

Faith vs. Unbelief

by Neil Rhodes

Faith is the foundation of our walk with God, and it leads to unity and agreement, while unbelief is the thief of life and faith.

Duration: 1:02:13

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 9:24, John 10:10, Acts 20:27, Acts 27:22, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 6:14

Topics: "Faith Formation", "Kingdom Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story about a man who discovers a treasure in a field. The man sells everything he has in order to buy the field and possess the treasure. The preacher uses this story to illustrate the transformative power of finding Jesus Christ in one's life. He emphasizes the need to lay hold of the treasure of life that Jesus offers and to let go of doubts and unbelief. The preacher also references the biblical passage in Matthew that describes the kingdom of heaven as a valuable treasure worth sacrificing everything for.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, PO Box 260, Lindell, Texas 75771, or calling 903-963-8626.

You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. Father, I thank you for your presence here among us in the house tonight.

Lord Jesus, we love your presence. We love you, Lord. We thank you that you are in our midst and we contend to you that there is not a problem that is too big.

There is not a situation in life that you cannot handle. There is nothing that is impossible to our God. There's nothing.

Lord Jesus, we are confident in our heart tonight that there is nothing. Even right now, the pain that some are going through in their hearts because of different things that are taking place in their lives, you're still not impossible. That's still, God, something that you can deal with.

And I pray, Lord Jesus, that you will allow faith to begin to arise afresh in our hearts concerning everything that you've said concerning us. Now, Lord, I thank you that right here in the heart of New York City, you can be glorified. In the midst of this modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah, that there can be a praise and a worship ascend to the throne of Almighty God.

Now, Lord, be blessed. Be blessed by our praises. Be blessed by your word being preached in Jesus' name.

Amen. And amen. Beloved, faith versus unbelief.

I am absolutely convinced that there is no other battle. The devil is always trying his hardest, whether it be temptation, whether it be trial, whether it be circumstances, whether it be natural or spiritual. The devil is always trying, at every single moment that he can, to rob your faith.

If he knows that there's somebody who's going to walk in a magnitude of faith, he knows that his kingdom will be plundered. It's by faith that we walk. It's not by sight, it's by faith.

And so, he does everything that he can to get your eyes off of the God of the impossible. Get them focused on the things that are surrounding you, no matter how deep the pain. If you can get your focus on the things around about you, then he knows that his kingdom will stand and will not be plundered by those who walk in faith.

Now, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 14, it says, Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Now, we use that scripture so many times. I used it all the years that our children were growing up in our household.

It was a very familiar portion. They can all quote it to you, because we used it so many times. And we would say to them, to our children, don't be unequally yoked.

So, in life, don't be attracted to those people that are not of faith, that are outside the kingdom of God, because you'll pay a price. You might fall in love with someone who doesn't know the Lord, but they will lead you astray and take you far from God. But, you know, beloved, it's not just about dating.

It's not just about walking with people in an unsaved manner if you're a single person. It's not just talking about dating. And if you are a single person and you are attracted to somebody who is not a Christian, we have one word for you.

No missionary dating. Don't think that, well, they'll get saved and God's got me in this because he wants me to win them to Christ. Don't believe that lie.

And so, it's not about dating. It's not just about dating, that we don't want to be unequally yoked together. But this is about everyday life.

Don't allow people who walk in unbelief to be your closest friends. Don't allow them to influence your life. It's so easy to have people round about you who have no faith, no trust in the living God, and yet the biggest battle is in the area of trusting him in our faith.

And so, don't surround your people who walk in an unbelief. We had these friends of ours and we thought we could help them at one time, but she never wanted help. All she wanted to do was just talk, talk, talk, talk about things that she's going through.

And every scripture, every verse, every answer we gave to her by the word of God was not embraced. And it was, oh yeah, that's good, but let me tell you about something else. And all the time, and eventually, we made a decision.

We can't walk with these people. We can't walk with them. We choose not to walk with them because the influence of that unbelief would creep into our hearts and we didn't want it.

It's like, if we were a counseling couple, we've done so much counseling over the years, and what I'm going to share with you now, it's so typical of so many cases, and some of you will identify, because I know and believe in my heart that there's some of you who are going through some very trying times in your marriage right now. But it's just, let me put it this way. If we were counseling a married couple, and they come to us and they come for help, and let's just say this man has been out in adultery and he's out of the house, he's not living with his wife anymore, but they want to reconcile.

So they call us up and they say, can we come see you? We want to visit with you. And I've seen this time and time again. We want to reconcile.

Pastor, can we come down and sit and talk with you about our situation? And we invite them to come in, and let's just say they come and sit down in our home, they sit in the living room, and they begin to share their heart. And we open up in prayer and we allow him just to begin to speak his heart and tell us the sad story of how he got involved in sin and drew him away from his wife and his relationship, and he got involved with another person, and he began to lie and in this cheating, he's now lying, and this is a man who has served the Lord, and in time gone by he's loved God with all of his heart, but now he's lying, he's cheating, he's deceiving everybody around about him, and then eventually it comes to the surface, and he's unrepentant, she puts him out the house, and he's gone. And now, as time goes by, this man, a year, maybe two years goes by, or whatever the case might be, but here is a man who comes back to terms with where he's going in life, and suddenly he finds that, you know, really, this is going nowhere.

