

Having Done All to Stand

by Elmer F. Schmelzenbach

Elmer F. Schmelzenbach emphasizes the importance of standing firm in faith through God's armor and personal reliance on Him in challenging times.

Duration: 58:07

Scripture: Matthew 14:29-31, Matthew 17:20, Mark 5:34, Mark 10:51-52, Luke 5:17-26, John 11:43-44, Ephesians 6:13

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal testimony about the faithfulness of God in providing for his ministry. He talks about receiving financial support from a man named General Budget, who was diligent in knowing where his money was being used. The speaker also mentions facing challenges and feeling lonely, but finding comfort in knowing that he was part of a global family of believers. He emphasizes the importance of prayer and the support he received from fellow Christians during difficult times.

Transcript

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. And above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. Looks like God pretty well took care of his people.

There's just no way, no way you can fail here. He's got us so well armed. In the first place, he said, be strong in the Lord.

Not your neighbor, not your friend. Sometimes friends would let you down, sometimes your neighbors will move, and sometimes you might have to move. Not strong in people, but in the everlasting Lord.

Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Well, enough said there, because I'm not going to be preaching on that just now. Then he put us with all the armor that we needed, he put us out, said, there you are now, you're armed.

We're all fixed up. But he's so fixed us up that there's no way in the world that we can turn back. Because if we turn around and present our backs to the enemy, we're dead.

He didn't equip the back at all. He didn't feel it was necessary. He didn't plan on failure in that area at all.

Nothing on the back. We said, what am I going to do if I can't go through it, if I can't go over, if I can't go under, if I can't go around, what am I going to do? He's got that fixed up too. You don't have to turn around.

He said, having done all to stand. We said, well, that's simple. Is it? It may be for you, but I have found occasions when the thing I wanted to do the most was to run.

Just get out of there as fast as I could. And it was impossible to run. The only thing you could do is stand.

And when you stand, he's right there like you promised, and he'll do the job for you, get you through. And not only that, then pour out blessing upon you, and you'll hardly be able to contain it. Do we miss, because we try to do things on our own, I believe in qualifying myself and qualifying.

I believe in that. Let's go to school. Let's get all the qualifications we can.

Let's equip ourselves the best that we know how. I believe in that. But there's some things you're not going to be able to figure out.

And the quicker we understand that, maybe the more victorious we will be. God wants to do things for his children, and he wants to do them his way. He don't have to tell me how he's going to see me through.

He don't have to tell me his strategy at all. He'll get me through somehow. When Mary and I were moved from the eastern transvaal, from the Swaziland into the eastern transvaal in 1942, into that vast primitive area, well, just east of the Drakensberg range of mountains that stretch to the west and run the full length of Africa practically, some areas it's very high, and some areas it's not all that high.

In our area, it was quite high, went up to over 6,000 feet. And there's sheer cliffs, 2,000, 3,000, like sliced marble, beautiful beyond description, to the west, not too far away. And that land rolling on to the great Kruger National Park, beyond the Kruger National Park to the little mountain range, coastal mountain range that merged with the blue of the sky, beyond that, the great Indian Ocean and the Madagascar Straits, in that vast area.

They told me that there was a million people, a million and a half people in there. And I wanted to find out where they all lived, where they were. I wanted to know where the chiefs were.

I had to know. If I wanted to get permission for something, I wanted to know where to go to get it. I wanted to know where to pitch my tent.

I wanted to know which direction to advance. There's no point in advancing where there's no people. I wanted people.

That's what I was out for. And so I followed every trail, every track, every road, I followed it. If I couldn't get there by car, I went by horse.

If I couldn't get there by horse, I walked. I made it. I got there.

I knew every trail, like the back of my hand. It stood me in good. I remember one December day.

I know it was December because I was balancing my books. And I never did prepare myself for books, you know. That's one thing.

I never knew that I'd have to keep books apart. I thought I was just going to be a preacher. I wept and cried and prayed and asked God to deliver me of those books, but He wasn't sympathetic at all, nor was old General Budget.

He wanted to know where every penny was that He sent to the field, and I knew He ought to know, and I'd get up and wipe my tears and say, all right, help me, Lord. Then He helped me until finally I knew how to do it. And it was December.

I was busy balancing my books to get a balance sheet out to Kansas City so that old General Budget would know what happened to his money. Early in the morning I was working on them before daylight because it's hot after daylight. It begins to get hot very fast.

Mary was up after a while, and she had breakfast ready and called me. Breakfast and prayers, and I went back to my office. Then a car drove up, and way out there, 80 miles from anywhere, and a car drives up.

It's something. And I jumped up and went out to see. And here was a carload of government men, four of them.

The leader was a fellow by the name of Schmidt. I invited him out. Of course, in Africa, any time anybody comes, it's either tea time or coffee time.

If they're of English descent, it's tea time. If it's Dutch descent, well, it's coffee, or if they're American, it's coffee. We had coffee that morning.

Mary got it all out there and all the fixings, and we had coffee. And they said, Missionary, we've been up here to the government offices, Bushbuck Ridge. They couldn't help us.

