith, but we also do it by obedience.

Now, I said to you that life is a life of changes, and it has risks.

If you look at Israel, you see the whole time from when they started leaving Egypt was one test with challenges and risks from the beginning right to the end. The first risk was the risk of leaving Egypt. Because there was the risk of Pharaoh coming after them, and killing them, and punishing them, and taking them back to captivity.

And so friend, if you want to live the life in sin, the life in slavery of the devil, and you want to break away from Satan's control, you are taking a risk, we can't get away from it, it's a fact. Let me guarantee you, Satan is going to be furious for every soul that he loses, and that slips out under his control. There was this time of change when they left Egypt with many risks involved, but they reached the point where they were so sick and tired of the slavery, they just want to get out.

But they were actually coming out of one world of slavery, and God was taking them into a new world. A new life spiritually, it symbolizes a new life of being born again. You know when I thought of this, I thought of the normal birth of a child.

When a child is close to being born, this child is quite comfortable and has been growing quite well there where he is. If you might ask that child whether he wants to be born, most probably, or maybe the child would say, no, I'm quite happy, it's nice and warm, I'm happy here. For that child to be born is in a sense a process of death before it gets born into this world.

And so when a person has not been born again spiritually, you might be quite happy in the life you're living. You've grown accustomed to the way things go in your home. The way you fight and you bicker with each other.

If your parents don't treat you the way you expect them to treat you, they don't give you the freedom that you think you deserve. Or if your children don't treat you the way you want them to treat you, or your husband the way you want him to treat you, or your wife doesn't treat you the way you expect her to treat you, it's amazing how a person can get used to life in captivity. And you think that's how it's supposed to be in a home.

We must just fight with each other every now and then. We must just slam the doors every now and then. Or maybe you're just used to the life of drinking, of smoking.

And so you're not interested in being born again. And you know, you could ask this child and this child could say, Well, I don't know how I'm going to breathe out there. I've never breathed in my life.

So the devil can come and make you afraid of the change that you are about to go through spiritually. And he'll tell you you're never going to make it. Without your drugs, without having something to drink maybe once or twice a week, especially over the weekends, I cannot handle life.

I cannot breathe out there. I'm going to die if I do that. But friends, unless we are willing to die, we will never, never be born again.

You will remain in the womb spiritually for the rest of your life. And you know, in medical terms they speak about a mummified fetus. You get something like a mummified fetus.

A child that dies in the womb. And it turns into a very hard tissue like a mummy. He doesn't decay, he just stays stiff in the same position.

I tell you, in the church of Christ there are many mummified fetuses. They were in the process of being born anew. But they didn't have the courage to go right through and they stopped halfway with the growth.

Maybe you say, well you know, I can't go and confess this mistake of mine. I can't go and apologize. Because they will never again trust me.

They are going to tell me, you see we always thought you were not reliable. And now that you've confessed that you've done it, that's exactly what we knew. We knew you were not reliable.

It's the most difficult to do that to your family members who live close to you. Because once you've acknowledged your mistake and apologized to them, the devil sees that you are going to get free now. And he'll tell you, don't go and do it, just keep quiet.

Because they are going to tag you. They are going to see what's your weak spot. You won't be able to do it again.

They'll pick it up quickly because they will know now what's your weak spot. Just try and deal with it yourself. You don't have to go outside and apologize and confess.

You know what you like? You like that little boy who came running into the house. He'd been playing outside in the mud. It was time for supper.

And his dad called him for supper. And so as he ran into the house, his dad said, no, your hands are dirty. And he did this.

This is what some people do when they realize that they are spiritually dirty. They do this, and what they do is they rub the dirt all over them or even against the people around them. You go and speak to your friend.

Because you think it's easier to speak to my friend. My friend will understand it better, you know, rather to go and speak to a child of God. Actually, when you do it, you rub some of the dirt onto your friend and you defile your friend as well.

Some people just decide to keep quiet with the filth in their lives. But you know sin is like nuclear waste. When they use nuclear uranium to produce electricity, radioactive uranium.

