

How to Live With Certainty

by Don Green

Bishop Don Green teaches how to navigate life's uncertainties by trusting in God's unwavering faithfulness and provision.

Duration: 40:47

Scripture: Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 14:22-32, Philippians 4:11-13, Philippians 4:19, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Overcoming Adversity"

Description

This sermon by Bishop Don Green focuses on living with certainty in an uncertain world, emphasizing the need to trust God in the midst of life's storms and challenges. Using the story of Peter walking on water towards Jesus, the sermon highlights the importance of faith, courage, and keeping our focus on Jesus despite the storms of life. It encourages listeners to rely on God's strength, provision, and personal assistance in times of trouble, reminding them that God is aware of every storm in their lives and is there to help them overcome.

Transcript

We are blessed this morning to have a special guest speaker, Bishop Don Green. He is, he just retired back in September of this year after 44 years as the senior pastor of San Francisco Christian Center and we thank God that he's willing to come out of retirement just to come and preach the word to us this weekend. He and his wife will celebrate at the end of this month 53 wonderful years of marriage.

And that's a wonderful, wonderful praise report. Well, I'm going to read the text that he's going to preach from. In fact, I'll ask if everyone, as you grab your Bibles, if you would stand as we read this text.

We're going to read from the book of Matthew chapter 14. Matthew 14. We're going to read verses 22 through 32.

Matthew 14 beginning with verse 22. Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray.

When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from the land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified.

It's a ghost, they said, and he and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them, take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid.

Lord, if it's you, Peter replied, tell me to come to you on the water. Come, he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus.

But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and beginning to sink, cried out, Lord, save me. Immediately, Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. You of little faith, he said.

Why did you doubt? And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Let's welcome Bishop Don Green to the pulpit here at ALCF. I would feel much better if you give the Lord a real big hand.

He's the only one that's great. Amen. Let's bow our heads again in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for this time. We don't take this for granted, standing before your people. We pray that you would allow our lips of clay, that we can speak a word that will encourage them and help them, that you would take the words of our lips and build in the hearts of your people that we might grow from faith to faith and knowledge to knowledge and grace to grace and love to love.

In Christ's name, amen. Certainly glad to be with you here this morning. Glad to have my lovely lady with me.

I want her to stand so you can see who she is. She's the reason why I'm a Christian today is because when I was doing all the stupid stuff that folks do unsaved, she was on her knees praying for me. She prayed until God took the taste of drugs and everything else away from me.

He saved me. Amen. She didn't act.

She prayed. Did you hear that? She didn't act. She prayed.

Amen. I want to talk to you with the time that I have allotted to me here today on this subject. How to live with certainty in an uncertain world.

How to live with certainty in an uncertain world. Today we are faced with so many uncertainties. It seems as though everything around us is being shaken.

The education, jobs, family, marriages, the economy, the loss of homes, unexpected diseases and tragedies, the world of politics, and in some cases, the church. Everything is being shaken. Used to be a time that if you had a city job, that you were secure for the rest of your life.

But now they're receiving pink slips from there. Everything around us are being shaken. When we see what's happening to all of these entities, it leaves us with a feeling of uncertainty.

The question is though, how do you live with certainty in an uncertain world? So church, when we look at this world and its selfishness, suffering, misery, and man's humanity to man, we're left to wonder whether God cares or not. Is he interested in human agony? Now I know some of you are so spiritual, it never happened to you, but there have been times in my life, in the 44 years of pastoring, that I had to say, God where are you? Do you really care about what's going on? Because of the things that was happening. And I have to say to you, he cares.

Oswald Chambers, devotional says these words, our natural inclination is to be so precise, trying always to forecast accurately what will happen next, that we look upon uncertainty as a bad thing. We think that we must reach some predetermined goal, but that is not the nature of the spiritual life. The nature of the spiritual life is that we are certain in our uncertainty, consequently we do not put down roots.

He goes on to say that certainty is the mark of the common sense life. Gracious uncertainty is the mark of the spiritual life. To be certain of God means that we are uncertain in all of our ways, not knowing what tomorrow may bring.

This is generally expressed with a sigh of sadness, but it should be an expression of breathless expectation. We are certain of the next step. We are uncertain, I should say, of the next step, but we are certain of God.

Thank you for that one amen. Yes we are living in a world that is filled with uncertainty, but we are serving a God who is certain, who's fixed, who's reliable, who's faithful to all of his promise. A God who changes not, who is not bound by our circumstances.

