

# Seeking the Lord

by Michael L. Brown

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking the Lord wholeheartedly and the consequences of turning away from Him, using the example of King Asa's reign.*

**Duration:** 54:43

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 16:14

**Topics:** "Faith And Prayer", "Gods Provision"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the challenges and difficulties they are facing as a ministry. They talk about the lack of financial support and the feeling of being abandoned by those who used to contribute. Despite this, they express their faith in God's ability to provide and deliver them from their current situation. The speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and seeking God's intervention in times of crisis. They also mention the need for diligence and responsibility in their work.

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## Transcript

Praise God. Let's pray if you got that tape you can officially start it. Lord, thank you for your grace and goodness.

Speak to us with clarity and in a way that will change us. Help us to act on your word to put it into practice. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Turn with me to 2 Chronicles chapter 16. 2 Chronicles chapter 16. We want to look at a simple theme and give a clear call to seek the Lord.

You'll understand the urgency of this as we look at the Scriptures. Chapters 14 through 16 deal with the reign of King Asa, often called Asa in English, Hebrew Aramaic name Asa. And there's a verse in the 16th chapter which is an odd little verse in many ways because it's been used by people through the years.

People who have believed God for healing. It's been actually used to say that it's a sin to ever go to a doctor based on this verse. So the verse has a little bit of a history to it in terms of interpretation.

But we're going to read the verse and then we're going to go back to chapter 14 and we're going to understand what this is all about and the calling to seek the Lord. 2 Chronicles chapter 16 verse 12. In the 39th year of his reign, Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet.

Though his disease was severe, even in his illness, he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians. And then in the 41st year of his reign, Asa died and rested with his fathers. Look at this again.

Though his disease was severe, even in his illness, he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians. What is this verse about? Why was this such an issue with this man? What's the lesson for us to learn tonight? Go back to the 14th chapter, verse 2. Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles.

Because of corruption in the leadership of the people, because some of the kings of Judah had strayed from the mark, all types of ungodly practices were instituted. There were male prostitutes in the temple where people could have homosexual relations, men with men, in the name of God. There were female prostitutes.

There were sacred poles. There were fertility rites, all types of things in the temple of the Lord, if you can imagine it. And the people were worshipping idols in different high places in the land.

And this godly king cleaned house. This godly king purged the land. And it says in verse 4, he commanded Judah to do what? To seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to obey his laws and commands.

Notice he commanded them to do it. What does it mean to seek the Lord? There are different aspects to it. It certainly talks about going after him, praying to him, crying out to him.

It means turning to him, cleaving to him, looking to him for help and support, seeking to know him, walk with him, obey him. It includes all those different things at different times. So he commands Judah, seek the Lord, look away from the idols, look away from the false gods.

As I've done work on a commentary in Jeremiah in recent years, I remember first going through it carefully how much I was deeply struck by God's pain over Israel's idolatry, over Judah's idolatry. And the fundamental sin for which God's wrath was going to come on his people was they turned away from him and they turned after idols. They worshipped with their own hands and made.

And here this godly king is calling the people of Judah to turn away from their idols. He's smashing down the high places and the idolatrous rites in the land and commanding them to seek the Lord. He removed the high places and incense altars in every town in Judah and the kingdom was at peace under him.

Why was it at peace? Because God brought blessing, because God was with him, because God raised him up and silenced his enemies because he put God first. He built up the fortified cities of Judah since the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for the Lord gave him rest.

Let us build up these towns, he said to Judah, and put walls around them with towers, gates and bars. The land is still ours because we have sought the Lord our God. Why is the land ours? Why aren't we harassed by our enemies? Why are we at peace? Because we've sought the Lord.

We sought him and he's given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered. Asa had an army of 300,000 men from Judah equipped with large shields and with spears and 280,000 from Benjamin armed with small shields and with bows.

All these were brave fighting men. Now something happens, now there's a test. Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with a vast army and 300 chariots and came as far as Marashah.

Asa went out to meet him and they took up battle positions in the valley of Zephathah near Marasharah. Now just remember this, even though he's got all the fighting men, even though he's got a great army, this guy's coming against him with a vast army. This guy's coming against him and could be outnumbering him and outmanning him.

In other words, in the natural it doesn't look good. In the natural they can't simply lean on their own strength and wisdom. So what happens? Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, Lord there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty.

We're outmanned, outnumbered. Help us O Lord our God for we rely on you and in your name we have come against this vast army. O Lord you are our God do not let man prevail against you.

The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled and Asa and his army pursued them as far as Gerar. Such a great number of Cushites fell that they could not recover.

They were crushed before the Lord and his forces and it goes on with the great victory there. Now chapter 15, the Spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. He went out to Asa and said to him listen to me Asa and all Judah and Benjamin.

The Lord is with you when you are with him. One of these words that God gives you that you think that's it? You know this, the Lord's given me a word, the Lord's given me a word. I've got to share this with you.

