

Are You Sure You're Called to Stay

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the call to vocational ministry, urging individuals of all ages to consider dedicating their lives to serving God in various capacities. Through powerful anecdotes and biblical insights, the speaker addresses the fear and obstacles that may hinder one from answering God's call, highlighting the importance of courage, trust in God's sovereignty, and the assurance of His presence and care in every circumstance.

Scripture: Matthew 10:28, Matthew 10:29, Romans 8:28, Romans 8:31, James 4:13

Topics: "Vocational Ministry", "Overcoming Fear in Faith"

Description

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Transcript

My church loves to send out missionaries. We have several folks in Kazakhstan. And we sent a young couple to that region, not that country.

And the father of the husband said to his son, if you don't come back, I'm going to shoot John Piper. And he meant it. Wasn't joking at all.

He was so angry at me for being instrumental in his son's taking his children and his wife to Central Asia that he said, if you don't come back, he will pay with his life. And I'd like to pray with you. Father in heaven, I'm here tonight to put myself in that position with about 2,000 parents.

And I'm really eager, Lord, for you to come and do a kind of calling work tonight that will bring to climax what you've been doing, perhaps for years for some, for hours for others, to bring them to a place where they are right on the edge, and some of them over the edge, of yielding to a call in vocational ministry, ministry of the word. So I pray for an anointing and a presence in this room tonight that would be remembered in decades to come when stories are told of fruitful ministries in the pastorate, in some parachurch ministries, in vocational foreign missions, and in other kinds of Christian vocation. When the stories are told about how did you get here, this night will prove to be one of the decisive pieces in your leading and your calling on lives.

And so, Lord, come, help young people to deal with parents who aren't interested in them laying down their lives in missions, who want to be somebody money-making, or famous, esteemed in the professional guild. And I pray that you'd change those parents' hearts, and that you'd give courage, fearlessness to young people. So, Lord, come down and do a mighty work of drawing, wooing, freeing, calling by the power of your spirit through the agency of your word for the glory of your name.

I ask in Christ's name, amen. Amen. Now, this is not just for young people.

We walk through three age groups as to what my dreams, hopes are in regard to this message tonight and where I am praying it will lead. Young people for sure, there are a lot of them here, and your whole life is in front of you almost. And God calls people, leads people, woos people, persuades people into vocational Christian ministry.

Could be pastoring, could be teaching, could be leading some kind of mercy ministry, could be missionary. He brings people there sometimes through decisive Damascus-like experiences in a moment. Almost inexplicably.

More often than that, I think he does it with a sequence over time of experiences that when they all come together, produce an irresistible, irrevocable desire for the work that you can't shake and you have to conclude this is of God. Because it's so biblical, and it's so me, it fits so many needs, people are confirming it, and so I yield. I think it happens that way probably more often than not.

And I just, I hope that you young people, whether you experience a Damascus thing at this conference, or this is just one of those pieces. Another one will come in a week. Another one in a year.

When you look back over, it will be like the hound of heaven after you, one thing after the other, and you will then yield and say, all right, God's after me for that kind of work. Because the need is great. It's great in the Korean-American community for ministry, pastoring, other kinds of leadership.

It's great in the wider missionary need around the world. Second group of people I have in mind are midlife people scattered out there, people who've been in their professions 10, 20 years, middle of everything, going great, cresting in the achievements that you dreamed about when you got your degree. And God tonight wants to move into your life and say, are you sure you're called to keep doing what you're doing? Are you sure? Or will you look back on this conference and say, when John Piper asked that question, are you sure you're to be a lawyer this way the rest of your life? A psychiatrist this way the rest of your life? A doctor this way? A nurse this way? A teacher this way? An engineer this way? A computer analyst this way the rest of your life? Or all of these 10, 20 years of experience, have they been getting me ready for another use for more directed Christian involvement? That's the question I want you to ask and the Holy Spirit to begin, if not to decisively answer.

Let me give you some examples. David and Mary Decker from our church in West Africa now, on their, I think, fourth term with SIM, was a manager of a Foot Locker shoe store. When I preached a message like this over 15 years ago, then I called, like probably there may be some kind of call afterwards tonight, I don't know how we'll close.

I called at the end of the service, if you sense God doing something unusual. I don't mean just, I'm willing to do the will of God. I expect everybody to say that.