They said, if anybody could, that you could. We are engineers and surveyors and mineralogists, and there's an area here that we need to find out about and survey. We have no record of it in our maps, and we have to find out.

They tell me that you can tell us if we can get in there or not. He laid a map out there, and I says, Oh, you mean here? And he said, Yes. Well, I says, You can get in there.

There's nobody there. What do you want in there? Well, we've got to map it out. We've got to survey it.

We've got to look it over. I says, All right, I'll take you down there. But I says, There's no way.

You finally run out of trail, and there's nothing but game tracks, and you have to follow the game trails. They said, That'd be all right. We can get around.

Now, listen. I says, I can't stay with you. I'm sorry.

I'm working, and I've got to get my books in, my book balances in, but I can take you down. I'll have to leave you. You fellas take care of yourselves.

I says, It's very primitive, you know. I'd hate to come back in a few days to hunt for you and find a hat here and a boot there and a shirt over there and a jacket over there. That's not nice.

I says, I wouldn't want that. They said, We can take care of ourselves. We've done a lot of it, missionary.

So I got into my pickup. One of my boys was with me, my youngest boy. He was on Christmas vacation.

I couldn't drive that pickup out of the yard without one of those fellas with me. He was there. And so we drove along, and the carload followed us 40 miles north on the McAdam Road, and then sharp to the left and into the blue, tortuous, winding trail, everything bone, bone, bone dry.

It hadn't rained for so long. Oh, my, it was dry. The leaves in the trees were shriveled and burned.

Many of them had fallen and just lay there helter-skelter. Even the limbs had broken on a lot of the trees, the grass, what little was there. The game had devoured most of it, but what few blades of grass were there.

It was so dry, you'd touch it and it'd powder in your hand. We drove along carefully, watching out for hardwood stumps and potholes and twisting, agonizing. We made it 15 miles in there, and then there was no more trail.

We got out. We were on the high banks of the great Oliphant River now. It flowed to our right, deep and wide and, well, beautiful.

Along the banks of this river, down there close by, the reeds grew lush and green. The trees were high and tall and green, drawing their sustenance from the waters of the great river. We stayed up high because up there it was clear and walking.

We wouldn't have to worry. The pools, great, dark, swirling pools full of fish and crocodiles and hippopotamus. Once in a while, a hippo would come up and the water would swirl and splash and yawn and bellow, and down he'd go to get out of the sun.

Over on the same bar, I spotted two huge crocodiles laying there like submarines in a dry dock. Their mouths were wide open and birds were pecking their teeth. I said, we'll stay up on the high banks.

Let's just stay up here. We'll walk. This is an elephant trail, but let's walk along this elephant trail.

You're not going to tell government men, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, you're in a hurry. But I told them, I said, well, fellas, if you can keep up with me, we'll get there. They said, set the pace.

Well, I set the pace. I was big, but I could shuffle right along. Dust devils were swirling and picking up leaves and twigs and dust and dumping them mischievously all over us.

We'd wreak them out of our shirts and blow them out of our eyes and mouth and spin them out of our teeth and walk on just to duck some others. Up on the hillside was a great herd of zebra watching us carefully, flicking their tails and wiggling their ears. Something happened that gave them the alarm and they went in a cloud of dust over the top.

That started everything else off. The wildebeest went raring by and the impala come gracefully jumping over the bush. They went on.

Three big giraffe were standing there watching us. They didn't see anything to run for, so they just stood there dignified, waiting for some other signal that would set them off when it didn't come. I set the pace

and my son behind me in the tracks on top of the elephant tracks was lion tracks.

I didn't have anything to worry about. It was mid-morning, everything like that. Well, they'd be resting or fed up by now, so they wouldn't be hunting for food.

I set the pace. And I got so far ahead, I got worried. I thought, well, I've missed these fellas now, they're going to get lost, but I'd hoping that they were bush-wise enough to follow my tracks in the trail.

I stopped and we looked back and after a while we saw them come around the bend. They waved at us and told me to go on. So I went on and we went on and on.

The hot sun made everything quiver and perspiration pouring down our faces, soaking our shirts and drying quickly. Finally, I saw a big tree, it was stretching into the sky, it was dry too, and there was no shade much, but the trunk of the tree afforded some shade. I said, we'll sit under that tree and rest until they catch up to us.

Maybe we'll get a little bit of shade there. Stopped close by to it, limbs, dry limbs that had fallen off lay helter-skelter and some across the trail and they stood there and I turned around. We watched the trail and we could hear them way off in the distance.

After a while I said, well, they're coming, but just as I got ready to turn, the hot currents of air brought to me an odor that always made me freeze. I stood stock still, my son said, what is it? And the odor got oppressive and I knew what it was. It was the smell of a snake.

Well if it was a python, I wanted to locate it first before I moved. I didn't want to move and step on something and be in big trouble. And I wanted to make sure where it was.

If it was a python, well, they're slow and sluggish, you can get away from them. If it's a cobra, well, they don't attack you unless you got them cornered and they'll get out of your way. But what I was afraid of is that it might be a black mamba, M-A-M-B-A, and they're always ready to do battle.

