

Life Is Not a Lottery

by David Wilkerson

David Wilkerson's sermon 'Life Is Not a Lottery' emphasizes the importance of faith in God's goodness amidst life's challenges and the false allure of luck and material success.

Duration: 56:48

Scripture: Psalm 73:16-18, Psalm 73:24-28

Topics: "Faith And Doubt", "Suffering And Righteousness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares his personal experience of going through a time of shaking and testing in his faith. He recounts a moment during a sermon in Los Angeles where he was overwhelmed with doubt and heard a voice telling him he was a phony. He had to step down from the platform and deal with his doubts privately. The preacher also reflects on the apparent prosperity of the wicked and the struggles of the righteous, questioning why the wicked seem to prosper while the righteous suffer.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Pulpit series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing to World Challenge, PO Box 260, Linnville, Texas, 75771, or calling 214-963-8626.

None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to your friends. I think it was last Tuesday night after service. I went to a newsstand to get a newspaper, and I couldn't get near the store.

They were lined up, and I couldn't figure it out. I went to three newsstands trying to get the New York Daily News, and I couldn't figure it out, and suddenly it dawned on me there was a \$25 million lotto, and they were lined up everywhere. They all had the magic number.

You know, everybody in that line has it all figured out, this is my lucky day, my ship is coming in, and you ought to listen to some of them, how they get their numbers, how they figure it out. It just comes to them. Some of them go to the horoscopers.

Some of them go to the occultists. There was a lady on, I think, 63rd and Columbus, she had a little card table, and she read poems, and she said, let me get your lucky number, \$5. People were lining up.

If she was that smart, if she had power, she would have won it already. All across New York City, they were laying down their dollars and confidently calling out their numbers. This is my turn, I feel lucky.

And that was one of the biggest prayer meetings New York City ever had, praying to Lady Luck. Dear Lady Luck, please let my ship come in, solve all my problems, all I need is money, all my problems are gone. I can win the lot on that ship, Mercedes Benz, a house in the country, one in the city, one in the country, I'm going to fly to New York, and all the dreams that people have, all their problems, no more bill collectors, I'll quit my job and that stupid boss can go where he pleases.

All they need is the magic number. And I know there are some Christians that are lined up in those lotto lines saying, Lord, help me win, I'll give it to you. I'll give you a whole bunch of it, Lord, just help me win.

I just want to pay my bills and I'll give you a whole bunch. I'll tell you what, if you're in those lotto lines, you're not really walking according to this Word. I don't believe a Christian can play the numbers and keep the touch of the Holy Spirit.

And there are a lot of Christians in New York City that are numbers players. You might as well be in the occult, because that's what it is. There's nothing there, well, I'm not even going to tell you what your chances are, you know that.

But there are a lot of Christians who wonder at times if life is not like some great cosmic lotto, lottery, and only a lucky few get all the breaks. And those with trouble and hardship are just unlucky Christians. And Bob touched on it.

This is the lie of the devil that maybe this thing is not true. You wake up one day and it's just been like a big cosmic lottery and only been a few lucky ones that hit the numbers. And in the Word of God, we have the detailed story of a believer, a man of God named Ossoff.

Now, look at chapter 73 in the book of Psalms, Psalm 73, and it says it's a psalm of Ossoff. Now, in Hebrew, the name is pronounced Ossoff. Ossoff was David's choir director, one of a number of choir directors.

His name means collector in Hebrew. He was a collector of the psalms, the songs and the poems of David, evidently. But he was also a thinker himself.

He was an observer of life. He was a man of God, there's no question, because 12 of the psalms are attributed to Ossoff. And Ossoff went through a deep inner struggle, a major battle with his faith.

He almost got shipwrecked. This story, this whole chapter, is about this journey that he experienced that is common to so many Christians. And many of you here tonight, I believe, have experienced this deep inner struggle with your faith that almost shipwrecked you.

Some of you may be on the brink of shipwreck because you don't understand what you think is bad luck. You don't understand the hardship that you're going through in your Christian life right now. Now, in Psalm 73, we see Ossoff going through this very deep spiritual struggle and this battle that is common to so many.

We're going to go into the depths of it, but first we know from the very first verse, I'll read it in the King James, we know that he came through his struggle. He wants you to know that. Before he tells you his

struggle, he wants you to know, first of all, don't go into this, don't even listen to my struggle until you know I've worked my way through it.

