

# The Walk of Faith - Part 3

by Larry Ainsworth

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of believing in miracles, having hope fixed on God, and living a life of moral purity and character.*

**Duration:** 1:00:36

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 2:36

**Topics:** "Obedience To God", "Faith And Works"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a near-drowning experience to illustrate the consequences of disobedience. He emphasizes the importance of doing the right thing, even when it may be inconvenient or difficult. The speaker also discusses the devotion to good works and encourages the audience to find joy in their work. He then transitions to discussing a woman in the Bible and encourages the audience to learn from her example. The sermon highlights the importance of obedience, accountability, and dedication to good works.

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## Transcript

It's interesting to note that, as our sister was sitting there, standing there singing, I was sitting there thinking about, I believe in miracles, I believe in God, as I was thinking back over some portions of my life and how many times I denied the power of God to do a work in other people's lives. Remember in my early years of working for AT&T, there was a man that I rode to work with in a carpool, and I thought, of all the men that I had to have in a carpool, this man was, to me, the pick. He was the most vile speaking person, the most immoral person.

I felt that whenever we carpooled, I always tried to make sure that I didn't sit in the same seat next to him. If he sat in the front, I sat in the back, and so forth, and I thought, there truly, I guess, walks a man that God can't save. And I remember that all the other four men in the carpool, they had potential, but this man was absolutely one I just could not ever see God doing a work in.

Some years later, I was walking down one of the aisles at work, and here comes Don walking toward me, just smiling from ear to ear, and I thought, oh, no. We hadn't seen each other for a while. And he stopped me and said, Hi, how are you? And I said, fine.

I said, how are things going? Oh, he said, great. He said, I found the Lord. I said, what? He said, I found the Lord.

Oh? Tell me about it. So he told me how the Lord had done a work in his life, and he had spent some time down here at Kansas City, I guess it was, at Calvary College, and he was now working in the evenings for the Lord in a little community church there in town. I just walked away, and as she was singing that song, I don't know why, sometimes things just come back to you like that.

I said, there goes Don. I believe in miracles, and I didn't believe that God could do a work like that. We have a niece that has a husband who is a very well-to-do insurance man, and he has worked very hard and built his business up, and I always felt that Bob was a young man that would never, ever see the importance of coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ, because he had whatever he wanted, he got.

He had a good job, a nice home, a wonderful family. I said, how is the Lord ever going to work in his life? But yet everybody in our family has persisted through the years to pray for that young man's salvation. A little over a year ago, the word came to us.

Bob's come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoiced. He goes in Denver now to Littleton, a little community Bible church in Littleton, and we're just thrilled that Bob's come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and what a change it's made in his life.

So we need to still believe that God is in the business of miracles, and the greatest miracle is bringing life to the dead, for only he can do that. Man is born, but he's born dead, but he's made alive to God through Jesus Christ. We never need to forget that great miracle that he's worked in the lives of men and women today.

As I look out upon you this morning, this beautiful morning, you are alive. You're a miracle. You were dead, but now you're alive.

You rejoice in it. Something for you to think about. And before I forget it, before we get into our message this morning, how many of you have children over in the children's meetings? Maybe you don't even know that they're going on.

There are children's meetings that are over there with our brother Tim Kane from Hutchinson, Kansas. Tim and I have worked on these messages, and he is giving the same messages to the children on the same topics, not the same messages, but he's giving the same topics over there. So if you have children, do me a favor.

Talk to them about the message. Let them know that you're listening to the same topics. It'll give you an opportunity to talk to your children.

I know that may seem absolutely absurd, but your children do like to talk to you, parents. Mine sometimes give me the appearance that they wouldn't necessarily like talking, but we talk anyhow, and it's good to talk with your children, especially about the things from the Word of God. This morning we're going to continue on in our studies.

We talked last night about Gehazi. I said I would quit at the end of an hour. I had at least another 35 to 40 minutes we could have gone on last night, but I was running out of voice, and I know that the mind will only endure what the seat can withstand.

So I feel that you've been very patient, and I appreciate your listening, and I hope they have been an encouragement to you. We talked last night. We shared about the life of Gehazi, about how God works in

a man's life, that Gehazi needed to remember that the power of God is still in the healing business, that the mercy of God is still to the heathen, and the judgment of God for sin.