You never know what it takes to trigger them off and they're deadly, deadly, deadly. I didn't want anything like that. And I looked carefully everywhere, behind every shrub, every fallen log and limb, every crack and cranny and boulder.

I looked carefully, turned slowly, and I had my hand on the boy and as I turned, all of a sudden here he was. I had been in such a hurry that I hadn't noticed that the dead limb lying across the trail in front of me wasn't a dead limb. It was a black mamba.

And he was standing now, and there he was, higher than I was, looking down at me, his beady eyes and his long black tongue reaching out and feeling the air and watching me as if to try to read my mind. And I stood perfectly still and froze now and didn't even blink my eyes and watched him. They don't stand ramrod straight, they have to balance themselves, and he was undulating, balancing himself.

And I knew if he was this high, more than half of him would have to be on the ground. I never carried a yardstick or tape around with me to measure them. All I know is, I don't care how big he was or how small he was, he was just too big.

And he had no business there at all. I didn't like it. What was I going to do? I watched him trying to figure out what to do.

My mind went into top gear. And I didn't even dare lick my lips. They were dry.

Inside of my mouth tasted like a paper bag. Have you ever been scared spitless? And I stood with my hand on the little fellow behind me. And he didn't budge, he knew something awful was there.

And he just leaned his head up against my back and stood there. And I thought, well, I can't jump, he's with me, and I couldn't jump even if he wasn't with me. I couldn't jump far enough to get out of the reach, he would chop me down any direction I went.

If I went this way, that way, or backwards, no way could I get away. And he was watching to see what I was going to do, daring me to make one false move. Then I thought, well, I'll reach up and grab him because he's right there, I'll get him close right now, I'll grab him right up under the chin, but where's the snake's chin? And these fangs I knew would be so long, if I got him too close, they'd sink into my hand.

If I didn't get him close enough, he'd bend down and bite. And by the time the men got there, I'd be gone. And he would be mad, and he'd maybe take out after all of them then.

No, I gave that up. Besides, I didn't know, I wasn't sure that I could hang on to that maybe 12, 13, 14 feet of muscle and brawn fighting for itself. The thing I wanted to do, I hung on to myself with all of my might.

The thing I wanted to do was to run, but I had to stand. I thought of everything, and it all, I just couldn't accept it. I did everything I could think of, and I passed it all up.

The only thing to do was to stand. I had to stand. I didn't want to be there.

I wanted to be anywhere else in the world, but right there at that time, but I just simply had to stand. You know, then I did the thing I should have done in the first place. We always put it off until last, somehow.

I started to talk to my friend, and he was close by. And I could do it, and the snake couldn't even hear to find out about it. I couldn't communicate with this snake.

I didn't know his language. I had no way to reason with him, and so I just talked to my friend. I said, Lord, Mary and I have had so much, so much joy and laboring in this harvest field, and you have blessed us so richly, we felt, we feel we still have a lot of time, and much yet to do.

But if you want me to go like this, it's up to you. It's a painful way to go. It's a terrible way to go.

Well, I wouldn't look forward to it much, but if I have to go, all right, Lord, your will be done. And I opened my eyes and looked, and he was even with my eyes. He'd come down, and I squeezed a little fellow behind me and hung on to him tight.

Then down, down. He watched me, his tongue coming out, flicking and tasting of the air. Down.

Piling his coils at my feet, and one of them rubbed against my boots, and my knees were weak anyway, and now they turned to jelly. Determinedly I grit my teeth and stood there. Down.

Down. When his head was about even with my knees, then I thought, Now I'll run. Then I said, No.

My friend started it all. He's taken care of the whole thing. I'm going to stand right here.

Pulled away, straightened himself out, and in a little cloud of dust, drug himself down the bank, into the reeds, and up the tree. I think I'd been holding my breath the whole time. I can't be sure how long it was.

It seemed like an eternity. And all of a sudden, there he was in the tree, and I said, Thank you, Lord. I had no way to deal with that situation.

He took care of it. The men came up just about then, and I turned around, and I said to Dennis, It's okay. And Schmidt looked at me and says, What's the matter? Are you sick? I says, No.

No? He says, Is the sun bothering you? I says, No. Never bothers me at all. He says, You look awful.

And so I pointed to the ground. He says, A snake. Where is it? And I pointed up a tree.

He says, A black mamba. What happened? I says, Wait a minute. Sometimes they travel around in pairs.

Let's make sure the other one isn't around. And so we cleared the area, and then we sat down in what sparse shade we could find, and I told them about my friend, my Heavenly Father, my Lord, that takes care of His people, having done all to stand. And they sat there and looked at me and nodded their heads and said, Truly, that's the only way you could have taken care of it.

It's wonderful to have God on your side. I took them to where they wanted to go, and I left them and came back and got into the pickup, and we drove out of there carefully and on to the main road, and then we whirled along, the windows wide open, the wind sweeping in, and the tires whirling on the pavement and the engine ticking over, going about 60 miles an hour. And I was thanking Him again.