But something unusual in your life, and there's David and Mary, a Foot Locker shoe store manager standing here saying, I don't know what it is, I don't know when it is, I just have this rumbling that something's going to change. And now for the fourth term, they are a family, three sons of our most rugged, hang in there, make it happen, missionaries. They have lost every possession they own three times, I think, because of evacuation in the midst of military coups.

Helicopters had to sweep in, yank them out, carry what's in your suitcase, everything else is gone. And I have never met a more positive couple happy to go back every time. And then there's Brian and Deanna Pratt, have had some hard times recently.

They're in Kazakhstan. I think they're back right now, it was a few weeks ago to try to sort those things out. I think they're in their third term.

Brian was probably 10 years ago making \$80,000 or so, working for the phone company as an engineer in Minneapolis. We did a retreat where we said, come on now, wherever you are in your career, does God want to use those gifts more focused for His cause and His purpose around the world? And he walked to the front and couldn't stop his hands from doing this for a half an hour. There was such a powerful move of God on his life, and they've been remarkably fruitful.

Among the most fruitful missionaries, I mean for soul winning and church planting that we've ever sent out. And then, right now, just a few weeks away from going to plant churches among the poor in Bangkok are Todd and Karen Indahar, who are in their mid-40s, I suppose, and have one teenage daughter and two younger children, and they just sold their house. They moved into an apartment across the street from us that a person has just for missionaries, and they're trying to finish raising their support.

And they're heading out, and he's been a professional person for 20 years. That's the kind of people I mean in this second category. Do not assume this message of calling you to seriously ask the question about vocational Christian ministry is only for these young people.

It is for you and for the others. Here's my third category, retirees. The Bible does not know anything about the concept of retirement.

It does not exist. You can change. You can devote yourself to one career, 35, 40, 50 years, and now here you are, 65, 70 years old, healthy, good eyes, good ears, not losing your memory too bad.

I'm 58, I'm losing mine, so I know you can keep doing ministry when the memory is weaker. And you've got in front of you 10, 15, who knows how many good years left. I want to just ask the question for those of you in your 60s, why would you waste a lifetime of wisdom given to you by Almighty God playing games in Nevada? Why would you just do hobbies? Why would you just go fishing, just play golf? I asked somebody for a little cultural sensitivity here, do Korean people play golf? I have no idea whether this is a popular sport, but if I were talking to an ordinary, non-Asian American group, I'd say, don't throw your life away on the golf course from 65 to 85, for goodness sake.

God has invested in you all these years. God has invested in you. You are ripe for ministry now.

How tragic it is that we have this American sense that now I've invested my life, I've earned my money, all my 30% of it went into a retirement plan and I'm gonna live off that stuff and do all the stuff I wanted to do and couldn't do. What a worldly mindset, wanted to do and couldn't do. You don't want to lay your life down where only gray haired or no haired people can go.

The people that are the safest in the world probably in the dangerous countries are very old people. Everybody in those countries respects old people. They don't want these young whippersnapper Americans with all their corrupt music to come over there, right? That's the way they think.

All Americans do is export trash. But if an old person comes, venerable, wise, they wonder, hmm, why would you spend the last 10 years of your life with us? And of course the answer is, I'm about to go to heaven, I'd like to take you with me. So those are the three categories that I hope will listen carefully to what I have to say.

My aim is to remove the obstacle of fear tonight. There are so many ways to stir people up to consider vocational Christian ministry. And I only have a few minutes and I'm going to choose this one because as I had, you know, a couple of hours to get ready for tonight, I had to retreat to the things that I'm most at home and comfortable with and I have a text in Matthew that I have thought a lot about in regard to courage and in regard to fear.

So maybe the one thing I could do for those three age categories tonight is to give you enough words from Jesus that fear would no longer be a decisive element in keeping you from responding to God's leading. There may be others and I don't address those, somebody else will have to do that in your life, but I can at least tackle this one. Let me give you one illustration from my own life why this is probably such a big deal.

This will be relevant especially, I think, to young people, although I don't know where the middle-aged and older folks are on this issue. When I was a senior in high, when I was a ninth through 12th grade in high school, I could not speak in front of a group. I couldn't stand up in a civics class and give a book report of 45 seconds.

Because physically my throat froze, my whole body choked. It was a physiological impossibility for me to speak. I shed more tears over this.