After they've used it for some years, it's not strong enough to use anymore. But it's still active and it can still cause cancer if people are exposed to it. So they load it in trains, and the Europeans cart it somewhere off the coast of Germany.

And of course the Greens are all very unhappy about it. And they dump it in the sea, deep in the sea, and there it lies with its radioactivity there down in the sea. But it doesn't matter how deep you throw it, it remains radioactive there at the bottom of the sea.

It lies there radiating this dangerous extra rays out. Friends, it doesn't matter how deep you try to hide the sin, how deep in your heart you put it. You don't talk about it, you don't even try not to think about it anymore.

But there at the bottom of your heart where it's lying, I tell you it is radioactive. It's affecting your soul, it's harming your soul, it's radiating your soul. There's only one way.

You must get to Christ, the Son of God with His filth in your heart and in your soul. Don't worry how you're going to breathe once you've done it. You can't imagine how you're going to live once you've been born again.

Yes, once you've been born again, you will live a totally different life. You can't imagine what it's going to be like. And don't want to understand it first, how am I going to still live if I'm going through this? If I obey God, don't worry, it will be a new life.

God will sustain you. And friends, once this child is born, he finds himself in the arms of his mother. He looks up at her warm, smiling face.

He's the hero of the house. Everybody comes and they want to see him. The devil don't want you to experience that.

That's why he's making you afraid to be born again and to leave the world of sin. There's another change going to come, another birth. As this child grows up, he learns to love his family.

Maybe he gets a wife and children. Yes, life is difficult at times, but he goes through with it. It makes him strong.

And slowly but surely, he becomes comfortable in this life. And just when we think we're comfortable in this life, if we've met with God, the time comes for us to be born again. And again, it looks like death to us.

I don't want to leave my loved ones. I don't want to leave. I'm living comfortably now.

And yet, if we go through this with Christ, when death comes, we will open our eyes on the other side in heaven. We look at the smiling face of our heavenly host. Our Lord and Master, that's just the first change.

I'll have to go quickly through the rest. There was another risk for Israel. Where were they going to get food? There was another risk for Israel.

What about the enemies out there, the Moabites and the Ammonites? They were going to be hunger and drought. Friends, it was a life of continuous risks that they were exposed for. And yet, it was all, if they stayed close to God, it was going to be better than the life in Egypt.

And when I thought of these risks in the spiritual life, I thought of a portion that somebody had given me. Let me warn you that it's written by a worldly person. And because of time, I'm just going to scan through them.

Because it is written by a worldly person, not everything applies to Christians. The title of the piece is called Risks. He says, to laugh is to risk appearing a fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental. They listen to this. He says, to reach out for another is to risk getting involved.

Tell me, brother and sister, are you still involved? Or have you stopped being involved? Being involved in the Lord's work. Being involved in saving the souls of others. He says, to expose feelings is to risk

exposing your true self.

Listen to this one. He says, to love is to risk not being loved in return. Tell me, are you still loving? Or maybe somebody hurt you in the process of loving.

And now you walk around with a grudge in your heart. You go around and tell people once bitten, twice shy. Once bitten, twice shy.

If you've once been hurt, you're very afraid to go close to the person again. Then he says, to live is to risk dying. Yes, friends, if you start living for God, there is the danger, the risk of you dying spiritually, that you can fall away spiritually, that you can fall from grace spiritually.

To live spiritually. Some people are so afraid that they will die, that they don't want to come to the Lord, to be born again and to start living. He says, to hope is to risk despair.

That's what Israel did. As they moved into the desert, they had to hope on God. They had to trust God that God would keep them alive.

They had to trust God to daily give them their manna. Friends, the Christian life is a life of risks. Every day you're exposed to risks.

When Israel moved out of Egypt, there was the danger that they could die in the desert. If you leave the old life in sin, if you turn your back on the devil, if you turn your back on your old friends, worldly friends, you're starting to live a high risk life. It is true.

Because there'll be temptations and trials in the desert. Listen to the next point. He said, to try is to risk failure.