And as I was thanking Him, He came in and joined the party. He sat there on the seat of the pickup with us all the way home. We had a great time.

Got back there to park the pickup and went into the veranda. Oh, I didn't do books that day anymore. And after a while, Mary came from the clinic and says, Oh, you're back.

I says, Yeah. She says, What's the matter with you? I says, Sit down here, I'll tell you. She sat down on the lounge, and I told her all about it.

Then we got down there on that veranda, at that lounge, and prayed and rededicated our days to Him. And He came and He blessed us so richly. Personally, sometimes we hurt ourselves, sometimes we hurt our friends, when we just could let Him do it for us.

There in the Eastern Transvaal, we got the idea that everything was coming our way. The government was for us. The government helped us in every way they could.

Every time I applied for a church site, they gave me a church site and also gave me a place to build a parsonage. Never any hassle. Always they came across beautifully.

Then one day I applied for four church sites, and in no time I got those four applications back. Negative, negative, negative. They were canceled.

No church sites. I thought, What happened now? I jumped into my car, and I drove up to the government offices. I knew my friend, the chief commissioner, didn't handle this, it was the assistant commissioners.

And I discovered that they had changed assistant commissioners. And I went to him. I says, Is there something wrong here? Did I not fill in these forms right? He says, You filled them in right.

But he says, You're not getting any more church sites. That's the end of it from now on. I says, Is there any reason for it? Yes.

He says, You got too many churches in this area anyway. But I says, Your Honor, I says, We've got people out there worshiping under trees. When the day comes and we can get the money, we can build a church for them, we need a site to do it.

He says, I'm sorry. No more. You don't argue with government officials.

Make it worse. So I went back out to the car, put the cancelled applications in the front seat with me. And I said, Lord, now where do we go from here? Well, it says in the times past and other times, other occasions, you've kind of left things with me and I've taken care of them.

You suppose you could do this? Well, I said, I'd sure be glad to, Lord. It was a Friday. And I went home.

Mary says, How did you come out? Well, I says, I think I come out better than I thought I would. I had to leave it with the Lord and that always works better. Well, she says, Do you remember that Monday is the first Monday of the month and all the workers come in and we're having a day of prayer and fasting? He says, I remember.

And this will be one of the topics for prayer and fasting. Monday came and the first thing we did was get down and pray and fast about this situation. We prayed that God would change this commissioner's heart or get him out of the way so that God's work would not be hampered.

We prayed and prayed and prayed until about one o'clock. Then we got so blessed, we almost forgot what we were praying about. We got up and had a great testimony.

You know something? God didn't tell us what he was going to do. He just assured us he'd take care of the situation. We didn't have to know.

You think you have to know? You don't have to know. Let God do it to himself. Monday went by.

Tuesday went by. Thursday went by. Friday came along and my friend, the chief commissioner, he stopped in for a cup of coffee.

Every time he was in that area, he knew he could get a good cup of coffee, because he discovered that I long ago had a policy that it doesn't take an awful lot of water to make good coffee. And he liked it that way. And he stopped in.

We were drinking coffee and visiting. And finally I said, Say, Norman. I said, Has the government changed its attitude toward us? He said, No.

Why? And I told him. I said, Look here, these forms have been turned down. That's the first time it's ever, ever happened.

He said, It must have been the new commissioner, new assistant commissioner. I said, Yes, it was him. I went to him and talked to him and he told me that we'd never get any more church sites.

Well, he said, Did you hear what happened to him? I said, No. What happened to him? Well, he said, Monday about noon, he got a telephone call from Pretoria, 350 miles to the southwest. He got a telephone call from them saying, Listen, close up your office, go home, pack up your things.

There's going to be a moving van come in tomorrow to move you to your new assignment, your new post. I said, What happened? He says, He went right home. He closed up his office, went home, packed up.

On Tuesday morning about 1030, the van came in. They had it all packed and they pulled out about two o'clock. I said, Where'd he go? Mary was looking at me and she snickered.

I said, Where'd he go? Oh, he says they sent him to beyond Kurman in the northwestern Cape area, way over 950 miles to the northwest, right on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. Nothing much there but goats and lizards. Well, I said, Thank the Lord for that.

He says, Why? So I told him what had happened and how we had prayed and God did assure to see the answer prayer. Well, he says, Listen, missionary, do you have any more forms? I said, Yes. He says, Fill them in.

I'll get them passed through for you. And we filled them in and he got them passed through. When he left to get in his car, he turned to me and said, Listen, when you people pray about me, please be careful.

Nobody got hurt. Nobody got hurt. I didn't get blamed for it.

God did it. And from that day to this, we've been getting church sites through the eastern Transvaal and all that area, anywhere in the Republic. We've been getting church sites.

No fuss, nothing wrong. It works that way. It works personally.

It works church-wise, community-wise, and state-wise. You'll forgive me if I give a testimony. After all, when you've come these many miles with somebody along with me like my Lord, you've got a testimony.

Mary and I were appointed to go to Africa in 1936 in January. We left in February. You wouldn't believe it.

Look at me now. I was a basketball player. I was on the first team all through high school and all through college.