What's the word? The Lord says he's with you when you're with him. That's the word. Yeah, but it's a very profound fundamentally true word.

You forsake him, he'll forsake you. You turn your backs on him, people of Israel and follow other gods. He'll forsake you and give you over to your enemies.

But when you're with him, when you're right with him, when you're obedient to him, when you're seeking him, he'll be with you. If you seek him, listen to these words. If you seek him, he will be found by you.

There's another calling, another exhortation. Remember, they've been seeking God. Remember, they've been godly.

Now they have a great victory. Sometimes after victory, you can get complacent. Sometimes after victory, you fall asleep.

Many times the enemy comes with his greatest attacks right after a great mountaintop experience in God or OK, the battle's over. We can rest. And here's a prophet say, seek the Lord.

For a long time, Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach, without the law. But in their distress, they turned to the Lord, the God of Israel, and sought him. And he was found by them.

In those days, it was not safe to travel about, for all the inhabitants of the lands were in great turmoil. One nation was being crushed by another, one city by another, because God was troubling them with every kind of distress. But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.

Does he get angry with the prophet? Does he say, why are you exhorting me? God's with us. God's blessing us. Why are you telling me to make sure I don't forsake the Lord? No, he rejoices in this word.

When Asa heard these words in the prophecy of Isaiah, son of Oded, the prophet, he took courage. So now he's going to do an even greater purge and move beyond the boundaries of Judah and even move into northern Israel. He removed the detestable idols from the whole land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns he had captured in the hills of Ephraim, which was the northern territory.

He repaired the altar of the Lord that was in front of the portico of the Lord's temple. Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and the people from Ephraim and Manasseh and Simeon who had settled among them. For large numbers had come over to him from Israel when they saw that the Lord, his God, was with him.

You have the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, and they were divided, and the northern kingdom was full of idolatry. And as the people there saw that God was with him, they came south. And he's calling for purging and purifying of all of God's people.

They assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the 15th year of Asa's reign. At that time they sacrificed to the Lord 700 head of cattle, 7,000 sheep and goats, and enters into, goes the details there, they entered into a covenant to do what? To seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and soul. And now listen, he's serious.

All who would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. And this was according to the Torah, according to Israelite law, that if there was idol worship in the midst of the people, Deuteronomy 13, the idol worshipper should be killed. So this is it, seek the Lord or die.

They took an oath to the Lord with loud acclamation, with shouting, and with trumpets and horns. All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly.

I mean, there's a message here, 14th chapter, 15th chapter. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side.

They had a battle, they had a test. As a result of it, they sought God, they came out even stronger, they sought him even more. And now God gives them even more rest.

And look at what he does. King Asa also deposed his grandmother Maka, this is his own grandmother, from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive Asherah. This guy didn't fear man.

This guy didn't fear family implications and political ramifications. He was going to obey God, period. What a godly king.

Asa cut the pole down, broke it up and burned it in the Kidron Valley. Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life. And look at what he does.

He brought into the temple of God the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated. There was no more war until the 35th year of Asa's reign. 20 years, no war.

20 years to either get deeper and more established or to get complacent. 20 years to either move forward or to move backwards. 20 years of blessing.

And at the end of 20 years, something has happened to the king's heart. Whether the change was subtle from early on, whether it happened more quickly towards the end, scripture doesn't tell us. But at the end of this time, the man is in a different place.

Look at what happens. In the 36th year of Asa's reign, Basha, king of Israel, went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa, king of Judah. So this is the king of the northern kingdom of Israel.

These guys are brothers. Now he's launching war, north against the south. So what does he do? Well, what else is he gonna do? You know the story.

He's gonna seek the Lord. This is a guy who seeks the Lord. He was in trouble before and he sought God and God delivered him.

He prayed and God answered. His whole nation made a covenant to seek the Lord and if anyone wouldn't seek the Lord, they'd be put to death. What's the guy gonna do? He's gonna seek the Lord, right? Wrong.

It's not what he does. In fact, what he does is absolutely shocking. Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the Lord's temple.

This is God's temple, items dedicated to him, stuff that Asa and his father had dedicated to the work of the Lord. It would be like monies that were specifically put aside to feed the poor and monies that were specifically put aside to spread the work of the gospel around the world. And then some trouble comes up and that money is stolen out of the account and used to put into some pagan fund.

Not only does he take money from the temple of the Lord, but look at what he does with it. He took silver and gold out of the treasuries of the Lord's temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. He's gonna send the money to a pagan king and say, hey, work with me to get this enemy off my back.

Instead of leaning on God and seeking God, he's gonna do the opposite. He's gonna lean on the arm of flesh. He's gonna lean on the arm of pagan, sinful, idolatrous flesh.