Then he says the following, he says, but risks must be taken. He says, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. Tell me friend, have you taken that first risk? Was there a time in your life when you turned your back on Pharaoh? When you left the old life in sin? And are you still taking those risks? Are you daily depending on God? Are you still living that life where you daily need God to supply your manna for you? Some Christians get tired of this life.

Trusting the Lord. Depending on the Lord every day. Because daily God must sustain me and you.

Daily God must give us, as he gave the Israelites the manna, he must give us new grace. Daily he must give us new patience. Daily he must give us new love to the people around us.

It's a life where you are daily totally dependent on God. And you must stay close to God, otherwise you miss these blessings from him. Are you still living this life of risking for God? Refusing to tell a lie.

Even if you know if I tell a lie I'll keep my job, if I don't tell the lie I might lose my job. Are you still willing to risk for God and to refuse to tell the lie and trust the Lord to take care of you, even if you lose your job? A person who risks nothing is lukewarm. Because he doesn't take sides.

He's everybody's friend. He's the friend of the world and he's the friend of God. And he lives a comfortable life without any risks.

Everybody's happy with me. Nobody's complaining about me. I've cut out all the risks and I'm living a nice peaceful life.

And you don't realize you've taken the biggest risk of all. Because God says, because you're lukewarm I'm going to spit you out of my mouth. I'm rushing to get through this.

The person who risks nothing does nothing. Do you realize that? You can be in church every Sunday. You can be active in God's work.

But in God's eyes you're doing nothing. You've stopped making progress. You've stopped conquering new grounds spiritually.

You've stopped risking and so you've stopped doing something. He says, a person who risks nothing does nothing. Has nothing.

And is nothing. Friends, have you stopped going closer to God? Growing more holy. Stop risking to go more humble.

Grow more humble. Stop risking to grow more humble. Then he says, they may avoid suffering and sorrow.

But they cannot learn. Some people are like that. They are so afraid of making mistakes.

That they rather just stay in one place spiritually. No, friends. If we make mistakes, then we remain enough to apologize and say, I've made a mistake.

Forgive me. I've made a mistake. I've sinned.

They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they cannot learn. They cannot feel. They cannot change.

That's what God said to the One Nation. He said to them, you like wine that hasn't changed its taste. Such a person cannot change.

He cannot grow. He cannot love. If you stop changing, you cannot grow in the love of God.

And you know what? You are even going to lose the love that you have in your heart. And he says, you cannot love. In trying to avoid suffering and sorrow.

He says, chained by their certitudes, they are a slave. They have forfeited their freedom. And then he ends with a sentence.

Only a person who risks is free. So let's just look in closing at Israel in the desert. We read about all the risks they were exposed to.

How they had to be obedient. Sometimes God said to them, don't keep the manna for tomorrow, eat everything. When they tried to keep it, it started stinking and the worms came into it.

Sometimes it is like that. God gives us something. Like he gave them the manna.

He gives us money. He gives us children. He gives us a job.

But may we never start holding on to these gifts of God. Because if we hold on to them, they will start stinking in our hands. God was afraid of that with Abraham.

He gave Abraham his son Isaac. But then after some time he said, well, is Abraham not too attached to his son Isaac maybe? He said, Abraham, go and sacrifice Isaac. Because if Abraham started holding on to Isaac, that beautiful relationship would have started stinking.

Friends, the gifts of God must never be more important to us than God himself. Even if it is the very manna that is supposed to keep me alive. Even though it is God's work.

Maybe God has given to you a ministry. Maybe there is a calling on your life. It must remain on the altar.

If God's work becomes too important for you, you will find worms getting in there. You will start becoming proud. You will start becoming selfish.

If your children become too important to you, or your wife, or your husband, the worms will start getting into them. God must remain the first in our lives. Tell me, are you willing to keep taking that risk? To keep God first in your life.

At other times, God said to them, leave to the Sabbath. Don't go and pick up on the Sabbath. And sure enough, the manna didn't rot.

