

Problems of Youth

by Charles Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the urgent need for love, prayer, and faith in addressing the challenges faced by today's youth.

Duration: 43:58

Scripture: Exodus 12:43

Topics: "Youth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses a book called 'God Sometimes Has a Kid's Face' written by a Roman Catholic priest who requested to work with young people in need in Harlem. The book highlights how God speaks to people through the faces of these troubled young individuals. The preacher also shares a story about a rebellious son who is reminded of his sins by watching a Billy Graham sermon on TV. The sermon emphasizes the importance of conveying love to rebellious children and grandchildren, and the need for prayer and persistence in reaching out to them.

Transcript

There's a blight. And it was wished, in many cases, that it was willing to pay the fare back to the home city of any young person in America free of charge. They reckoned there was at least a hundred thousand runaway kids in the New York metropolitan area alone.

I'm reading a little booklet that came into my hands. I haven't read it thoroughly yet, just a couple of chapters, but what I've read almost appalls me. I should have known where I have lived in the shadow of the Empire State Building in New York City for most of my adult life.

And so I ought not to be at all overtaken or overwhelmed by what happens in that great metropolitan city. But this little booklet is the story, the case histories, of a Roman Catholic priest who deliberately asked his bishop if he would transfer him to Harlem, where he wanted to work with young people who are in need, of course, from his point of view, religion and reformation. And the title of the book is an arresting one.

It's entitled, God Sometimes Has a Kid's Face. And what he's trying to say is that God is speaking to the hearts of people through the faces, the distorted faces of these ravaged young people. Somebody's son slept in a garbage can for three months.

Another one slept in an automobile for 12 months, an old broken-down car. And they come to him wretched and broken. I think one of the most arresting statistics is the fact that now the number two cause of death among young people under 21 is suicide.

This year alone, 55,000 young people from about the age of 10, yes, 11, 12, up to 18, 19, 55,000 kids will attempt to commit suicide. They think that number seems to be the lowest that they can compile. And the tragedy is that out of those 55,000, 5,000 at least will be successful.

They'll hang themselves. They'll overdose. They'll shoot their brains out.

They'll stab themselves to death. They'll jump from buildings. I ask you, I can understand, I think, an adult man whose life crumbles, whose business falls apart, whose marital experience is shattered by infidelity and unfaithfulness, or who says it's not worth staying alive for those few months the doctors promised me.

I think I can understand a person, an adult man who faces all of those things, who says there's no way out but to take my life. I don't condone it, but I can sympathize with it. But I ask you in the name of all that's sensible and decent and logical, what makes a kid 10, 11, and 12 years old want to commit suicide? There must be basic underlying reasons.

And I'm not here tonight to explore those reasons, for I think I have something a little more, I hope, positive to say along these lines. But I'm speaking on this subject because as I look out on this audience, I see a lot of snow on the roof and quite a few shingles missing, too, here and there. And the chances are pretty good that most of you have survived raising your families.

Most of you have. And maybe your problem is not your own children, although it's a fact that I meet everywhere around the country. There are folks who say, my son, my daughter is now up in their 50s and 60s and they're still outside of Christ.

They're still resisting the Savior. We have a burdened heart and a broken heart because they have resisted every effort to lead them to Christ. But then it extends beyond our own children to our grandchildren.

I suppose, if I should ask here tonight, how many of you have grandchildren who are wandering away from the Lord? They haven't come to Christ. They're rebellious, or they're not interested in spiritual things. I wouldn't be surprised that we would have an overwhelming number of people who would raise your hands and say, that's true in my case.

I share my son's burden for his children, or my daughter's burden for hers, who are outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I don't think that I'm speaking on a subject that is totally foreign to your special needs tonight. I know that if I were giving a missionary message and appealing for volunteers to go to the mission field, that would certainly be a little inappropriate to this audience, wouldn't it? You say, that's past me, brother.

Should have come down the pipe 50 years ago. I could have listened and maybe done something. No, I do feel that this is an appropriate subject for us to consider tonight.

Now, what do you do with these kinds of children? I don't have any magic formula, but it seems to me that there are two very simple things that all of us can do. As far as our rebellious children or grandchildren are concerned, who stubbornly refuse to yield to the Savior's commands and overtures of love. The first is that

we must somehow, someway convey to them that we still love them, that basically our love has not diminished.