Not to be a treaty between me and you, he said, is there is a treaty between my father and your father, which is an exaggerated misplaced statement. See, I'm sending you silver and gold now. Break your treaty with Bashar, king of Israel, so he'll withdraw from it.

These guys, Israel, northern Israel, and the Arameans, they had a covenant together. And now the king of Judah said, break your covenant with them, come with us. So not only is he taking money from the temple of the Lord, not only is he using it to hire out a pagan king, he's asking the pagan king to break an agreement.

This is flesh. Do you understand? Flesh. Ben-Hadad agreed with king Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel.

They conquered Aeon, Don, Abel Mayim, and the store cities of Naphtali. When Bashar heard this, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work. The king Asa brought all the men of Judah and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Bashar had been using.

With them, he built up Geva and Mitzpah. In other words, it worked. The king of Israel withdrew.

His strategy succeeded. Taking money from the Lord's treasury, hiring out a pagan king, and getting this guy to break his agreement actually succeeded. And the enemy left, which is one of the clearest teachings in scripture.

One of the clearest examples in scripture you can find that just because something works doesn't mean God's in it. Just because something succeeds doesn't mean it's blessed by God. But just because somebody did it this way and it worked doesn't mean God's anywhere near it.

It may work for a moment. It may temporarily succeed. It may look like it is doing good.

But if it's born and birthed in the flesh and contrary to the plan of God, when it's tested by fire, it'll go up in smoke, either in this world or in the world to come or both. But he's at rest, at least outwardly. Inwardly, who knows what's going on on the inside? At that time, Hanani the seer came to Asa, king of Judah, and said to him, because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand.

In other words, you were supposed to bring judgment on both of these guys. These are both your enemies and you're supposed to fight against both of them. Instead, you lean on one.

You may think it's a victory. It's actually a defeat. Why? Because you didn't rely on God.

You lean on the arm of the flesh. We're not the Kushites and Libyans, a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen. Remember what happened in the 14th chapter.

Remember, Asa, what happened earlier in your reign, over 20 years ago. Yet when you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

You always hear that verse quoted. This is the context. You have done a foolish thing and from now on you'll be at war.

You've got temporary relief, but what's going to come in the end is worse. Different friends of mine that have ministered in areas with a lot of pagan superstitious curses and witchcraft and stuff have told me about people who were miraculously healed by the power of witch doctors, but they always end up with the worst bondage. You may get temporary relief.

You may get a temporary answer, but you're going to end up in a worse place by leaning on the flesh and doing things contrary to God's ways. And this verse is very vivid in Hebrew. It says, His eyes are going back and forth, back and forth through the entire land.

He's looking. He's looking. He's searching.

It's the same word that's used in Jeremiah five, except in a more intensive form here, where God tells Jeremiah, go through the streets of Jerusalem. See if you can find one man who's living honestly and doing right now. Forgive the city.

Go look here even more actively. God's looking, actively looking through the whole land, through the whole world, through the whole earth. So that he can stand in strong support of those whose hearts are holy.

Most of you know the word shalom. You've all heard the word. It doesn't just mean peace, but it also means well-being and wholeness.

And it's that same root here, shalem, those whose hearts are holy gods. He's looking for people to support. Do you understand that? This encourages me as I'm praying for our work, as I'm praying for our work, meaning the work the Lord's entrusted to us, as I'm praying for different ones here going out on the field in the States and overseas to preach Jesus, as I'm praying for God's work to advance among the Jewish people and different things we're involved with.

And I look at the hearts of so many here and the staff and the faculty and the leadership, the different ones laboring and the students and the grads and others that are part of Fire Family. I look at the hearts and I'm sure that there are many here whose hearts are holy gods. I'm talking about sin-free, perfect people.

I'm talking about people who said, God, I'm yours and I don't care the cost, the consequences. I want to live for you and do your will. God's looking for such people so he can back them, so he can support them, so he can uphold them and undergird them.

Some of you remember in Daniel 10 when Daniel's seeking God for an answer and the angel Gabriel comes, but he tells him that it's three weeks late in coming. And the first day Daniel prayed, he was heard, but he got delayed. There was a spiritual battle and the prince of Persia stood against him.

And then Michael came and supported him. Remember that? Michael came and supported him against the prince of Persia. And then he was able to come and deliver the message, deliver the answer.

That's the same Hebrew verb that's used here. God will stand and strongly support those whose hearts are wholly his. I saw you've done a foolish thing.

There's going to be war from here on. So what does he do? Does he humble himself? Does he repent? Does he say, Oh my God, I've sinned. How far have I fallen? No, he gets even harder.

Asa was angry with the seer because of this. He was so enraged that he put him in prison. What happened to this guy? At the same time, I saw brutally oppressed some of the people.

Think of the way it starts. Think of the way it ends. The events of Asa's reign from beginning to end are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

And the 39th year of his reign, Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Maybe now he'll wake up. Maybe now that there's judgment, perhaps judgment for his mistreating of the people and mistreating of the prophet.

