

(Biographies) John G. Paton

by John Piper

John G. Paton's life and ministry demonstrate the importance of faith, trust, and courage in the face of adversity, and his legacy continues to inspire and encourage others today.

Duration: 1:19:50

Scripture: Genesis 5:24, Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 22:6, Matthew 6:33, Acts 16:31, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 1 Timothy 4:13

Topics: "Faith And Courage", "Godly Parenting"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares personal anecdotes about his experiences with his children and the importance of teaching them reverence for God. He also mentions a missionary named John Patton who faced great danger and opposition while spreading the Gospel. The speaker emphasizes the need for courage in the face of criticism and highlights the impact of a godly father in raising children who love and serve God. The sermon concludes with a story of the speaker's own encounter with armed men and his reliance on prayer and trust in Jesus during that difficult moment.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at www.desiringgod.org. If you draw a line from Honolulu straight to Sydney, it'll cut right through Port Villa, which is the capital of what is today called Vanuatu. And if you go along two-thirds of that line, you'll be there.

Those are the New Hebrides, given that name by Captain James Cook in the 18th century because they look to him like the Hebrides islands off the coast of Scotland. Today, Vanuatu has about 190,000 people on 80 islands. Not all of them are inhabited, but many of them.

As far as we know, there was no Christian influence among the New Hebrides until 1839. Think of it. Just think of it.

Just think of it. Eighteen centuries between Christ and the first missionary. It should not have been.

The first missionaries, you've probably heard the names, John Williams and James Harris. Within minutes after going ashore on the island of Aramanga, they were clubbed to death, cooked, and eaten in the face of the ship that was still offshore. John Patton arrived there in 1858 and gave his life to the New Hebrides.

He died when he was, what was 1907. You do the math. He had a long life, which is amazing when you realize what he went through.

He was born in 1824, 1824 to 1907. He lived in Scotland, grew up in a godly home and was a city missionary. Today we call him urban missionary, probably, in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Glasgow from age 23 to 34.

And it was a wonderfully fruitful ministry. He was filling up classes of six and seven hundred poor people every day. And then God called him to be a foreign missionary and he went to the island of Tanna with his wife when he was 34.

And he labored there for four years until he was driven off. The hostilities became so great. Took four years doing vision spreading all over Australia and Britain.

And then God called him to the island of Aniwa. And there he spent the rest of his life. And the whole island came to Christ.

And today, if you go to Vanuatu, roughly, oh, what are my numbers here? 85 percent, I think, of the people on the islands would call themselves Christians. And a very large percentage of that are Presbyterians. It's the biggest church, which is a tribute to the abiding influence.

That's about 93 years between the time Patton died and today. And the Presbyterian church is strong there. Perhaps, according to Johnstone's Operation World, 21 percent of the population would call themselves evangelical.

So the history of the church is so short. It's so recent. And they were cannibals.

That's not an overstatement or a rhetorical flourish. And the missionaries came there in the 1830s, 40s, 50s, and labored so faithfully that whole islands were brought to Christ. And it was a remarkable thing.

What he did was simply to plant himself there, learn the language, translate parts of the Bible, built a couple of orphanages on Onewa. He and his wife raised dozens and dozens of children for Jesus. He said, trained teachers that became converted, sent them out to the outlying villages.

He said, we ministered to the sick. We dispensed medicines every day. We taught them the use of tools.

We expounded the scriptures. We held worship services every week on the Lord's day for any who was willing to come. And then he wrote in his old age, I claimed Onewa for Jesus.

And by the grace of God, Onewa now worships at the Savior's feet. It was a remarkable thing. It was not a big island.

It was two miles by seven miles. That's how big the island was. Had on it three or 4,000 people scattered in little, little villages around.

And that's what he gave 15 years of concerted life to. And then he began to mingle mission on the island with what was really probably the most influential part of his life was missions mobilization preached all over America from California, up into Toronto, to New York city, around Europe, especially in Australia, in the islands, constantly blowing the trumpet of the South sea islands and the remaining tribes yet to be reached there. He kept journals, notebooks, and letters.

And, uh, I don't know if any of these are left in the bookstore now, but, uh, John G Patton and autobiography is all three volumes in one volume from banner of truth trust. Now, everything I know about him, I learned from this book plus about four others, which are totally dependent on this book, except one. There's one other book that I know of that says the later years, because there was about 10 years to go when he stopped here.

And I wanted to know, well, how did he die and what happened in the last 10 years of his life? And there is one called the later years, which I got from Bethel library. So it's, it's not a huge corpus and anybody can read it and you can do for your church, what I'm about to do here. And I encourage you to do these kinds of biographical studies.

You don't have to be any great scholar to do this. You just have to take one of these on vacation in the summer and underline it when you read it and go home and take a few notes and put it together and give a talk and your people will love it. They will benefit so much from the trials through which so many great saints have gone.

So I encourage you to do it. So here's the outline of my, of my talk, which is entitled, you'll be eaten by cannibals, courage in the cause of world missions, lessons from the life of John G Patton. Three questions.

Number one, what kinds of circumstances in his life called for courage to what did his courage achieve? Three, where did his courage come from? So number one, what kinds of circumstances called for courage in Patton's life? Number one, he had courage to overcome the criticism he received from respected elders for going to the new Hebrides. A Mr. Dixon said, you'll be eaten by cannibals. And a brother just walked up to me here and said, when he was at Moody, I forget whether you said your grandmother or whoever sent pictures from national geographic to him and said, they'll eat you.

And it was not a joke. And it wasn't a joke for Mr. Dixon here either. You'll be eaten by cannibals.