They have grasshoppers for basketball players now. And Mary was also on the first team all through high school and all through college. Track team? Why, I'd run up and down those mountains of Swaziland.

I could run as fast as a rabbit all day long. And so, worked out beautifully, strong and well. Went to Africa, young, enthused, and worked.

Married a registered nurse. And I had charge of Bible school and all that district. And she worked hard at a big clinic.

Everything went okay until about five years had gone by. And then she got an infection of the sinuses. And nothing would clear them up.

Nothing. Oh, my. The doctors tried everything.

In those days, they didn't have antibiotics. And, oh, it was difficult. There was no way to clear it up.

They warned her. It may drain into the bronchus and infect the bronchus. It may even end up as asthma.

But it wasn't long after that, then she began to show signs of allergies. And she was allergic to this and that. And we tried everything.

We prayed and prayed. And finally, she did have asthma. And it got worse down through the years.

You know, we never keep track of these things. I wish we did. But you don't think of it until it's too late.

I wish we knew how many babies she brought in the world. How many teeth she'd pulled. And how many assault cases she'd sewed up.

How much minor surgery she had done. Way out there all by herself. In a hospital nowhere around.

The patient would die before you'd get them there. So you have to do the best you can. And she did.

Did things that I wouldn't have the heart to do. And I don't have time to tell you about them tonight. I'd come home from all day away.

Late in the evening. And I'd find the bicycle gone in the black bag. And I'd inquire.

They'd say she's gone. Village way over here somewhere. They always tell you just over the hill.

But they mean over that other hill. The other hill. The other hill.

And so you keep going over hills. And well, finally you get there maybe. And so I'd start out to the pickup.

I'd take it and go follow the trail. And I'd shout and ask questions as I passed villages. And they'd keep pointing ahead.

And I'd just keep on going. And find her. Out of breath.

Sitting on the side of the trail. The bicycle laying there. She'd peddled it as far as she could.

To try to get back. Pile the bicycle on in the black bag. And bring her home.

We're always able to somehow control these things with medication. But as the years went by, it got worse. Oh yes, we prayed and prayed.

Anointed. But we never asked any questions. That this is what God wanted.

We'd just keep on. And we kept on. And God kept blessing.

But finally in the year of 1970. In the month of May, she had an attack. We were in Johannesburg at the time.

And the attack wouldn't let up. They tried everything. And some of the medication that they have.

Well, the after effects are just, just most undesirable. And when you can't breathe, you can't eat. And when you can't eat, you lose your strength.

Months went by. June, July, August. We tried everything.

September, October. I thought, oh, I'm going to get out of here. And I piled her into the car.

And drove north. And went by Petersburg. And picked up one of our nurses.

Money to pay. On into Rhodesia. Clear on up to the falls.

To try to get into a different area. Maybe it would break the attack. But up there we landed in a hospital.

They got her back so she could breathe halfway. And we dashed back into the Republic again. And down into the Eastern Transvaal.

To our own hospital. And there she landed in an oxygen tent. And with drips.

And, oh my. Now, from her regular weight of about 128. She was down to just 105.

Something like that. Then Harmon called me from Petersburg. Bring her here, Dad.

Our doctor thinks maybe he can help. In desperation, grasping for any help. We took her there.

And the doctor examiner says our heart is about finished. We'll have to somehow build up the heart. And the lungs are filling up with fluid.

We've got to see if we can somehow dry them up. And she was weak. She could hardly walk across the floor.

And he promised to do the best he could. Then he came to Harmon and I and he said, I'm sorry to tell you this. But he says, she's not going to be with you long.

Three months. Six months. She's through.

I don't have any hope. Even if we can improve the breathing. She's too far gone now.

Everything is wrong. He did improve the breathing. He was able to help.

In the month of February of 1971, we were out all day one Sunday and had services she wanted to go. So he said to take her. So we took her.

Came back and says, you know, I feel good enough. I think I'll get some sandwiches for lunch. And she went to the kitchen.

And I heard the pots and pans clatter a bit and then everything was quiet. And I jumped up and I ran to the kitchen. She slumped over the kitchen counter.

A match in her hand. The gas flame burning close by. I picked her up and set her in a chair.

Noticed that all one side was completely paralyzed. Arm, face. I tried to talk to her and she couldn't even talk back.

Her speech was gone. I picked her up and took her to the room and called the doctor. He was there in no time.

He stayed with us all that day and way late at night into the early hours of the morning. He says, you can't expect much now. He says, maybe if you keep on, she'll get back some of her use of her hand and a little bit of walking.

But he says, I don't think that the speech will improve much. February. The speech didn't improve much.

It didn't improve. Things got worse and worse. March went by.

I learned not to sleep. I sat in a big chair. And the least little movement or noise, I was up.

Dr. Phillips says, bring her home. And I wrote him and told him all about it. He says, bring her home.

And the doctor says, don't move her. You get her up there 30,000 feet in the air and she passes away and you land in some foreign land and you'll have an awful lot of difficulty. You don't want that.

I says, no. And so we stayed on. And oh, my.