I heard an interview a little while back between Barbara Walters and Kurt Douglas, and it was a very interesting interview. And there was one touching moment when Barbara Walters said to Kurt Douglas, and he had referred to his father, who must have been a very severe disciplinarian and who was probably pretty tough on Kurt and the rest of the family. And Barbara Walters said, if you could speak to your father now, father is apparently dead, if you could speak to your father now, what would you ask of him? And this rather hard-bitten, at least he comes across that way on films and so on, Kurt Douglas, tough guy.

He hesitated, and it was apparent that he was emotionally touched. And he stopped for a moment or two, thought, and then he said, I guess I would ask him to just pat me on the back. Pat me on the back.

Here's a man who apparently was revealing the fact that he longed for the touch of love in his life, and missed it. Maybe, maybe basically, this is one of the problems with our young people. Maybe they don't truly understand that we love them, but we must convey that.

The second thing, very simple, it may seem too simple, is to pray for them. Now you may say, but I do and I have for such a long time. Why, I have prayed for my children for lo, these many 35, 40 or more years, and my son still is outside the family of God.

I pray for them. Well, maybe, maybe I can inject one more thought. I think it calls for the prayer of faith.

The injection of an additional element in our praying, not merely, oh God, save my son Bill. I've said that for year after year. It's almost sometimes like spinning a prayer wheel.

But do we dare to step out and claim God's promises by faith? You see, we can prove, I think, from the scriptures that it is the will of God that all of our family should be saved. I believe in household salvation. I believe that Acts 16.31 means exactly what it says, and they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

That God's will, God's plan, God's purpose is for all of our family to be included in the great salvation that he provides in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may remember that when Peter went down to preach the gospel in the house of Cornelius, it is written in Acts 11.14, he says, I came down to say that I'll give you the words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved. Yes, I think it's God's plan that all of our children should be saved, that they all should be included in salvation.

And we must not rest. We must give God no rest until we have the assurance that he is going to answer that prayer of faith. Do you remember Rahab the harlot? When she spoke to the spies, she said, When you come here, and I know you're going to do it, your God is powerful.

When you take this city, I want you to promise me that you will spare my household. And then she specifically mentioned them, father, mother, sisters, brothers, all of them. And they did.

They were saved. Now, there is a very interesting incident in the Old Testament to which I now refer you that has always intrigued me. I'm going to ask you to turn to the book of 2 Chronicles, please, in your Bible.

2 Chronicles, and chapter 20, well, I was going to say 29, but I'll look at chapter 28 with you if you'll bear with me. Chapter 28, I think, of 2 Chronicles, ought to be rimmed in black. It ought to have a black border around it.

It is one of the blackest chapters in the Old Testament. It's the record of a very wicked king's deeds, Ahaz. Look what it says about him.

Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign. He reigned 16 years in Jerusalem, but he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord like David his father. For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and he made also molten images for Balaam.

Moreover, he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Enam, and burnt his children in the fire after the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places and on the hills and under every green tree, wherefore the Lord his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria, and they smote him and carried away a great multitude of them captives and brought them to Damascus. He was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel who smote him with a great slaughter, for Pekah the son of Ramaliah slew in Judah a hundred and twenty thousand in one day." Imagine what that looked like in the headlines of the newspaper.

A hundred and twenty thousand casualties in one day. "...which were all valiant men because they had forsaken the Lord God of their fathers." And then verse 8, "...and the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons, daughters, took also much spoil from them and brought the spoil to Samaria." Wouldn't you think that a fellow would come to his senses when these blows were struck one after another? Tens of thousands of these people taken captive, the land stripped by the enemies. Well, it didn't have much effect on him.

Look at verse 19 of the chapter, "...for the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz, king of Israel, for he made Judah naked and transgressed sore against the Lord. And Tiglath-Tonither, king of Assyria, came to him and distressed him, but strengthened him not. For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of Jehovah and out of the house of the kingdom of the princes and gave it to the king of Assyria, but he helped him not.

And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord. This is that king Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him." He said, "...because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore I'll sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

"...And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord and made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods and provoke to anger the Lord God of his fathers." I guess you'd have to sum that all up by saying he was a crooked, wicked scamp. And so the best news of the chapter is the next couple of verses, particularly verse 27.