Well, Harris and Williams who were happened 19 years ago when that was said, this is fresh. This is not 150 years ago. This is 19 years ago.

And you're going back to the same islands. And this was his response. Mr. Dixon, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave and there to be eaten by worms.

I confess to you that if I can, but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I'm eaten by cannibals or by worms. And in the great day, my resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen redeemer. Now there is a kind of spiritual moxie there that makes the book really enjoyable.

It's a good read. He was a remarkable man. I think we're overusing the word remarkable.

So I'll try to pick another remarkable word besides that one. He was an extraordinary man and it makes a very good read. There was a gutsiness and in your faceness that comes out in his dealing with the most terrified circumstances on the islands that you just stand and wonder.

But he was leaving a very fruitful ministry. He was a success. If anybody would look at him and say, you got an anointing for urban ministry, brother, nobody's been able to do for decades in Glasgow what you have done.

And he walked away from it and he got stiff criticism for it. He said the opposition was so strong from nearly all and many of them warm Christian friends that I was sorely tempted to question whether I was carrying out the divine call or only some headstrong wish of my own. This also caused me much anxiety and drove me close to God in prayer.

First act of courage to handle that kind of criticism and stand by his sense of God's call. Second, he had courage to risk losing his loved ones and press on when he did in fact lose them. He married just before he left.

It's early thirties. There's a lot of details, by the way, left out that just are maddening. You want to know.

I do not know how many children Patton had. I know he had at least six, but there's no where he talks about them. His selectivity in writing this autobiography is frustrating to the biographer, but he had several.

Anyway, he married Mary and took her on a boat three months to Sydney, then over to the islands. They choose the island, Tanna. Go to Tanna.

They positioned him there. He built a house. Then he brought her over February 12, 1859.

The baby was born. So now they have a little one and they're married and the boat leaves. No telephone, no telegraph and nobody else.

Our island exile, he said, thrilled with joy, but the greatest of sorrows was treading hard upon the heels of my great joy. Mary had repeated attacks of ague, fever, pneumonia, diarrhea. Quote, Then in a moment, altogether unexpectedly, she died on March 3rd.

So this is four months after he's there. To crown my sorrows and complete my loneliness, the dear baby boy whom we had named after her father, Peter Robert Robeson, was taken from me after one week's sickness on the 20th of March. Let those who have ever passed through any similar darkness as of midnight feel for me.

As for all others, it would be more than vain to try to paint my sorrows. He dug the graves with his own hands. He put them in at the end of his house and he said, My reason seemed for a time almost to give way, but for Jesus and the fellowship he vouchsafed to me there, I must have gone mad and died beside that lonely grave.

Now, the two aspects of courage here are one, to risk that happening. Her parents never recovered from that. He met them when he went back four years later.

They never recovered. They died from that blow. And so you can imagine the kind of criticism that would begin to crop up.

You took my daughter. You took my daughter. I've had a man threaten my life from outside this church for sending his son overseas.

He said to me, If anything happens to him, you will pay. The courage then to go on after it happens is a great courage. And he went on.

He went on. Four years beside that grave, alone with Abraham, his anitimes convert servant helper who was wonderfully trustworthy. He fought the battle alone to preach the gospel among the cannibals.

Number three, he had courage to risk his own sickness in a foreign land with no doctors and no escape. Fever and ague, he said, attacked me fourteen times severely. He never knew.

Picture it now. You have no hospitals. You have no doctors.

You do have some primitive medicines with you. And you get sick with the same thing your wife died of and you watched her die. You buried her with your own hands and you never know 14 times and you don't know which one is going to be your time.

Do you not go mad? Do you not quit after the third or fourth or fifth or 13th time and say that's enough? And he didn't just kept on going and going and going. And those dangers were not just in the first four years on Tanna. Here's what he wrote.

15 years later, there was another wife, Margaret. He married after the went back home and he had another child. And this is what he wrote during the hurricanes of January, April, 1873, when the day spring, the mission ship was wrecked.

We lost our darling child by death. My dear wife had a protracted illness and I was brought very low with severe rheumatic fever and was reported as dying. So it isn't as though he passed through a season of serious suffering in the first four years and then triumphant conversion of Aniwa.

He wrote the line, our struggles were strangely mingled all through life with successes and difficulties. It was a strange mingling. Number four, the most common demand for courage was the almost constant threat to his life from the hostilities of these natives.

What makes this autobiography so thrilling, it's like a thriller to read, is because of his report of so many crisis situations into which he was brought and out of which the Lord brought him one crisis after the other. And one wonders how he kept his mind from snapping. I've been in only a very few situations where there've been death threat phone calls or somebody hollering obscenities outside your house or some gunshots.

And the thing that has happened inside of my stomach and my chest at those moments, when it's not surrounded by 500 people with machetes, it's just, you're not sure what it is. I just want, how in the world do you keep your mind from just going snap? And then to have it happen over and over and there are no weekend getaways. There are no restaurants.

There's no bed and breakfast. There's nothing but more of it tomorrow morning. Never knowing whether if you walk down to the water place, somebody would kill you.

Or if you did anything, it's constant tension. The spring never has a chance to unwind. How in the world, but for sovereign miraculous grace upon grace, way beyond anything any of us carries into it.

Could it last? And that's the way he, he lived for these four years on Tana. He wrote our continuous danger caused me now oftentimes to sleep with my clothes on that I might not, that I might start at a moment's warning. My faithful dog, Clutha.

This is a great theme running through the first volume. Clutha. I love Clutha.

