

Living by Faith

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living by faith and trusting in God, highlighting the unshakable nature of those who trust in the Lord, the need to persevere in faith despite challenges, and the promise of peace for believers. It warns against turning back to unbelief and encourages a life of faith in Christ for eternal security and peace.

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Description

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Transcript

Let me ask you this question before we read it. Do you think you know, are you learning how to really live by faith? Are you learning how to trust God and live by faith? That's the most important thing in the Christian life. So we're going to talk about that today.

My prayer is that God would speak to all of us about this reality of what it means to walk by faith, live by faith, and that you would continually pray, Lord, teach me more of what it means to live by faith and walk by faith. There's no other way to live the Christian life. Psalm 125, They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever.

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever. For the rod of the wicked will not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.

As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. But peace shall be upon Israel. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for the inspiring and the translation, the writing and then the translation of Your Word over the centuries. Lord, those who reject the Bible as true, those who reject the authority of

Scripture, reject God because this is Your voice. It's the only truth there is in the earth.

So this morning, Lord, as we have heard it read, we have heard Your voice, but now by the Holy Spirit we pray we would hear the speaking voice of God in our minds and our hearts that, Lord, You would feed us, that You would open to us the Scriptures, You'd help us to speak in a way, Father, that would please You only, and that would minister life and faith to every heart here. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Amen. In 1989, Chuck Colson called the second half of the 20th century the New Dark Ages. Thirty-one years later, I wonder what he would think and feel.

Think we're in dark ages now? I think so. Increasingly, Paul says to Timothy, in the latter times, man will depart from the faith, perilous times will come. So we know that we are.

So what must the Christian have in his tool bag of life, in his journey to live in this dark times as we have and are the light of the world? Jesus said, I'm the light of the world, we have Him. And He said, you are the light of the world. So we're the light of the world in a dark age, Paul said, among whom you shine as lights.

So we have to learn how to live in difficult times. We're living in increasingly dark times culturally. We know politically and spiritually.

In such times, with such urgency, with such serious mindedness and discernment needed, that the only path and approach is to live by faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Not faith in your position of employment.

Not faith in your company. Not faith in your husband or your wife. Not faith in the church.

All can change, but Jesus only. Blessed be His name. He's the same yesterday, today and forever.

And we have to learn that the only path and the only approach to life, to marriage, to living, to raising children, to walking in this world is to live by faith. It's the only way through all of life. If you depend on man, you will always be disappointed.

If you depend on others, you will always have a struggling heart in the times when they're not available. When you're alone. I remember being at times in Europe, sometimes in the boondocks.

It was a 10 hour cold bus ride back to Bucharest to fly home. One night I felt claustrophobia. I felt spiritual oppression.

I felt homesick. I felt afraid. Michael, did you ever have any of that over there, ever? It's real.

I felt that. And I had nobody. My driver didn't understand English.

I could say, Pace Domine Lui. Tell him what that means, Alan. The peace of God be upon you.

I had nobody in that hard moment but the Lord to turn to. Who do you turn to in the hardest moments? Living by faith is what we're talking about today. The life of faith.

These Psalms, Psalm 120-134, are known as the Songs of Ascent. They were songs, as many of you know, these were songs sung annually by the people of Israel in their annual journeys to go back to the annual, the three feasts of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost and the Day of Atonement. They're songs expressing a life of faith and a life of trust in the journey.

Psalm 125 is that. Look at it. Those that do what? Trust in the Lord.

So easy to say it. Faith is not a complicated, complex word. The world, even the New Age bunch have grabbed it.

Well, he's a person of faith. Faith in his mushrooms or faith in whatever. Idle his candles or his rituals or the source, the energy, everything that is.

Everybody today is a person of faith, it seems. But the Bible limits this to faith in the living God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith in the Lord, trust in the Lord. This is the pilgrim's pathway, the way of living by faith, trusting Christ in all things.

Because, listen, here's a question. If you do not know how to live by faith, how are you living? Living in dependence on yourself? If you don't know how to live by faith and trust God daily, where your principle, where the way you function is to live in dependence upon Christ. And that's your go-to.

That's how you live life. That's your grid. That's your lens.

If you don't know how to live by faith, how are you living? Some of you are engaged to be married. Won't call any names. Are you approaching your engagement through faith in Christ to do this? Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain that build it.

Faith is all-pervasive. Now, let's look through this psalm. It's not a long one.