I'm miserable. I might have been in sin all this time, but I'm actually miserable, because life without Jesus Christ is miserable. The pleasures of this world soon run out.

It might be attraction for a moment in time, but beloved, the longer you pursue the desires of this world, you soon come to the realization that you're actually very miserable, and the deep-seated things of your life and heart are not being satisfied. It doesn't matter what it is. And so here is this man.

Let's say he comes to the place where he cries out to the Lord one more time, and he cries out from the depth of his soul. He says, Jesus, I've sinned. I've sinned against heaven.

I've sinned against my family. I've sinned against my kids. I've sinned against God.

I've sinned against myself. Lord Jesus, I come back to you with all of my heart. I cry out, God, would you forgive me? Would you just wash me, cleanse me one more time? And this man, let's say he cries out to God.

And by the way, this is, I'm saying this man, and maybe this happens, but this is a case that has happened so many times, and I just don't want to put names to it, but it's a true story. These are true stories that have happened over the many years that my wife and I have counseled. So here is this man.

He cries out to God. And the very second that he cries out to the living God, yes, he's got a history of failure. Yes, he's got a history of deceit and lying.

He's got a history of, now for the last couple of years, he's got this history of wickedness and lying and deceit, and the hurt, the pain is so enormous on the family that it won him, and it's just this terrible situation. But here is a man who eventually finds himself eating the pig slop in a pig pen, and he comes to himself and he cries out to God. And he says, God, would you forgive me? I've made a mess.

I've destroyed my family. I've destroyed my life. I've destroyed my business.

God, can you find it in your heart to forgive me and wash me and cleanse me? What do you think the answer of God is? Yes. That's why I went to Calvary. Yes.

The very second. I want to tell you something tonight. And this is where we're going to spend our time and just going through the same situation over and over again through the Scriptures.

When somebody embraces Jesus Christ, in the very moment and the second that somebody from their heart cries out to Jesus Christ, in that very second that they repent from their sins, and there comes an embracing of sinful man with the holy God, in that moment of time, life from God comes into that human being. It doesn't matter. It can be a woman.

It can be a young child. It doesn't matter. But when the heart of a person cries out to Jesus Christ, irrespective of the history, it might be a horrific history, terrible past, but when you come to the place and you find like this person has come to the place eating the slop in the pig pen and cries out to God, I want to tell you that in that moment of time, you see, faith in Jesus Christ must result in an instantaneous infusion of life from God.

The moment we cry out to God and say, Jesus, I need you, there's got to be an infusion of life. Otherwise, it's not God. Otherwise, it's principles.

Otherwise, it's something else. But my belief, I am so coming in my heart over and over again, as I'm meditating on the scriptures more and more and more, I'm coming to an absolute persuasion that when you call on the name of Jesus Christ from the heart, in that very second, that moment of time, life has to be infused into my death, into the dry places. In fact, if you go to Ezekiel, let me just read a scripture to you in the book of Ezekiel just to tell you.

I want to tell you where it is so that you can listen to me and not turn the pages right now. Keep your place in Acts chapter 20. In Ezekiel, it says this, And he said to me, These waters issue out towards the east country and go down into the desert.

Don't you just love it? Don't you love that the waters go from the east, from the throne of God, there are coming these waters from God's throne. And I love it. It says it goes down into the desert, into all those dry areas, those places.

You see, it's always been in the heart of God. It's always been in his heart that every dry place in your life get met by the power of Almighty God. That there should not be one single desert left in our hearts and lives untouched by the power of Almighty God.

Now I stand on the word of God. I've got to come to the conclusion that God's word is not a lie. And I've got to believe it.

So whatever is causing something in my heart to dry up and have this existence of a dry desert, I've got to believe that the river of God, the spirit of the living God, when he talks about the river, he's talking about the spirit of the living God coming to a person in need and touching them. It says it'll come to the desert and go into the sea, which being brought forth into the sea, the water shall be healed, and it shall come to pass. Now listen to what the Bible says, And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live.

Now do you have life tonight? Are you a living human being? Are you sure? Pinch yourself. Make sure you're alive and you're not sitting here and you're not really alive. But if you're alive tonight, the Bible tells me that every single, and if you see someone napping, nudge them and say, Arise, shine.

And it shall come to pass that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live. And there shall be a very great multitude, and it goes on, and wherever the people go, they shall live. So the Bible is so very clear then, that wherever there is life, wherever the Spirit of God is, there is going to be life.

And I want to put this into your heart. I want you to put it into your spirit. I want you to understand that whenever you call on the name of Jesus, there is an immediate infusion of life.

Now, if it doesn't take place, if we call on the name of the Lord, and there's no change, and it doesn't reach our heart, and there's nothing taking place, it could very well be that there is unbelief resident in the heart. Because that is the thief of all the life that is in Jesus Christ. So here is this man, and he cries out to God, and he says, God, will you forgive me? Will you wash me? Would you restore my life one more time? And this man cries out to God, Do we believe, knowing now his past, his history, everything that has gone behind him, do we believe that God will forgive and can forgive that kind of a person? Do we believe that the moment he cries out, that there's an infusion of life? Well, now let's just say they come to us for counseling, and so because of all the lying in the past and everything in the past that has taken place, his wife now says, well, I don't believe it.