Good news. Ahaz slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem. They didn't even bring him into the sepulcher of the kings of Israel.

And Hezekiah, his son, reigned in his stead. There's a chapter break there, once again in the King James Version, and it's most interesting what follows in the next, in the opening of the chapter. What would you think, what would modern psychologists say about what kind of a boy would be the product of this kind of a father today? What do you think they would say? Well, he's just, he's a chip off the old block.

He can't help it. He was raised in this rotten environment, so he must, he's got to turn out bad. It's his father's fault.

That's what he gets for having a father like Ahaz. You know, they're very quick to blame parents these days. When a mother pins the diaper on the baby too tightly and pricks him with a pin, that baby has a complex the rest of his life.

He's ready to fight all of society. It's mama's fault, you know. Blame everything on everybody but the kid himself.

The big problem today is that people will not face up to the fact they have personal responsibility. I am responsible for what I do myself. You can't blame it on everybody and everything else.

Well, here's what I read. After that kind of a record, the deeds of this man Ahaz, Hezekiah began to reign when he was 25 years old and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

And he did that which was, now hold it, I happen to have a Schofield reference Bible Does that disturb some of you? If you don't like it and you want to criticize Schofield, you better smile when you talk to me because I'm quick on the draw. I've never, I have recommended this Bible to hundreds of young converts and I never have learned of a single one of them led astray doctrinally because of the Schofield reference Bible. I staunchly defend it.

Now, you know enough about this Bible that one of its characteristics is that it's printed, no matter whether you pay, you used to be able to pay four or five dollars for a Bible or fifty-five dollars for one. Doesn't make any difference how much you pay. They're all printed exactly alike.

Page 517 starts with the same words up above and it ends with the same words at the bottom of the page. Now, that's the old Schofield. I don't have any truck with a new Schofield.

My wife carries one of them and I tell her she's a modernist. But the old Schofield. When I was a pastor preaching, I taught our folks to carry their Bibles to church.

I didn't want anybody getting any wrong ideas where they were going on Sunday morning. I wanted the neighbors to know they were going to church. So, put your Bible under your arm, hold it out there where people can see it.

Don't hide it. Don't stick it under your coat. Let the neighbors know where you're going.

And then I didn't believe in putting Bibles in the pews. That makes lazy Christians. I said bring your own Bible.

And then when I got to preaching, whenever we turned to various verses, it was music to my ears to hear the rustling of the leaves. When the leaves were turned, you know, it meant the folks were right there with you. Now, all of that is to say that in the old Schofield Bible, it says, And he did that which was... And when

you turn the page, I was fully, and we're justified, in expecting that the next phrase will say, He did that which was not right in the sight of the Lord.

He did not follow in the ways of David his father. Because that was the theme song all through this historical portion of the Scriptures. King after king after king, it is written that he did not that which was right.

But no, in this instance, you read, He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord according to all that David his father had done. Now, how do you account for a king, a young fellow, acting like this with a father like he had, they had, with his record? Well, I guess the only answer is because of the mother he had. It's very interesting that the Holy Spirit includes his mother's name.

This is a bit foreign to Jewish custom. Women's names are seldom mentioned. Occasionally they are, but seldom mentioned in genealogies or in identification of a person.

The father's name is mentioned, but seldom the mother's. But he had a mother whose name was Abijah. In the Hebrew that means Jehovah is my father or my father is Jehovah.

So that whenever her name was mentioned there was a constant reminder of her relationship to Jehovah God, the true and living God. And this boy grew up with that from the earliest moment of his memory. His mother's name was Jehovah is my father.

He was reminded of that. And then he had a grandfather who had an interesting name, Zachariah. And Zachariah means Jehovah remembers who's your grandfather.

Jehovah remembers who's your mother. Jehovah is her father. So Hezekiah was influenced, the impact of a godly grandfather and a godly mother made their mark upon this man Hezekiah.

Now, it would be interesting if we had the time, and I don't want to take too much time to show you how this man got started and what he did. And the record is here for us to read. It's very interesting reading.

Very interesting. One has to admit that there are some times in the historical records when the reading is a little dull and maybe a little bit disinteresting, uninteresting, because we don't get all the connections and so on. But that's not true of this area.