Little Scottish terrier saves his life over and over again. And all I think is he must've brought him on the boat. I mean, where do you get a Scottish terrier in, in the new Hebrides and Clutha, the name Clutha is

the name of the boat that, that brought him down there.

So this little dog is a very poignant seeing when the dog doesn't escape when he escapes, but this dog saved his life over and over again. And he gives God the credit for it. Our continuous danger caused me often to sleep in my clothes that I might start at a moment.

My faithful dog, Clutha would give a sharp bark and waken me. God made them fear this precious creature and often used her in saving my life. My enemies seldom slackened.

He wrote their hateful designs against my life. However, calmed or baffled for a moment, a wild chief, for example, followed me around for hours with a loaded musket. They got muskets from the traders.

In fact, one of the other horrible themes in this book is how wicked the white men are in their intentionally fostering violence and intentionally spreading measles. In one case, they took, they took slaves off into the boat, threw them in the hole with measles, took them out after 24 hours and send them back. And the epidemic wiped out a third of the islands.

The population was about 170,000 when the ministry began. It was down to 70,000 by the time the missionaries were done. And one of the reasons the missionaries were treated so badly is because the traders did that kind of thing and they blamed them as they might well for the kinds of miseries that were brought to them.

A wild chief followed me around for four hours with his musket loaded. And though often directed towards me, God restrained his hand. I spoke kindly to him and attended to my work as if he had not been there, fully persuaded that my God had placed me there and would protect me till my allotted task was finished.

So imagine going about your pastoral duty all morning with a man with a loaded musket, just kind of following you around and doing like this. And you never know, you never know when he's going to pull the trigger. One morning at daybreak, my house was surrounded by armed men and a chief intimated that they had assembled to take my life.

Seeing that I was entirely in their hands, I knelt down and gave myself a weight, body, soul, and spirit to the Lord Jesus for what seemed the last time on earth. Rising, I went out to them and began calmly talking about their unkind treatment of me and contrasting it with all my conduct toward them. At last, some of the chiefs who had attended worship rose and said, our conduct has been bad, but now we will fight for you and kill all those who hate you.

So they were a very fickle group, but he had a way of getting right in their face. He would just say, you shouldn't be doing this. He lectured them.

He would just, he would grab the pistol of the gun and he would just shake that like this and hold the barrel up in the air while he lectured them about how bad they were because he was their friend and there to do them good. And so many times they were shamed by his lecturing them in that way and they would walk away. His courage increased, I believe as his deliverances were multiplied.

He experienced so many times that you do begin to get callous, you know, certain neighborhoods you get used to and certain noises you get used to. If that didn't happen, missionaries would just, would go crazy, I think, where they are. They just get used to certain things that we would be scared by.

Going amongst them every day, I did my utmost to stop hostilities, setting the evils of war before them and pleading with the leading men to renounce it. He would even go and visit his enemies when they asked him to come to pray because they knew he had medicines. They knew he prayed with effectuality until even those who had been hostile to him when they got sick would say, send for Missy, the missionary.

And so he went one time to a man named Ian. He was called Durst. I Durst neither move nor speak because he had just, he was lying there and he, it was an ambush.

He walks into the hut and this man is lying there like he's dying. He throws up the cover, pulls out a huge knife, puts it right at his chest. And, and that's, he just feels like, well, it's over.

And here's what he wrote. I Durst neither move nor speak except that my heart kept praying to the Lord to spare me or if my time was to take me home to glory with himself. There passed a few moments of awful suspense.

My sight went and came. In other words, he almost fainted. Not a word had been spoken except to Jesus.

And then Ian wheeled the knife around, thrust into a sugarcane leaf and cried, go quickly. And I ran for my life, a weary four miles till I reached the mission house, faint yet praising God for such deliverance. Fifth cause for courage.

The need for courage in the face of criticism that you didn't stay when you left. After four years of risking his life almost daily, um, the rising tide of opposition was over the whole island and huge mobs were gathering on the hills around the coastline where he was. And he felt like this would now be the guilt of self murder, which is a strange thing because it looked to me like many other times.

It was also risking the gift, guilt of self murder. And, and yet there comes a point, I suppose, where you sense something in your bones. And he, he wasn't one to think that you should choose martyrdom intentionally by throwing yourself on somebody else's musket or knife.

And so he prayed for deliverance and the Lord sent a ship and he took the opportunity and he did escape after four years of enduring those horrors. Then he got criticized for it. And he wrote, conscious that I had to the last inch of my life tried to do my duty.

I left all results in the hands of my only Lord and all criticisms to his unerring judgment. Hard things were also occasionally spoken to my face. One dear friend, for instance, said, you should not have left.

You should have stood at your post until you fell. It would have been to your honor and better for the cause of mission. Had you been killed at the post of duty, like the Gordon's and the others.

And at that point, when you've risked your life for years and lost your wife and lost your child, and somebody says that to you, if you've been pouring your life out and preaching your heart out, wouldn't you just want to take your ball and go home to Glasgow and say, okay, if that's the way you treat your missionaries, if that's the way you feel, then I'm out of here. And he didn't, he could absorb that and press on. And he did press on.

That's point one. What were the causes of courage? So here's, here's number two, what did it achieve? What did it achieve? And I've already mentioned one, the entire island of Aniwa turned to Christ. So he had four years of apparently fruitless ministry on the island of Tanna, a few little remarkable conversions,

and then four years of itinerant trumpeting, telling a story, recruiting, raising money for the ship and so on, spreading vision.