You see, unbelief many times is couched and cloaked with self-preservation. And it's something, and I've seen this of late, that the person who, let's take the wife's side, and there's a lot of compassion given to her because of the hurt, the woundedness, the lying, the deceit, and everything that's gone by. So she can't really trust this man.

She really can't trust him because of all the lies and the deceit. And so, in a sense, she's justified not to believe his statement now I've come back to God. She's justified in that.

Well, so she thinks she's justified. But you see, many times unbelief is cloaked in the pain we're going through. And because the pain is so severe, so hard, so deep, so difficult to overcome, we seem justified to hold on to the sense, well, I don't believe him because he's lied in the past, what makes you think he's not lying in the future? What makes you think he's not lying right now? And so, what we carefully do, and I see the pattern of it all the time, is that we begin to set up hoops and begin to set up things that people got to get over before we'll believe that there is a change.

And so, unless we start seeing things that are changed in your heart, changed in your life, I'm not going to believe him. And so, here we sit with this couple, and what do you think the result is? You see, in most marital relationships or the hurts and pains and bruises that we have in family affairs where kids no longer talk to parents, and we're adults now, and our parents are aged, we're still not talking to them. We're still not dealing with issues because the pain is so real, but we are justified even though they say that things have changed in their life.

We don't believe it. You see, folks, many times unbelief couches itself in the pain that we're going through, but unbelief is still unbelief. It doesn't matter how you look at it.

So, we can say, well, she's justified, this guy is, you know, he should be shot, not saved. He should be shot. Well, it might be true, but it still doesn't justify us not believing in the power of Almighty God.

You see, as we begin to uncover this in the heart, she's got to stand and believe and say, God, despite what he says, I may not trust the man, but I trust the God in the man. I've got to trust God. I've got to trust God, and if there's unbelief in the heart, if he's still lying, and if there's still unbelief in the heart, let me tell you, unbelief will work itself into death.

There's no life in unbelief, and so there's nothing will come forth out of the person's life. It doesn't matter what a person says, the end result, if it's unbelief in the heart, if they're still lying, the end result is going to be continued death. There's not going to be any fruit in that person's life.

But if somebody comes, I've got to tell you, when somebody comes in touch with the living God, when you receive Jesus Christ into your life, I've got to tell you, instantaneously, powerfully, miraculously, life begins to spring forth in the heart. And anybody who comes in touch with that, there is a joy. I'll show you in the scriptures what it means tonight, because it's so powerful.

And so here's this couple, and we have ministered to so many thousands of these kinds of people, and until she comes and he comes to the place where they renounce and they repent from unbelief, no matter how it's couched or cloaked, and repent of that and turn to God, there's no life in that relationship, because there's no unity. How can two walk together lest they be agreed? I can't walk with somebody in unbelief, there's no agreement with us. But when two people, regardless of the past and the difficulties, when faith, it's like this, if I come into a place, my spirit witnesses with your spirit that you are a child of God.

I don't know anything of your past, I know nothing what you're going through, I don't understand all the hurts and pains that you might have caused a million people, I don't understand it. But when I come into your presence, there's something inside of me that witnesses that you are a child of God. Oh, my hand goes out, I say, brother, sister, God bless you, and you say, hallelujah.

You see, it doesn't matter, because there's life that is coming, my spirit witnesses, and that's how we understand when we're walking with people, are they people of faith? If they are, your spirit will witness with them, and there will be a witness in the heart that we can walk together. Can two walk together lest they be agreed? No. So, when we find this unity, and the unity is always Jesus Christ, I just love it.

Life will come forth when I embrace Jesus, there is life instantly right now. Every single morning when I wake up and I open my eyes and I say, good morning, Jesus, there's life. Hallelujah.

Not if I get shoddy and start yelling, it's just because I am so excited about the life of Jesus Christ. I've got to believe it. Amen? If you don't believe it, then you're going to sit there and say, I don't believe it.

It's that simple. Alright, Acts chapter 20. Look how the devil goes after.

I want to show you the battle tonight of faith against unbelief. It's a real battle. We know the story in Acts chapter 27.

I am so sorry. Acts chapter 27. I got it written down wrong in my notes here.

Acts chapter 27. Now, look what it says here. The apostle Paul has already admonished them in verse 9, and then in verse 10 he says, So here is a witness that is going forth.

There's a witness here that things are not going to go very well. It's amazing how we can be in the house of God and the word of God comes, and it's a witness to our spirit that if we pursue in the direction we're going, it's not going to be well with us. And you witness to it.

It's better you take heed to the witness of the Holy Ghost than anything else under the sun. This is how I know when I come and see Elder John. I walk with him because I witness he's a brother in Christ.

And it doesn't matter when I shake your hand. Now, if you're walking unbelieving, shake your hand. How are you, brother? Well, you know that I don't get a witness to walking with this person.

If you're not witnessing with the person that you're going with, don't go there. It'll be hurt. It'll be a damage to your soul.

And so here is the witness. Now, look at this. The devil doesn't come blatantly.