It's a very fascinating and interesting portion. You'll notice what he did right at the very beginning. Verse 3. He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them.

I don't know particularly what month it was on the calendar, but it was the same as if it were January 1st, New Year's Day, first day. He made it clear to his people and to his nation that God was going to have priority in this nation from here on out. He opens the doors of the house of the Lord and then he begins to prepare it.

Now, the thing I want to establish about Hezekiah is this. And obviously we remember just a few things about this man. I guess if I were to ask, what do you remember about Hezekiah, you'd right away say, oh, he's the one whom God gave an extra lease on life, 15 years, more.

And you would be right, absolutely right. But I notice there's one feature about Hezekiah that doesn't often pop up to the surface. Hezekiah was a man of prayer.

He was a king who knew how to get things from God. And I want to show you the evidence for that. Notice the 18th verse, I think it is.

The 18th is what I want, of chapter 30. It says, A multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebudeen, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the Passover otherwise than it was written. Horror.

Horror. That's terrible. They were eating the Passover without observing the laws of cleanliness and holiness.

What do you do in a case like that? Get angry and mad and pass some laws? Uh-huh. Hezekiah knew better. It says, But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon everyone that prepares his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary.

And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the people. Here's a man who faces the unspiritual condition of his people, and how does he handle it? He lays it all out before God. Lord, you can move.

You can cleanse these people. Lord, you can bring them around. Lord, you can straighten them out.

Do it until they become a godly people. He prays for this ungodly group of people. Now in chapter 32, he'll turn over, you come to verse 20, and when you get to this point, he's got a totally different situation.

Old King Sennacherib is coming up against Hezekiah. If you back up to the 17th verse of this 32nd chapter, it reads, He wrote letters to rail on the Lord God of Israel and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people out of my hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of my hand. Then they cry with a loud voice in the Jews' speech unto the people of Jerusalem that were on the walls to scare them, to frighten them, and to trouble them, that they might take the city.

And they speak against the God of Jerusalem as against the gods of the people of the earth, which were the work of the hands of man. And for this cause Hezekiah the king and the prophet Isaiah the son of Ammon prayed and cried to heaven. When he faced an unspiritual congregation, he is driven to his knees in prayer.

When he faces a time of military and political peril, this man is found praying. One of the nice things you've got to say about it, he chose the right kind of company, too. Did you notice who one of his companions was? One of his best friends? Isaiah.

I wouldn't mind having Isaiah as my pal, would you? Isaiah was his good friend. And they're found praying that God would deliver them from the hand of this defiant people. So Hezekiah at this turn is found in prayer.

Now in the same chapter, in verse 24, in those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and he prayed unto the Lord, and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign. So in times of personal distress, this man is found praying. Why have I tried to establish that fact? Because of this reason.

When God gave him a lease on life of 15 years, during that time a son was born to him, a son who was to be the heir of the kingdom. And Hezekiah knew that he would not be alive when that boy became an adult.

He knew he would be dead before the lad maybe was even a teenager.

Every father hopes and prays that he'll be alive long enough to see his children grow up and become mature. And he must have longed for this, did Hezekiah. Am I out of order? Do you think I'm using my imagination when I say in the light of the fact that this man is found praying at every crisis in his life that he must have prayed for his son Manasseh too? He must have asked God to make this boy a good ruler.

He'd had an experience with his father, what his father had done to Judah. Now God bless this boy. Bring this boy to yourself.

Make him righteous. And yet he knew all along that he wasn't going to be alive to see the answer to his prayer. Well, how did it work out? Look at chapter 33.

Manasseh was 12 years old when he began to reign. Hezekiah, of course, is now dead. He was 12 years old when he began to reign, and he reigned 55 years in Jerusalem.

But did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the abominations of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down. He reared up altars for Balaam and made groves and worshiped all the hosts of heaven and served them.

Also he built altars in the house of the Lord, whereupon the Lord had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be forever. He built altars for all the hosts of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord, and he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom. He observed times, he used enchantments, and he used witchcraft, and he dealt with a familiar spirit and with wizards.