And folks, if you've not worked your way through your doubts, you'll hear some things tonight from this man and from Psalm 73 that will just add to your doubt. If you have not yet cast yourself on the Lord, if you don't believe in His faithfulness, this message may not help you get through it unless you can accept this first verse. Verse 1. Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

And you'll notice the very next word, verse 2, but. But. Now, I want you to look at this very closely.

The Lord is good, he said, and He's faithful, but. And you've got to establish this right now. This man, Ossoff, this deep thinker, this man, observer of life, who looked around and saw so much trouble around him, he saw the wicked prospering, he saw the righteous suffering, and it looked like a lottery to him.

It looked like God was not being faithful, God was not being true. But he said, before I take you into the depths of my battle, before I tell you about this great spiritual trauma I've been through, you've got to know that God is faithful as far as I'm concerned. That God loves His people.

That He's a good God. Now, I want you to know that first right now. That's where I stand.

God is faithful, God loves His people, the eye of the Lord is on the righteous. Can you say amen to that? Now, if you've not seen and believed that, that He's absolute love and goodness to those who walk in His holiness, what you're about to hear will just add to your doubts. And what awesome is saying, look, I've been tested, so did my faith.

I've been down in a deep, dark pit of despair. I almost slipped. I almost back-slipped.

I almost turned to atheism. And I'm going to share this struggle with you, because many of you are in this battle. But He said, first of all, I want you to know that I came out of it victorious, because I believe that our God is good and that He's faithful.

Now, I don't believe that Ossoff had all the answers. I don't think he came out of this understanding everything. But he did come to a place where he cast all his faith and confidence and trust in the Lord.

He began to see things from God's view. He finally comes out toward the end of the chapter saying, Truly, God is good to those who are of a clean heart. Verse 2, But as for me, I almost lost my faith.

But as for me, my feet were almost gone. My steps were almost slipped. In other words, in New American Standard, I came close to stumbling.

Now look, he's going back now. He said, before I came into this renewed faith, before I came to this settled confidence in my Lord, I almost gave up because of what I saw around me. I almost stumbled.

I almost fell over it. Then he's going to take us into his struggle and tell us what it's all about. Now, here's a man who truly loved the Lord.

He's a choir director for David's choral groups. And I believe in some of those choral groups there were hundreds, maybe even thousands. And who knew the words and poems and songs of David better than all of us? This man had quoted the theology of this holy man, David.

How many times did he lead the choirs in singing, The Lord forsaketh not his saints. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. He sang, I have not seen the righteous forsaken.

I've never seen his seed begging for bread. He sang, the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them. How many times did Asaph sing and preach and pray, The Lord forsaketh not his saints.

Threat not thyself because of him who prospers in his ways. Evil doers shall be cut off. You can go on and on and on.

This collector of all of David's writings. He had all the theology. He had it all there.

But sometimes folks, your theology doesn't match up with what you see. You look around you and it doesn't look like it's working. Because it looks sometimes like God's people are the beggars and the wicked are the prosperous.

You can sing it. You can preach it. You can hear it.

But Asaph, suddenly it didn't line up. It didn't square up. His theology didn't square up with what he was saying.

Evidently Asaph saw a lot of believers, those who loved God, suffering. Perhaps he was suffering much himself. And it seemed just to be the opposite of everything he was hearing preached and preaching himself.

It appeared like this life is this great cosmic lottery and the devil was paying better wages than God was. The wicked were winning. Well, let me go into his struggle.

First of all, Asaph became envious at the apparent peace and prosperity of the arrogant wicked in his society. He became envious at the prosperity and the peace, what appeared to be peace in the hearts of the wicked around him in his society. Verse 3, I was envious at the foolish or arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Now look at me please. This man looked around him and saw all of his neighbors and friends and those he worked with that were evil. He saw them prospering.

Then he took inventory of his own life. He said, wait a minute, something's wrong. This doesn't add up.

He says, oh, look at verse 14. All the day long have I been plagued and I've been chastened every morning. Now look at me in the good eye.

Give me your best ear. How many of you know what this man's talking about? Every day I wake up to trouble. My middle name is trouble.

I live on trouble street. Sometimes I wonder if it pays to wake up. I wake up to bills.

I wake up to a job that I can hardly stand. I wake up to a boss who can't stand me. Now it may not be that way, but there's some way or another that you are able to say I, from morning to night, all of a sudden you say, from morning to night I've got troubles.

From morning to night I am plagued. He said, these others, they're not plagued, they're not troubled like other men, like I am. I love God with all my heart that I wake up with trouble.