Many times it starts slowly. Look at this in verse 13. And when the south wind blew softly, oh, just a little breeze.

And see, the next word there says, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence they sailed close by Crete. And so here is this little gentle breeze. The breeze is just blowing softly to begin with.

Now, the word supposing there means exposing one's glory. In other words, it's saying, the real thing there is saying, showing to other people your intelligence or how smart you are or how strong you are. It's the exposing of your strength and your intelligence or whatever you are.

In this case, it happens to be the mariners. And so the mariners are saying, hey, we can handle it. And so this is exposing.

It says supposing. That word is a tremendously interesting one in the Greek because it says that people show themselves to be able to handle this. And I tell you, how many Christians think that they can? Here comes a soft wind blowing down the pike and it's coming our way.

And we say, oh, I can handle that. That little temptation. What is that? I can handle it.

I'm not tempted by that thing. It's just a small, temporary breeze coming down the road. See, but that's how it begins.

Doubt. Well, I don't believe him. Well, I used to believe him, but I don't believe him anymore.

It's not a big thing, but I think that if he works at it, I'll come to the place and I might believe that God is doing a work in his life and I'll be able to accept him. Oh, it's just a little breeze. I can handle it.

I can handle these things in the heart. It comes as just a very small breeze. A little temptation.

Just a little something that comes along the way and we suppose we can handle it. That's how unbelief is. Unbelief doesn't start with something huge and big.

It starts with just a little temptation to cause you to go off course. You see, the ultimate goal of the devil, yeah, is to get you off course and destroy you. That's the ultimate course of the devil.

And so it comes with just a little breeze coming along. Look at verse 14. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind called the Eurocliden, which is a half Greek and a half Latin word, which means that it is a wind that is going to blow the ship directly off course.

So it's not long, beloved, when you allow. So going back to one of these couples and here we are counseling. You see, in my mind I'm looking at the situation and I see the tears and I see the pain.

I see the hurt in this wife, this mother. The hurt is astronomical. And here we've got on the seat this man who's got this grin and he's smiling.

He says, I've come back to Jesus. And she's looking and saying, you're a liar. Because the pain is so hard, it's so deep.

And so there's this little wind blowing. You see, beloved, she stood, she's prayed, she's sought God, she's cried, she's fasted, she's read in the Scriptures, God will you touch him, save him, deliver him, set him free from the snare of the devil. And suddenly the guy gets set free.

Now we have to deal with somebody's freedom who went into the pig pen. But many times our prayers, when we are praying and we believe in God, it's one thing to do that and cry out to God. But what happens when God brings the person back? Now we have to deal with that new life and suddenly my life is threatened.

Well, I don't believe it. And suddenly it's a little wind. So listening to this gal, I've got to make a decision.

Do I continue to sympathize with her, set up some more barriers and make sure that this guy for the next six months pays his dues and lives for God and then we can talk again? Or do I allow that unbelief to continue in her heart without going after it? That's the hardest incision to make. It's the hardest thing to do when somebody is struggling to go beyond the hurt and the pain and identify what is truly the real hurt and the pain. You might be mentally hurt, bruised and wounded by the relationship, but I want to tell you unbelief is out to kill you.

Unbelief wants to destroy your life. You can't have its seed dwelling in your heart, not even a little bit, because it starts off as a little wind, but the devil has plans for that. You let that little bit of doubt come into your heart and I'm telling you behind that is going to come a tempestuous wind to come against you.

Look at verse 15, When the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let it drive. You see, this is what happens so many times is it starts so small, but then we're against a huge wind of unbelief and it begins to drive our lives, begins to drive us. We're still praising God in the house and trying to worship God, but we have been driven by things of the heart and mind that we seem to have no control over

anymore.

That is the work of unbelief. It seeks to destroy a life. You can't allow it in.

That's why we tell you over and over again, get in the Word, pray, seek the face of God, worship Him, believe the Word of God, rise up in the morning. Every single one of us have to get up every single day. My wife and I get up every day of our lives, and it's not that we have devotions that makes us alive, but it's in those times of devotions that we renew our walk with Jesus.

And I say, Good morning, Jesus. Hallelujah. Glory to God.

How are you this morning? While I've been sleeping, you've been awake looking after me. Hallelujah. I believe that He's living, residing inside of me.

And when I wake up in the morning, I say, Lord Jesus, I die to my flesh today. Of anything that's going to tell me, I can get the answer outside of you. Paul wasn't saying when he says, I die daily, he wasn't saying that he was dying to temptations and this, and so God help me, I'm going to die to this, die to that.

No. When he said, I die daily, what he was saying was, God, I am not going to let my flesh tell me not one moment of any day that it can make it on its own. It can't.

Therefore, I die to any suggestion, any thought that my flesh might say to me that you can make it now on your own. Thank God, God's got you this far, you can go the rest of the way by yourself. I die to that thought.

Because in that thought there is a seed of unbelief that starts as a little wind. But becomes a tempestuous wind. And the next thing, the ship is driven.

It's driven. You now become driven. No longer are you seen clearly, you're driven in your mind.

All you see is liar, cheat, unbelief. Never work. It'll never happen.

But if you're arrested right in the very beginning and say, God, I'm not the owner of this man's life, you are. If he names the name of Christ, I believe it. But if there's doubt and unbelief in him, you'll walk in death.