This morning we're going to look at a woman of the Bible in the New Testament. I would like you to, first of all, turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 5. We're going to learn some lessons this morning from a woman. I know, men, that may be extremely difficult for you to endure, but we can learn some wonderful things from the lives of women.

God has a number, a great number, of women, in his words, whose lives speak to us and give us some rich lessons that we can enjoy also. 1 Timothy 5, and verse 3. Honor widows who are widows indeed. Honor widows who are widows indeed.

Verse 5. Now she who is a widow indeed, and who has been left alone, has fixed her hope on God, and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. Verse 9. Let a widow be put on the list only if she is not less than 60 years old, having been the wife of one man, having a reputation of good works, and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work. In the city of Omaha, in the middle of our town, there stands a memorial.

It's a quarter circle standing over 30 feet high, running over 150 feet long, and emblazoned across that monument are these words. They serve with honor. And upon the columns of that monument, in brass tablets, are the names of men and women who gave their lives in service to our country in the Korean War and in World War II.

And as you look at that monument and as you see the names, the list of names on each column, long lists. And these are men and women just from our county there in Omaha. These men and women served with honor.

This morning in the Walk of Faith, we're going to talk a little bit about service, what it means to serve the living and the true God in a practical sense. Now, I'm a practical person, or I try to be. And I feel that so often when we study scripture, we have kind of a nebulous idea out here of what the scripture says.

But what we fail to do is to take those ideas out here and bring them home to ourselves and put them to work. So this weekend, I've endeavored, by the will of God, to help you to see some things from the word of God that you can put into your lives if they're not there, or to be encouraged if you are doing them. Practical is what our Lord wants us to be.

Practical in service for him. Now, in this portion of scripture that we read this morning, there were ten things that I see that were attributes of a woman who was a widow and a widow indeed. But now, if you notice this list, this list here that we have in First Timothy are things that not only are important for a widow, but for every man and woman of God.

Notice what it says, first of all, for a widow or a woman or a man, they have their hope fixed on God. Fixed on God. Now, what does it mean to have our hope fixed on God? I would say that if I went around this nice group of people this morning and I asked you, I said, what does that portion mean to you? To have your hope fixed on God.

Some of you might say my hope is fixed on God in that I know that there is coming a day when I will be with him for eternity. Some of you may say my hope is fixed on him knowing that every day, day by day,

he's with me. He's my strength.

He's my encouragement. I know that he will never leave me nor forsake me. Or you may have a variety of other answers.

But the thing is that if we're here this morning knowing and loving the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a hope. Something that we can attach ourselves to knowing that there is a day coming when everything will be made perfect. We have that hope that what we have done down here is not in vain.

Our beliefs are not in vain. Our lives are not in vain because God is. We notice that in the widow, in these attributes of the woman of God, that she has a sense of urgency before God.

She has her hope fixed on God. Next, we notice, secondly, that she continues in entreaties and prayers night and day. That's a challenge to service, isn't it? We always, I can't recall how many different arguments I've heard or discussions I've heard about, you know, Paul makes the comment, he says, pray without ceasing.

What does it mean to pray without ceasing? I want you to be awake this morning, so I may have to ask you to answer a few questions. How many of you would like to answer? What does it mean to pray without ceasing? Glenn, you were putting everybody on the spot. Well, I'll tell you one thing, I'm never going to get on the bad side of that man.

Glenn, what does it mean to you when we read in the scriptures to pray without ceasing? An attitude of constant communication. Okay, that's very good. I see a lot of people nodding in agreement.

Just don't call on me because he's given a pretty good answer, okay? How about somebody else, what does it mean to you? Pray without ceasing. To be persistent in your prayers. True, very true.

Prayerful attitude at all times. Good, very good. Consciousness of His indwelling presence.

Good. Man, you're getting warmed up now, let's keep the fires burning. Okay, well, right? We have our own little things that we think about.

