

# Tragic Price of Unbelief

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in receiving God's promises and the severe consequences of unbelief.*

**Duration:** 37:06

**Scripture:** Psalm 25:4

**Topics:** "Unbelief"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story from 2 Kings chapter 6 to chapter 9 in the Bible. The sermon focuses on the events surrounding the promise of God that there will be an abundance of food in the city of Samaria. The prime minister, who doubted the possibility of such a promise being fulfilled, scoffed at the prophet of God. The preacher emphasizes the tragic consequence of unbelief and highlights that God's purposes cannot be thwarted by human doubt.

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## Transcript

Now let's turn in our Bibles to Psalm 25 for our scripture reading this morning. I'll read the first, the unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the even-numbered verses and shall we stand as we read God's word.

Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee. Let me not be ashamed.

Let not my enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed. Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

Show me thy ways, O Lord. Teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth and teach me, for thou art the God of my salvation and on thee do I wait all of the day.

Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses, for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth nor my transgressions. According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness sake, O Lord.

Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

For thy namesake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity for it is great. What man is he that feareth the Lord? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. His soul shall dwell at ease and his seed shall inherit the earth.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him and he will show them his covenant. Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn thee unto me and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and afflicted.

The troubles of my heart are enlarged, O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain and forgive all my Consider mine enemies, for they are many, and they hate me with cruel hatred. O keep my soul and deliver me, let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee.

Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait on thee. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles. Let's pray.

Lord, we're so thankful that when we are in need, you are always there to help. When we feel our own weaknesses, we can always look to you for strength. When we're confused about the future, we can always seek your direction.

Lead us, Lord, in your paths. Today, we ask that you would speak to us through the word and show to us, Lord, the danger and the tragedy of not taking you at your word. In Jesus' name, Amen.

You may be seated. We continue our journey through the Bible this week. 2 Kings chapter 6 beginning with verse 24 and going through chapter 9. Last Sunday night, we stopped at verse 23 because verse 24 really begins chapter 7. I feel that when they were making the chapter distinctions that they cut off the story right in the middle.

And so, we will be taking from 624 through chapter 9. But this morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the 7th chapter, the first couple of verses. Then Elisha said, Hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria.

Then the Lord, on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, you will see it with your eyes, but you will not eat of it. The situation is this. The city of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, has been under siege by the Syrian army.

The siege is having its effect. They've cut off supplies coming into the city. And now the people within the city of Samaria have come to the point of starvation.

The food is gone. Inflation is taking its toll. We read that the head of a donkey is selling for \$50.

Now, I don't think there can be much meat on the head of a donkey, but probably boiling it for soup or something for nourishment, \$50 for the head of a donkey. People are desperate, so desperate that actually they've begun to cannibalize their own children. And this is what brought the whole issue to a head.

There was a woman that was crying unto the king of Samaria for justice because they had boiled her baby and had eaten it with a pact with her neighbor that they would eat her baby one day and the neighbor's

baby on another day. They had eaten her baby and now the neighbor was hiding her baby. She was asking the king for justice.

And interestingly enough, upon hearing this horrible thing, the king sought to blame the prophet of God for the calamity. He said, may God do so to me and also if I don't get the head of Elisha. Blaming God for the tragedy that has taken place.

It's interesting how that so often in times of calamity, people want to blame God for their problems. It's interesting that we call major disasters as acts of God. Talk about putting a spin on things.

Satan is the master spin master. The scripture clearly shows that the reason why Samaria was going through the great difficulty is that they had turned their back upon God. They were worshipping other gods.

They in essence said, God, we're not interested in you. Just leave us alone. Get out of our lives.

And God had really just obliged their request. And as a result, they were now being starved to death because of the siege of the Syrian army. God had let them to their own devices.

But so often, people want to leave God out of their lives until calamity comes and then they want to blame God for that calamity. It is like trying to blame God for the spread of HIV among the homosexual community, when in reality, they are disobeying the very laws of God that would protect them from such a thing. If God would say, now don't take that path.

That's a dangerous path. It's covered with ice. You're apt to fall.