It'll be self-evident. We don't have to struggle with it. We don't have to make somebody look good before we accept them.

We accept them because they name the name of Christ. If I go into a place and somebody says, Hi, are you a Christian? I say, yeah. Are you a Christian? Yeah.

Praise God. Shake their hand. There's an identification.

I don't know what's behind that. But if there is death working in them, even though they name the name of Christ, it'll be self-evident. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed.

And so the agreement is that in that purpose, when I start speaking to another born-again believer who loves Jesus Christ, and all they can talk about is Jesus and what he's doing, man, I want to go to the mission field. God is such an awesome God. And I start seeing life.

Fruit doesn't take long to be produced when you come to Jesus. It's right there when you embrace Christ, there is life. Hallelujah.

So here is this wind. It's now, this boat is driven. So verse 17 is, well, let's undergird this.

See, the very thing that Paul says, I won't do, they're doing. Paul says, I won't let the flesh tell me what to do. But here they are.

Well, let's undergird this. Let's begin to tie this ship together. Let's begin to hold this boat together with works.

Okay, you, let's make sure that he pays a good price. Let's make sure that he comes to church every Sunday and we see him worshiping. Let's, okay, I'll believe him if I see that he is very sorry for his sins.

Let me tell you something. There is a grief when we hurt God. There is a grief in our heart when we hurt one another.

But when you touch life, there can only be joy. There can only be joy. It's the strangest dichotomy of Christianity.

How can I look sad when I've got life? How can I look sad when I've been pardoned from the death penalty? And the warden has come in and set you free. Oh, thank you. Oh, hallelujah.

How do you respond? You respond with joy. So when you come to life, there's always joy. So it's very difficult.

You've got to understand that it's going to be walking with the witness that somebody else is walking in faith with you. And so here we, well, let's undergird this. Let's try and tie this together.

And see, this is what we try to do. We try to hold everything together. When there is unbelief, you have to resort.

God's already given the word. But when there's unbelief in the heart, you have to resort to so many things in life. Well, if they do this, then I'll do that.

If God does this, I'll do that. If God heals me, I'll believe Him. If God provides the way, then I'll trust Him.

And so here we are trying to hold this thing together. He's not interested. He's going to let the thing fall apart.

God's going to let the whole thing fall apart because His word needs to stand. They struck sail. They've driven.

Look at verse 18. And we've been exceedingly tossed with a tempest. How many of you have been tossed? When there's unbelief in the heart, folks, you are tossed to and fro.

There is no rest. There cannot be rest because you will be tossed to and fro. And with the tempest, the next day.

So this is day one, and now this is the next day. So we decide, well, let's lighten the ship. Out the house you go.

You can't stay. So we start to do things. We start to lighten our boat.

We start to try and figure out what is wrong. Next thing, we're throwing over the tackling. And until verse 20, we suddenly come up to the place where all hope is now lost or being saved.

But look at this. I just love it. Verse 21.

Now here comes, you see, what unbelief wants to do. You might be in the grip of the storm of unbelief in your heart. You might be at the very beginning.

It's just a little breeze blowing. I don't trust him. I don't believe this.

I don't believe that. But I want to tell you, behind the gentle breeze is coming a tempest that's going to toss your life to and fro. But in the midst of that, see, this is God.

God doesn't want you walking in that unbelief. So in the midst of the storm, God speaks. This is why you've got a message tonight.

In the midst of your storm, God will speak. This is why you've got the words tonight. God wants to speak into your storm.

He wants to speak into that area of unbelief. He wants to speak into your pain. He wants to speak into those areas that are causing you to be distracted from believing what he is doing.

You see, when you're in the midst of the storm and you're the one caught in the storm, you don't see what God is doing. The apostle Paul knew what God was doing. But not everybody can see that clearly.

And that's what unbelief does. It causes you not to see. But here comes God.

And I just love it. Verse 21 says, But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them. So here is this prisoner.

He is an outcast. He's in the lowest dungeon of the boat. But he says to the centurion, Now listen.

I've got a word from God. God will always speak in the midst of the storm. He will come.

He says, Sirs, you should have hearkened unto me, not to have been loose from Crete and gained harm in the lost. And now I exhort you. I'm going to show you selfishness tonight in its maximum form.

So here comes God. God is speaking. So now listen.

I exhort you to be of good cheer. Be happy. Now brother, be happy.

How do you be happy in a storm? How do you be happy in the midst of a difficulty that I'm going through? Be happy. That's literally what he's saying. He's saying, Be happy.

God is about to show up. God. God is about to show up.

Be happy. Don't be distraught. He knows you're in the midst of a throw of doubt and unbelief.

He says, But God is about to show up. He says, Be of good cheer. There shall be no loss of any man's life among you but of the ship.

So God is going to destroy this unbelief once and for all. But your life is going to be saved. For there stood by me this night an angel of God, who I am.

He says, I belong to this God. And his angel came down. I think that's Jesus, by the way, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul.

Thou must be brought before Caesar. And, lo, God hath given thee all that sail with thee. Therefore, sirs, be of good cheer.