It's five verses. But it's pregnant. It's pregnant with life-giving truth about the person in their journey who is the one who's trusting the Lord.

Is that you? Trust is the third word in the psalm. Every translation, and I checked them all I think except the Living Bible or the Good News for Modern Man. I didn't check the paraphrases.

I checked every translation. Every one of them translates the word trust. Those who trust in the Lord.

And it calls this pilgrim here to trust because the bottom line is we're not in charge. We have to trust the Lord. We do not have it in ourselves to control everything.

To accomplish what we need to accomplish. To persevere. We don't have it within ourselves to pull that off.

We're driven to faith and trusting the Lord. Anything in life, we can't do it apart from Him. And we learn this more and more.

A lot of the Christian life and growth is learning how to die to depending on yourself and others. And learning to be cast upon God and to trust in Him alone. Psalm 62 says, Trust in Him alone.

Pour out your hearts before Him. So, those who trust, it says, they that trust. This is the description of what characterizes a believer.

It's what characterizes their life. What we believe. How we live.

We trust. Which means, our hearts are to cling to and depend on Him. We're called to that.

Christ is ever saying to us as He's with us, Trust Me. Look to Me. Looking unto Jesus.

Don't set your eyes on men. Don't look inward. Don't look downward.

Look to Him. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. So, this theme of trust, I just looked yesterday and today, just in the concordance of my study Bible at the back, all the references just to trust and it was astounding.

I'm not gonna give them all to you, but just when you read the Psalms and you read the Old Testament and you read so many places, as for God, His way is perfect. He's a buckler to all those who trust in Him. He's a buckler.

He's a securer. He's a keeper. Oh Lord my God, in Thee do I put my trust.

Psalms 7. Those who know Your name will put their trust in You. Blessed is the one who makes the Lord his trust. In everything, we learn to live a life of faith in everything.

Faith is the most important subject in the Bible. Why? Christ is the most important person, right? Salvation in Him is a monumentally supreme truth in the Bible. It's the whole Bible is about that.

But you cannot know Christ or find salvation in Him except through faith. Faith is the most important thing. Therefore, being justified by faith, you have peace with God.

So faith is the entrance into the Christian life and faith is how you continue. As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him. Faith is the most important subject in the Bible.

And I remember, I came to this when I was 19. I remember the years before, right before Linda and I got married, I heard teaching on faith and some good men and I got confused. What's, I know trusting in Christ.

I know Him now, but what does it mean to believe God? How do I learn to trust the Lord? How do I learn to exercise faith? I thought, well, do I look for something inside me and I got to work it up? And for years, the Lord whittled away at my false concepts and it took me years for light begin to dawn on my life that of what faith really was. Abiding in Him, looking to Him, trusting Him and believing Him. Believing Him.

So, we cannot know Christ except through faith. You can't walk with God except by faith. You cannot receive from Him, you can't please Him.

You cannot be used by Him except through faith in Him and trust. Daily trust, abiding trust, growing trust. Faith is the heart of living as a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth.

They trust in the Lord. And that means learning to lean daily. You wake up and He's there and He's with you.

And your dependence goes to Him. Your heart goes to Him. Your mind focuses on Him and you hook up your heart to dependence upon Christ, clinging to Him.

And life experiences strip away your self-dependence and your man-dependence and your world-dependence and you are driven to more and more learn to trust the Lord. And it's hard sometimes. But only He can fight these battles.

Faith in Christ is the safe rock in all things. Every day, every way. Everything we ever have to go through, everything you're going through, everything you will ever go through, it is faith, living by faith, that will bring you through it as pure gold.

And it is faith that's always tested. And when you come through it, your faith is refined and you know the Lord more and you're more dependent upon Him. So you have here this reality that faith is the foundational reality.

They that trust. What's true about them? We'll look back to verse one again. The second thing that is true about them is that such a person is immovable in life.

They will be kept. They're immovable. They that trust in the Lord will be like Mount Zion.

So Mount Zion, the immovable city of God, is the picture of what the saints are like. They will be like Mount Zion, which cannot be removed. You as a believer who is living a life of faith, your faith will not be shaken and ever destroyed.

Sometimes we feel like it is. It's hard to go through the fire of trusting the Lord. But this song calls us to see the primary place of faith and trust because that's the safest and best and most secure life to live.

Because those who trust are immovable. Now, that means, different translations translate it, but they cannot be shaken, cannot be moved, will endure, will abide forever. Your faith, if it's real faith in Christ, cannot be quenched, cannot die out, cannot be lost.