But you say, I don't need your advice. I'll go where I wish. And you go down that path, you hit the ice, you fall.

And then you say, God, why would you allow me to fall? People are always, it seems, trying to blame God for the tragedies that come across their lives. God has established certain physical laws in our universe. We recognize these laws and we learn to obey the laws.

We learn to respect the physical laws in the universe. There is that law of gravity. Now, I know that the law of gravity does have an effect.

I know that mass attracts mass. I don't know how it works. I know it does work.

I respect the law of gravity. It would be totally wrong for me to go up on a high building, stand on the ledge, and scream, I hate gravity. And jump.

And when I'm lying at the bottom, a crumpled, broken mass, to say, God, why did you let me fall? You see, it doesn't make sense. I've deliberately defied the law of God, and now I'm suffering the inevitable consequence. Now, we understand the physical laws of nature, but there are also spiritual laws that God has established.

Now, as I do not really understand fully the physical laws, why they work, I respect them. It is true that we don't always understand the spiritual laws of God, how they work, how they operate. But we are wise if we will learn to respect the spiritual laws of God.

Because, just as there is the actual cause and effect, as far as physical laws and violating them is concerned, so there is the cause and effect of violating the spiritual laws of God. Now, if God has said I'm not to do a certain thing, and I go ahead and do it anyhow, then it would be manifestly wrong to blame God for the misery, for the pain, for the suffering that I'm now going through when I deliberately defied the spiritual laws that God has said. My sorrow, my misery are my own fault, not God's fault.

The nation of Israel have broken the spiritual laws of God. They are now reaping the consequences of forsaking God. They are suffering tremendously.

And now what does the king want to do but blame God for the suffering when he was the one at fault because he was leading the people away from a trust in the living God. So the king sent his messenger to the house of Elisha to take off the head of the prophet, blaming God for the calamity in Samaria. Elisha must have been an interesting fellow to be around.

He was sitting there in his house with his friends. And as he's sitting there, suddenly you can tell that he's no longer in the conversation. His attention is taken elsewhere.

And so you just sort of sit and watch the prophet as he is just sort of in this state of not paying attention to you. And then he says, look what that son of a murderer is planning to do now. He's sending a fellow down here to get my head.

Can you believe that? When the messenger comes, open the door and hold him fast. For behold, the king and the prime minister are right behind him. And so when the messenger came on the porch, Elisha's friends grabbed hold of him and held him fast to keep him from taking the prophet's head.

The king came riding up with the prime minister and Elisha said unto them, thus saith Jehovah, tomorrow about this time they will be selling a measure of fine flour for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel right in the gate of Samaria or two gallons of flour for a dollar or four gallons of barley for a dollar. Here is a fantastic promise of God. The famine will be over.

Inflation will be over. By this time tomorrow, two gallons of flour will be selling for a dollar. The prime minister, the man on whom the king leaned, scoffed at the prophet of God.

He staggered at the promise of God. He said, if God would open up windows in heaven, could such a thing be? You see, his problem was that he was trying to figure out intellectually how in the world could God ever do this? This amazing promise, how could God ever fulfill that? And the only way in his mind he could see how this could be is that God would somehow open up chutes from heaven and just rain flour and barley on the city. If God would open up windows in heaven, could such a thing be? And that is when Elisha said to him, you will see it, but you won't eat it.

And this is often the tragic price of unbelief. You see it. God keeps his word.

God is faithful and will keep his promises. But your unbelief will often keep you from enjoying the benefits and the blessings of God's fulfilled promise. Unbelief keeps you from enjoying the blessings of God.

Through Jesus, God has provided a means by which all of our transgressions, all of our sins might be forgiven. And what a blessing it is to know that my sins, my transgressions are forgiven. David in Psalm 32 said, Oh, how happy is the man whose transgressions are forgiven.

Oh, how happy is the man whose sins are covered. What a blessedness. What a joy to know that my sins, my transgressions are all forgiven.

David spoke of the misery that he felt when he was aware of his guilt and of his sin. He said, night and day, God's hand was heavy on me. David said, inwardly, I became as dry as the desert.