Be happy again. For I believe God. So, see, the moment the apostle Paul utters those words, I believe.

You've got to understand that this isn't just a storm. This is a battle between doubt and unbelief. That's what it is.

That's why he says, I believe God. The battle is doubt. We don't believe God.

But I believe God that it shall be even as it told me. Now look at verse 27. It says, And when what? The fourteenth night was come.

Well, what happened to day one? Day two? Day three? Day four? Day five? Day six? Day seven? Day eight? Day nine? Never ending storm. Doubt doesn't give up. It doesn't release you.

It keeps you in the midst of the darkness of the storm. Fourteen days being tossed to and fro. Driven up and down in Adria about midnight, the shipmen deemed that they drew near.

Now look what it says here. Go down to verse 29. It says, They wished for day.

Most people wish the daylight would come. Everybody who's ever gone through any kind of pain wishes for daylight. Everybody says, I wish this would be over.

But you don't have to wish. You can believe God and go through it and come out the other side. But look what happens.

I'm going to show you now selfishness. Selfishness, when there's unbelief in the heart, it results in incredible selfishness. Selfishness that wants to preserve its own life.

In verse 30 it says, And the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship when they had let down the boat into the sea under color. And when I was reading that in the scriptures, I thought under color, that's a weird term, as though they would have cast anchors out in the foreship. So I was reading this.

What he's saying is, you see, whenever there is faith, you're always going to have those who have unbelief and they don't want to listen to God. They don't want to trust Him. They don't want to believe Him.

So it says under color. That word color simply means they were pretending. They were pretending.

It was like, what are you guys doing? We're putting down an anchor. No. What are you really doing? We're putting it under color means they pretend to be okay.

But in the heart, there's unbelief. These are the people who know how to run the boat. You see, selfishness in the heart always looks for self-preservation.

Nobody's going to look after me. I'm going to look after number one. What are you doing? Putting down an anchor.

How come that anchor is floating? It's a light anchor, I'm sure. Oh, it's the wrong rope. You see, they're lowering a boat.

They want to get out of the situation. Selfishness always will have self-preservation. Unselfishness lays your life down for the next person.

See, if you believe in God, you lay your life down for your brother. You take them at their word, and you trust God to deal with the individual life. You've got to allow God to work in the heart.

Let Him deal with the individual. You can't change a single person. For the first 12 years of my marriage, I tried to change my wife.

I did everything in my power to make her just like me. And by year 12, because I'm a slow learner, by year 12 I decided, you know, this isn't working. You can't change anybody.

You cannot change any individual. But God can. God can change any human being.

And so, yeah, we have this selfishness. Yeah, they're lowering this boat under color or under disguise, and they're lying as though they would have cast out anchors before the ship and then the Apostle Paul. Here comes faith again.

Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved. And so here they get the word, and this is the centurion. But you go to verse 42.

It's an amazing thing. Yeah, they're the soldiers, and they're thinking to themselves. Now, under Roman law is that if you lose a prisoner, you die.

That was the law. You're in the Roman army, in the legions, and you're given a prisoner. That is your charge.

That person is your life. And you bring them all the way through. If they don't, if you lose a prisoner, you die.

Life for life. That was the Roman law. So, yeah, we have the boat is just breaking up, and suddenly the soldiers start thinking all these prisoners are going to escape.

So immediately we say, well, let's kill them. You see, selfishness is so incredible. Selfishness rules the heart of mankind.

The breakup of every marriage. What do you think the number one problem is for the breakup of every home? Every marriage. Every single situation in life.

What do you think the number one problem is? Is it alcohol? Is it drugs? Is it adultery? What do you think the number one problem is? It's selfishness. Selfishness is the root of every single problem that we go through. It's the very root that comes and produces the life.

You see, if there's the root of self deep down in my heart and life, then the result of that produces things out of my life which will result in anger and resentment and unbelief and adulteries and lying and murders.

All of these things come from that single root called selfishness. That's why Jesus said, if you want to be my disciples, what have you got to do? Deny yourself and take up your cross before me.

It's the simplest answer to every single situation. So when I die, when I allow Christ to work a death in my life, then somebody else lives. When I choose and die to self in the relationship, my wife is blessed.

Amen? Just like you when you're walking with your friends. If you choose to want to have your own way, they suffer and you think you get your own way. But you're destroying the friendship.

You're destroying the relationship. And that's what selfishness is. Selfishness is I'm going to lower the boat.

Selfishness is I'm going to kill all those people on board. And so we see that the end result of unbelief is that we should escape the situation. And you will always know if there's unbelief working in your heart, this one little thought in your mind will be reoccurring.

I'm not going to go through. I want to escape. How many of you here tonight have had recently in your mind, I want to escape the job I'm in.

I want to escape the relationship I'm in. I want to escape out of this place where I'm living. Oh, I want to escape.

You see, if the terminology escape is in your heart and mind, you don't want to face certain issues and certain things in your life. If you think that the only way is to escape, then I've got to tell you something tonight. Then you're dealing with unbelief.

Because God says nothing is impossible to me and I will take you through every single storm. And when we make a choice for God, He brings us through. And as a result of this, everybody is saved.

276 people on the ground safe and sound. Because God spoke a word. And one man, one man said, I will believe God.