In order for a prayer to be heard by God, it has to be done in a certain way, doesn't it? I wondered, have you ever thought about the prayer that Peter gave when he was out there walking on the sea? He didn't have time to go into a long dissertation with God. He just let out three words, Lord save me. And that was it.

There was no kneeling, there was no bowing. There was no bowing. There was no bowing.

There was no bowing. There was no bowing. There was no bowing.

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There was no bowing. Now, Lord, I'm reminded of a brother years ago. Two brothers were traveling workers among the assembly.

Some of you might remember Leonard Linstead and Tom McCullough were traveling. They had just left a little town in Iowa and they were getting out on the highway and Tom McCullough was driving and Leonard was sitting next to him. Tom said, well, let's have a word of prayer committing ourselves to the Lord as we travel on.

Leonard said, fine. Leonard said, I bowed my head and closed my eyes. He said, I felt the car beginning to do a little bit.

He said, I opened my eyes. Tom had his head bowed and he was praying. The problem was he was doing the driving.

He said, I nudged him and he said, Brother Tom, I'll pray you drive. So we can pray in a variety of ways. I found it very beneficial, I know, in my own life.

A lot of times in that time that traveling from home to work and back, that it's a good time to talk with the Lord. I know sometimes I've gotten to work and I'll sit down thinking, I don't even remember driving this morning. How did I get here? Here I am in the parking lot and it's just been a time, you know, and you lose sense of the reality.

But I would say if you do pray while you're driving, don't close your eyes. But we see that prayer is divine communion. It's communion with God, the living God.

And the woman of God, the man of God, continues in prayers and in treaties night and day. We never forget our communion with God, for God says through his son, I will never leave you nor forsake you. And it's just like our brother said.

We're walking down life's pathway with one who says, I will always be with you. I am the only friend that can say that. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

He never leaves us 24 hours a day. I wonder how many of thee woke up last night during the storm. I barely heard it, but the one flash of lightning and the clap of thunder kind of brought me to my senses for great.

Let her go. But nonetheless, when we're in the storms of life, we like to feel the presence of someone else by us, don't we? But think about the widow who is a widow indeed, who has no one, no family, no one to lean upon. But she says, I trust in God.

And I have that divine communion with him that no matter what happens, no matter what the circumstances are like, I can commune with him. Our sisters were singing this morning, that beautiful song. He's only a prayer away.

I thought, boy, what an appropriate hymn for this morning's message. He's only a prayer away. How far is it? It's just in our conscious spiritual state.

We kneel before him and call him Lord, and he's there to listen to us. It says that the widow continues in a treatise and in prayers night and day. Now it says that a widow who is a widow indeed is not less than 60 years of age.

Now let's move away from the physical aspect of age and the requirement of age, but let's talk about what does God want of a Christian? What does he want more than anything else out of you besides worship? Who said that? He read my notes. He wants us to go on to maturity. All of us have had, and maybe some of you have experienced, seen a small child that cannot grow because of some physical problem.

They cannot grow. They stay small. They never grow.

I wonder if we think back to that day when we first came to know the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Maybe it's been just a few months ago. Maybe for some of you it's been quite a few months.

Maybe for some of you it's been years and years. I look at my own life. It's been over 30 years now that I've known the Lord Jesus Christ, and I would pray that I've gone on to maturity, that I've been growing in the Lord, that I'm not the same as I was as a young boy of 10 years of age as we were singing that hymn at the close of a meeting.

Choose now, just now, while the call is clear. And I realize that today, the day of grace was still here. That tomorrow might be too late for me, that I may be in eternity.

And God was saying to me, Jesus paid the price. Will you by faith believe it? Knowing that you're a sinner in need of a Savior. You know, I'm glad I was saved at the age of 10.

I feel that if I had waited until I was later in life, it would have been that much more difficult. Because it seems that the older we get, the harder it is to bend the knee. How hard it is to bend the knee before the living and the true God.

And dear ones, we need to pray. Pray for our children. For it's truly, it should be the desire of every Christian, man and woman, boy and girl, to go on towards maturity.

That we might grow. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, fourthly, we notice that a widow was the wife of one man.

Now, we might say here even that it's the wife of one man at a time. And maybe she's lost a husband due to death and remarried again. But this, I think, speaks of moral character.