The heavy hand of God, the sense of guilt, the sense of condemnation, that tormenting knowledge of my guilt. Until David said, and I confess my sin unto the Lord, and he forgave me. Oh, how happy is the man whose transgression is forgiven.

Many people do not know that happiness because they are still under the guilt and condemnation of their sin. Though God has promised forgiveness, they do not believe the promise of God. They have difficulty intellectually of understanding how it is that by simple faith in Jesus Christ, God accounts me righteous.

God blots out my sin. They just can't understand how that can possibly be. The spiritual laws, I don't understand how they work.

But by my faith in Jesus Christ, my sins have been pardoned, my sins are cleansed, and I can stand as an innocent person before God because of my faith in the work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul said, the cross of Christ to the Greeks was foolishness. And so the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to many people today is foolishness.

But what is the consequence? They're still in their sins. They're still suffering from the guilt complexes as a result of their sin. They don't know the joy, the blessing of knowing my sins have been pardoned, I've been cleansed, I'm clean, I'm innocent before God.

John 3.16 just doesn't seem to register with them. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life. Believing in Him, so simple.

Unbelief keeps a person from that overflowing life in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, I have come that you might have life and that more abundantly. He didn't come to take away from you.

He came to add to you. Life more abundant. I think that David well describes that life in fellowship with God when he said, my cup runneth over.

What an apt description for a person who is living in a close relationship with God through Jesus Christ. My cup runneth over. Not just life, but life more abundantly.

But unbelief can keep you from that life in Christ. It can rob you of that abundant life that He has and wants for you. John said, he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.

And that's age abiding life. It's not just length, it's quality. That abundant life.

But then he went on to say, but he that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. Believes not. You see, it keeps you away from God, alienated from God, under the condemnation of God.

Unbelief, a horrible thing. You have to pay such a price for it. Unbelief robs you of the hope for the future.

As I look at the world in which we live today, I really don't see much hope for the future. Almost any direction in which you look, there seems to be despair. Islam, that seems to breed hatred in so many of the adherents, has named us the great Satan, and their hatred towards us is impossible for us to even imagine or grasp.

Why would they hate us so much that they would be willing to get in a jet with the passengers on board, and deliberately fly the jet into the World Trade Center? As we watched in horror, these jets slamming into the World Trade Center, our minds could not grasp it. We could not realize this is actually happening. It was, it was, there was an unrealistic kind of a thing to the, I just couldn't believe it.

I don't even think it has sunk in yet. How a person could have so much hatred and anger and bitterness stored up that they could take the lives of so many innocent people. And we look at the conditions of the world today, and we read of nuclear warheads, biological warheads, chemical warheads.

We read of the energy crisis, the pollution, the terrorist cells. And is this the kind of a world that we want for our grandchildren? After the events of 9-11, we are told that we can never go back to normalcy again. Our lives have been forever changed by what happened on September the 11th.

Never again can we feel the same security that we once felt. The world has entered into a new era of hopelessness and desperation. But that's for those that don't know Jesus Christ.

You see, for those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we realize that we are right on the edge of a glorious new world, a new world order. And that Jesus Christ is going to return very soon. He's going to set up his kingdom upon the earth, a kingdom of righteousness, a kingdom of peace, a kingdom of joy.

His kingdom in which peace will flow like a river. His kingdom in which righteousness will cover the earth as the waters do cover the sea. His kingdom where there is no poverty, where there is no want, where there is no physical infirmity.

His kingdom of righteousness and joy. A world without wars, without striving, the wonderful kingdom of God. But you see, unbelief robs you of that hope.

It leaves you in the despair. Looking at the things that are in the world, it leaves you with that feeling of just despair within your heart as you look toward the future. Now, as the prophet said to the king and to his prime minister, you will see it, but you won't eat it.

In other words, God is going to do his thing, whether you believe it or not. Whether it may seem preposterous to you, God's still going to do it. Tomorrow, by this time, they will be selling two gallons of fine flour for a dollar in the gate of some, you're going to see that.

God's going to do it. You see, God's purposes cannot be thwarted by my unbelief. What God is going to do, he's going to do.