He's not bound by the economy or the educational system. A God who is able to transcend every problem, every disappointment, every fear, and every situation. Church, it is our choice of faith against despair, trust against doubt, hope against pessimism.

As Christians, we believe that love is stronger than hate. Goodness will conquer evil, and the cross will outlive the sword. The question is, can you believe God in the midst of this uncertain society? Jesus said these words in Matthew 634, therefore do not worry about tomorrow.

When worry about, it has enough worry in itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. The message puts it this way.

Let me show you how this message says. I like the message. How many reads the message every now and then? Eugene Peterson's book.

Isn't that wonderful? He gives it this way. Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

But now I want us to go back in Matthew 6, look at verse 30 to 33, and I'm going to just read it straight from the message. If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers, most of which are never even seen, don't you think he'll attend to you? Take pride in you. Do his best for you.

What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can't respond to God's giving. Lord have mercy. People who don't know God, and the way he works, fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works.

Steep your life in God's reality, God's initiative, God's provision. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

Amen. You can just stop there and go home, can't we? What Jesus is saying to us is that we should not let our concerns for tomorrow overwhelm us today. So you see we could be so preoccupied with what the future will bring that we can't face the present.

The present. Hear me church. When I speak about this, I'm always talking to myself as well.

No amount of anxiety, and I want you to get this, will bring tomorrow sooner. No thought contains the power to change what will occur when it gets here. Jesus said each day, each day contains sufficient evil for itself.

And we live in a world that's full of trouble. Each day in the news report brings another burden to lay upon our hearts. Comes a time sometime when my wife said, I don't even want to look at the news today.

This is why we pray each day. Lord, give us this day. Give us this day our daily bread.

How many of you? Let me ask the question. How many of you would like to live or have someone to handle your worries? Would you like to have someone to handle your worries? How many remember the story about a salesman who went to the office every day wearing an outdated clothes, driving an old car. And one day he came to the office in a designer suit and a new BMW.

The people asked, what happened? And he said, I hired a team of professional worriers. The question was asked, how much do they charge? He said, \$5,000 a month. They asked, how can you afford that? He replied, that's their worry, not mine.

Well, I believe that's what Jesus is saying to us in many ways when he tells you and I to cast all of our cares upon him. For he cares for us. All your worries, all your concerns.

He said, I want you to just throw them on me because you are my concern. Isn't that wonderful that we have someone like Jesus that can handle our worries? Paul said in Philippians 4, verses 11-13, he says, in a time of stress and uncertainty in his life, he said these words, I'm not saying this because I am in need. For I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

I know what it means, he said, to be in need. I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in all, in, and in every situation.

Whether well-fed, hungry, whether living in plenty or in want, I can do all things through Christ, through Jesus who gives me strength. I can do all things through Jesus who gives me strength. And always look at that in the context that it's in.

When he talks about I learned, I've learned how to have plenty and not have anything at all. But whatever state I'm in, I can do all things through Christ who gives me the strength, the energy. You can do it.

You see church, I want you to have the assurance today that no trial is too great. No storm is too overwhelming. No crisis is too much.

We can do all things through Christ who gives us strength. When we face the crisis of life, we can make it because Jesus is there to give us the strength that we need. And then Paul says in Philippians 4:19, And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

And this speaks of both material and spiritual needs. Here we see the great provider, God himself, letting us know that he can meet all of our needs. No matter what those needs might be, the need is never greater than God.

Did you hear that? You missed it. Paul said, My God. I always like that statement.

That means that he had a relationship going on. My God. My God.

If your God is Jehovah Jireh, then you can say like Paul, My God shall supply all my needs according to his riches in glory. No need is too low or too big. No need is unimportant.

No need will be omitted, I should say, or overlooked. One of my favorite scriptures, and I love this passage. Matter of fact, there's seven points in that one verse, but we don't have time to deal with it.

It's found in Isaiah 41:10 when he says, So do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you and will hold you with my righteous right hand.

Amen. I love that passage of scripture. But let me just pull one point out of that for you.

That what he's saying to us. I will help you. I will uphold you.

Which says to you and I, that the God of the universe, the one who said let there be, and there was light. The one who created the heavens and the earth. The one who was the fourth man in the fiery furnace.

The wheel in the middle of the wheel. That same God said that when you're in trouble and when you need help, I will offer you personal, personal assistance. You missed that point.

Personal assistance. You mean to tell me that all this creation, God, you have time to offer me personal assistance? He said that's what he would do. That's what that verse says.