The valley was long and deep and dark. Sometimes it gets awful lonesome. And then I discovered that I wasn't down there all by myself.

That I belonged to a great family around the world. And all of a sudden they were there with me, the whole crowd that they called Nazarenes. The missionaries told the workers.

The workers told their churches. The churches all got to praying. The people around the United States and around the world.

We got letters. We got telegrams. We got messages and telephone calls.

And the light begins to open up at the other end. And you feel, oh, my. I guess I wasn't by myself after all.

It's just great. Great to belong. And things got worse.

And finally in the month of April we took her to Johannesburg in desperation. And in Johannesburg they gave us no hope. And we stayed in one of our missionaries' homes there, Dennis and I. And every day we stayed there at the hospital with her.

And she didn't even know we were there. Most of the time. And then one morning early about four o'clock, I couldn't sleep at night anyway.

And I hadn't been sleeping. Dennis would sleep and I'd envy him. And I'd just lay there.

And the telephone rang about four o'clock. I'm sorry, doctor says to wake you up. I have bad news.

And I said, doctor, I was awake. He said we had to put her in intensive care. She's had a stroke and she's in a coma.

And we cannot make contact. I says, can I see her now? He says, as soon as you get here. Whenever you can.

And the whole missionary family was up in no time because they heard the telephone. They wanted to know what was going on. I told them.

And we all piled in cars and we went there. There were three doctors and four nurses working with her. And she was deep, deep, deep in a coma.

Thursday morning. The doctor said, do you have any people to notify? She, at this rate, won't be with us any longer than Saturday night. So I telephoned our daughter in Kansas.

And I told her to find Dr. Phillips wherever he might be and explain to him. And then tell our folks too. Her folks and mine.

And she found Dr. Phillips all right. Then she told him. He telephoned the generals and told them.

And they telephoned the DSs and told them. And in no time, the wires all over the United States were burning back and forth. This terrific family of the Church of the Nazareth.

Our folks knew and they told their friends. And their friends told their friends. And their friends told their friends.

And Friday by Friday, cables were piling in. Telephone calls were coming in from everywhere. And all of a sudden, we knew for sure that the whole great family that we belonged to was with us right there.

It wasn't so lonesome. We prayed and we prayed and we asked God. We said, Oh God, she's worked now for 37 years.

You want to take her home? Take her home. If you want to bring her back, bring her back home. Not just as a vegetable or something.

We talked about it. We thought, no, no, that cannot be, Lord. When you're finished with us, take us home.

She deserved it. She'd worked faithfully, unstintingly and uncomplaining. 24 hours a day on call for 36, 37 years.

And raised a family. And oh my, this was the end. People prayed.

Saturday night, we sat there and waited and waited. The doctor said she'd be gone. 11 o'clock, the doctor came to me and he says, Missionary, Reverend, go home and get some rest.

If there's a change, we'll let you know immediately. Go home. Dennis reached down and lifted me, pulled me.

I got up. He drove me home. In a little while, Dennis was sound asleep.

And now it was about 1.15. Dark. The lights were out. And I was laying there, unable to sleep.

And all of a sudden, beside my bed stood my friend. And he said, all these years you've left things with me. But this one thing you have not seemed to trust me with.

And I said, Lord, I thought I'd left it all. I do whatever you do, Lord. It's all right with me.

Your will be done. He said, all right, roll over and go to sleep and just leave it with me. I rolled over and went to sleep for the first time.

And I slept until about 5.30. I had telephoned the hospital and she was still there. Still in deep, deep coma. Sunday morning.

We dashed to the hospital and we stood by the bed. She only weighed about 95 pounds. Thin, blue, no circulation.

Hardly able to breathe. A warrior took her hand and tried to talk to her. No contact.

Three times that Sunday morning we were there. And that Sabbath morning, every church went to prayer out there. And they prayed.

Prayed through the Sunday school hour. They forgot their clothes for Sunday school and going to church. They prayed right on through into the church hour.

They prayed right on until about 2 o'clock. And then they told us as they witnessed after that. They got so blessed they had a revival.

And they got up and testified and wept and cried. Eight of us went up to the hospital at 2 o'clock. We went up that elevator to the 13th floor.

The ward where they kept the intensive care patients. The elevator doors opened up. And over there the third bed.

All of this life-sustaining business was there. The tubes, the gleaming implements and everything. It was there.

But the bed was propped up a little bit. I thought, I wonder if they've moved her. Then all of a sudden I noticed she was looking over there toward the elevator and saw us.

And raised a hand that had been paralyzed and waved it. You don't believe in miracles? Then you can't believe in my Lord. He never changes.

He walked the shores of Galilee. He made the blind to see. He healed the lame and the halt.

He raised the dead. That Sabbath morning I saw a miracle. Dennis went by me like a flash.

It's wonderful to be young. The other missionary slipped by me and a little dark-haired doctor grabbed me. He says, missionary, something dramatic has happened.

I says, I see. What happened? He says, I don't know. But I was standing there by the bed just a little while ago.

And I wondered how much more the little lady could take. And she opened her eyes and I thought she could see me. And so I greeted her.