It's an abiding reality in you by the Holy Spirit that faith is the gift of God and the true believer believes God and they do trust in the Lord and they are immovable. That's why many Christians, they search for a church and they're disappointed and they're hurt, they go to another one, they don't find the satisfaction and the answer, but they know in their heart, we can't be alone. I wanna be with God's people and their faith drives them on to go find the people of God.

And they will not stop. They're immovable, they keep on. Psalm 121, just turn back and look at that.

Across the page in my Bible. Just think of this fact that believers are immovable, which means they are kept by God through faith. I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence comes my help.

That is faith right there. I'll lift up my eyes to the hills from whence comes my help. My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Now look at this. He will not allow your foot to be moved. Oh, we stumble, but the righteous stumble seven times and rise again.

The righteous will never abandon the faith because faith is in them. They trust and they keep trusting. He will not allow your foot to be moved.

He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper.

He's your shade on your right hand. The sun will not smite you by day nor the moon by night. The Lord will preserve you from all evil.

He will preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and coming in forever. About seven times that Psalm says, God's your keeper.

He's your preserver. They shall not be moved and shaken. They are immovable.

Verse one of Psalm 25 says, can't be removed. He who does the will of God abides forever. True faith doesn't dissolve.

It's not temporal. It keeps you walking and clinging and trusting in your Savior through it all, through the hardest things as you look to Him. True believers live their life with persevering faith and they will not fail to persevere and endure because the verse says, this is connected to Mount Zion.

Mount Zion, the immovable city of God, the church, the true Jerusalem now, is eternal and you are a part of that. You're in the new Jerusalem here on earth. You're a part of the city of God and the city of God cannot perish.

The city of God cannot fail to continue on and be built. The kingdom is advanced and you're in that and you're a part of it so you are immovable and eternal with the purpose of God in the kingdom of God. You're a part of the church of the living God which can never be destroyed, stopped, or failed to make it.

Kept, Paul says, we are kept by the power of God through faith. See, there's this connection. They who trust in the Lord cannot be removed.

We are kept by the power of God through faith. Not apart from faith, through faith and nothing and no one can ever separate the trusting one, the trusting soul who's clinging to Christ, who does trust and follow Him. No one and nothing can separate them from the love of God.

Nothing will walk them out and make them shipwrecked if they're a true trusting soul. So not only does verse one say that the trusting one is immovable but look at verse two. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is what? Around about His people.

The Lord surrounds His people. The believing one is surrounded. You're not only immovable, you're surrounded.

Remember Elisha and his servant saw the hills. What was true of them? They were surrounded. They were surrounded by enemies and the servant, the intern, the ministry intern, he was panicking and what did Elisha pray for him? Lord opened his eyes, let him see and suddenly he saw shining ones surrounding and Elisha said, they that be with us are more than with Him.

We got them outnumbered. They were surrounded by divine reality, surrounded by the presence of God, surrounded by angels. You're surrounded by angels all the time as a saint.

You're trusting Him and you are immovable and you're surrounded. Now let's think about that. This means that you are one with the Lord.

You're in Him, He's in you and you live and move and have your being in Him underneath of the everlasting arms. Above you are great spiritual realities preserving you, keeping you. All around you, underneath you, all around us is the current of His love.

This truth that we're surrounded is phenomenal. Psalm five, let all those who put their trust in you rejoice and shout for joy because you defend them and you will bless them and compass them about like favor with a shield. Let them shout for joy.

Let them shout for joy. Let them rejoice. We rejoice in the truth of what's true of us that if I'm trusting in Christ, if my heart is abiding, focused on Him and I really am following Him, I cannot be shaken.

Nothing can shake me because I'm a part of Zion and I'm surrounded by the great mercies of God. If we could see, if our eyes could be open like Elisha's servant and see the spiritual world and see what's there for us and we see, we see a lot that is for us. There's a lot more with us than there is for them.

The promises of God, the angels of God, the saints of God, the truth, the resources, the people of God. There's a lot more that's for us than is against us. You're surrounded.

He who trusts in the Lord, mercy will surround him. Psalm 32 says. Proverbs 3, trust in the Lord with all your heart and don't lean to what? That means stop depending on yourself and your brilliance and your knowledge and your experience.

Stop depending on yourself. In all your ways, acknowledge Him. Here's the surrounding reality.