And then they reassigned him to Aniwa. And he says later, years later, I claimed Aniwa for Jesus. And by the grace of God today, Aniwa worships at the Savior's feet.

Second thing that it achieved, this endurance on the island of Tanna resulted in a story being written and told that awakened thousands to the call of missions and strengthened the home church of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland in ways he never dreamed. So he wrote his second volume to the autobiography, which is the second two thirds or second third, last third of this book, roughly because the first volume, as it was told orally and then written, had such a great impact. But now the connection between that impact in mobilizing missions for the New Hebrides and the other South Sea islands and the four years of seeming failure, he brought those two together like this.

Oftentimes while passing through the perils and defeats of my first four years in the mission field of Tanna, I wondered why God permitted such things. But on looking back now, I already clearly perceive that the Lord was thereby preparing me for doing and providing me materials wherewith to accomplish the best work of my life, namely the kindling of the heart of Australian Presbyterianism with a living affection for the islanders of their own southern seas and in being the instrument under God of sending out missionary after missionary to the New Hebrides to claim another island and still another island for Jesus. That work and all that may spring from it in time and eternity never could have been accomplished by me but for the first sufferings and then the story of my Tanna enterprise.

So there is a Romans 828 kind of microcosm that he lived on for the rest of his life, those four years that looked so completely pointless in the happening. And some of you are at the fourth year of that. You cannot write the rest of your story.

You have to trust God that he will do something with that apparently fruitless investment. I was filled with a high passion of gratitude, he wrote after he visited Scotland, to be able to proclaim at the close of my tour, tour at home, that of all her ordained ministers, speaking of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, now one in every six was a missionary of the cross. So one of the effects, one of the achievements of the fruitless experience on Tanna was to go home and tell the stories of the dangers, tell the stories of his wife, tell the stories of his child, tell the stories of his sickness, and when he headed back four years later to Aniwa, one in six of you was a foreign missionary.

That's worth a lot of suffering. At least he believed it was. Now, what about the effect on the church just at home? Not to leave it, but here's what he wrote, nor did the dear old church thus cripple herself because of these men who were leaving.

On the contrary, her zeal for missions accompanied, if not caused, unwanted, W-O-N-T, unwanted prosperity at home. New waves of liberality passed over the heart of the people of God. Debts that had burdened many of the churches and mansions were swept away.

Additional congregations were organized, and in May 1876, the Reformed Presbyterian Church entered into an honorable and independent union with her larger, wealthier, more progressive sister, the Pre-Church of Scotland. So he thrilled to look at the health of the church at home because he was there recruiting for the New Hebrides. And brothers, I would tell you, never, ever, ever has the Lord let the cause of world missions in a local church hurt that church.

It doesn't happen. And so go for broke when it comes to the unreached peoples of the world. I don't care how bad it is in your church, lift up your sights towards the unreached peoples of the world.

Third effect, to vindicate the power of the gospel to convert the hardest people. One of the interesting things about Patton's autobiography is that he has an eye on the culture despisers of religion back home in Scotland and in Europe. He's writing this book for lots of different kinds of people.

One of the kinds of people he's writing for is professors in universities who scoff at the reality of supernatural and the reality of conversion. Oh, he's got good quotes on this. For example, there was a chief named Kawia on Tanna.

This is one of the triumphs of Tanna. There weren't many, but Kawia was one of them and he was dying. And these natives had an uncanny way to know when they were dying.

And he came to him and he said, I am dying. And he didn't know how he knew, but he just said, I am dying. Farewell, Missy.

I am very near death now. We will meet again in Jesus and with Jesus. Abraham sustained him tottering to the place of graves.

There he lay down and slept in Jesus. And there the faithful Abraham buried him beside his wife and children. Thus died a man who had been a cannibal chief, but by the grace of God and the love of Jesus changed, transfigured into a character of light and beauty.

What think ye of this, ye skeptics, as to the reality of conversion. In another place, he talks about Abraham himself. This Abraham is another sweet piece of this story.

They don't get any better than Abraham, his servant. When I have read or heard of the shallow objections of irreligious scribblers and talkers, hinting that there was no reality in conversions and that mission effort was but waste. Oh, how my heart has yearned to plant them just one week on Tana with the natural man all around in the person of cannibal and heathen and only the one spiritual man in the person of the converted Abraham nursing them.

He means him nursing them, feeding them, saving them for the love of Jesus that I might just learn how many hours it took to convince them that Christ in man was a reality. After all, all the skepticism of Europe would hide its head in foolish shame and all its doubts would dissolve under one glance of the new light that Jesus and Jesus alone pours from the converted cannibals. I there's something about evangelism brothers and especially on the raw cutting edge where it feels impossible that a person could really stop being a Muslim and start being a Christian or stopping a Hindu and start being a Christian or stop being a cannibal and start being a Christian or stop being an agnostic and start being a glorious transformed Christian.

There's something that happens there that sweeps away all the skepticism of Europe from your heart. Whereas if you're just trying to fight that battle with books and not doing the frontline stuff of testing it, it doesn't have the same force of deliverance from skepticism. And so this book functions as a kind of vindication of the reality of the supernatural and the reality of conversion.

That's another effect of of courage on Tana. Third, let me third main point, where did this courage come from? What was its origin? Number one, his courage came from his father. Now I know he wants to say

first it came from God and I do say that first, but under God there were these means and his father.

I tell you after the first 80 pages of this, if you had taken it from me and ripped it to shreds and said, see, you've wasted your \$25. I would have said I didn't waste a nickel. Five pages in this book are worth \$25 to me.