My mother sent me to a psychologist. I only went once because I could tell the psychologist was trying to blame my mother for this problem and I love my mother more than anybody on planet Earth, so I wouldn't go back to that psychologist anymore. They wanted to figure out what's wrong with this guy.

His daddy's a preacher. Is he gonna be a preacher like your dad? I'd say not in a million years. Not in a million years.

I couldn't give what they called a part in a Southern Baptist training union on Sunday evening, all through high school. Some people get elected to be vice president and president of their classes. I never even ran for an office because you had to give speeches, right? I couldn't give a speech.

And that's the way I finished high school, introverted. It's probably why I had such bad complexion like I talked about this morning because I was anxious and nervous all the time, churning inside. So I go to Wheaton College and I won't give you the whole story, I'll just give you the crisis.

And it was after the first two years, I stayed for summer school and chaplain Evan Welch came to me one day and he said, Johnny, that's what I was called in college. Johnny, would you be willing to pray in chapel this week? Now, up till that point, I had navigated my way through classes at college to avoid all public speaking, not knowing how I would graduate because you had to take a speech class to graduate in those days. And I was just gonna put it off till the last day and then drop out of school.

And he said, would you pray in chapel? Now, chapel in the summer at Wheaton was about 500 people. And I found, and I have no idea why, coming out of my mouth the words, how long do you have to pray? And he said, what, 30 seconds? To this day, I do not know how or why I said, yes. Now I was really in trouble.

And I remember walking to front campus, this beautiful tree, grass, flower, big old building and pacing back and forth saying, God, please help me. And I did something I've only done a few other times and I don't recommend it as a frequent thing to do, but sometimes it's biblical. I made a vow, just like in the Psalms it says, I will pay my vows to the most high.

I made a vow and I said, God, if you just get me through a 30 second prayer in front of 500 people, just get me through it. Whatever impression I make, just get me through it. I will never say no to an opportunity to speak for you out of fear again.

That felt absolutely cataclysmic to me. I mean, it may sound strange and funny to you because I know people joke about their knees knocking when they speak and shaking. That is not what I'm talking about.

I'm talking about a mega shutdown. So God got me through and it was a breakthrough. And I still get nervous and I've never, I think, broken my vow.

Fear is huge, right? That's one kind. There are all kinds of fear. So I wanna take a passage of scripture for the next few minutes and open the words of Jesus and give you five reasons not to be afraid of following God into the ministry of the word, even if it's risky.

So let's go to Matthew 10. If you have a Bible and you can read, if it's not too dim out there, read with me. We'll start at verse 16 of Matthew 10 and we'll go to verse 31.

Matthew six, I'm sorry, Matthew 10, verse 16. Put yourself in front of Jesus as if he were talking to you and ask him if he is talking to you in a very direct way. Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

That is a very frightening sending because wolves eat sheep. Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. So be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Beware of men for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues. You got secular people in courts against you, Jewish people in synagogues against you, flogging you. Verse 18, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

So there's an evangelistic strategy that Jesus says will happen, not might happen, but will happen. Verse 19, when they deliver you over, do not be anxious. Those texts used to land on me with such discouragement because I was so anxious.

I knew I wasn't supposed to be. And I prayed and prayed and prayed. And young people don't give up praying about the thing that you're wrestling with because I prayed probably from age 14 about that problem.

And the answer came at age 20. It really came. Those were six very painful years.

And sometimes I wondered, will it ever change? Don't quit praying. Don't be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say. For what you are to say will be given you in that hour.

For it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your father speaking through you. Brother will deliver up brother to death, father his child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death.

I mean, you think it's bad in the world now? Children and parents betraying each other to execution. You will be hated, this is verse 22, you will be hated by all for my namesake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next. For truly I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher.

And now begin to listen for reasons why not to be afraid. Because there are five of them in these next verses and I'm going to come back and point them out. A disciple is not above his teacher nor a servant above his master.

It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher and the servant to be like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, that's the name of the devil, how much more will they malign those of his household? So you think you're going to escape being maligned? And false names being put upon you, there's no escape. If they call Jesus the devil, what will they call his followers? So, verse 26, have no fear of them.

For nothing is covered that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light. What you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not you sparrows sold for a penny? Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father.

But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, you are of more value than many sparrows. What an amazing, amazing word from the Lord Jesus.

There are a lot of reasons why you need to have courage to speak the word of God. And in America today, as well as in very hostile countries around the world, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and others, to be an evangelizing Christian is to be a dead Christian. Shot, poisoned, killed.