In this world in which we live, the sad tragedy of it is, and the media has taken and allowed itself to become the tool of Satan. You can't turn on and watch a program on television. You can't hardly pick up a magazine.

Where your moral character of men and women today is directly in opposition to what the Word of God says. The question today is of moral purity for the Christian. It always has been.

The Lord, you notice, when he spoke to the people of Israel in the Old Testament, he says, I want you to remember this. You be holy even as I am holy. And you know, Peter picks that up in the New Testament and he reminds them.

That commandment has not changed for the man and woman of God today. Moral character is still one of holiness in all of our life, every aspect of our life. God calls us to be morally pure.

The widow who is a godly widow is one of moral purity. And it says here also, fifthly, that she has a reputation for good works. Now, we notice that practically all of the remaining attributes that are ascribed

to the woman and the man of God are all in relationship to others, not to self or about self, but to others.

We see that it says they have a reputation for good works. Now, if we're doing good works, who are we doing the good works to? There are a variety of things that we can notice that God calls us to good works. Do we understand what God means when he says, I want you to work for the betterment of others, to consider others? We notice next that the woman of God brought up children.

She brought up children. How did she bring them up? What does Paul say to us? He says, Dear parents, bring your children up. How? In the fear and love of God.

Are we doing that? How do we transmit to our children that we love and fear God? How can we do that? There's a variety of parents. Let's hear some of your ideas. How do we transmit to our children a love and a fear of God? When we say fear of God, let's understand the aspect of reverential fear, not a fear of bodily harm.

But how do we bring that up, transmit that to our children? Some of you that are younger parents. Ivan? Well, that's all right. Go ahead.

I didn't mean that that way. You know what I mean. First of all, we need to be an example, don't we? Many messages that are not spoken, that are lived, are better than the messages that are spoken.

Okay, that's one. Very good. Okay.

And I'm sure that if we went into the area of discipline this morning, as far as for children, we'd have a wide variety of questions and answers on that, too. Okay, but that's a good point. All right? Another.

How do we transmit to our children the love and fear of the Lord? You covered about half a dozen items there that we could spend the remainder of the weekend speaking on, but the important thing, I think, is that... You know, parents, if you ever want to be humbled, ask your children how consistent you are. They have a wonderful way of humbling parents, don't they? Just love them. And just remember how it was when you were a child.

Some of you, I know that'll be a long trip back, but it's not very long, though, is it, for us, Glenn? Right? Amen, brother. You know, if there's anything you want to learn as a parent is learn to communicate with your children and how they can bring you to realization of how you really walk. They can tell you very, very clearly, exactly what kind of an image you're presenting, how, by the way they walk.

Because if the message is coming from you loud and clear, that you're walking with the Lord and that you're depending upon Him, they understand what it means to fellowship with the Lord in their own lives. It says she brought up her children with respect for others, a respect most of all for God. It says that she shows hospitality to strangers.

Hospitality. I don't know how many Christians today miss the greatest part of being a Christian by not showing hospitality to others. You know, we've come to this, I don't know how it is where you fellowship, but it seems like in order for us to fellowship and feel like we've been hospitable, we have to have a sumptuous meal, you know, and everything has to be done, you know.

And we forget that God says that hospitality is nothing more than giving a drink of water to someone who needs it. Maybe they just need somebody to talk with. We could be hospitable not only in sharing what we

have, what the Lord has given to us, but sharing of ourselves.

The greatest essence of hospitality is sharing yourself with somebody else, giving someone else of your time. And the important thing for us to remember is that when someone shares themselves with us, they consider it a very sacred thing, and do we. It says she washed the saint's feet.

Boy, that's a challenge. I remember not too long ago in Omaha when we were studying in the Sunday School classrooms this portion on John. One of our Sunday School teachers is a very practical person, and she brought a basin of water and some towels.

And she told the six or seven little children that she had in her class, she says, I want to give you a practical application of what it means. And the children right away, as soon as she had read the lesson, they knew what was coming. And those little boys said, you're not washing my feet.

Uh-uh. They were embarrassed. But she got down on her knees and she says, I just want you to see this lesson.