No amens. You're all trouble free. You don't wake up like this man, wanting to crawl right back in bed and say, what's the use of getting up? If you didn't know Jesus, you wouldn't get up.

He said, I work like a slave. I don't seem to be getting ahead. I get slapped down everywhere I turn.

He said, yes, I know the theology that God takes care of His children. I've preached it to others. I've sung about it.

And I know it's in His Word. But why am I in such deep trouble? Why is it that those who love the Lord and do what is right suffer so much, that all the ungodly around me seem to prosper and make out so good? I'm troubled from morning to night. But they're not in trouble as other men.

Neither are they plagued like other men. Verse 5. It doesn't add up. They don't seem to be paying for their wickedness.

Look at all the people on my block. And by the way, you go to any block in New York City on Saturday and Sunday and look out there. Look at all the shiny new cars they're polishing.

And look at all the big stereos they've just bought for a thousand bucks a piece. And look at all your neighbors having furniture being delivered. I heard a Christian brother say, it doesn't make sense.

He said, all of these wicked people around me, some people in my job, they've got money to burn, they're always taking their wives to the restaurant. I can't even take my family to McDonald's. He said, I know people on a certain block and they were naming East Side.

Upper East Side. He said, I know people up there because I've worked with some of them. They spend more on their dogs than I do on feeding my family.

And don't tell me you haven't tried to figure this out. You say, here I am serving God and I don't have a job. And I'm in trouble.

And I've got bills. And I have a boss that dislikes me and makes it hard on me. Others have passed me by.

They're being promoted and I'll be there for years and I get overlooked. Am I touching anybody's nerve yet? It goes deeper than this yet. He said, they seem to be getting away with it.

I want to tell you something. This time that we have on earth, this is not for judgment. This is just trial.

There's a judgment day coming. But you see, Jesus hasn't even come to judge. He's not a judge right now.

Many things you're going to see, they're not going to be judged right now because this is not judgment day. This is trial time. Everything's on trial right now.

And so you're just looking at the trial. You're not even looking at the day of judgment. That comes later.

But also, Saul, very wicked men living high. They're living in the lap of luxury. They don't have any troubles.

Everything their hearts desire, they can get their hands on it. And even when they die, many of them die in some kind of peace. They're not even crying.

I thought if they were in sin, if the devil was after them, they're going to cry. They're going to hell. They'll scream.

At least when they die, they should have some kind of terror or agony, but they seem to die in peace. Look at verse 4. There are no bands or pains in their death. Their strength is firm.

He's right up to the end. They seem so strong. Oh, we've heard a lot of stories about atheists who just before they died went out screaming and yelling, God, I'm sorry.

We've heard of deathbed repentance. We've heard of those who were on the battlefield and they got shot and they confessed just before they died. But I want to tell you, the majority of ungodly men, they have been so blinded by their sin.

They have been so put to sleep by their sins that nothing moves them. They die in an ungodly peace. They die smiling.

There are many wicked men that have just died rich and smiling from ear to ear. The Bible said they're fat, they're rich, they have everything they want, and they die with this blind, empty peace. It's not peace.

It's a false peace. But it's there and many Christians look at that and say, well, look, they lived in luxury and they die in peace. And then I get a letter from a lady last week, a note who tells of a godly mother who spent her last two years in a crippling arthritic pain every day of her last two years, crippled up in pain before she died, a real woman of God.

And then the devil comes along and says, add it up. Figure it out for yourself. Here, she says, God, she's faithful to the Lord and she dies in pain.

She's a poor woman when she dies. She doesn't have enough to bury herself, a family to bury her. And look at all of these who don't even, they party.

They have a good time. And I tell you, the devil's come to a number of you right now. He's trying to do a job on you.

Said, look at your friends that party. They've got money. They go out and eat and they don't have the trouble that you have.

It doesn't pay to serve God is what the devil's saying. They buy anything they want. Their eyes bulge out with lust after material things.

The Bible says they have more than their heart could wish. Their eyes stand out with fatness. They have more than their heart can wish.

They're full of pride. Now, please understand that God does have some that have been entrusted with great wealth. They've been through suffering.

They know what it's like. They're not attached to their wealth. They're giving people.

I know a number of people. Not many, but I know a number. This church has a few and they're very faithful to the Lord and they've known suffering.

They're not attached to their money. We're talking about the wicked who prosper in this message tonight. The Bible says they mock.