I have four sons and one daughter and I wept over these pages and I wept last night as I read them again because I want to be a daddy like this daddy was to produce a John Patton. He did not come out of nowhere. He came from a daddy and a mommy and most of us, not all, but lots of us are fathers in this room and some are younger and still have a lot of fathering to do.

Others are older and we still have a lot of fathering to do. I do. I got a four-year-old and I get another chance now with talent.

Now, why do I say this was so remarkable that he came from his, his father, there was a closet in this little tour thorough wall village. And in that little closet, his father went three times a day after every meal and prayed. And they heard him praying.

There were 11 children in the family and they knew how to keep it sacred and quiet. This is what he wrote though. Everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory.

We're blotted from my understanding. My soul would wander back to those early scenes and shut itself up once again in that sanctuary closet and hearing still the echoes of those cries to God would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal. He walked with God.

Why may not I, how much my father's prayers at this time impressed me. I can never explain nor could any stranger understand when on his knees and all of us kneeling around him in family worship, he poured out his whole soul with tears for the conversion of the heathen world to the service of Jesus. And for every personal domestic need, we felt as if in the presence of the living savior and learned to know and love him as our divine friend.

Now there was one scene and we recreated it for you and then let him describe it. And this is the most moving scene in the book for me. And there were many moving scenes in this book.

He's now in his early twenties. I wish I knew exactly how old, and he's going to leave for Thorwald for the first time and go to Glasgow. Glasgow is a long way.

It's 40 miles to the train station. You got to walk it. You don't know when your son will come back from the big city.

He's going to go to divinity school. He has this mission impulse within him. He may stay there.

We may not seem we're older. We may die. We don't know.

My, my dear father walked with me the first six miles of the way, his counsels and tears and heavenly conversation on that parting journey are fresh in my mind as if it had been but yesterday. He's an old man writing this and tears are on my cheeks as freely now as then, whenever memory steals me away to the scene for the last half mile or so we walked on together in almost unbroken silence. My father, as was often his custom, carrying hat in hand while his long flowing yellow hair, then yellow, but in later years, white as snow streaming like a girl's down over his shoulders.

His lips kept moving in silent prayers for me and his tears fell fast when our eyes met each other in looks for which all speech was vain. We halted on reaching the appointed parting place. He grasped my hand firmly for a minute in silence and then solemnly and affectionately said, God bless you, my son, your father's God prosper you and keep you from all evil.

Unable to say more, his lips kept moving in silent prayer. In tears, we embraced and parted. I ran off as fast as I could and when about to turn a corner in the road where he would lose sight of me, I looked back and saw him still standing with head uncovered where I had left him gazing after me, waving my hat adieu.

I rounded the corner and out of sight in an instant, but my heart was too full and sore to carry me further. So I darted into the side of the road, wept for a time. Then rising up cautiously, I climbed the dike to see if he yet stood where I left him.

And just at that moment, I caught a glimpse of him climbing the dike and looking out for me. He did not see me and after he gazed eagerly in my direction for a while, he got down, set his face toward home and began to return, his head still uncovered and his heart, I felt sure, still rising in prayers for me. I watched through blinding tears till his form faded from my gaze and then hastening on my way.

And here is the line, vowed deeply and oft by the help of God to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonor such a father. You, you talk about what was happening on Tanna and by the gravestone of his wife and through the thousands of difficulties in his life and what was happening was the fruit of a father's love. I almost gave this lecture totally on that father-son relationship because there's enough there just to unpack it for us in terms of how he prayed.

He talked about they had to walk six miles to church. His father missed church twice in 42 years, never in his memory missed a family devotion. Everything gave way.

I think of myself and if if Barnabas says, well, I'm late for school, then I say, well, at least let's pray. I'm gonna whip. Sit down.

You can be late for school. They never miss. There's gotta be scotch to do that, right? The six miles, this kid and his 10 brothers and sisters, he said, looked forward to going and coming because the meat at the temple was so rich.

They were eager to get there and it was so rich. It took six miles to digest it on the way home. And he said, religion was presented to me with such an intellectual freshness.

That was the phrase intellectual freshness that the Lord's day was never boring in the patent home. Oh, what an impact the home will have. Number two.

Um, his courage came from a deep sense of divine calling before he was 12. He said he knew God wanted to be a foreign missionary, though he put it on the shelf for a long time. When he was criticized, you shouldn't go.

This is crazy. Then his parents took forward. And this is what they said here to four.

We feared to bias you, but now we must tell you why we praise God for the decision to which you have been led. Your father's heart was set upon being a minister, but other claims forced him to give it up. When you were given to them, your father and mother, this is his father writing this, your father and mother

laid you upon the altar.

They're first born to be consecrated. If God saw fit as a missionary of the cross, and it has been their constant prayer that you might be prepared, qualified, led to this very decision. And we pray with all our heart that the Lord may accept your offering long spare you and give you many souls from the heathen world for your hire.

Thank God for parents, right? Thank God for parents. Number three, a third source courage came from a sense of the Holy heritage of his church. He was the heir of the blood of martyrs among the Scottish covenanters, and he knew it.

And he said, I am more proud that the blood of martyrs is in my veins and their truths in my heart than other men can be of noble pedigree or Royal names. And when he talked about truths, he meant Calvinism. And he says so explicitly on page 195, I am by conviction, a strong Calvinist.

And then he unpacks it in the way true Calvinists really unpack it, who are missionaries and the best Calvinists are missionaries and non-missionary Calvinists are not true Calvinists. He said, regeneration is the sole work of the Holy Spirit in the human soul and heart and is in every case, one in the same conversion. On the other hand, bringing into play the action of the human will also get the order here now is never absolutely the same, perhaps in any two souls.