Does that mean we shouldn't do it? I think Paul would look at people today who say, oh, those countries are closed. You say, what do you mean closed? Well, if you go there and you share the gospel, you could either wind up in jail or be beaten. He'd look at you and say, I don't get it.

How's that closed? Well, I mean, we don't want that to happen to us. You say, well, right. But Jesus was crucified and I was whipped five times and three times with rods and was in jail countless times and danger everywhere.

What's closed? That's an American concept. It's a comfort loving, running, run from risk, chicken hearted, unbiblical American concept. It's not a biblical one.

I send you as sheep in the midst of Muslim wolves, Hindu wolves, Buddhist wolves, secularist wolves. How's the gospel going to spread? Oh, it's just go where it's safe. What's that? Where's that in the Bible? And in America itself, the fear of declaring a truth strongly pervades the clergy.

We have so many wimpy clergy. Just say what is unifying and safe. Don't say anything that could get you into trouble or cause division.

Let me read you a quote from Martin Luther. If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that one little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Jesus Christ. However boldly I may be professing Christ, where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved.

And to be steady on all battlefields besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point. And how many pastors calculate their ministries exactly to flinch at the point of controversy, the pro-life point or the homosexual marriage point or the divorce point or the materialism wealthy church member who happens to give a lot point. We just won't go there.

Let's preach safe gospel that offends nobody because it's couched in such self-affirming American psychobabble. We are called to take risks specifically in regard to ministering the word of God. So this text now is real clear on what the main point is.

Let me direct your attention to verse 26, 28, 31 so that you can see Jesus' main point. Verse 26, so have no fear of them. Verse 28, do not fear those who kill the body.

Verse 31, fear not, therefore you are of much more value than many sparrows. There's a real clear negative point here. Don't be afraid of doing what? That's clear too in this text.

Verse 27, what I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. And what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. So the fear in this text is all about fearing speaking.

And I'm calling you retirees, middle-aged, young people, I'm calling you, consider the possibility that God is on you tonight, moving you toward vocational word ministry. All kinds of forms, but a vocational word ministry and the use of your very gifts to proclaim the gospel. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light.

What you hear whispered when I'm with you in the garden of the Mount of Olives, and I'm telling you all the secret to the kingdom, preach it to everybody and don't be afraid to speak. Now, he gives five arguments and so I hope you will consider these. Number one, five reasons not to be afraid when you consider the possibility tonight that God might be calling you to this ministry.

Number one, look at the word so or therefore at the beginning of verse 26. So, or it could be translated therefore, have no fear of them. That word so means the reason for not being afraid came just before.

The command, so don't be afraid. What did come just before? Let's read it at the end of verse 25. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those in his household? So, have no fear.

Does that make sense? Doesn't sound like it makes sense. That sounds like very strange logic to me. They called Jesus the devil.

You're not as good as Jesus, so they're gonna call you worse things so don't be afraid. How does the so work? How does therefore work? And I think it works like this. If they call you and treat you like they did Jesus, that's really good evidence that you are a member of his household and nothing could be more wonderful.

You see what it says? If they call the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household? I tell you, there is nothing in the universe I want more tonight than to know I'm in the house of Jesus. I belong to the family of Jesus. And if they come after my head or my heart, they can have it as long as I can be sure that their maligning of me is evidence I'm in the house.

So I think the logic works. I think the logic works. So don't be afraid because the very persecution you are fearing is the evidence you belong to the household of Jesus.

Therefore, don't be afraid of the thing that you're fearing. That's argument number one. Here's argument number two.

Look, and I hope you can learn a little something about reading the Bible. You know, I said to you that I was lying in the hospital this morning listening to John Harold Ockengay handle the Bible in such a way that made a fire burn in my heart like in Luke 24, did not the fire burn within us when he opened to us the word? A fire burned within me because I saw him drawing out things like I'm trying to draw out right now from clear logic of a text. Not just putting on the text, his ideas, but drawing out what's really there.

So look at the word for in the middle of verse 26. And I'm sorry if you have an NIV and they drop things like this. That's because the NIV tends to be a paraphrase and not a really more literal translation.

And I would recommend you get another one. Verse 26 has in the middle of it, the word for, if you don't see it, you need to change versions. So have you not, so have no fear of them for nothing is covered that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known.