He's gonna direct you. Always. You're surrounded by guidance and His wisdom and His help, His mercy and His leading and the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

You're surrounded with all kind of mercies. Those who trust in the Lord, the mercies of God will surround Him, encompass Him all about. Your life is hid with Christ and God.

Think of that. Your life is hidden with Christ and God. Nothing can get to you except that it's your Father's good pleasure for His glory and for your good and for the building of your faith.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that? Your life of faith cannot be removed or touched by God, so you're immovable, surrounded. Now look at verse 3. I don't have time for verse 3, really, but this living the life of faith, I'll just touch on it quickly. Verse 3 says this, The rod of the wicked will not rest upon the rod of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

In essence, that's saying in the context of a life of faith, the righteous are gonna be protected from the wicked because separation from the ungodly is necessary for holiness and a life of faith. You cannot be joined together with wrong kind of relationships and live a life of faith. You cannot be given to compromise and impure things and live a life of faith.

You cannot be half in and half out and live a life of faith. It's all in to live a life of faith. That's what verse 3 is basically talking about.

God's gonna protect the righteous from the rod of the wicked. It shouldn't rest on the light of the life of the righteous, lest the righteous are tempted and pulled away. Be not deceived, evil communication, evil behavior, evil relationships will corrupt a good life.

One rotten apple will spoil a whole big barrel of healthy ones. So verse 4, the psalmist moves from this description of those who trust and they can't be removed, they're immovable, they're surrounded to verse 4, this prayer. Prayer for grace by the trusting one.

Those who trust the Lord, they do pray. J.C. Ryle said, Christians pray. That's a mark of the Christian.

Saul of Tarsus converted, behold, he prays. Christians' hearts do pray. Your heart goes out to the Lord.

Even on your bed, even in your drowsiness. You ever just drowsy, you're drowsy and you wake up in the night and your heart starts praying? You're on a long flight, you have jet lag. Your heart can pray.

You're weary. You're tired. Your heart can pray.

So here's a prayer for divine blessing. Verse 4, do good, O Lord, to those that be good. That's believers.

Believers are described as having goodness. He was a good man full of faith in the Holy Spirit. Do good, Lord, to those that be good and to them that are upright in heart.

This is a prayer, a simple two-word prayer, do good. Sometimes I'll pray for people and I'll say, Lord, bless today. Bless and help Kevin and Sherry.

That's an all-encompassing prayer. The Holy Spirit knows what they need. I don't have to do a prayer list for them.

I don't have to tell him. God doesn't need my information. He knows how to answer that prayer, right? Bless them.

I pray for Michael Thacker. Sometimes I know he's on a trail. I'll say, Lord, go before him, bless him, be with him.

God knows how to answer these short little prayers. Do good, do good to them. This is believers praying for God's all-encompassing, gracious blessing.

God's comprehensive grace. It's all-inclusive. It's all-sufficient.

Think of how much this covers. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. What all's included in that goodness and mercy? It's every day, it's every moment, it's every month, it's every year, till the end of life.

Surely goodness and mercy are gonna follow me all the days. Goodness and mercy are your constant two companions. Do you like that? Do you take that for granted? Do you feast on that? Is your living a life of faith, looking to the goodness and mercy of God to follow you and keep you, and you say, Lord, do good to me, or I won't make it through this well.

I'll respond wrong. You ever wanna respond wrong to somebody? It's just rude. Or, and you wanna respond back in kind, and you just have to bite your tongue and pray? Lord, do good.

Do good to us. Do good to me. Now, there's a warning here.

Look at verse five. As for such, the psalmist pauses and he says, well, let me pause, because there's a certain group of people that need to know something. As for such as do what? Turn aside.

The context is this trusting in the Lord, being in Zion, but there's those on the journey professing who turn aside. As for those who turn aside back to their crookedness, their sinfulness, back to the world, back to their old ways, as for such as do that, the Lord will lead them. He'll hand them back over to evil people in

the world.

He'll just turn them back over. He'll let them return like a dog to the pack of dogs and give them over to it. This is a strong warning to the backslider.

Those who have professed faith, those who've come into the church, and they've tried to live by faith, they've gotten offended, they've gotten their feelings hurt, and they've grown cold. They're less and less interested. They don't think this works for them, and they begin to compromise the truth.

They begin to harden themselves against the truth. Their hearts begin to turn away, and suddenly their heart is departing. This is a warning.