Oh Jesus, to the alone be all the glory. Thou hast the key to unlock every heart whom thou hast created. That's what kept him going theologically in the hardest places of the world.

Calvinism is not a hindrance to missions. It's the only hope for missions and anything else is a distortion of it. And if you call yourself a Calvinist or somebody who loves the supremacy of God, and you aren't hard after the unreached peoples, you're a living contradiction.

And many of the great missionaries, Duff and Judson and Carey and Patton, the whole wave of the first modern missionary movement would put you to shame for talking about Calvinism apart from missionary reaching the unreached peoples. Fourth thing that prompted his courage besides the truths of these covenanters that he loved was the sovereignty of God controlling all of his adversities. What about his wife and child? Feeling immovably assured that my God and father was too wise and loving to err in anything that he does or permits, I looked up to the Lord for help and struggled on in his work.

Once when he was surrounded by natives and they were threatening his life, he records this happening. My heart rose up to the Lord Jesus. I saw him watching all the scene.

My peace came back to me like a wave from God. I realized that I was immortal till my master's work with me was done. The assurance came to me as if a voice out of heaven had spoken that not a musket would be fired to wound us, not a club prevailed to strike us, not a spear leave the hand in which it was held vibrating to be thrown, not an arrow leave the bow or a killing stone the fingers without the permission of Jesus Christ whose is all power in heaven and on earth.

He rules all nature, animate and inanimate, and restrains even the savage of the south seas. So if you wonder what kind of theological structure was holding this man as he walked through the most incredible dangers, the answer was you can't bring that knife down until Jesus takes his hand off your hand. Often since have I thought that the Lord stripped me bare of these things.

He lost everything when he left Tanna. He left everything, heirlooms and 600 pounds, British dollar pounds worth of stuff there. He said often I have thought that the Lord stripped me of what he called my little earthly all in order that I might with undistracted mind devote my entire energy to the special work soon to be carved out for me and of which at that moment neither I nor anyone had dreamed.

He knew disappointment and he knew discouragement. I'll pass over some of those quotes, but this was his theological foundation. Whatever trials have befallen me in the losing, for example, of the day spring that he'd raised money to get the ship that was the lifeline for so many missionaries on the islands and it was wrecked in a storm, whatever trials have befallen me in my earthly pilgrimage, I have never had the trial of doubting that perhaps after all Jesus had made some mistake.

No, my blessed Lord Jesus makes no mistakes. When we see all his meaning, we shall then understand what now we can only trustfully believe that all is well. Best for us, best for the cause most dear to us, best for the good of others and the glory of God.

Two more and then I'll stop. I think two more sources of courage, praying a certain kind of prayer submitted to God's sovereign wisdom. For example, how do you claim the promises of God on Tanna when your wife believed them as much as you did and died? So what does it mean to claim the promises? Claim a promise, John.

Claim a promise for protection, a shield. And what does that imply about his wife or the Gordons or Harris or Williams? He knew that Jesus had promised, some of you they will kill. I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.

So what do you mean, claim a promise? Well, he illustrates numerous times. Oh, this is practical, brothers. This is practical because you will pray beside people's bedsides and you don't know if they're going to get healed or die.

So how are you going to pray? What promises are you going to lay hold on at the bedside? What words come out of your mouth? How do you articulate a prayer for a dying or maybe dying saint? How do you say it? This is a good book on prayer. For example, he was surrounded again by these armed natives and he was aware of submitting to the overarching wisdom, glory of God. And he said, I assured them that I was not afraid to die for a death.

My savior would take me to be with himself in heaven and to be far happier than I had ever been on earth. I then lifted up my hands and eyes to heavens and prayed aloud for Jesus either to protect me or take me home to glory as he saw to be for the best. Over and over again, he prayed that way, save me, spare me or help me die.

Well, protect me or take me home to glory as thou see best. Did ever mother run more quickly to protect her crying child, he said, in dangers hour than the Lord Jesus hastens to answer believing prayer and send help to his servants in his own good time and way so far as it shall be for his glory and their good. Do you hear the theology behind that? How quickly a mother runs to help her child in her time and her way for his glory and their good.

That's a lot of qualifications and they're all thoroughly biblical and breed boldness, not wimpy escapism. Joy was a key. Oh, that the pleasure seeking men he wrote and women of the world would only taste and feel the real joy of those who know and love the true God, a heritage which the world cannot give to them,

but which the poorest and humblest followers of Jesus know.

Joy sustained him. My heart often says within me, he wrote, when, when, when will men's eyes be opened at home? When will the rich and the learned and the wise renounce their shallow frivolities and go to live among the poor and the ignorant and the outcast and the lost and write their eternal fame on the souls by them blessed and brought to the savior. Those who have tasted this highest joy, the joy of the Lord will never again ask is life worth living.

And I close with this. If you ask now, all right, what was the bottom line means by which he maintained joy that triumphed over such opposition? What was the root source of joy? How would he put it? How would he say it? Well, there are a lot of quotes I could give. I'm going to just take you to a tree on the way to the tree.

I'll just say the promise low. I am with you all way King James low. I'm with you all way was the most precious promise in the Bible for him.

And it mediated mark that word. Well, it mediated the presence of Jesus to him. I believe theologically he's right.

That the living spiritual presence of Christ today is a mediated presence through the word and especially through the promise of God. And that promise more than any other came to him at the most critical moments of his life. And he tasted Christ.