So a ground, a reason, a basis, a foundation is given for the first half of the verse. Don't be afraid of them. Why? Because nothing is covered that will not be revealed.

Now, how does that work? Isn't it amazing that Jesus is arguing your fear away? You might think, you can't argue somebody's fear away. Jesus is. When you know it's Jesus and he's giving you good reasons and you pray, Lord, let these reasons land on me with your power, they can make fear go.

And so he says, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed and nothing is hidden that will not be known. Now, how does that help take away fear? Works like this. One of the great obstacles to keep speaking is when you seem to be surrounded by powerful, cultured, well-to-do, thoughtful, intellectual people who roll their eyes and cluck their tongues at your mythological folly about the death and resurrection of God.

And they just think you are a fool. And at that point, you can begin to feel like a fool. And Jesus says here, let me tell you something.

Right now, something is covered and concealed to them. Their eyes are blind. You have been given eyes to see a truth.

Know that one day the skies will blaze with this truth and all those people who are rolling their cultured eyes despising you right now will fall before you and say, you were right, you are vindicated. And you need to hold on to that so that you can move through these moments when you feel so foolish and so small and like they know so much and they're so educated and they're so powerful and they're dressed so sharp and on and on. You need to remember, the things that are covered are gonna be revealed.

The things that are concealed are gonna strip the world bare with light and glory. The trumpet will sound and everybody who has seemed so sure, so cock ready to put Christians down are gonna reel back on their heels as the Lord of glory appears. And all these nobodies who spoke the truth fearlessly are gonna shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

Be one of those, be one of those fearless nobodies. Let your vindication come later. It doesn't have to come now.

Number three, that's the second argument. Here's number three. It's in verse 28.

It says, do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. So what's the argument for fearlessness here? I would put it like this. Fear not.

You can only be killed. Isn't that a fair paraphrase of verse 28? I'll read it again. Do not fear those who kill the body and cannot kill the soul.

All they can do, Jesus says, all they can do is kill you. Now, if that doesn't land on you with relief, you don't get it. You don't get Christianity.

You need to get out of the American, actually it's a human assumption that we deserve life. Who says you deserve three score and 10? You don't deserve another breath. Every breath is a free gift of grace to be put to use for King Jesus.

If he wants you at age 16 in a car wreck like my wife's brother Ben, or at 40, 56 like my mother in that bus accident in Israel, or at 85 like my dad who's having dementia now, whenever he wants you, he can take you and it's no wrong done to you. All you can do is die. Now, but if you choose to live the life of the fear person, the seek comfort rather than meet need, protect yourself, live in safety, you can lose body and soul.

And that's worth trembling about. Lose your body and fly away to Jesus. That's no loss.

It's a loss for your mom and dad and your kids. Sure, but God will step in and meet their needs. All your enemies can do is dispatch you to paradise.

And it might be helpful to say right here, what's the difference between a Christian martyr and a Muslim terrorist? Suicide bomber. The difference is this. There are lots of differences.

Muslim people do not believe in Christ crucified and risen. And therefore they're not saved. They're not going to heaven.

There is no paradise on the other side, especially on the other side of murder. The difference when I say all that can happen for you is that your enemy dispatch you to paradise is you die to bring people to the truth. You don't kill to bring people to the truth.

Christianity does not spread by the sword. There is no spreading of the message of the Prince of Peace by the sword. I wish the Muslim world knew the difference between American military and Christian missions.

They don't. They think it's all one thing. And that's a great tragedy, which is why we must as patriotic as you want to be.

And it's a good thing. You must distance yourself in kingdom enterprises from American enterprises. There is a difference between having Jesus as your president and having Bush as your president or Kerry or whoever else.

There ought to be a kind of counter cultural edge to your Christianity that lets the people you work with know my first allegiance is to Christ, not America. I don't, I shouldn't go there. I'll forget that one.

Number four, that was number three. Number three was, you can only be killed. Here's number four.

It's found in verse 30. Even the hairs of your head are all numbered, fear not. What does that mean? Who cares? Go ahead, count them.

What difference does that make? What are they saying? Go through the words and ask the heart of Jesus. What is Jesus saying when he says, don't be afraid. The hairs of your head are all numbered.