Do you see the secret, friend? The secret is to hear God's voice. And to obey God. Sometimes God may expect you to do the opposite things.

Sometimes He might have told you, don't leave the manna for tomorrow. And then suddenly one day He says to you, now leave it. And the devil is going to try and make you anxious.

And say, no man, I must go and pick up the next day. I must say something now. I mustn't keep quiet now.

Or maybe you're tempted to just lose your temper to your child. Because you're afraid the worms might get into this child. You're afraid the manna might rot.

And God says, no, just keep quiet. Leave it. Don't speak to the child now.

Test the child. See whether this child's conscience won't prick him. It is so beautiful for me to see how God trained the Israelites to stay close to Him and to remain obedient to Him.

Have you experienced that? When the devil says, now you've got to do something, say something now. You feel anxious. Everything in you screams out that you've got to go and pick up the manna.

It's going to rot. And deep in your heart, it's a still small voice that says to you, no, just leave it. You see, a Christian that is legalistic and that lives according to laws will never be prosperous in this life.

And you will think that God is not keeping His promise. Some people want to be busy all the time. They want to pick up manna every day.

They want to always be busy with God's work. I don't know whether you've met some people like that. I've met them.

They are forever busy with a new project. They think if they are not busy with a project, then things are going to go wrong. But the person who stays close to Christ will hear it when God says, my child, now is a time of rest.

Don't be afraid to rest. I'll take care of the manna. It won't rot.

It happened to the ten virgins. Well, to the five of them. Those whose lamps were full of oil.

They didn't lose their oil while they were asleep. Some people are so afraid to sleep. They are so afraid to rest that they work themselves into a state where they become all anxious, they lose their peace, and they become irritated.

But the one who is living close to God will hear God's voice when He says, now you can rest. Don't worry. I'll take care that no worms get in.

You know who is the bread? We celebrate at His birth these days. Christ is the bread of life. The bread that came from heaven.

You know what's interesting for me? The manna lasted only for a certain time. The Bible says, later in the day it melted. And so the time of grace is only for a short period.

There is only a short period for us to eat the bread of life. It won't be there forever. Today, today He is there.

Today you can eat from Him. Today if you come to Him, your soul can be saved. Today if you come to Him, your sins can be forgiven.

But remember, the bread of heaven won't always be there. There is a time coming when people will run to the door, and they will knock on the door and say, let us in, let us in. And Christ will say to them, who are you? I never knew you.

Why? Because the time when the manna was there, they didn't eat of the manna. Friends, we don't know how long will be the time of grace. For each one of us, it's different.

Maybe for some of us, the manna is only there for another month. Or another week. Or another day.

Let's make use and eat the manna. If God speaks to your soul today and says, go and eat that manna before you go from this place, make sure that you've eaten the manna. Don't be afraid to take the risk.

Yes, it's a life of risks. But as long as we stay close to Christ, like Israel is here to. Every day we will receive our manna.

That's my closing remark. In 40 years, not one day did God not send them their manna. Oh friends, what a God we serve.

Not one day was the manna not there. God has never in the history of the world failed anybody ever. Yes, it's a life of risks.

Yes, but if we stay close to Him, it's a life of surety. We can be confident. He will take us to the promised land.

Even if at the beginning of the month you don't know where the food at the end of the month is going to come from. Don't worry. We serve a faithful God.

So what year do you want? Do you want a year where you want to gather for yourself security? Get the things of this world to give you security and peace. Or are you willing to step out in faith and start living a life where you are following Christ in faith from day to day? That life is a mystery. We won't understand it with our human brains.

It's a supernatural life where God keeps us supernaturally alive every day. Shall we pray? Lord Jesus, thank you that you are more than sufficient to be our bread today and for the rest of this year. Lord, help us to take the right risks so that we might live with you.

Thank you Lord for your faithfulness every day. Lord, we pray that we would turn away from and avoid everything that causes us to suffer loss and to see our manner go rotten. Lord, rouse within us a new faith and a new hope and a new obedience as we do what you have said to us.

Please part us now with your blessing. Amen.

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