And so I'm going to end with the tree experience, which ends, I think, on a note where he'd want me to end, namely by asking you, have you had this experience? Do you know this experience brothers? You see, if you don't know personal communion with Jesus Christ, living sweet, deep, not an inference from an argument, but an experience. If you don't know Christ like that, you probably won't survive the hardest times. So listen to him at the end of the time on Tana, he's escaping.

It's a harrowing escape. He's being cut off from the sea. He's going through the night.

He's having to entrust himself to totally untrustworthy people. He gets into a village. The village is surrounded by those who are after him.

He doesn't know whether he can trust the chiefs there or not. They say with a smile on their face, there's a tree out there. You climb up in the tree and we will protect you.

When the moon rises, you come down and you'll be able to make it. He has no idea whether they're telling him the truth. He has no choice being entirely at the mercy of such doubtful and vacillating friends.

I, though perplexed, felt it best to obey. I climbed into the tree and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if but of yesterday.

I heard the frequent discharging of muskets and the yells of savages. Yet I sat there among the branches as safe in the arms of Jesus. Never in all my sorrows did my Lord draw nearer to me and speak more soothingly in my soul than when the moonlight flickered among these chestnut leaves and the night air played on my throbbing brow as I told all my heart to Jesus.

Alone yet not alone. If it be to the glory of my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree to feel again my Savior's spiritual presence to enjoy his consoling fellowship. If thus thrown back upon

your own soul alone, all alone in the midnight, in the bush, in the very embrace of death itself, have you a friend that will not fail you then.

Lord, if we have such a friend, then we will be unstoppable. And if all we have is a few arguments, we will be stopped. So Lord, I pray very specifically now for these brothers and sisters here that you would befriend them, that you would come to them in this conference and manifest yourself to them in ways that they've never tasted before.

Authentic, deep, word-mediated experiences of the living reality of God in Christ. Oh Christ, you are everything. If we have you, we don't need anything else.

If we have you, we'll weather every storm. If we have you, we'll be as bold as a lion. So would you draw near now, I pray, and give us yourself.

Amen. Amen. Well, I've just about used up all my time, but maybe we could take five or ten minutes.

What happened to Abraham? Do we know? Abraham died while he was there. Now take that back. He came back after one of his tours and he found out that Abraham had fallen asleep in Jesus.

So we're not given many details, but he lived out faithfully to the end. The quote about his Lord take me, help me to die well or give me deliverance. I thought of the Hebrew children in the furnace.

It's in the manuscript. Believe it or not. Just a practical question, a theological question.

What keeps that attitude from deteriorating to just simple fatalism? For the believer. What keeps us from going there just practically or philosophically or just deteriorating? Spurgeon said the difference between fatalism and the sovereignty of God is the difference between God and atheism. In other words, if you have a purposeful God, what you're submitting to is not fatalism, but wisdom, love and power.

You got to really believe this, though. I mean, it might look to the world like fatalism. It might sound like fatalism to say, may the Lord dispose of me however he pleases, like Joab and Abishai.

You help me if they're too strong for me and I'll help you if they're too strong for you. And may the Lord do what seems good to him. That'll sound like fatalism to the world.

But if you really believe that a personal, loving, wise, sovereign God guides the arrows and guides the spears and moves the battlefield around, you're not fatalistic in saying I'm going to wield my sword. I'm going to pray my prayer. I'm going to do my all.

Let us play the man for the cities of our God. And the Lord reigns and he will dispose of us as he pleases. But that's for our everlasting good, according to a big, wise plan.

And that's not fatalism. That'd be my main answer, which is Spurgeon's answer. I'd be interested in hearing anything that you would want to share with us about, you know, being that kind of a father that was described there.

I'll give you my specific question, though, as a starting point. I, you know, I'm struck by what you said. He was one of 11 children, and yet they knew how to maintain a sacred quiet in their home.

I have four children, six and under. And my question is, what do you believe is the, you know, give me a picture of the appropriate goal of what a sacred quiet in my home ought to look like right now? And how do I get there? Yeah. Seasons of sacred quiet.

Let them run, let them bounce off the walls when it's a season to bounce off the walls and get out and play with them and bang around and holler and scrape and do everything so that they know you're that kind of a person too. But then elevate this book. This is the New Testament.

Elevate this book and the season around it so that they know daddy can really have fun. Man, can he be serious? And they can know the difference. I really believe children make that transition better than adults do.

And they need to have fear of their parents. And they need to be utterly unafraid. You said that.

Who said that? You did. Yeah. Be afraid so they don't have to be afraid.

That's Exodus 20. Fear the Lord so you don't have to fear the Lord. So we need to get fear into our children with the kind of discipline that makes them know you do not trifle with the word of your father because he's the greatest guy in the world.

That kind of, you know, there's a spirit there that you do both. And so you got to do it your way, but carve out some seasons. You and your wife have to have these.

And it could be five minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes in which we're serious here now. Happy as can be, but we don't move around. Now I've got a four-year-old.

She's very rambunctious. I'm still working on what to do with her hands while she sits in my lap. When we pray, you sit down here, fold your hands, fold them.

Okay. And I put my hands around and I'll hold them there. You're going to fold your hands.

You're going to sit still. You're going to close your eyes because you got to learn. There's such a thing as reverence to the living God in this family.

And I, I play dolls with her. I build houses. We have Kings who get blown up and I had four sons and I'm still trying to learn how to do it with girls.

There's a lot of blowing up as I play house. This little table here becomes a helicopter. Right at the beginning here in your talk, you said something like this, 18 centuries since the Savior came before New Hebrides heard the gospel.