And I'm sure that that was a tremendous impact upon those young lives. I don't think they'll ever read the Word of God in that portion in John without remembering a Sunday School teacher who knelt down and showed them what it meant to wash someone's feet in a physical way. But more importantly, is are we willing to wash the saints feet? Are we willing to kneel down as our Lord did? He says, be this an example to you.

Even as I have done it, so do you to one another. Are we willing to kneel down? I think the hardest thing for us to do as Christians is to kneel down and wash someone else's feet. It's a challenge for us.

And especially, especially if it's someone that tends to heap coals upon us. They just seem to have no end of causing us grief. But the Lord says, kneel down and wash their feet.

How it must grieve our Lord's heart to see how sometimes how difficult it is for brothers and sisters to dwell in unity. I think that many, many Christians are going to be sadly dismayed when our Lord tells them, here's what you could have been for me if you would have been willing to kneel down and wash the saints feet. To give of yourself.

To allow yourself that position of humbleness. It says that she assisted those that were in distress. So often, I don't know about you, but this was a challenge to me and it still is.

It never ceases to speak to me. It says here that the godly woman assists those in distress. You know, when somebody has circumstances that we can sympathize with, we don't have any problem of digging down or digging in and helping them.

But have you ever noticed that sometimes when Christians do dumb things. You ever know a Christian that does something, boy that was dumb. Well, you made your bed, now you sleep in it.

You know, you messed it up, now you got to pay the price. And we see them wallowing, not knowing where to go, trying to grasp on to something. Like caught out in the water, in the lake, and there's nothing to grab on to and they can't swim and they're reaching around.

I remember one time as a young boy. My parents had taken me swimming to a lake that was near the city of Omaha. And being one of the only boys my age in our group at that time, I enjoyed the water, loved the

water.

And I'd just get in that water and just stay in it all the time we were out there. And we always had a picnic, lunch and everything like that. And I remember everybody had gone in and was getting prepared to eat and I thought, well, no, I'm just going to stay in the water a little bit longer.

And I remember my parents always told me, now stay within this area here. Don't go out in the deep water. We know you can swim, but stay here so we can see you.

But there was that one place out there, that one dock out there, it was just on the edge of the deep water. And it wouldn't really be being disobedient to go out there. But yet inside of me I knew that they didn't want me out there.

But I knew I could talk my way out of it. But I went out there. And I thought, as I was paddling, I thought, I don't remember that dock being this far away.

And I had been out in the water practically the whole day and I knew how it is, you never really realize your own state. Paddled out there. And I thought, man, I didn't remember this dock being so far.

And I got out there and I said, finally. And I reached up and I put my hand on the dock and I said, oh, am I glad to be here. And I reached up and I grabbed hold of the dock and I started to pull myself up.

But my hand slipped and I fell back into the water and I felt myself going down, down, down. Finally I stopped. Came back.

And I kept trying to grab it and I couldn't seem to get a hold of that dock. And I thought, oh, no. But finally, after several tries and becoming panicky, I finally got a hold.

Just, you know, how you dig your fingers in and you just hang on for dear life. I couldn't even clear my throat enough because of the water to scream out and help. And I thought, I'm going to pay the price for my disobedience.

And sometimes, you know, there are people that are around us. And we're oblivious to them being in distress. And it just seems like that they're so choked up with something that they can't call out in their distress.

And we just seem to go on our way and not really worry. How many times as a Christian and as a leader in a local church, I've seen Christians that have come and they come sporadically. And then they become less sporadic and they just seem to drift away.

Then all of a sudden, sometimes several months later, I'll stop and think. I'll say, look at where so-and-so is. I haven't seen them.

Hmm. I must not have seen anything too important in meeting in this local church. There are times I found out later on.

Here was a Christian in deep spiritual distress. But for the sake of humbling myself and doing what I knew the Lord would have me to do. For the Lord's Word still speaks to us, dear ones here this morning.

To Him that knoweth the right thing to do and doeth it not. To Him it is accounted as sin. We sometimes want to evade that verse.

We don't want to really listen to that. We know the right thing to do. But we just say, I don't have time.