They boast. They walk over people with their tongues. Verse 8 and 9, they mock and wickedly speak of oppression.

They set their mouth against the heavens. Their tongue parades through the whole earth. Look at me, please.

You stop and think of those producers of those ungodly films. Those movies that mock Christ. The Temptation of Christ, for example.

Think of this artwork right now in St. Louis. This homosexual artist who is depicting Jesus Christ as a sadomasochist. Dipping the cross of Jesus in vats of urine in his art.

The most filthy vile. I couldn't even explain the art. I couldn't even in public, in good taste, explain to you all the filth and the trash.

And yet the man who does it becomes a hero. He's making a lot of money. He's got the courts behind him and the liberals applaud him as a hero.

And then something rises up inside of him and says, God get him! God get him! How can he get away with it? And that's what Ossoff said. He said, Lord, I don't understand it. They're getting away with it.

They mock you. They walk over people. They belittle people with their tongues.

Their tongues parade around the whole world mocking God. Mocking the things that are holy and pure and righteous. The second problem with Ossoff.

He was almost convinced he was getting a raw deal by being so righteous before God. Being so careful in the straight and narrow path. In fact, look at verse 12 and 13.

Behold, these are ungodly who prosper in the world. They increase in riches. Verily, In other words, he said, I tell you, I've cleansed my hands in vain.

I've washed my hands in innocency. Beloved, the devil's a liar. He's the father of all lies.

And one of the biggest lies he has ever tried to perpetrate is this. What he does, he'll come to you and say, take a good look. You see who pays best.

You look at the fun, at the parties, at the expensive cars, the nice homes, the money, compare the good life of your ungodly friends and your neighbors. They are not harassed. You look at that and then you look at the suffering and the poverty of God's people.

And then the devil will try to say, you are wasting your time at Times Square Church. You're wasting your time reading your Bible and praying, show me where it pays. Show me where it's getting you a better job.

Show me where it's getting you a better house. Show me where it's putting more money in your pocket. That's the big lie right out of the pits of hell.

And Ossoff couldn't handle this lie. In fact, he confessed, I've been walking this straight narrow path for nothing. It doesn't pay to be so holy.

It doesn't pay to be separated. He said, Christians claim that they have peace. So does the wicked.

They say the Lord makes you happy. Well, they're happy. They say we need to be pure of heart.

But he said, why this spiritual warfare? Why go through all this? He said, I've cleansed my hands. I've washed my hands in innocency. I did this with all my heart, but it's all been in vain.

It's not paid off. But if you're going to measure it just in material things, you'll never, never make it. If you're trying to put it on some kind of a materialistic scale, and measure it by dollar bills and houses and jobs and promotions, you might as well forget it.

It doesn't work that way. That's not the measurement at all. And that's what Pastor Bob was talking about so eloquently this morning.

Tragically, many are believing these lies of the devil. They're giving up. They're being shipwrecked in their faith.

They're saying it's all in vain. It's useless. It doesn't work for me.

And you see, the second part of the lie, there's two parts to this lie, and also fell for it. God does not see all your suffering. God's too busy, in other words, with the universe.

He's too busy with the stars and the moon and the sun. He doesn't have time to see that you don't have a job. He doesn't have time to see those bills that you are worried about.

He doesn't have time to see your problem with your children or your wife or your husband. He's too busy. God's not concerned.

In fact, it's in verse 11. How does God know? Is there any knowledge in the Most High? And this is the lie. Look at yourself.

Look what you're going through and how long your troubles lasted, and tell me God's watching you. Tell me God sees you because you're about to go under. How long have you been praying for a job? How long have you been praying over your troubles? It's still there, isn't it? And this is what blew off of faith.

It shook him, and he finally came to the conclusion. That's right. That's right.

I might as well go back to the way I was. I might as well go back to not believing God because this is not getting me anywhere. I'm not making any progress.

And this is the satanic lie that turned Darwin into an atheist. In Darwin's dying letter, one of the last letters that Darwin... By the way, the Darwin theory, you know what the Darwin theory is. But in his dying day, this atheist, Darwin, wrote, The universe cannot be the result of chance.

It's impossible to believe that this glorious, immense, wonderful universe is the result of some brute force. In other words, he said, I want to believe. He said, it's impossible to look at this great, immense world and believe that it just happened.

He said, I'm too intelligent for that. But listen to what he went on to say. And this is what shook his faith and caused him to be an atheist.