Whenever you're going through your stress and strain of life, he said I'm going to offer you personal assistance. Aren't you glad we said with the God that he can offer you and I personal assistance? Oh, I love that passage. How do you live with certainty in an uncertain world? Remember the scripture said that the just should live by what? Faith.

So here in Matthew 14 verse 22 to 32, you thought I forgot that, didn't you? We see faith at work. Let's look at the text a little closer. Jesus commands his disciples to get into the boat and to go to the other side.

I can't help but believe that because he is who he is, that he knew that a storm would come. Don't miss that point. Jesus knew that a storm would come.

And yet he sent his disciples to go to get into the boat, told them to get into the boat. Are you hearing what I'm saying? Therefore, he sent them so that they could know him in the storm. It's something about going through something that you learn God more.

You know something about him when you have gone through something. I never will forget that when I became a Christian in 1959 and lost my job at United Airlines. And out in that world that I knew about and how I had to go through certain things, it was tough, it was rough.

It was hard, it was difficult. I used to walk the sand of the ocean, San Francisco, backwards and forwards, crying out to God, saying, now I'm a Christian and here I have no job and all this is happening to me. One day, when I came home, my wife, thank God for her again.

She said, you know, Donald, God doesn't move on self-pity. Because you feel sorry for yourself, it's not going to make God do anything for you. And as I kept going on, God started working miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle.

Teaching me in the midst of my tears, in the midst of my trial, that he was still able to provide for us. I learned about him in the storm. And all I'm saying is that God allows us to go through the storms of life so that we can know him as the God of the storms.

Got to know him. See, I like the fact that Peter got out the boat. You can talk about him, but he got out the boat.

And we're going to come back to that in a minute. Notice what the disciples said in Matthew 14, 26. It says, when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified.

It's a ghost, they said. They cried out in fear. It's a ghost.

You know, sometimes it's amazing. So many times God comes to us, and when God shows up, there's always mystery about it. Isn't it? There's always some kind of mystery about it.

And then I thought about all these things. I don't understand sometimes the storms of life. That's why they're happening.

Why did this happen? And when I was a young preacher, I thought that I had to explain everything that comes along. And then I discovered as I got older that my faith helps me to live with mystery. You missed that.

My faith helps me to live with mystery. And many times there are things that God does that there's a mystery behind it. But my faith helps me to live with mystery.

Let me make another observation here. These disciples were doing exactly what Jesus told them. But the storm still came.

Don't miss that point. Why is it, church, that every time something bad happens to us, we feel as though we're sinning, that something is wrong with our lives. We start beating ourselves down, so to speak, and saying, oh, what's wrong? Evidently, I didn't do this or that or the other.

But they were in the will of God. Who told them to get in the boat? Who told them to get in the boat? Jesus. They were right in the center of where God wanted them to be.

They were doing God's will, and yet they had a storm. You can be right in the will of God, walking with God and serving God and living for God, and yet storms come into your life. Because the Scripture says in 1 Peter that after we suffer a while, he makes us perfect, he establishes us, he sells us, and he gives us strength.

And that word perfect is like the automobile mechanic. When you have a lot of rattling going on with the motor, he gets out his wrench, and he starts adjusting it so the noise won't be so much in your car. But that's what happens with God.

When you go through your trials, God gets his big wrench out, and he starts adjusting you so you can fit into his program. So don't think that you're out of the will of God because a storm shows up. Not necessarily.

You can be in the will of God and still experience storms. And the purpose is that you can know God in the storm. Another observation, if you don't mind, I'd like to make from this passage.

You need to know that Jesus is aware of every storm that arises in your life. He does not always deliver you immediately, because he needs to teach you to trust him and obey him, regardless of what you have to face in life. It would be good if he would come quick, wouldn't it? But sometimes he lets us stay there a while.

I like the story of the three Hebrew boys. The only thing that was burned up was that that bound them. And when you're going through the fires of life, don't worry.

He's just burning up those things that's keeping you back from serving him fully. Here's another observation in this text. The disciples were fearful, and they cried out in fear.

And Jesus spoke to them and said, Take courage. You see, the condition for courage is the presence of fear. Some of you missed that.

Let me say it up those up there at the top there. The condition for courage is the presence of fear. See, if there was no fear, you wouldn't need any courage.

So the condition for courage is the presence of fear. But here's the thing. You can't let fear have the last word.

Oh, you missed it. Never let fear have the last word. Don't let your fears paralyze you, but take courage and move towards that that God has for you.