He wrought much evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger, and he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David and Solomon, his son, in this house. And in Jerusalem have I chosen before all the tribes of Israel will I put my name for. Why do you think the Holy Spirit gives us a detailed description of this man's wickedness? Maybe it's because Manasseh was such a rebel that he decided that he was going to undo everything his father had done before him.

He was rebelling against the godliness and the goodness of his father. We used to have a radio broadcast in our church late on Sunday night when it was kind of novel. Eleven to twelve on Sunday evenings, a live broadcast on the church auditorium.

Lots of young people came from other surrounding churches and we had a great time. Well, we had musical groups. We had a male quartet.

We had a brass, I think it was, a quartet. It was made up of a couple of girls and a couple of fellas. We had this quartet.

And one of these girls, the youngest of the crowd, played an instrument in the quartet. But after a little while, I noticed that we had to put up with a trio instead of a quartet. She wasn't there.

Her sister was in the group. And this went on two or three times and I felt it needed some correction, so I said to her sister, Your sister, Oldeen, what's going on? She isn't here to play. Now, she's got to make up her mind whether she's going to stay in the brass aggregation or get out.

Oh, she said, Pastor, if you only knew what's happened. I don't know what's happened to my sister. She's turned away from God completely and totally.

They had a mother who was a widow. She said she has gotten in with a crowd that runs off to New York City and carouses around. And she said she has gotten to the place where when we open the Bible in the house to read it, she swears at the Word of God.

The other day, she grabbed the Bible. She ripped pages out of the Bible, tossed them on the floor, threw the book in another direction, and with profanity said to my mother, I don't want to see that book at all. I want to have nothing to do with prayer, and so on.

It seemed like she was doing her level best to say to her mother, Every good thing you stand for, I'm against. I want you to know that. And I'm not going to turn back either.

Her end was a sad, sad end, I assure you. This man, Manasseh, everything that his father had done that was decent and good to bring God's people around to righteousness and righteous living, he tried his best to undo. When you turn the page, you will read that it says, verse 9, And so Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel.

And the Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken. They wouldn't listen. God spake to them.

I don't know what means God used, but God was speaking to Manasseh and his people to turn them around. And they turned a deaf ear. Sometimes God does that with our offspring.

He speaks, you know, in strange ways. You have a son, he's a sports maniac, and he turns to sports on the TV. Now, you've been witnessing to him for a long time, praying for him, and then one Sunday afternoon as he turns on the TV, searching for his favorite sports game, there's a voice that comes out and a finger that points to him.

Happens to be Billy Graham reminding him that he's a sinner on his way to hell, and unless he turns away from his sin and repentance, he'll be lost forever. How quickly is the dial flicked? But nonetheless, there's a registration of God's word and God's reminder. See? And that's what God must have done with Manasseh.

And so you read in the next verse, Wherefore, the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon. Wherefore, beware of God's wherefore. When God begins to work, sometimes he will shatter life. Before some people come to himself, he leads them along hard, rough roads.

We had a family in our church. The mother was a godly woman. The father was a professing Christian, but he was secretly an alcoholic.

His wife kept it secret for years. He was somehow able to survive. They had four or five children, and this one boy was a rebel.

So bad that despite the fact that his brothers and his sister went into Christian work, and he felt that he wanted to go into Christian work, I remember I allowed him to come as a student to our Bible college. And

we had to get rid of him. He had been kicked out of practically every Christian school, and it was only by the grace of God, and what little grace I could muster, that we let him in our school.

And then later on, he kicked over the traces, and what are you going to do with a guy that beats up the business manager? You can't let him stay in school, can you? So I had to say, You're out. And then he told me something that I could hardly believe. He said, You know, I've taken to drinking, and I go to New York, and I get pretty soused.

And he said, When I come home late at night, two, three, four o'clock in the morning, I see a light in my mother's bedroom, and I know the old lady, already, the old lady, I know what she's doing. She's praying for me. And he said, I stand at the door, and I laugh at her.

I love to see my old lady cry. You know what I said to him? I said, If God in heaven would give me about twenty seconds' dispensation, I'd like to put all these knuckles right down your throat. Any man that talks that way about his mother, I'm sure God would forgive me if I buried you right in the mouth, right now.

So I said, Get out. He did. You know something? A little while later, they found his father dead in the gutter of a town nearby.