It's clearly understood in Old Testament terms. This is judgment. He's under judgment.

He's in severe pain. Sometimes people don't pray until they're sick and in pain. Sometimes atheists don't pray until they're on their deathbed.

Then they wake up and they cry out. Maybe now in the severity of his illness, he's going to wake up and pray and seek God. He still doesn't.

And there's just there's a slight variation in the Hebrew and something I noticed when years ago, writing my doctoral dissertation on the Hebrew word for healing and getting into all these detailed studies and

things. And I noticed something that some of the commentators and translators had missed. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness, he didn't seek the Lord, but rather consulted with the physician.

It's a different preposition. It's a minor thing in Hebrew, but it speaks volumes. That particular idiom means to consult in an idolatrous way, like consulting Baal, consulting an idol.

And most of the doctors, you have to remember, you didn't have a normal medical practice. And most of the ancient world, Egypt and Mesopotamia and these countries, the doctors were often priests. These things were associated with magical rites.

It would be today like going to some witch doctor or to some New Age healer who's going to speak some special words over you and give you some kind of crystal and bring in all these false religious practices. It was a mixture. And this Hebrew idiom indicates just that either he went and sought pagan physicians or ungodly physicians within Israel.

It was the exact same thing he did in the midst of war. He did it again. Instead of seeking the Lord, he went.

He knew there's a need. He needs something supernatural. So what does he do? He goes and consults godless physicians for their help.

And so he dies. The thing that makes it all the more tragic, as you've heard his name over and over, not the way you normally hear it in English, Esau, but the Hebrew Aramaic pronunciation, Asah. Most scholars agree that this is a shortened form of a name.

Just like the name Mike in itself means nothing. It's short for Michael, which in Hebrew is Mikael, who is like God. So also this name in all probability was either Asael or Asaya, which means God or Yahweh healed.

That's the guy's name. The guy's own name comes from the Aramaic root for healing. And this guy is the one famous in his death.

He consults godless physicians or idolatrous help rather than seeks God. The guy's name is Healer. The fact that this ends up being the reason that he dies, because he doesn't get healed.

The fact it ends up that the reason he's at war, which means other people are going to die. The fact that it was a result of his not seeking God is a vivid message to all of us, because either we seek God or we die. We may live natural lives and we even may prosper to a certain extent in our walk and calling with God, but if we do not prioritize seeking God and going after God and being diligent to lean on Him and cleave to Him and cry out to Him, we will not make it.

We will not see the purposes of God fulfilled and some of us won't make it, period. It's a shame that often it takes crisis to push us to pray. One reason we don't see more people healed in life and death situations, terminal diseases.

One reason. I'm not condemning anyone. I'm not pointing a finger as a holier than thou.

I'm just making an observation. I've been part of situations like this, along with people, seeing painful, grievous things happen. I don't say this lightly, but one reason that we don't see more miraculous answers to prayer when someone's on their deathbed with cancer is because seeking God was the last alternative

when everything else failed.

You know, it's almost like I don't work out athletically for 10 years and then I realize I'm sick, so I'm going to run the marathon. You're not going to make it. So when everything comes against us and our first reaction is always medicine, and I'm not saying it's sin to use medicine.

Please don't mishear me. This text in no way teaches that. And in fact, there are other scriptures in the Hebrew Bible that indicate that there are medical practices that were common among the people and accept it and expect it.

That's not the issue. I'm talking about our attitude, our dependence. When our first line is always medical help, lean on man, get a diagnosis.

Okay, we got to go to a specialist. Okay, the specialist can't help us, but they can refer us to a specialist specialist and maybe a highly trained person that's helped many. But I'm talking about the attitude of our heart.

And then finally, we travel around the world. We get the special medication, the special diet, the special thing, and all else fails. They said, there's nothing we can do for you.

And you think, all right, I'm really going to pray now. Sometimes it's a little too late to start. You know what I'm saying? You're in a life and death situation, and on your way down, it's a little tough to just suddenly rise onto the super faith that's going to drive back the powers of death.

I'm not saying it can't happen. I'm just saying it's a lifestyle pattern. And for many of us, unfortunately, we don't pray with urgency till we're under pressure.

It amazes me. I know it's human nature, but it still amazes me that in war times, church buildings in America get packed out. Well, what is that? Are you trying to get some kind of consolation or suddenly going to become religious and pray? I mean, it's such a strange thing when following God and walking with him is your lifestyle.

You know, do you now get up and breathe because there's war? No, you do that every day. It's your lifestyle. And yet the fact is, sometimes it takes extreme pressure to get us to cry out.

One of the most common things that drives us to pray is lack of money. When I say most common, I don't mean in our circles, I mean in any circles. Because you can't spirit, you know what I'm saying? You can only rebuke the bills so long.