In fact, he said, I cannot overlook the difficulties, in other words, the difficulty of believing that there's a God from all the immense amount of suffering throughout the world. He said, when I look at the suffering and I see people suffering, I can't believe there's a God that would allow His people to suffer. And so Darwin died an atheist.

He couldn't reconcile the suffering with what he thought was the Holy God. He couldn't understand that God is good, God is holy, but man has messed up his own life. Man has caused the sin.

Man has caused the suffering. Man himself has ruined God's divine purposes. Now, the devil's out to destroy the faith of God's people by convincing you that your present troubles, your present problems are not going to go away, that God is not watching them, He doesn't see them, that you're going to be left to luck and chance, that God is not there.

Now, this has happened all through the Bible. It's not some new trick of the devil. Psalms 10 and 11 says, He has said in his heart, God is forgotten.

He hides His face. He does not see. But Zion said, this is Isaiah 48 and 14, but Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me.

My Lord's forgotten me. See, the devil succeeded with the children of God in Zion. There was trouble everywhere.

They looked and they said, God's forsaken us. God's forgotten us. Ezekiel looked out at Jerusalem when it became corrupt and evil.

Jerusalem had become so corrupt, so perverse, it caused Ezekiel to fall on his face. And he said, this exceeding wicked and perverse land is full of blood because the people now say, the Lord has forsaken the earth and the Lord no longer sees us. You see, when a people or when a nation says that God doesn't see, God's not concerned, it turns to perverseness.

That can happen to you the moment you say, God's let me down. God doesn't see my problem. God's not with me in this.

God's not answering prayer. And if you allow the devil to convince you of that, you will turn out to be a perverse, wicked person, the Scripture says. It will lead to all kinds of perversity.

Now, Ossoff was so deeply affected by all these doubts, he couldn't even share his inner thoughts. And what he's trying to say, you'll find in verse 15, if I say I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. And what he's saying, he said, I see things that so trouble me, and I think these thoughts that if I were to really express my heart, everybody would think I was an atheist.

I would offend everybody. Because even though I'm a choir director for David, and even though I'm known as a man of God, these thoughts that bother me, these things that go through my mind, if I expressed

them publicly, I'd offend everybody. You would think I was a total atheist.

And I'm not. He said, my faith has been shaken by these things. And I wonder how many here would like the public of this congregation, this congregation to know some of the thoughts that have gone through your mind when you face trouble and suffering and persecution.

Would you want the body of Christ to know what you've been thinking about God and His faithfulness? I tell you, there have been times in my life, I've been through such great battles that I know one time in Los Angeles, in the middle of my message, I've been going through a time of shaking and testing in my faith. This is the end of side one. You may now turn the tape over to side two.

I knew that I wasn't ready to preach because I was staggered. And halfway through my message, I heard a voice screaming at me, David, you're a phony. Quit preaching.

I had to get off the platform. There were 4,000 people. I walked off stage.

I walked back and the pastor said, what's going on? Someone else had to go out and finish the message. I said, I don't know. I said, I feel like a phony.

I can't preach. I had to go and settle something with God. I had to deal with something because doubts were coming out.

And at that time, if I had stood before that congregation and told them what I was going through, what I was thinking, what was struggling in my mind, everybody would have thought I was a total atheist. And I wasn't an atheist. I was going through a battle.

The devil was after my faith. And some of you are sitting here now and I have the unction of the Holy Ghost upon me. And the devil is trying to destroy you and cast you back to hell.

Get you back to drugs or get you back to your old life. Because you're going through a struggle. You're going through hard times.

And the devil is trying to tell you God's forgotten you. That it's just chance. That life is a lottery.

And that you're unlucky. And that you're not going to make it. And you can't even express what's on your heart tonight.

And there's no use expressing it. And I'm glad Asaph didn't take it any further than he did. He'd only told us, I think he only touched the top of the iceberg.

This great test of his. He said, if I would speak it, I would offend. Now, keep in mind, he's looking back now.

He's already won his victory. He's looking back. He said, but if I had really told you what I was going through, And not up in the balcony.

And I'd say it even in the choir. And here. I tell you right now, I know in the Spirit, There are some battles raging in your heart that have to be settled tonight.

You can't take it another step. In prayer this week, the Holy Spirit just tore my soul. There was a churning and a boiling inside.

I remember a few years ago, standing in front of a mirror. And the Holy Spirit, I was shaming. And the Holy Spirit said, right now, write a letter to your friend Jimmy Schweiger.