We make up all of the excuses we want. But God still will hold us to account. And we see lastly that she was devoted to every good work.

Devoted to every good work. Let's take a little survey this morning. How many of you love, really enjoy working? Now when I say work, I mean work.

I don't mean playing, I mean working. How many of you like working? Not too many. How many of you enjoy working when there is no monetary reward? If there were no monetary reward, how many of you enjoy working? Some of you say yes.

But you know, as I think back on it, as I go back to the Garden of Eden, Our Lord says that man would pay the price for he would have to work by the sweat of his brow. I don't know about you, but I'm like our brother. I don't really enjoy sweating.

We don't like to work. Some of us like to use our minds in our work, you know, instead of using our hands. But work.

It says here, that if we look at it, she was devoted to every good work. Here is a woman, who was a godly woman, who sought out work to do. I don't know, I've learned a variety of lessons through life.

But one of them was that I never volunteer for work. When I was at home, and as growing up, I remember that my mother and father had to say, Larry, do this. And I often used to ask why.

And when I became educated, I learned not to ask why. I just did it. You know, you learn to do things, because you're told to do them.

And I was one, I can say, that I was not motivated to run around and look for work to do around the home, you know. If dad said, go out and do this, I would go out and do it. You know, I could see the grass growing and growing and growing.

And he went off to work every day. I know my dad worked hard. And he would come home, and the lawn wouldn't be mowed.

And I could mow the lawn. Yeah, I suppose I could. Good idea, dad.

I like that. Then it would come down to tomorrow, mow the lawn. Or do whatever was necessary.

And all that great job, remember? I don't know whether you were like me, but was there always those jobs that parents seemed to, when they really want to get to you, there was one job you hated above all other jobs, and it seemed that at just the right moment, they would pick for you to do that job. My dad had that special way, and he's here this morning, so I don't have any hesitancy about saying this, but he had that one special job, and it was clean the garage. That wasn't a task that he hit me with every other day.

But I remember of all the jobs he used to ask me to do was clean the garage. And you know, it was ironical, when my sons were growing up, the job they loved the best was when I said, clean the garage.

Oh, dad, all that stuff.

Yeah, move it all out. Hose the garage. Clean the garage.

But it says here that the devoted person of God seeks out those good works to do them. This is our lesson from a woman of God. But I believe, as many have said, that we need to put flesh and blood on the Word of God.

And I would like to read to you a few verses from the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 2, that embodies these things, I think, in a very beautiful way. Luke, Chapter 2, and we're going to read a few verses about a woman, I feel, embodied these things. Luke, Chapter 2, and verse 36.

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with a husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of 84. And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

At that very moment, she came up and began giving thanks to God and continued to speak to Him, to all. Anna and Simeon meet Joseph and Mary, bringing the Lord Jesus Christ to the temple for the first time. Remember Simeon as he took the child in his arms.

And Anna is standing nearby. And she comes up, and she hears the words of Simeon. Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed.

And a sword will pierce even your own soul to the end, that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. Anna had served. It says she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

Here is a woman, I believe, embodied all of the things that Paul spoke to Timothy of in the epistle we just read. Anna was a woman that embodied these things. You know, I've often thought, Anna.

As we look at that portion, it says that Anna, and she was a special Anna, not just any Anna, it says the daughter of Phineu, of the tribe of Asher. And I said, why does he make such a point? Why does Dr. Luke make such a point of identifying this woman? Why didn't he just say this woman? But he gave her a name. He gave her a lineage.

And he said, here is where she came from. Now, if you go back and study a little bit, you understand that the tribe of Asher, one of the things that the tribe of Asher was most noted for was their beautiful women. Their beautiful women.

And it says that here, she was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years. Now, as a young woman, she was married. And she lived with her husband for seven years.

But then her husband died. How he died, we do not know. But it said then, as a widow, to the age of 84.

She was 84 now. Now, if you want to take the numbers and change them around, but whatever the case is, she was advanced in years. But what had she done with the preceding 60 some years? It said she had served in the temple.

Never left the temple. Now, does that mean that she never went anywhere else? I don't know. Whether we can say it with that intensity.