And that was a shocker, this boy. But it didn't turn him around. God was speaking to him, like Manasseh.

He defied God. And then one night, he and another fellow driving along the highway in an almost brand-new Thunderbird. The other fellow was drunk.

This boy was pretty well liquored up. And they were driving, and the boy who was with him sat on the floor so he could get close to the speedometer, and he kept calling out the speed, 70, 75, 80, 85, 90, and the last thing either one of them heard was 90 miles an hour when they struck a concrete abutment head-on. And you know that twisted ball of steel? They had to extricate them with blowtorches.

And Manasseh, that wasn't his name, but he was Manasseh. He suffered God's wherefore. His arm is forever twisted.

He's a preacher now. God redeemed his life and used him. He's a pastor of a church near Washington, D.C., and a great soul winner, but he says every time he looks at that twisted arm, he remembers when he was a rebel against God and when he was fighting his mother's prayers and how God left him with a twisted arm to remind him again of the mercy and the grace of God.

Well, you know, Hezekiah's dead. He must have prayed for this boy, but he didn't live long enough to see this boy come to the Lord. Here's what the Bible says.

And when he, Manasseh, was in affliction, he besought the Lord, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers and prayed unto him. And he, God, was entreated of him and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, he was God.

That's Old Testament conversion, sure and simple. He was converted and a dead father's prayer will answer. You know, some of us may go home to heaven without seeing the answer to our prayers for our loved ones.

That's all right. God knows about that. Doesn't make too much difference whether we see the answer to our prayers or not, does it? It's the answer, and they come to know Him.

And Manasseh was really converted to God, and his life was transformed and changed. Let me just mention one or two illustrations of how this works out. Catherine Booth of the Salvation Army is reported to have prayed, Oh God, I will not stand before thee without my children.

I don't want to stand before you without my children. And as far as we know, every one of them was saved and even became preachers. Jonathan Edwards claimed from God that not one of his own seed would ever be lost.

Talk about faith, the prayer of faith. He not only prayed for his own children, but his children's children and his children's children's children, and right on down the line he says, I pray that not one of my seeds will ever be lost. And after three or four generations, those who have made diligent investigation could not find one descendant who was not a decided Christian.

I said that one morning, and a man came up to the aisle, stood there in the front and tears were running down his cheeks. He said, Pastor, I am a relative of Jonathan Edwards, and it's true. I know of nobody in our family, anywhere, who is not a committed, dedicated child of God.

God answered that prayer of faith, Jonathan Edwards. Mrs. A.J. Gordon, the wife of Dr. A.J. Gordon, founder of Gordon College, mother of five children, claimed that she believed God would never let the children of believing parents be lost. One by one, each of the five of them were saved.

One night in the First Baptist Church in New York City, I think it was a New Year's Eve service, people were getting up to give some testimonies, and a man arose under the gallery, and he gave this testimony. He said, among other things, five years ago, a dying mother called her daughter to her bedside. Thank God that all of her family were saved.

And the daughter said Mother, what about John? John is down on the bowery. John is a bump. And that mother quoted Acts 16, 31, and she said she dared to believe that it meant that John would be in the family of God.

And that man said, I am that son. I was picked up from the gutter by a God who answers prayer. There are abundant illustrations to encourage us this evening, ladies and gentlemen, to believe God on behalf of our unsaved loved ones, whether they be our own children or even our children's children.

Let's dare to believe God. Shall we pray? Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for that rich grace that found us when we were rebels, rebelling against Thee by love, casting thy restraining love aside, rejecting Thee, going on in our blindness until one day overcome by the sweet grace and the love of God we yielded to Thee. We thank Thee for that wonderful grace of God.

And we pray this evening for our children and for their children, too. Many of them may be far away from Thee, dear Lord, and sometimes it seems that they're too hard. They'll not turn back.

It's been too long. They're set in their ways of sin. But Thou hast Thine own way to curb the rebellious spirit, to bend the stubborn will, and to woo the heart that rejects Thee.

And so we pray that we may be encouraged tonight, even as Hezekiah went to his death, still believing that that boy of his would turn out right. And so we pray that we may, with similar faith, trust Thee for our loved ones. Hear our prayer, for we pray it in the blessed name of the Lord Jesus.

Amen.

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