And that's not right. Can you process that for us with the sovereignty of God? Yeah, I can try. I mean, when it came out of my mouth, I knew that's what many of you would be thinking because that's what I think.

That's what I think. When I say it's a sin and I believe in the sovereignty of God, I'm saying that God permitted or ordained, however you want to put it. Those are not, those are the same to me because he ordains what he permits.

And I would simply say that the answer is the same with all sin. God hates sin and he's sovereign over sinners and he can change any of them to cause them to stop sinning. The day he will in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds change you in an instant without violating your personhood, you'll never sin again after the second coming.

How can that be? You will never sin again after the second coming. Why God? That's the only reason. And if God can do it without violating your personhood at the last trumpet, he could do it right now for every human being without violating anybody.

And he doesn't do it. I don't know why God draws who he draws, why he sanctifies at the pace he sanctifies, and why he releases the gospel and impales the gospel to the new hebrides in 1839 instead of 1539, why he didn't cause shipbuilding to happen a different way, why he organized the renaissance and exploring the way he did. I don't know except that God is God.

I'm not God. I just know that he said, go and make disciples of all nations. And we've been very wimpy in the way we've gone about doing it.

And we should feel bad about it and should repent of it and not say, God made me do it any more than if you walk out of here and look at a dirty magazine, you should say, God made me do it. Free will is not an ultimate answer to the question of why you get sanctified or don't get sanctified because the Bible is so replete with work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you to will and to do his good pleasure or Hebrews 13 20. He is at work in you to will and to do what will please him and many other places.

I will put my law within them and cause them to walk in my statutes. I will put the fear of God within them so that they will not turn away from me. God lays claim to the human will without violating our personhood or our accountability.

Ultimately, I think it's a mystery there, but, but let's get the mystery reposed in the right place. At least the place I think is right. Is the mystery between accountability and sovereign control, not between sovereign control and human autonomy.

That's not the place that the mystery exists in the Bible. The Bible does not teach human autonomy. It teaches human accountability under the sovereign control of God.

Abimelech, I kept you from sleeping with Sarah. I did that. And if I kept you from sleeping with Sarah, I can keep any man anywhere from sleeping with anybody.

And I don't do it. And I have purposes for not doing it. And they are wise purposes.

So I'm sorry. That was beyond, beyond what you asked. I think the simplest, shortest answer to that question is however you, however you solve the problem of anybody's sin in any circumstances under a God who loves holiness and righteousness and is sovereign over the human will.

You use that same means to solve the problem of why we disobeyed the great commission for so long. It's not, it's not to our credit. Regarding a genuine communion with God versus simply drawing inferences from syllogisms, that experience I find easier to maintain when there are 500 guys with machetes around my house and harder when things are going well in the church and well in my family, like they are, for example, right now.

What do you do to, when you don't have the prod of outward difficulties to make your soul hunger after God, what do you do when things are going well to avoid the creeping dullness? Yeah, well, you're absolutely right. That's what he said. He said that very thing, that those hours were the sweetest hours of communion.

And you're absolutely right. I don't know of any human being that said, I learned the deepest lessons about God when things were going well. I've never heard that come out of anybody's mouth.

I learned the deepest lessons about communion with God when I was having a good vacation. It's never, ever been said that I know of, but rather at bedsides and at gravesides and when kids are running away and you want them back, then you start to realize, do I love or do I not love? Those are the kind of things. And, uh, but your question is, all right, if that's true and you have one of those wonderful seasons that the brother up here was talking about where things are going well in the church and in the family, I would say tremble, tremble at those moments and read biography and read the Bible.

Read what were you answering that? You guys are so good. I just can't remember what Al and Ben said that these all said it together. That what was said in response to that question was, it's a season, give thanks for it.

It's going to end and the biographies will help. And, um, then maybe this should be said. He loves thee too little Augustine who loves anything together with thee, which he loves not for thy sake.

Meaning when things are really going well, health is good. Marriage is good. Kids are compliant.

Church is prospering. Are you at that moment getting your good feelings from those things or from God? And if you, if you sense I'm really starting to lean pretty heavily on the circumstances of my life for joy, things are not going well. That's bad news.

And it's a crisis of faith at that moment. And we must turn all those things into spring, not things that we just are threatened by. We run away from, but springboards of praise.

So make the food that you're going to eat tonight and the fellowship you're going to enjoy at hotels and restaurants. And you say, good night. I should be on an Island somewhere suffering.

No, you probably shouldn't yet. But at that moment, every fork full should be worship. God, I don't deserve this.

I'm a sinner. I should drop over dead with a heart attack and go to hell. And you lavish me, you lavish me with steak or chicken or pizza and diet Pepsi.

And I can't believe what a good God you are. Don't let me get addicted to this stuff. Don't let me start to lean on this stuff.

Make me love you more than I love this feast right now. Just pray that way. Earnestly, your life hangs on it.

I'd just like to share Hebrews 13 and 15 with a question. When is surrender absolute? Now, this is not original with me, but I think it goes right along with the message we've heard today. When we're willing to give thanks to God in all things, by him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.

Just to paraphrase it, I'm not mad at God for what he's allowed to happen in my life. That has meant an awful lot to me, pastor. Amen.

Amen. That's a good word for us. I think we should stop.

Sounds like this is a good place to stop. Can I pray for you? Lord, as we go to our arrest and our food and our seminars that we're going to have, I pray that you'd go with us. Sanctify what is being heard here.

Cleanse it. Take away all the self and flesh out of it. And what is true, let it have a tremendous effect.

I pray for the glory of your name through Christ. I pray. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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