And everybody is saved. Every life is accounted for. Because we lay hold.

The one Timothy says, fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on life eternal. Now, when Paul spoke to Timothy, and I'm closing on this verse of scripture.

When Paul spoke to Timothy and he said, Timothy, fight the good fight of faith. He was saying to him, there's going to be enough battles to get you into unbelief, Timothy. There's going to be enough, you've got to fight the fight of faith.

In other words, you've got to continuously come back. That's why the apostle Paul got up every day and he said, Lord, every day I die. I die daily.

And like I said, it wasn't just to close down and say, God, keep me from this, keep me from that. No, he wasn't battling and struggling with gross temptations that were coming his way. He was dealing with one issue and one issue alone.

My flesh wants to rule my life and tell me I can make it by myself. Therefore, I die to that. So when he writes to Timothy, he says, Timothy, fight the good fight of faith.

And then he says, lay hold of life eternal. And so when he's talking about life eternal, he's not talking about now I'm saved, I'm on my way to heaven. That's how we always see it, lay hold of eternal life.

Timothy, you might struggle in this lifetime, but just thank God you're going to heaven. And we love singing about heaven, but it's not just about a message about living a life and struggling in this world. And then one day making it to heaven because my name is down in the Lamb's book of life.

But thank God it is, and that is a true reality. But what Paul was saying to Timothy, he says, Timothy, I want you to lay hold of life. And when he says, when he's talking about lay hold of it, he's saying seize, catch, take a hold.

This is a battle. You've got to take a hold of the seize life. Lay hold of the one who gives you life.

That's how simple it is. It doesn't get any more complicated than that. It's the man who comes home and he says, I gave my life to Jesus.

Well, I want to see you walk this out. No, I gave my life to Jesus. It's like what Matthew says.

Matthew talks about this man, and I'm definitely closing on this. I promise, I will close on this. When Matthew is writing, he says, the kingdom of heaven, let me explain it this way.

Here is this man. He is bowed over. It is hot.

It is dusty. He's got his staff in his hand, and he is trudging down the road. It's hot.

It's uncomfortable. Life is miserable. He's not a happy camper at all.

He's going down to the end of this mile block on this hot, dirty, dusty old road in the country. And then he's making a left, and he's going to this little town two miles down the road. It is hot.

It is dry. It is just terrible. He is bemoaning his life.

His life is not very good. And he's probably bowed down. He's thinking, I wish I wasn't alive.

I wish I could escape. And he takes a look. He says, you know, I don't want to walk all the way down the corner and all the way down that way.

He says, I'm going to take a shortcut through this man's field. I'm going to take a shortcut. So he looks around.

Nobody's watching. So he enters into this field. And he's going to go kitty corner right the way.

He's going to take this shortcut. And so as he's walking through this old field, and it's been plowed a couple of times, and there's patches that it's been missing, and he's walking down this dirty old field, and he's trudging along, and when he gets to a certain place in the field, and he's going with his staff, he goes clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk, clunk. And so he takes the staff, and he begins to dig around the dirt.

And he sees this metal case under the ground. And he begins to scratch and scratch and scratch around, scratch and scratch and scratch. The lock is all rusted, and it's all breaking away, so he breaks the lock.

He's got his interest. This box has got his interest right now. And so he takes, could be a snake in this thing, could be a dead man's bones, but he takes his staff, and he steps back, and he flips the lid.

And inside this metal case are dozens of Roman gold coins, jewels, diamonds, rubies, gold! He shuts the lid, looks around, takes his staff, taps that thing down. How do you think he walks from there to town? Who, who, who? Hey, how are you? Great, great, great, great. What's going on? Oh, nothing much, nothing much.

Praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Everything's just fine.

Hey, that piece of property on the back side of town, you think it's for sale? Yeah, yeah. How much is it? Oh, this much. Oh, okay.

Out he goes. And that man begins, now honey, sell that dress. You can't keep that dress.

That dress has got to go. Put it on the garage sale today. See that old clock? Put it on the garage sale.

Get rid of it. Come on. Let's get this one.

And he sells everything that he has. Everything that he has. Why? So he can buy the field.

Why? Because in that field is a treasure unspeakable and full of glory. I want to tell you that when a person bowed over despair, doubt in life, struggling, hating life, you want to give up. But then you find the greatest treasure called Jesus Christ.

When you find that treasure, beloved, your life changes. You are no longer the same. You can no longer be the same.

That man began a whistle. He began a dance. I think he began a skip.

What happened to his doubt? What happened to his bad day? What happened to life in general? What happened to all of his difficult moments in time? Everything changed when he came across treasure in a field. And Jesus says that is what the kingdom of heaven is like. That when a person who is bowed down, over hurting, in pain, hating life, wanting to escape, finds a treasure called Jesus and embraces that treasure, we sell everything.

We sell our doubts. We sell our unbelief. We sell every single thing.

And we say, no, it's Jesus. And Jesus is all that matters to my life. Beloved, that is what we should be experiencing every day.

Every day I wake up and there is brand new treasure in Jesus Christ. Hallelujah. Let's stand together.