And warn him. And I said, I can't do that Lord. I said, dude, and my secretary's right here.

And I went the next day, and she copied a four page letter. A loving letter of warning. And I had that same spirit this week come upon me.

While I was standing in front of a mirror. And the Lord said, stand Sunday night. And warn.

Warn my people about this struggle. Settling these doubts. And seek to build the faith and confidence of my people.

God said, I must have their trust. I must have their confidence. And I tell you with great love tonight.

Unless you work your way through this tonight. With the help of the word. And I'm going to show you how Esau came through it.

You can come through it just as he did. I, what did he do? He rejected outright the devil's lies. He absolutely refused to listen to lie of the devil.

Verse 16, 17. When I thought to know this. It was too painful for me.

He said, it got to a place I couldn't figure it out anymore. He said, oh God, this is over my head. If I keep thinking these things.

If I keep thinking these thoughts. I know it's dangerous. I know I'm going to be shipwrecked.

I'm telling you that right now folks. Hear it from heaven. Hear it right from the throne of God.

It's over your head. You'll never figure it out in a million years. Give it up.

Give up your doubts. Give up your fears. He said it was too painful.

Until I went. First look at it. Verse 16.

Until I went into the sanctuary of God. Then understood I their end. He said, I went back to God's people.

I went back to Times Square Church where I belonged. Don't care what church. I do care what church it is.

It's not enough to say. That's not honest saying. I don't care what church.

I wouldn't dare want to go back to some dead church. But this. Here's the trick of the enemy.

When you get these doubts and fears. It's always. Almost inevitably.

People that go through what Ossoff was going through. They quit going to church. They quit reading their Bible.

They quit praying. The very thing they shouldn't do is what they end up doing. Until you settle your faith.

Until the victory comes. And you're not going to get it except in the sanctuary. He said, not until I went back to the sanctuary.

Did I understand what God was trying to say to me. You won't understand anything out there by yourself. You won't understand it out there with your wicked friends.

With those wicked people you work with on the job. You're not going to understand it until you're in the presence of the Lord Jesus. He said, when I went into the sanctuary, then I understood.

I went into God's house. I was back with God's people. I was surrounded with that love.

Then God opened my eyes. Then I began to see what I hadn't seen before. You know what he saw? He said, oh God, they're all on banana peels.

You have set them in slippery places. That's what it says folks. I went into the sanctuary.

Look, verse 18. They are set in slippery places. You know what? He began to see.

God said, now look. If you're just looking for time and not eternity, I can't deal with you. But he said, if you want to see the whole picture, just stand still.

Let me show you. He said, see all those people rich and prosperous and wicked and mocking. He said, you see that great cavern.

There's hell. There's a fiery hell. And look all along the edge of it.

See all of those stones with moss and water. They're slippery, slidy stones. He said, they're all slipping and sliding right down into hell.

I've set them in slippery places. He said, in just a moment of time, terror will be on them. He said, yes, in life they are rich, they are prosperous.

But he said, suddenly they are gone, and terrors grip a hold of their soul. And in eternity, they have to face a real devil, a real hell, a real God, and a great white throne judgment. He said, that's just the beginning.

He said, let me show you the eternity of it all. Let me show you the end of it all. Life is just a dream.

The riches are just a dream. Look, it says, in one moment they are taken into terror. Verse 20, as a dream, when one awaketh.

As a dream. Brother, sister, I can't tell you how many times since I've been back in New York City, on the 22nd floor, 22B of our apartment house, I look out over this wicked city, and I turn and I look at the apartment and the furniture, and I hold my hand up in front of my face, then I look at all of those big skyscrapers, and they look like tombstones to me. Because that's what they are, they're just tombstones.

And you know what I say to myself, and I've said it a thousand times, Lord, this is all a dream. This is not the reality. The reality is eternity with Jesus.

That's the reality. That's the reality, folks. We just buried my wife's mother this week, 95 years old.

Died peacefully in our home last week. I preached her funeral. But I thought, 95 years old, that's a vapor of smoke.

That's just a vapor, it's here and gone. The Bible said life is just grass that burns. He said it's all going up in smoke.

Brother, sister, one of these days you won't find New York, you won't find America on the map. In fact, you won't find a map, because there's going to be a new heaven and a new earth, and it's all going to burn. It's all going to burn.

He's saying if you're just seeing brick and mortar, if you're just seeing jobs and promotions, if you're just seeing clothes and cars, you're not seeing the reality. The reality is eternity. This is just a dream that's passing.