You can only speak faith, you know, to the telephone company so long. You can only, I mean, there's a certain reality, you know, when you walk in smiling to Burger King and just standing there because the Lord's going to give you a meal. There's only someone you can stand there and smile before they say, sir, get out of the way.

People are trying to order here. What would you like? But see, here's the thing. There's always the temptation in the midst of it to try to find another way.

Yes, we're diligent and vigilant. If Scripture's plain, if you don't work, you shouldn't eat. You know, we're not talking about handouts.

We're not talking about irresponsibility. We're not talking about not carrying our load. We're talking about things that are above and beyond human ability.

Above and beyond our means. And in the midst of it, there's great temptation to just do it the way of the flesh. To just hatch a plan.

To just make it work. Well, somebody did this, surely it'll work for me. I know King of Judah, I mean, he took this money from the temple of the Lord and he used it to hire out a pagan king and he got victory.

It worked for him, it can work for me. It works for this ministry and look at how much they've been promoted and prospered so we can do the same thing. And I've found it to be a grace of the Lord in terms of part of my walk and my calling and it's also part of the fire identity that maybe somebody else can do it, but I can't.

In other words, even if I try, it won't work. Even if just by the law of probability, if everybody lets this thing drop, it'll drop. If God tells me not to let it drop, I let it drop, it'll go up.

You know what I'm saying? He won't smile on it, he won't breathe on it, he won't bless it. We find ourselves here at fire and maybe some of you visiting are in a similar situation, but we find ourselves in such a paradoxical situation. A situation with such fundamental contradictions in which for many months now, all we've received is green light and go ahead and go for it and take the land kind of words in our spirit.

And those of you that have been in our midst regularly in prayer and worship and seeking God, God's been meeting us, God's been with us. We're not working something up, trying to convince everybody. It's going great, isn't it? Yeah, it's great, great.

He says it's great, so we'll say it's great. We're not trying to convince people and get you all psyched up and look at the person next to you and say it's great here at fire. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord.

I'm happy, you're happy, we're happy. I'm talking about God's been in our midst and overwhelmingly assuring and encouraging and going before us and meeting us in so many ways and teams going out. Just being in India and talking to Steve Heights who's leading the team back and forth in India, just saying it's the most prayerful team he's seen and worked with.

It's so focused there and we get reports from the team in Morocco and others and people going at it and local outreach here. Just reports we got of the last 24 hours of God touching young people in the community and filling them with the spirit and different things happen. God's with us and he's given us a forward march.

I was talking to a colleague, a radical-hearted guy, and he said, so you have your facility in Charlotte? I said, well, we're trying to lock it in. We're actively working on it and trying to lock it in now. We believe we have the right place now and we're trying to lock it in.

And he said, you guys are crazy. You're going to be there all in September and have school start? You don't even have a facility yet? I said, actually, we're doing well for us. This is pretty good.

Normally we only get a few days notice, you know, start a new school. How long do you have? A few weeks. I mean, the way God's led us, you know, we're praying earnestly.

God, are we supposed to make our move now? Is this the time? Are we supposed to make our move now? Is this when you want us to go to Charlotte? Is this the time? Really praying, really resting with it. And then we get word, building's sold, you have to be out by June. Yes, Lord, we'll be out by June.

Got it. And in the midst of it, I'm talking about stretched out, going for it. There is no money.

It's the most amazing thing. It's the most, I mean, people that normally send money haven't sent money, you know, and they're not mad at us. It's not like we did something wrong and they don't like us anymore.

It's wild. And there's this, and then just when you're in a situation, and most of you have been there, where it's like, God, if you don't answer, if you don't help, this ship's going down. So you figure he's going to answer.

Powerful miracles. You know what he does? He just gets enough water out so it doesn't totally sink. It's like, oh, come on, either down or up.

I mean, one or the other. I mean, I look back at journal entries, you know, six months ago, two years ago, and this is it. Our back's against the wall.

If you don't answer now, it's over. So in other words, he meets, but then he only meets so far. You've been there, too.

And listen, I mean, this is, we have visitors and friends here, but this is basically our, you know, our community here. And I'm talking honestly. We're not taking another offering at the end of this.

This is not an offering. Oh, wait, why should I withhold a blessing? I was in meetings in Japan one time, and they had really gone for a great facility to have meetings, one of the most ambitious things that, you know, it would have been one of the largest gatherings. As it was, it was a good-sized gathering, but they really, they overextended themselves massively.

And they just kept taking offerings. Like, you know, we were only there 48 hours. We did seven meetings in the 48 hours that we were there, one of these in-and-out, quick things in between two locations.

And Scott was there with me, but they just keep, they're still short. Sometimes a few times in the service, and people just kept giving. I mean, we're not, and bless them, they did it joyfully.