Paul was never satisfied with where he was. He said, if I can just apprehend him that apprehended me. If I could just lay hold of him that laid hold of me.

If I could just serve the sentence that I was arrested for. You're always reaching out for more of God. Never get satisfied.

But realize that you can take courage and move forward into the things of God. We say a lot about Peter, don't we? I'm going back to it. But Peter is the only man that I know outside of Jesus who walked on water.

That was faith. He was willing to get out of the boat. Some of us are more comfortable in the boat of our fears, our discouragement.

Some of us feel pleasure in telling someone, Oh, you just don't know what I'm going through and how difficult it is. But it comes a time that for all of us, that we had to get out of our comfort zone and start walking on water. Are you hearing me, church? The scripture said, when Peter saw the strength of the wind and was afraid, he began to sink.

And he cried out, Lord, save me. See what Peter did, he used the storm. Don't miss this to move towards Jesus.

I want to pause there for a moment. He used the storm to move him towards Jesus. Can I suggest to you that you should never waste a good storm? Don't waste the storm, but let the storm that you're in move you towards Jesus.

Oh, you heard me, you heard me. Peter had faith, but just like us, our faith is not always perfect. And if we are not careful, the wind that has been blowing all the time can become so big in our eyes that we begin to sink in our circumstances.

The wind that was blowing all the time. The wind was there. It was blowing when he got out of the boat.

He was in a storm. But what is it that happened? Peter took his eyes off of Jesus and started looking more at the storm. That's what happens to us, church.

When we take our eyes off of Jesus and we start looking more at the storm that was there all the time, we begin to sink. But thank God for his mercy. Thank God for his love.

Thank God for his compassion that even in the midst of my sinking, he can reach out. I'm close enough to him just to reach out and to pull me up and walk back to the boat with me. That's what it is.

Don't let the winds, the rains of life. Don't focus so much. But keep looking to Jesus.

The Bible says, look into Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. And he says we got to run this race with patience. That's the only race that we run with patience.

Because we understand that the race is not given to the swift, not a battle to the strong, but to him that endures to the end. And we want some folks that will endure to the end. You see, church, when life is a struggle, Jesus is there to help in life.

The winds of life are often contrary. There are times when we are up against it. When life is a desperate struggle with ourselves and with our circumstances.

With temptation. With our sorrows. And with our decisions.

But thanks be to God. Hallelujah. That we don't have to struggle alone.

Because Jesus came across the storm of life. Stretch out his hand and save. Aren't you glad that we don't have to struggle alone? If we were in this by ourselves, we would be in trouble, wouldn't we? You see, church, this passage of scripture is a testimony to us of what Jesus can do in the storm.

When we are in danger of being overwhelmed by the storms of life. Jesus can help us. Well, church, there's a poem I like.

It says this. I do not fear tomorrow. For I have lived today.

And though my course was stormy. My pilot knew the way. I do not fear tomorrow.

If the sail sets east or west. On sea are safe and harbor. In him secure I rest.

I'm not fearing the storms. I'm not going to back up in the corner. And not do anything.

But I'm going to keep moving towards Jesus. Because in him I find rest. Rest.

Let's bow our heads a moment here. I'm sure that those in here in this building. There's been some struggle for you.

I don't know what it might be. You're facing storms. And you just need God's help.

If that's you, I want you to stand just where you are. Stand a moment just where you are. Just where you are.

Jesus. You see your people standing. Across this building.

So they're facing storms. I praise you in advance for the outcome. Because if they stay with you.

They will come out stronger. More able to do all the things that you want to do. In their lives.

So I pray now that the Holy Spirit is in their lives. Will work as a comforter and he is a comforter. Will help them go to the breaking point and still not break.

That he will give nerve to the feeble arms here today. And they can say, yes I can. Yes I can.

I can do all things through him who gives me strength. So I pray this moment that your peace will rule and overrule their hearts. And that you will help them I pray.

As they face each day with me. Saying, I can do it. While you stand in a moment let me tell you a story.

Of an old man that entered into the marathon in New York. When he first entered it in he said, I can do it. I can do it.

And as he was running he kept saying, I can do it. But there were some times there that he was losing his breath. And he starts saying, I can make it.

I can make it. He was encouraging himself. But as he got close to the finishing line.

He was about to faint and about to give up. And that's when he raised his hands as he was running. And said, Lord help me to make it.

I want you to know that God will help everyone of you standing to make it. You can make it. And you will make it.

God bless you. Amen.

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