The Scripture said it's just a vapor, a smoke that soon vanishes. Have you ever been out on a cold day, and you huffed your breath, you saw that little vapor, and suddenly it's gone? God Himself said that's your life. It's a vapor that appears suddenly is gone.

I don't care if you live to be 110. It's a vapor. But I'll tell you something.

It was the very lack of trouble... This is what Asaph really came to see. It was their very lack of trouble that destroyed them. Listen to me.

I'm going to make a statement and hear it, because it's the key. It's the exemption from trouble and affliction that causes men to continue in their sins. It's the exemption from suffering and trouble.

One of these days, you're going to stand before a holy God, and boy, will you thank Him for the trouble He allowed in your life. David said, if I hadn't suffered, I wouldn't have shot the Lord. Listen to it.

Now, I know that this flies right in the face of the doctrine of prosperity. It flies right in the face of, I'm going to give you a Bible. Listen to what the Scripture says.

In the day of my trouble, I sought the Lord. Before I was afflicted, I went astray. But now, I've kept Your Word.

It is good, David said, Psalm 119, verse 71, It is good for me that I have been afflicted and in trouble, that I might learn Your statutes. He went on to say, in faithfulness, You have allowed this trouble. In faithfulness, Thou hast afflicted me.

All of a sudden, Ossip cried and said, Oh God, I've been so foolish, like a dumb animal. Verse 22, look at it. He said, like an animal, like a dumb animal.

I've been so ignorant. Lord, I've been thinking and saying things so dumb, even a dog wouldn't talk like this. Even an animal that didn't have any sense wouldn't be thinking like I'm thinking.

Where have I been? God, You're on the throne. You're eternal God. You put all of these wicked on a slippery path.

They're going out into eternity, into terror. I'm going into the loving arms of Jesus. Hallelujah.

Verse 23, nevertheless, I am continually with Thee. Thou hast held me by my right hand. Oh God, I didn't see it, but all along, even through all my trouble, there You were holding my right hand.

Now, I'm telling you right now, you may not have a job, but God has you by the right hand. You may be going through suffering and trouble, but the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous. He knows exactly what He's doing.

And when He's ready, it'll open and God will see you through. God's not going to end your crisis until you give up believing in the flesh. Until you cast yourself completely in His care.

Look at verse 25 and 26. Hallelujah. Here's where He came to.

And here's where you've got to come to. I tell you, hear me. You've got to be able to leave this church tonight saying this with all your heart.

Whom have I in heaven? Let's start verse 24. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. You see, Lord, You guide me, but You're taking me someplace.

The wicked are going to hell, but You're taking me to glory. You're guiding me to glory. Not just to a job.

Not just to promotion. You're guiding me to glory. Look at the next verse.

Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and He is my portion forever and ever. God is my portion.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Look at verse 28.

But it is good for me to draw near to God. I have put my trust in the Lord God. Period.

Period. He said the devil's lied to me long enough. I've been tested long enough.

I've been saying long enough I've been serving God in vain. It's not in vain. I don't have any other desire in this life but Him.

Now, Jesus is my desire. That's what God's been after all along, that nothing is left but Him. He becomes the desire of your heart.

You can say, Lord, live or die, I'm yours. Lord, I don't care what happens to my body. Even I don't care.

I belong to you. I am yours. I've put my trust in my God forever and ever.

Stand, please. Do you understand? It was said this morning, we're saying it again. We're not praying for jobs.

As such. Yes, we do pray about jobs. But that's not what we're after.

We're not after promotion. We're not after cars. We're not after material things.

We're after the full trust and knowledge of Jesus. We're after casting ourselves on Him and having a people so completely dependent and trusting in God that come what may, they say, Lord, nothing's going to take away my confidence and my trust in You. I trust You.

Hallelujah. I trust You. Hallelujah.

God has never once failed His children. He will not fail you. He knows right where you're at tonight.

He knows every struggle. He knows every thought. He's numbered every hair on your head.

Why would He take the time to number every hair on your head and count every sparrow that falls if He wasn't concerned about you? Hallelujah. I'm coming against that doubt. I'm coming against that fear and that unbelief in your heart right now.

And I'm asking in Jesus' name to lay it down and say, Lord, I've been ignorant. It's just an animal instinct taken away. Jesus, I trust You.

Lord and brother, sister, He can't work without your confidence. He can't work without your trust. I'll say it again before I close.