But you're going to suffer because though you see it, you won't be able to eat it. What happened? Well, we read in the story that that night, the sentries in the Syrian camp heard strange noises. The noises, they interpreted it as the sound of chariots and horses.

And so they surmised that the king of Samaria had hired the Egyptians and the pharaoh had come with his army, with his horses and with his chariots to relieve Samaria from their siege. And so they began to flee their camp, leaving everything there, not taking anything with them. They began to flee back toward Syria.

So that by morning, there wasn't a single Syrian troop on the west side of the Jordan River. They had fled to go home. And as the scouts went out looking for the Syrian army, they came back with a report.

The Syrians have fled. They've left everything intact. There's plenty of food for everybody.

And so the people began to flood out of the city in order to pillage the Syrian camp. Now, this fellow upon whom the king leaned, he went down to the gate of the city and he tried to create some semblance of order. He said, all right now, all of you just line up single file and let's go out orderly and all.

And the people were so desperate and so hungry that they mobbed the gate, they trampled him to death. He saw it, but he didn't eat it. The tragic consequence of his unbelief.

What a price he had to pay for not believing the promise of God. He saw it, but he didn't eat. In the book of Revelation, there's an interesting passage of scripture.

It talks again about the tragic consequence and the price that people will pay for their unbelief. Revelation 21.8 tells us, but the fearful and the unbelieving and the abominable and the murderers and the whoremongers, the sorcerers, the idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. If you do not believe in Jesus Christ, you will see it.

But tragically, you will partake of it, the second death, because of your not believing the promises of God. The promises of God are certain. What he has said, he surely will do.

You can bet your life upon it. In Numbers 23.19 we read, God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent or change. Hath he said and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good? What God has said, he will do.

Count on it. You can believe in it. You can put your faith in it.

God is going to keep his word. That better day is coming for those that believe. Salvation from sin is given to those who will believe.

The abundant rich life can be yours if you believe. If you don't believe, you can see it in others, but you can't partake. Your unbelief will rule you out.

Unbelief is such a terrible sin and it costs such a horrible price. The Bible said, be not fearful, but believing. Put your trust in God's word.

You'll find that God's word has never failed. Solomon, he said, all of the word of God has, not one single word of God has failed of that which he has promised. Not one single word.

And you can be sure at the end of the road, again, it will be said, not one single word of God's promises have failed of all that he spake of doing. God's word will stand. Heaven and earth may pass away.

God's word will stand. Put your faith, put your trust in the word of God and you won't have to pay the price of unbelief. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you for the certainty of your promises and of your word that we can bank on it, that we can just put our faith and trust in your word and in your promises today. Thank you, Lord, for the exceeding rich and precious promises, the promises of salvation, the promises of that abundant life, the promises for that future, the future kingdom that you will establish and are living and reigning with you forever. Lord, we pray for those that have been in unbelief and as a result of that unbelief have been held back from the enjoyment and the blessings of these promises.

May this be the day, Lord, in which there is that transformation and change from unbelief to a faith and a trust in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are standing down here at the front to pray for you. If you'd like to put your faith in God today, I would encourage you to do so. It's a choice.

I choose to believe or I choose not to believe. It's a choice. And if you choose to believe, God will give you all of the evidence that you'll ever need to know that you've made the right choice.

If you choose not to believe, you can create all of the excuses in the world, but what will happen is that one day you'll pay the tragic price. You'll see it, but you won't be able to partake. God's Word will stand.

God's Word is true. And I would encourage you this day, put your trust in the Word of God. Put your trust in Jesus Christ.

Receive today the cleansing, the pardoning of your sins. Receive today that new life that Jesus promises, the peace that passes human understanding, the joy that is indescribable and full of glory. Receive that work of God's love and grace within your life.

These men are here to pray for you that you might know that you might partake even this day of the rich blessings that God wishes to bestow upon you. Now may the Lord watch over and keep you in His love and fill you with His Spirit and cause you to abound in all things in Christ as you experience and know that abundant life in and through Him. The Lord bless thee.

And keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee.

And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

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