Father, we thank you tonight that we have found treasure, joy unspeakable and full of glory. God, the doubting and unbelieving won't believe that they can even get the field. But Lord, tonight I pray that every one of us who is bowed down over in pain and hurt, God, at this altar, they are going to discover treasure.

Lord Jesus, I pray tonight that every person struggling with the little wind of adversity right now, God, show them, give them the warning that to embrace just the little wind of adversity and of doubt and unbelief will result in their lives being tossed to and fro. But that we can embrace the word of God tonight. There can be life.

God, I pray tonight that every person that comes to this altar seeking relief, seeking relief from life, relationships, jobs, will discover a treasure that they will walk out of this house differently than when they came in. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God spoke in your heart. Step out the aisles. You come and we are going to discover treasure tonight.

In Jesus' name. You come on down and I'll pray with you. And we'll lay hold of Jesus in a brand new way, giving us life.

Let me ask you boldly tonight, how many of you are coming back to God from living a life, a wayward life and you're coming back tonight. Don't be ashamed of anybody around here. There's a hand over here.

This is you. You're coming back to God tonight. Just put your hands straight up.

See these lives? Don't be ashamed. There's nothing to be ashamed of. We've all gone back and God is drawing you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Anybody else? That brother over here too. Praise God. Anybody else? That sister over here.

Over there. The brother got his hands up. And over here as well.

You too. I tell you, this is what God, and that hand there. How many of you tonight have never received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? Now, I want you to put that hand straight up real high.

If you've never received Christ as your Savior. I see that hand over here. Keep it up.

Anybody else? You've never said Jesus Christ come into my life. I want to be a born again believer. We've got one person over here.

Anybody else? Have you ever accepted Christ before? You have. Okay. There's another hand over here.

Never received Jesus Christ. Thank you. What a wonderful friend you have bringing you to the altar.

I think it's an awesome thing. Now listen. I want to read a scripture to you.

How many of you are coming tonight because you want to lay hold of treasure again? You besiege with doubt and unbelief. Okay. Look at all these hands.

All right. That's the rest of you. Let me read a scripture to you.

And hopefully you'll understand it in a new dimension. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17. Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Old things passed away. Behold, all things will become new. Now we say that.

And so for this lady who's going to come to Jesus Christ tonight, your past up to this point, it's all going to be, God's going to just take it, cleanse you, forgive you, and you start a brand new life in Jesus Christ. Old things pass away. Behold, all things.

Don't clap. Don't clap. Hold on.

Everything's going to become brand new. But this scripture, you know what new means in the Greek language? Do you know what new means? It means fresh. Life has become stale because of doubt and unbelief.

He says it's going to become fresh one more time. He says all those old things. All those old things.

He says, I'm going to take it away. It's not just a one-time thing. It's an everyday experience.

He says that you'll become a new creature. That means, the original language of that simply means that God will speak a creative word into your life and make it new. So your doubt and unbelief, you'll blow it away, and He will speak a word of life, and it'll become life to you.

It'll be brand new life. 2 Corinthians 5.17 isn't a one-time deal. It's an everyday deal.

I have new, fresh life with Jesus every day. Yesterday's victory is not sufficient for today. I got a new victory today in Jesus Christ.

Old things have passed away. All things, all things today are brand new for me, fresh. Amen? Now that's what you've got to believe.

So God is going to speak into your pain. He's going to speak in your unbelief. I'm going to pray with this young lady first, and as she gives her life to Christ, you can all pray with me, and we'll thank God that she's saved, and then I'm going to pray for each one of your hearts and lives.

It will become fresh, brand new in Jesus Christ. Pray with us. Lord Jesus, I receive you tonight as my Lord and Savior.

Forgive me of my sins. Lord Jesus, I know I have a need of you tonight. My sin has kept me separate from you, but tonight I ask you to forgive me.

I open my heart. Lord Jesus, I invite you in to my life to become my Lord and Savior. Right now, I believe I am forgiven, my past is gone, and I have a new life started in Jesus right now, and I thank you for it in Jesus' name.

Now, everybody pray this with me. Lord Jesus, I'm coming back to you tonight. Doubt and unbelief, pain and hurt, bad circumstances will not keep me from my decision tonight.

I found a treasure. His name is Jesus. I sell all that I have.

I give up everything, every argument. I give it up. I sell it.

And I embrace the treasure in my life called Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, forgive me, wash me, cleanse me, renew me, reinstate me in fellowship with you right now. And I believe that for me, that right now, all things are departing, and everything is becoming new, fresh.

A brand new victory is in store for me right now. Not tomorrow, not later on. Right now, instantly, powerfully, I am reunited with Jesus Christ, my Lord and my God.

Amen. Now, Lord Jesus, I thank you that you have done a work tonight. I believe it.

And that, Lord, we are going to be like that man who found a treasure in the field. We were walking bowed over, but we leave whistling a new song, a new heaven song in our heart. The storm that was tossing my life is now over.

I am at peace in my Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, get into the Word.

Come into fellowship, young man. Come straight into fellowship. There's a lot of wonderful people who will just shake your hand and tell you that they love you, young lady.

You're a newborn again creature in Christ. There's lots of wonderful people to shake your hand. All the despair is moving from you.

You watch. New hope is springing up for you. God bless you.

In Jesus' name. This is the conclusion of the message.

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