I have a mandate from the Holy Ghost tonight, and I'm going to obey Him. I warn you lovingly as a shepherd who stood before the Lord and I heard it from God's throne. God said, ask and beseech my people to trust me.

I've got to have their confidence. I've got to have their trust. Does He have your confidence? Does He have your trust? Do you believe He's going to see you through? Come what may.

I don't care. There may be mass unemployment coming. I got a note today from a missionary that we help support.

He's down in Costa Rica. We just got a letter. His little child almost choked on a nickel.

They had to operate. He went home. His car was stolen.

Everything in his house was taken. And he's almost penniless now, and he's stuck. He's not stuck, but he's down in Costa Rica learning the language.

But he's praising God. He's praising the Lord. He doesn't even know how he's going to get around.

And when you're in Costa Rica and your car is stolen, you'll never see it again. For that matter, anywhere today. It's almost impossible to get it back.

But I want to tell you something. That man, he had a wonderful notation. He said, praise God.

I don't know what he's trying to say. I don't know what he's trying to do. But I love him and trust him.

And we are blessed. We are blessed. Hallelujah.

Lord, I pray for those being tested and tried. Those that are in a hard place. Those who are in trouble.

Those who are plagued. Oh God, help us to reach out and touch you by faith right now. Lord, we're going to lay down our doubts and our fears.

We're going to say, Father, you're faithful. We serve a faithful God. Hallelujah.

You're a faithful God. You're a faithful Father. We're your children, you said.

We're in the palm of your hand. Never will you forsake your children. You will not forsake your children.

Lord, I would not forsake one of my children or my grandchildren. How could you ever forsake one of yours? You will not forsake your children. No.

If you have been struggling with doubts, the devil has been lying to you. You've been overwhelmed. I want you to come and lay it at this altar tonight.

Just get right out of your seat quickly from the balcony. Go to either exit, down any aisle. Come and lay it down here right now.

Say, Lord, that's it. I'm going to learn to trust you. I want to trust you with my life tonight.

Bring your doubts, your fears, your sin, whatever it may be. It may not be walk with Jesus. You may be backslidden.

Come and join. Lord, I will trust in the Lord. I will trust in the Lord till I die.

I will trust in the Lord. I will trust in the Lord. I will trust in the Lord till I die.

Father, I stretch my hands to thee. No other help I know. If thou withdraw myself from thee, no river shall I go.

Hallelujah. You can still come while I'm talking. Hallelujah.

There are some that are coming forward, but I speak to the whole audience. Up in the balcony and here in the main floor also. You would say, well, Brother Wilkinson, thank you for the message, but my faith is secure and strong.

But you may be tested in the week to come, or in the days to come, and the Lord may be forewarning you right now. So I'm asking you right now, get a hold of God right now. Say, oh God, I want that settled faith.

I want that constant settled faith. Hallelujah. That you'll see me through.

I'm not going to be up and down, hot and cold. I want that steady, solid faith in the Lord. Everybody that came forward, raise both hands please.

Raise your hands to the Lord. Just lift them up. Pray this prayer right out loud, right from your heart.

Jesus, forgive my doubts. Forgive my fears. Blot out my sins.

I want to trust you with all my heart. You're my Father. You're my Lord.

I'm your child. You will not forsake me. I put my trust in you.

From this day on, give me faith. Help my unbelief. I trust in God.

Now thank Him right now. Lord, I thank you for trust. Thank you for confidence.

Thank you, Lord, for not pouring of your Spirit on my heart. Lord, we believe you. We trust you.

You will not fail us. You will not let us down. You'll stand with us.

You'll stand with us tonight. Now I want to pray with you that have come forward. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord, I pray for everyone who's come forward that this would not just be a simple prayer, though a simple prayer of faith touches God.

Lord, we don't belittle that. We thank you that this prayer is heard. But Lord, it's got to go beyond that now.

It has to be a casting of ourselves on your care, saying, Jesus, I'm not trying to figure it out anymore. I'm not questioning you anymore. I'm going to speak the word of faith.

I'm going to talk from my heart and say, Lord, I'm sorry for the way I've been thinking. I'm sorry for the way I've been talking. I want to speak the victory of the name of Jesus.

Hallelujah. I want to speak the living word of God in my heart. I will not doubt you.

I'll not be afraid of the wicked one. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ear is open to their prayer. And we know if He hears us, we have the petition that we ask of Him.

Lord Jesus, we want You more than we want anything else. We want You. Hallelujah.

This is the conclusion of the tape.

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