But her mind was always, day by day, in serving in the temple with fastings and prayers. What an intensity. What an intensity of purpose.

Now, I know many of us today, now maybe some of you here, when faced with circumstances, you pray and fast. But I wonder how many of us have the intensity of purpose to pray and fast on a continuing basis. We may pray.

But fasting goes a step farther, doesn't it? We say, well, that's not really a tradition we want to take. Maybe we need to. Maybe we need to be more intense with God by our prayers and fasting.

I was challenged by this. To many people, when they're facing circumstances, they will pray and fast. Go without food.

We look around, most of us, we haven't missed too many times at the table, have we? We enjoy it. We have a lack of exercise to use up the food that we intake. But you know, if we're out busy doing work, it gets used up.

But you know, the thing I noticed today is that we do not, among Christians today, we do not have a lot of spiritually fat people. We have malnourished people. And it's not because of prayer and fasting.

Prayer and fasting is the only time where you start to become spiritually fat. And you can't do it. If one thing is that we can never eat too much of the Word of God, we never get too fat.

It's ironical, isn't it? How the things of the flesh are in direct opposition to the things of God. We can never eat and feast in the Word of God too much. We never get too much to eat.

Is there anyone here, I wonder, that can say, I've eaten too much of the Word of God? It's just been too much. I think there's probably not a soul here. I don't think you'll find a true Christian anywhere that can say, I've had too much of the Word of God.

But here it says that Anna was a woman for sixty-some years. She served, served, served. The Lord Jesus Christ, when He came into the world, He says, I came not to be served, but to serve.

Some years ago, I had a very dear set of friends. And they were leaving the fellowship. I said to them, why? Why are you leaving? You've got so many spiritual blessings from the Lord and so many good spiritual gifts.

Why are you leaving? Well, our needs are just not being met. I wanted to croak on that, but something held me back. So many people today are worried about their needs being met.

As Christians, we have to have a prepared diet. We can't get into the Word of God on our own, we have to have a prepared diet. Somebody has to take the food and chew it up for us and then give it to us.

It's like when you're a little baby. Mothers take the food and they'll a lot of times put it in a blender and get it all chewed up so that the baby can swallow it. We can't take the meat of the Word and chew it on ourselves.

We just say, I can't chew it. We spit it out and we walk away from it. We're afraid to exercise ourselves enough to get into the Word of God and to study it.

It takes discipline to sit down and study the Word of God. That's why so many of us are malnourished. We won't take the time.

We won't take the time to sit down and get into the Word of God and to find out the wonderful and rich things the Lord has for those who love Him. But it says that Anna served 60 some years. You know, I got to thinking about that.

Here's a woman who served in the temple and it says she prayed and fasted every day. She was consistent. I don't mean she fasted every day, but she prayed.

She had a concern. And I've often asked myself, what in the world could a person pray about for 60 some years? What consistency of life? You know, I don't think there was probably a person that went to that temple that didn't know who Anna was. Because Anna was an integral part of every person's life in that particular place.

For she knew the needs and the cares of everyone and she prayed for them to the living God. Such was the life of Anna. She served and she fulfilled.

I believe almost to the letter, except maybe the having of raised children. But she served all of those things. And one day, something changed in her life.

You know, I would imagine that as Anna became aged, she entered the 80s. I wonder if she began to wonder how long it would be before God would remove her. I wonder if in Anna's mind there was always that one thought, there's something coming.

There's something coming. God has prepared for us something. Someone.

Someone. For the Messiah will come. And I wonder if behind her mind was always that, I wonder who it will be.

I wonder who it will be. The Messiah. I wonder if she had any thought in her mind that one day there would come a baby.

And she would hear the words of Simeon. And she would say, this is him. This is why I'm still here.

To proclaim to others of the Redeemer for Israel. It says that she went out and she began giving thanks to God. And she continued to speak to him, of him.

To all of those who are looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. She recognized him. She recognized in a baby.

In a baby. What's that little song we sometimes sing? The children sing it in Sunday school. I'm a great big bundle of potentiality.

We look at children. We look at babies. We think of all the things to come.

We think of them growing up. All the things that, I wonder what they're going to do when they get older. I wonder who they'll marry.