What's that about? Isn't it about closeness and intimacy and care? We have a little eight year old daughter and my wife sits her on a bench, either with a Christian video or a book in front of her and for three hours braids her hair, cornrows, different kinds of things. That has provided for me, as I've watched it over the last eight years, that has provided for me a sense of this text that Jesus probably didn't have in his mind, but it's like what he had in his mind, I think. Namely, look at her.

Look at her like a mother hen, hovering over her little chick with her hands on her head for three hours, braiding, massaging, moving, making sure the tug is just right so it doesn't hurt. Pull hairs out. What care? What intimacy? What closeness? What devotion? And one of the things that is so threatening in ministry is the feeling that God's gone.

He's left me. I'm in jail in Pakistan or India or Saudi Arabia or Sudan, and nobody remembers me. Oh, the dangers at that point of making shipwreck of our faith, right? Jesus wants to say to them, no, it's not like that.

I come down and just like you would have to count hairs like this, one, two, three, four. And then if you got 10, pull a little rubber band around 10 of them and then start counting again because you might lose your place, you know, because there's no even rows or anything. You just count.

That's how close I am to you in the prison cell. I love you so much. I'll never leave you.

I'll never forsake you. I'll be with you to the end of the age. So just here as you contemplate this moving of God tonight and in the past and in the future on your life to draw you possibly toward vocational ministry, always hear the last word of Jesus in Matthew.

Lo, I will be with you to the end of the age. One more argument. Number five.

It's verse 31. Start at verse 29. Not one of them, are not five sparrows sold for a penny? Not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father's will.

You are of more value. Now I'm at verse 31. You are of more value than many sparrows.

There's a logic going on here. It's called an argument from the lesser to the greater. He's dealing with sparrows and talking about how cheap they are.

A couple of pennies, get five of them. And then he says, God is so attentive and powerful and providentially in control with these sparrows that not one of them drops dead apart from his will. In other words, he is sovereign over all the birds in the world.

That's really sovereign. All the birds in woods, in jungles, where no human being is, having no influence whatsoever. When one of them dies, God has decided that it's time for it to die.

And then he says, to make sure we get where he's going, that the logic from the lesser to the greater, he says, and you, you're more valuable to me than many sparrows. Therefore, here's the conclusion, nothing will befall you, but what I decree as good for you. Nothing befalls you, but what I decree is good for you.

It's like that text that I began with last night from James chapter four. Come now, you who say, we will go up to such and such a city and spend a year there and get gain. You do not know about tomorrow.

Your life is but a vapor. Rather, you should say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. If the Lord wills, we will live.

And if the Lord doesn't, we won't. But it won't be because he dropped the ball. God never says, oops.

Satan tries his best to make God look like he says, oops, but he never does. And so the great confidence that we have, and I think probably in my battles in the ministry and to stay in ministry and to slog my way through hard times and good times, the confidence in the sovereignty of God over the details of my life is probably the most important thing after the cross. So let me put the two together and I'll be done.

Romans 8, 28, we all love, don't we? For I, we know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His promise. Now, there is a ground, a basis, a foundation put underneath that. For those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

And those whom He predestined, He called. And those whom He called, He justified. And those whom He justified, He glorified.

What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, will He not with us freely give us all things? Now, put verse 32 at the end to verse 28 against each other, on top of each other. All things work together for the good of those who love Him and are called. Will He not give us all things with Him? And the answer is yes.

He'll give us everything we need. He'll work every circumstance together for good. And that seems to be where Jesus ends His argument.

Don't be afraid. Take what you've learned in your churches from your mom and dad, from the Bible, and pray earnestly, Oh God, is there a call on my life tonight? Are you taking me one more step towards devoting myself to seriously pursuing a confirmation of your call on my life towards vocational declaration in some form or other, missionary, teacher, pastor, editor, writer, or some support ministry on the mission field. Is God doing that? Please use these five Jesus arguments against my anxiety and against my fears to get that out of the way so that I can hear your voice clearly.

So Father, I just pray that you would do that. That as we worship now, and as we contemplate what you've been saying for some days, as we wonder why Erwin McManus is hung up in the hurricane in Florida, and

why I was to be here tonight and just fill in, what's this all about, Lord? What are You doing? I ask You to come by Your Holy Spirit and right across the retirees, the middle-aged, and the young people to answer that question with a spiritual moving that brings them closer to what You may be calling them to do. Through Christ we pray.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/7WeAtTzbm78.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/are-you-sure-youre-called-to-stay/>

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