At least appeared joyfully. But, you know, we're in a situation now where, I have to say honestly, despite the fact that by God's grace we have fire workers now in probably 25 nations of the world that we've personally sent out and are covering, and fire workers in different parts of America, from New York to California, and all the way in between, and inner cities and different things, and the new plant in New York City, and doors opening for Jewish ministry beyond anything we've seen in years. And all this blessing, and so much to be praying for, so much to be crying out for.

I honestly believe that we would not be praying with as much urgency if we had a million dollars in the bank. I mean, I'll tell you what, Lord, you can test us with that. We're willing to be tested, Lord.

We don't mind. Some people say, oh man, if I had all that money I'd just backslide. Lord, we're willing to be tested.

But, you know, you feel the pressure, the squeeze. What do you do? You go after God. And sometimes the beauty of it is He doesn't give you any other alternative.

You know what I'm saying? It's not like there's another way out. It's not like we have something in the temple treasury to take and hire out a pagan king. And the things that others would do, God won't let us do.

But I'm sure, as sure as I'm standing here, that God's telling us, and this is a pattern, okay, I don't expect, I certainly hope, that for the rest of our lives and the rest of our years together at fire and in ministry, that we will not be under this kind of ongoing pressure just to meet needs. If it's pressure to raise up and send out more people, well, amen, praise God. Or more pressure because we want to feed more poor or help more people in need.

But just to pay salaries and meet needs and function from day to day, I certainly hope that it does change. I certainly hope so for two reasons. One, the pressure's intense.

Two, I've been telling everyone it's coming. It's coming. See, even the kids.

They're believing. Notice how the kids of all of our faculty and leaders and staff are so thin. It's going to happen, Emily.

I'm telling you, it's going to happen one day soon. But I honestly believe, I honestly believe in all seriousness, that in the midst of everything else going on, even though there are natural explanations for some of the pressure and so on, that for us as a community, okay, this is part of God's way to get us to go after Him with more passion and more earnestness and more focus and more intensity and more commitment as a pattern for who we have to be for the rest of our lives in ministry. It's been spoken to us so many times in so many different ways from people in our own midst and from others with burdens that we will succeed, I mean, in God's eyes, succeed in the work He's called us to do to the extent that it is prayed in and bathed in prayer and kept in prayer.

That the work will only move forward to the extent it is prayed for. That we will only have blessing to the extent that we are a house of prayer. And that is easier said than done.

And yet, we have no alternative. We have no choice. We have no way out.

Some of you are like that in your own personal lives. You are backed against the wall. That can either be the place of leaning on the flesh and doing the wrong thing, and maybe for a moment, getting some temporary relief.

And I'm not telling you here that if you had to go and get a loan for something that you're in sin or you're guilty of what Asa was doing, unless God plainly spoke to you and absolutely said, do not do this, I'll come through for you. I'm not saying that if you go out tonight, if you gave the money you had in your pocket and you go out tonight to get something to eat and use a credit card, I can't believe you sinned and you wait for God to supply you and die. I'm not laying that on anybody.

I'm not thinking that. I'm not saying that. I'm talking about a much larger thing.

I'm talking about a much larger battle, a much larger issue. And the thing that's interesting is as we've all prayed, and you would think, you know, the leadership team in particular carrying the burden of so much

going on, you would think that we'd be able to, you know, between us that we'd figure something out. Or we'd hatch some new plan or we do things differently.

And God just keeps saying, just go after me. I'm with you. Go after me and start this new thing and send these people out and give more.

The most recently he spoke to us to do was to give more. I don't mean he said take 90% of everything that comes in and live on 10%. It wasn't even a radical thing, but it was still a specific directive.

The one recent specific directive that we got from the Lord was to give more. I believe though, and I talk about the money to talk about the larger thing, which is this. Somehow, on a deeper level, with what God's calling us into, with the urgency of the hour.

And when I say the urgency of the hour, I don't mean because there's war, and I don't mean because we're at a certain date in the prophetic calendar. I mean because it is an urgent day and an urgent season when God is doing extraordinary things and the devil's at work. And we've been in the last days for 2,000 years and the intensity only increases.

Somehow, we must hear God's heart call to go after him even more. We were so blessed when part of the FIRE student body came to leadership and said, listen, we have a burden on a particular day to set that day aside to fast. And when we're not in class, to just gather together in one room and pray, go after God.

Can we just be released to do it? What an encouragement to us. I'm not saying be in competition with one another. And how much is this one praying? Well, I've got to pray more and earn brownie points or something.

I'm just saying that there's a squeezing. We felt it so deeply. We carry the weight of a lot of lives, a lot of people, a lot of situations.

My dear friend in India, Yesupatam, every day has to provide 1,500 meals. And there's no guaranteed monthly support that he knows is always going to be there. And you've got several hundred children that are going to be fed three times a day and workers out in the field and others.