I wonder if they'll have children. I wonder if I'll be a grandparent. All those kind of things come to our mind.

Because there's so much potential in a little tiny child. And Anna looked at that child with endearing eyes. This is him.

This is him. But you know, 33 years later, Anna would not be there. To hear the crowds as he once again would enter Jerusalem.

Hosanna. Hosanna. Nor would Anna be there.

Hours later. When another crowd would cry. Crucify him.

Crucify him. Nor would Anna be among the throng. On Calvary's hill.

To hear him say. Father forgive them. For they know not what they do.

Nor would she be there. There in the temple. To see the veil red and twain.

Nor would she be there. To see those who would rise from the grave. Nor would Anna be in the balcony of heaven.

And she would begin only then to understand. The fullness. Of the words that she spoke.

Here is the redemption of Jerusalem. Here was one who served him. Here is one who is obedient to his call.

To serve. I can only imagine that the. Crowns that Anna will receive.

As a servant. Of the living and the true God. Dear ones if we're looking this morning.

For crowns. Here upon earth. We will probably receive them.

You know all of us enjoy when we do something. We always enjoy being recognized. You know that's why everybody gives out a plaque for this.

And a plaque for that. In commemoration of your work. You know we're always tickled to death to get those things.

We enjoy those. And we plaster them on the wall. And we're glad to be recognized.

For a work that we do. But you know I think it was more important to Anna than anything else. That she would as Paul would say.

To hear those words. Well done. Well done good and faithful servant.

If we're looking for service. There's more than enough. But if we're looking for earthly rewards.

We'll probably get them. But when we stand before him. Expect not anything.

For if we serve to honor ourselves. It is nothing. But if we serve to honor him.

Whose name we bear. Jesus Christ. My Lord and my Savior.

Then it shall be our joy. To present to him. The crowns that we have received from him.

For our service and our lives. I remember one time hearing Dr. Stephen Oldford. As he spoke on the judgment seat of Christ.

And he made this comment. He says dear ones I want to ask you. When you stand before him.

Who bore your sins upon the cross. And you have received your rewards. What will you give back to him.

As your works and your life are tried by fire. As they go through the refiners fire. And only that.

Which is silver and gold. And precious stones. Will remain.

For all the wood hay and stubble. Will be consumed. And nothing left but the ashes.

What will you have to present to him. Who is the lover of your soul. Will you have the silver and the gold.

Or will you have nothing to put in those nail pierced hands. But ashes. Ashes.

Oh what a challenge to us. For what reason do we serve. Do we serve him because we love him.

Or do we serve. Because we want to claim. Anna embodied all of the things.

Of the true woman of God. She was a widow indeed. But more importantly.

She was a woman of God. And she served him. Whom she loved.

May the challenge of Anna's life. Be a challenge to our hearts this morning. Shall we pray.

Heavenly Father. Again it has been our joy. To look into your word.

And we thank you so much. For the power of the spirit. That emboldened these men.

To write the words. From yourself. We are reminded these are words.

Spoken by God. The living God. The God who is above every God.

To speak to the hearts. And the lives of men and women. Boys and girls.

And dear Father we thank you again. For this blessed privilege. To gather together in this beautiful location.

To spend time of fellowship together. More importantly to hear your word. And Father again we thank you.

That these lips of clay. Have been blessed in the privilege. Of opening your word.

And Father we pray that the ears of each. Who have heard this morning. Might have heard your voice.

Through your word. And not the words of man. But oh God we pray.

Speak to our hearts for eternity's sake. And Lord help us to understand. Our spiritual service for thee.

And Lord we pray that our practical service. For thee. Might be one that would be only glory and honor.

Not to ourselves. But to the one. Whom we love.

Jesus Christ. We thank you our Father again. For this beautiful morning.

We thank you for this beautiful day. And as a psalmist this is the day that the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

And we go on our way rejoicing. Thanking you for all the rich and wonderful blessings. You poured out upon us as your children.

We thank you most of all. For the love that you had for us. And sending your Son to the cross to die for us.

We thank you again. For all these things. In the name of your dear Son our Savior.

The lovely Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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