And she greeted me back. The first that she'd spoken and been able to make any sense out of since February. And he said, how do you feel? She said, I'm thirsty.

The only water she'd had or liquids was through these tubes. And so, he says, I got her some ice water, some cold water. And I gave her all the water she wanted to drink.

She said, doctor, if I had my glasses, I could see better. I rummaged around and I found her glasses. I cleaned them up for her, polished them up, and I put them on her.

And she said, thank you. I says, will she be all right? He says, I don't know. She was supposed to be gone last night.

I says, how long will it take you to know, doctor? He says, give us ten days. We'll have to run all kinds of experiments now, all kinds of tests to find out. I says, doctor, you wonderful fellows, there wasn't a time there wasn't a doctor in that room.

There was a board and nurses ready right there and then. And I says, I love you for that. It meant so much and it was comforting.

You're great fellows. But I says, you know, after all, you can only do so much. You can only go so far.

God has to take it from there on. And of all of your 2,000 patients or more in this hospital, this one has been prayed for around the world by more people. And God has seen fit to answer prayer.

He backed into the elevator and he let it close. And he looked at me like he thought I'd be his next patient. And I went over to the bed and crowded in, everybody standing around.

And I took a little thin transparent hand and looked down and tears rolled down her face. She whispered, I've come back. That afternoon, Harmon came in with his family and we had a great family reunion.

Sunday evening, Mary fell asleep. Deep, peaceful sleep. And we tiptoed out.

But in our cars, grateful, thankful, bells ringing. Went to our respective places of abode and went to bed. You know, I'm thick-headed.

I don't learn very easy. Lights were out and I was laid there and I thanked him. Then all of a sudden I got panicky.

I got panicky. I got, oh, I got alarmed. I said, oh Lord, what am I going to do? Six long weeks in the hospital.

All these tests, all these specialists, all these x-rays, everything that's going on. And I'll be alive the rest of my life. Where am I going to find out how I can pay for it? Oh.

And there he was by my bed again. He says, you don't learn, do you? He says, do you suppose if I could do what I did for her that I could also take care of the expenses? I wanted to crawl into a little hole somewhere and hide. I said, yes, Lord, I know.

Excuse me. Pardon me. Forgive me.

He says, you go to sleep. I went to sleep. I slept peacefully until about 630 and I telephoned the hospital and she'd slept great.

And the nurse says, we're just getting ready to give her a morning bath and give her a breakfast. I tell her we'll be there at half past nine. Nine o'clock, Dennis and I went out to get in the car and the postman come by.

And he says, are you Reverend Spellsma? I says, yes. He says, please sign for this. He handed me a registered special delivery airmail letter.

I signed for it and looked at it. I went back into the house and into my room and shut the door. I slit the envelope open.

Two pieces of paper come out and one said, missionary, these days we know what trying days they are. But just remember, you're still our missionary. We're all praying.

The whole church is praying. You belong to us. We don't know what God's intention is, what his will is.

We can't pretend to know. But he says, one thing we can know. He said his supply of grace is sufficient.

Missionary, just draw on that great, great, great supply of grace. He paid for that supply of grace on Mount Calvary. It's all yours.

Whatever God's will is, he'll surely sustain you and keep you. But one thing we can do, we can alleviate the burden. We've enclosed a check to help pay for the hospital expenses.

If it isn't enough, please reply. Send us a letter immediately and tell us and we'll send you the rest by return mail. Signed, Old General Budget.

I toured all over the United States. I talked to a few, six, into great camp meetings. And in 1960, the General Assembly.

And I'd looked into the faces of Old General Budget like I'm looking into his face tonight. I knelt down and soaked the letter with my tears of gratitude. And the crunch was on, you didn't fail.

All my life has been that way. Time I was a little barefooted boy playing around my mom's kitchen. Old General Budget.

And I prayed and I said, oh God, bless General Budget. Went back out to the car and Dennis was sitting there. He said, something wrong? I said, oh no.

Handed him the letter. He read it. And he pulled out of his pocket a handkerchief.

I never saw one that big in my life. It looked like a little towel. He blew his nose and he mopped his eyes.

He says, isn't it wonderful to belong to a great family like that? Ten days later, Mary hanging onto my arm and walking down the hallway. We stopped at the office. And I paid every last penny.

She walked out to the car park with me and I opened the door and she sat down. She looked up and said, what's the matter? I said, just hold on a bit. I just want to thank God.

When I brought you here, I never thought you'd sit there again. I bowed my head. I shut the door gently.

Drove 250 miles north to our doctor in Petersburg. He took a look at her and he says, I'll tell you one thing. Medical science can't claim any credit for this.

Only God could do a thing like this. Then he came to me and to Harmon. And he says, now missionaries, I don't know anything about this.

But he says, if she's back like she is now, God did it. And if he did it, it was for a purpose. If he's brought her back to you, you've got a great responsibility.

Missionary, you can't keep her here much longer. The pressures here would be too much if you wanted to live. Take her back to her people.

I said, all right, doctor. I told God that he could do what he liked with my life. All down through my years, he's had control.