And where's the money going to come from? And you say, yeah, well, it only costs, you know, you can support a full time worker there for 30, 40 dollars a month in that part of the world. True. But when another full time worker makes a dollar a day or two dollars a day, that means money is not easy to come by.

And you're in that situation. I share with Yesupatam, we talk often and share our hearts. And he has been so delighted to hear about the money pressure we're under.

He is so thrilled. He said, brother, he said, this to me is the best proof of all that you're in the center of the will of God. He said, every major thing I've ever done for God, I've been under extraordinary pressure.

The money hasn't been there and yet God comes through. So I hope you hear my heart. This is not an unbelieving.

What are we going to do? Nor am I preaching this to try to trick God. You see, not everybody knows you're going to have to do something. I told everybody about our situation, how I've been trusting you and praying to you.

And if you don't come through, they're all going to know. There's no manipulation in this. You may think like that, but I don't think like that.

I've had people judge me all the time. You know what it tells me? The junk that's in their heart. Because I don't think like that.

I'm just telling you that God laid this word on my heart. I preached it, but not talking much about money at all. In New York, I felt led to preach it.

I felt led to bring it again tonight. It's a life and death thing to seek the Lord, to go after Him, to press in, to shut down other things and cry out to God. In the midst of the pressure, in the midst of the intensity.

And as sure as I'm standing here, God will be faithful to back His work. And I'm saying this not just for fire, I'm saying this for individual lives. I'll be done in a moment.

Hudson Taylor, before going out on the mission field to China, determined to live completely by faith in London. Again, if you are living by faith and your needs are not being supplied and you are becoming a burden to other people, then you're not in faith to get a job. And Scripture is explicit on it.

And don't bail people out that are lazy. You're not helping them, you're hurting them. Don't bail people out that are in a spiritual fantasy.

I remember the first school where I was teaching. One of the gals there was way behind in paying her tuition. And she came in to see the director of the school and she said, I'm here by faith.

He said, no, you're here by my good grace. But Hudson Taylor lived this thing out. He determined while he was in school not to get support from his uncle, not to get support from his father.

And he wrote to each of them and said, I've gotten support from another source, hoping that they would each think the other one did it. Of course, they figured out quickly enough what he had done, but his other source was God. And he figured if I can't live by faith and make it in China, in England rather, it's not going to work in China.

I'm just telling you what he did. But he proved the thing out and was pressed right to the end. Sometimes one particular account, he just had one coin in his pocket and the poor man needed it and it was going to be the difference for his wife to get medical help.

But his only coin, it was one of these agonizing things and he knew he had to give it. Boom, it was a major breakthrough in his life. The last thing he had saved a life.

And there was a time when there were multiplied hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of workers in the China Inland Mission, full time, who never made their needs known, were all faith missionaries. That is not the calling for everybody and it is not unbelieving to make needs known. It's done throughout Scripture.

Paul shared needs, Moses shared needs, David shared needs. It's commonly done in Scripture. But somehow or another in our own lives, forget the money thing, be it with sickness, disease, be it with spiritual opposition, be it with pressure, be it with difficulty, be it with things that you come against, you will be pressed beyond measure.

You will meet with enemies that are too big for you. And the only alternative is to seek God, seek God, to go after God, to press in after God, to take hold and not let go. Whether it be in protracted prayer and fasting, whether it be in sometimes we may gather in the near future at fire and just set aside whole days and gather as a community and just go after Him.

Whichever form it takes on, this is for you and God to work out. I'm not laying anything on anybody. But I'm saying we seek God and we live, we prosper in Him and we are blessed and we seek Him and go forward and we are enabled to do everything He's called us to do and we don't seek Him and it all sinks.

So we're going to stand to our feet together. If you need a title for the message, you could just call it, Seek the Lord. This is not the key now to every breakthrough, the next five minutes, OK? But we do want to pray together and then release all those that want to go.

I may leave in a few minutes and go home, spend more time in prayer. So we're not judging by the clock, OK? We're not laying a trip on anybody. But we're going to go after the Lord.

Just out of curiosity, obviously, any time you preach on prayer and seeking God, it's relevant. I mean, always preach a message on loving God. How many find it relevant? Well, everybody always.

But how many of you find this particularly relevant at this time in your life? Would you raise your hands? OK, well, good for all those that it applies, especially for those that it doesn't. Tuck it away. It will apply one time or another.

Amen. We just specifically want to pray for a few folks. Some of our leadership have slipped out already because of heavy schedules.

We want to be remembering again. I'm just asking to keep this in mind over the weekend to pray for Josh Peters, John Kava, Bob Gladstone as they're out ministering or Bob will be out in the West Coast and Josh and John will be in North Carolina. It's a critically important work with us.

Keith, where are you going to be? Tallahassee. And as you know, I'm always pray for me because I'm always out somewhere ministering in Long Island and back in New York. But there's some folks that are that are with us tonight that we won't be seeing again for a while or while they're here.