Hebrews 6.12 says this, that you would not be slothful or lazy, but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. We have to follow on to know the Lord. We have to keep believing God, but the way to Zion is in the believer's heart, so he will persevere in faith.

Hebrews 10.39, now the just shall what? Live by faith. But if anyone draws back, God says, my soul will have no pleasure in that person. That's a strikingly scary statement.

God's person says, if I see someone in the way of faith among the people of God, and they refuse to trust me, and they will not trust me, and their heart begins to draw back to the world, to the flesh, and they reject the truth, and they're gonna go on their own way, I'll turn them over to it. But my soul has no pleasure in them anymore. That's highly offensive, and it's highly true.

But the writer says, we are not of those, true believers, are not of those who draw back and are destroyed, but we're among those who, through faith, persevere to the preserving of their souls. He who believes to the end, the soul will be saved. And listen, if you're a believer, you're called to a life of faith and trust.

Cultivate that. Ask God to teach you that more and more. There's no turning back.

Remember Lot's wife. You don't wanna go back to the world, because it would be seven times worse, and you would be destroyed. You would be given over.

Keep your eyes fixed and your heart clinging to the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what comes, no matter how deep the waters get, no matter how dark the skies get, no matter how many tears flow. Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning. You keep looking and keep trusting and keep clinging and depending on Christ.

Living by faith. I love that old hymn. Living by faith in Jesus above, resting, confiding in His great love.

From all harm's safe in His sheltering arms, I'm living by faith and feel no alarm. Sometimes now, these days, after 46 years as a Christian, hard things come. News comes.

I don't panic anymore. Instead, I choose to turn to the Lord. Lord, I trust You with this.

Does your heart panic or trust? You and I have to learn to live by faith. It's the only thing that's going to get us through it. Then a special promise.

The last line of the psalm. A special promise for those who are trusting. A promise of covenant peace.

Look at it. Here's the contrast word, but. That's true of the ungodly.

That's true of the backslider. The first part of the verse 5. But peace will be upon Israel. It's a declaration.

Peace will be upon Israel. Peace upon the true people of God. Peace with God.

The peace of God is our portion. That's you. This is a declaration.

It's a benediction. Peace will be upon the true child of God who's trusting. That's the church.

That's the bride. Now Paul says something very similar in Galatians 6.16. I'll just read it. Paul says to those who glory in the cross of Christ.

That's their joy. That's their glory. The cross.

Those who are dead to this world. This world's behind them. They're crucified to this world and this world's crucified to them.

They are a new creation as the children heard Alan say this morning. They have a new heart. A transformed life.

And they know and they are trusting in Christ. As many, Paul says, as walk according to this reality. Peace be upon them and upon the Israel of God.

That's the church. Covenant peace. If you're a Christian, you have peace with God.

And you used to be His enemy. Eternal peace. Permanent peace.

Nothing can change that standing of peace. You threw down your weapons of rebellion. You stopped the fight.

And you surrendered. Now terms of peace. Terms of peace.

I want you to, as you start this year, let's learn to increase and grow in living by faith with real reality. Ask God to teach you more to live by faith. Ask Him to work in you so you will trust the Lord more than anybody else.

For Psalm 118 says it's better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It's better, a life of faith is the most secure, safe, solid life there could be to live. And with it comes peace and joy and rejoicing and sometimes even shouting.

Now, let me close by saying this. This morning, some of you in this room, you're in the place and condition of willful unbelief. You don't trust the Lord and you know it.

You've never trusted the Lord. You're not trusting today, you're trusting in yourself. Some here may have once professed to trust in the Lord.

And verse 5 is a warning to you about this morning. Why won't you trust the Lord Jesus Christ? Answer the question in your own conscience and your own heart. If you are in unbelief today, and you know if you're honest with yourself, you don't have a living, abiding, real faith in the Lord Jesus where you're depending on Him and walking with Him, why are you yet in that condition? Why will you not stop? Why? God Himself says in the Old Testament, Why will you die, O sinner? What's holding you back? What excuses keep you? Those excuses will melt and be gone and vaporize the moment you stand before God

in eternity, alone.

No excuses. Your mouth stopped and it's too late. It's too late to trust.

Why won't you trust Him? Here at the beginning of this decade, how about a new start in life? Trust in the Lord. Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion. The amazing reality, just trusting the Lord and entrusting your heart to Him with reality, changes your eternity forever.

That's astounding to me. Where you will spend eternity depends on your heart and your choice of turning to Christ and trusting Him. Will you do that if you're in unbelief?

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