If that's what he wants, doctor, all right. But 52 years in the land, you're not just going to turn your back on it and lay your armor down and walk away. It's like dying.

The people you love, the people you grew up with. I spanked them. I dedicated them.

I disciplined them. I put them through school. I married them.

I baptized them. I prayed for them at the altars. These were my people.

But the God that brought me through that other tunnel, he was there again. And he said, it's all right. Come on now.

It's all right. I've still got much for you to do. What could I do in America? Who wants an old fellow like me to pastor a church? Besides, you talk a different language.

Your culture is different. And I declare I couldn't pastor a church in America. I'd been in Africa all my life.

I was finished. But he kept on telling me, no, you're not. You're not finished.

I couldn't figure out what he wanted me to do. Maybe to janitor a church or something like that or sweep the sidewalks. All right.

I'm going, Lord. I'll do it. And he'd give me peace.

A year later, at the airport, the Johannesburg General Airport, their international airport, in that great foyer, here they come, our friends, the Africans, the missionaries, and our family. They made a big circle around us and came in tight and close and put their hands on us and sang quietly, as only they can sing. And they prayed, O God, you've brought us this far.

You know the rest of the way and you'll take us. Then we walked down that ramp and into that plane. We sat there.

There were three seats. Mary sat next to the window and I sat in the middle seat and we looked out and they were all up on the observation deck. We tried to wave.

My hands felt like lead. They sealed that plane and we trundled down to the end of the runway. They turned around and they blazed down that concrete and scorched into the air, blowing smoke and fumes and into the sky, facing the west, racing with the sun, higher, higher, over Botswana, over Southwest Africa, over the Indian Ocean, higher, and the pilot came on.

I know they left part of me down there on that airstrip. My heart was broken. The pilot came on and he says, we're going 36,000 feet and we're doing 6,500 knots an hour.

He says, we have a good breeze behind us. Racing the sun for Brazil. Way up there.

Mary looked over and she reached over and took my hand. I'll tell you something. I don't know how it happened and I don't pretend to know, but my friend caught up with that plane.

It was sealed tight. I know they said it was, but he got into it just the same. And he come walking down that aisle and he sat in that empty seat beside me and he put his arm around me and he put his hand under my chin and he lifted it and he says, come on now, come on.

I've got so much for you to do. You don't have time to feel like that. Come on.

The bells began to ring and the choruses took up there and oh my, I wanted to jump up and shout and then I remembered to think I was trying to hijack the plane so I just hung on. We landed in America. And that year, deputation work for the full year, 431 services Mary and I were in and we lived in a car trying to find a place to live in America.

No place to go and nothing to buy with. And every state in the United States said they were the best state to live in and we were in 41 of them. We were confused before anyway and now it was worse than ever.

But God had his way of clearing things up. I got back to Garnett, Kansas on a Monday night. Tuesday morning the telephone rang while we were at the breakfast table.

One of God's servants was on the phone. He said, Elmer, you're finished now. I said, yes.

He says, where are you going to live? I said, I don't know. He says, God wants you here. I said, okay, I'll come and find out about it.

The next morning we were down there. We spent the day hunting a place with nothing to hunt with. But we found the place and we got it.

Having done all to stand. I didn't know what I was going to do. I said to Mary, where do we go from here? She says, I can't understand what you're talking about.

She says, I've looked through your books. Do you know you've only allowed us two weeks to find a place to live in and move into? And the rest of 73, 74, 75 and 76 is all scheduled. And now 77, 78 and 79 is all scheduled.

I never asked for a meeting. God did the scheduling. He's going to keep me alive to see to it I fulfill his schedule.

Keep me strong enough to do it. And Mary, well, you'd never know her. This summer when we have a little time, we're going to Weight Watchers.

Having done all to stand. Why bump your head? Why worry yourself? Why kill yourself? Why injure and harm your family and yourself? Why worry? Mary, why do that when he is there to open the doors and to do it for you? You say, I don't know what I'm going to do about my job. You say, I don't know what I'm going to do about where I'm going to go from here.

Well, you suppose we could just leave it with God? He kind of enjoys it. You know, he does enjoy it. Because when he gets through doing it for you, he's so grateful for the privilege of doing it, that he pours

out buckets of blessing upon you.

And all you can do, I don't know about you, some people shout and hoot and holler. All I can do is stand there and cry and weep. Well, sometimes I get out of hoop every little while.

This is our God. And he's concerned about his children. And all I could tell you is, after doing everything you could think of, just leave it to him.

Stand. You may want to run, but don't run. I wanted to run several times I wanted to run.

I'd like to have hid. Just hide away. Pull everything in behind me.

But he wouldn't let me. And I'm glad I didn't. My God is still on the throne.

And he said there's nothing impossible with him. This is our God, the God that we worship. Having done all, to stand.

And when you've done that, I'll tell you something. You can go home tonight and sleep. Perfect rest.

Just relax and sleep. And say somebody's got that load that can carry it. It was dragging my chin.

It was breaking my back. It was destroying my heart. But he took it and gave me peace.

God bless you.

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