We just want to especially pray for them. So, Farrell, why don't you just come on up here? Tim, if any of your family that's here, just come on up. Tina, would you want to come up so we could surround you and pray? And the Ellwoods back there.

Any other grads that have been away for a while? Little John Joe, if you guys want to come up. We just want to pray for some of our family and friends and co-workers, folks that are going to be sent out. Bless the Lord.

We're going to surround them and pray. And then just corporately, first of all, we'll pray corporately, then we'll pray for them. And then we'll release Aaron and the team to just go whichever way you want to go.

Those who want to stay and pray. Great. Hey, guys.

Good to see you. OK. Anybody I'm missing, Scott, that's on their way out or just here for a little while? OK.

Here's what we're going to do. We're going to cry out to God together just for corporate breakthrough. OK? Just in one concerted way that God will remove every barrier, that he'll bring us fully in line with everything he wants to do, and that he'll bring release and that it will be clear it's his hand.

OK? We want him to be glorified. Whatever the thing is we're talking about, be it the financial that I used as a major illustration tonight, be it anything else, we're just going to believe corporately. Whether it's doors open for ministry, whether it's household changes of radical nature, whether it's life and death health things, we're just going to cry out with one voice to God.

OK? And then, first, our fire staff and leaders that are here, we want to surround these guys and then other fire grads and then other fire family. Any of you that know any of these folks here, we just want to pray a blessing on them. OK? How much longer are you here, Alice, before you go out? OK.

You might as well stand up with Tina since you guys will be seeing each other a lot. Praise God. Alright, in one focused way, as if we're shooting an arrow of prayer heavenward.

OK? We're going to cry out for God to move and act and break through, break down every barrier, move things out of the way and give complete victory and answer supernaturally from heaven. Amen? So lift your voices with me. Everybody lift your voices.

Just begin to cry out. Father, Father, mighty God, mighty God, it's written in the Word that the righteous cry out and the Lord hears. The righteous cry out and the Lord hears.

When we're pressed and pushed against the wall and we've been seeking God and going after him, this is not a new innovation. This has been our pattern, our habit, our heart. We cry out when the forces of darkness come against you, when that death report comes against you, when there's no way out report comes against you.

We cry out in obedience to God with a pure heart, with clean hands. He answers from heaven. Father, Father, Father, we cry out to you, living God, not to impress you with noise, but to say our hearts are crying out in faith.

Our hearts are crying out, pressed beyond measure. You are faithful. You are faithful.

God, we thank you for all the good fruit that is being produced and is going around the world. We thank you, O God, for the work that you have started. Now we pray, bring it to the next place.

Bring it to the next level. Father, in the name of Jesus, open the windows of heaven. Open the windows of heaven and pour out blessing that there is no room to contain.

By your spirit, rebuke the devourer in every life here. Be it in sickness and disease, be it in robbed opportunities and closed doors, be it in finances, be it in depression or discouragement. Rebuke the devourer, Father, by the power of your spirit.

Father, Father, gracious God, gracious God. And I want you to just think about any wall. What's the biggest wall that you're facing now? Be it a wall of everybody being against the calling in your life.

Be it a wall of no finances. Be it a wall of massive physical health attack. Be it a wall of no vision, no direction.

Be it a wall of depression, opposition, fear, whatever it is. The children of Israel fell. Don't wait for the walls to fall.

Look at that and if God's telling you forward march, those walls must come down. What are those walls? Who are the Goliaths standing against the living God? Who are the ones saying you cannot take this land? Look at those walls. Nobody's ever knocked down these walls.

Nobody's ever come this way before. What are those walls? Can't happen in a Muslim land. What are those walls? Can't go against the system.

What are those walls? Look, you're being naive. Doesn't work. Face those walls.

Unbelief, fear, face them. Great God. Great God.

Our God is triumphant. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. I love what Catherine Booth said, the waters are rising and so am I. I'm not going under, I'm going over.

We are overcomers. Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory by which we overcome the world.

Even our faith. Often we're commanded and exhorted to shout in Scripture. Several occasions where we're commanded to in the Psalms.

Several occasions the people of Israel were commanded to shout. We're just going to do it. When I say hallelujah, I want you to let out a sustained shout.

Let it be a shout of victory. Let it be a shout of faith. Let it be a shout of saying God is with us and the walls are coming down.

Let it be a shout that says I refuse to bow down to the fear. I refuse to bow down to the pressure. I refuse to be manipulated.

I refuse to turn back. When I say hallelujah, I want you to raise a shout of victory. Let this be our demonstration that brings shock and awe in the enemy's camp.

Hallelujah. Shout to God. Shout to God.

Shout to God. Shout to God. Shout to God with the voice of Christ.

Shout to God with the voice of Christ. The walls must come down. The walls must come down.

Come let us sing for joy to the Lord. Let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation. Yes Lord.

Yes Lord.

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