

Childlike Faith (4 of 4)

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of childlike faith and obedience in the Christian life, trusting in God's guidance and eternal promises.

Duration: 1:09:19

Scripture: Genesis 17:8, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 18:3, John 3:16, Ephesians 3:20, Hebrews 11:13

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal experience of facing disruptions while preaching. He talks about being tested by a group of people and feeling uncertain about how to handle the situation. Despite the challenges, he emphasizes the importance of following God's calling and trusting that He will provide the means to fulfill it. The preacher also highlights the compassionate nature of Jesus, who works in gentle and transformative ways, never breaking a bruised cane or extinguishing a smoking wick.

Transcript

In itself, speaks volumes. So simple, isn't it? He was called, Your Babe. And you think that Christian life is so complex and people so often want to talk to me about so many different issues in theology and doctrine.

Boy, this has power. This has reality. He was called, but what did he do? Your Babe.

He obeyed. And he obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance. Here's something about faith that I didn't get to speak on last time.

And it's that when it's by faith, you go out and you realize that your going out is not in vain. It's not in vain. I'm afraid that much of the labor that we do in Christianity, we think that it's almost vain.

That it will produce nothing. It will do nothing. It will bear no fruit.

And sometimes when we see something that seems to have borne no fruit, we say, well, that bore no fruit. But how can we judge on this side of the line, on this side of Heaven's gate, how can we judge what bears fruit and what does not bear fruit? I think we'll be surprised. I think our world will go topsy-turvy on the great day of judgment when we maybe find out that all the things we thought did not bear fruit bore fruit, and all the things we thought were fruitful were fruitless.

Now say that three times. But He went out saying it's not in vain. I go back again to the disciples because this is so important to me.

It's such a corrective measure for my personality. When Jesus was going, they said let's go with Him. Let's die with Him.

They went. There was a sense of devotion, but there was no faith. There was no faith.

Yes, we'll go. It probably won't amount to anything, but we'll go ahead and obey. Don't.

Just go home. Watch television or something. When the Lord calls obey and go out believing this is a part of the advancing of the kingdom, that this is a part of the inheritance, that this is something God is doing, and it's going to bear fruit.

There is a sense of being very, very positive, optimistic in the Christian life. We should be optimistic about every work of God because God begins nothing that He doesn't finish. In His economy, He does not waste time.

I was talking to a girl yesterday or two days ago from Kirksville, Brother Leiter's daughter. I love her so much. She went to Romania with us and she said, well, I think I'm going to go to the university and I'm going to study and to be a nurse.

Well, how do I know if this is the will of God? What do I do? I said, well, first of all, what do you want to do? She said, well, I feel like I want to go study. I said, then go study. Well, what if it's wrong? God will fix it.

And even if it is right, if He's telling you to study, He might send you there for all completely different reasons than what you think. You might think that you're going there to learn how to be a nurse and He's going to take you there just to meet your husband. Who knows? You never know.

Sometimes we are too mature, too adult-like. We need to be more child-like. I remember one time listening to this old preacher and they called him on the radio.

It was kind of a radio program. And this young man, so sincere, called him and said, Sir, you know, I feel just drawn into the Great Commission and I just want to go to a people group that doesn't know Jesus and I just want to preach the Gospel, but what if it's not God's will? He said, son, if you get out of God's will trying to obey the Great Commission, I'm sure He'll forgive you. There's a sense in which we're so burdened down with whether we're right or we're wrong or this or that.

And when I see a person like that, I have to remind them you're trusting in your ability to hear and you're not trusting in God's ability to lead. God's ability to lead. It's so much different.

It's so different than what most Christians believe. The leadership of God. Let me give you an example.

I was preaching at a place one time and there was a lot of disruptions. A lot of disruptions. And I'm preaching and people are out there.

They're testing me. There was a group of people. They were testing me.

They were going to see how far they could go before I did something. And finally, I'm sitting there preaching. I'm preaching.

I'm preaching. And then all of a sudden I said, be aware, you group. Listen to me, you young people.

Listen to me. And then I said something that totally terrified me. We're going to start this meeting over again and then partway through it, there's going to be a disturbance.

There's going to be a disturbance in this thing and we might not even be able to finish. And your chance to hear the gospel is going to be lost. And all of a sudden I thought, oh my, why did I say that? What am I doing? I thought, oh my gosh, they're going to think I'm some kind of false prophet.

I'm up here like a crazy man predicting something's going to happen. Why did I even say that? We started preaching again and all of a sudden the doors started rattling and someone came in and made a bunch of noise and all sorts, and fear fell on the whole place. Now, why did I give you that example? To show you not to think much of men or their ability to hear.

Most people when they saw all that happen thought Paul Washer is so spiritual, he heard from God, and he made a proclamation. It was so clear from God what he heard that he told us and it came true. That's not the way it happened at all, is it? All of a sudden, for some reason totally unknown to me, I said that.

And it scared me to death because I thought, why did I say that? I don't even know why I said that. Then it happened. Now, that is a perfect example.

I'm trying to give you things that are reality here. It's a perfect example. Believers in the Bible and believers today end up right where God wants them to be and for the most part, it's not because they heard His voice or heard a vision or anything else or their great ability to discern the voice of God, it's the great ability of God to lead.

And many times we don't even recognize it was the will of God until we look back and see the hand of providence all through our lives. And so many people are timid thinking, well, you know, I feel like I might want to do this, but I'm just afraid to step out. There's an open door here, but I'm afraid to go through it because I might be wrong.

Not me. I've got a little, I don't want to say a deal with God, but it's basically like this. God, if it's an open door, I'm going through it.

You don't want me to go through it, close it. And when I'm trying to go through what I think is an open door and it closes smack in my face and carnal Christians look at me like, well, I guess if you didn't hear from God, it doesn't bother me in the least. There's all kinds of little white ivory theologians out there who are always critical about other people trying to follow God.

They don't bother me in the least. They never do anything and they never amount to much. I'd rather have a young man that I have to put a bit in his mouth and bridle him back than some old dud I have to build a fire under.

It's just the willingness to go out and the willingness to be wrong. You don't have a reputation. So if you make a mistake, who cares? It isn't about how good you look.

Just follow Him. Follow Him. Now, it says, he was called, he obeyed, he went out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance.

He went out not knowing where he was going. Beautiful, beautiful statement. Didn't have it all planned out.

Didn't have it all figured out. Didn't even really know what the next thing was going to occur. He just knew that God had called him to march in a certain direction and he set off in that direction.

I always tell young people, I say, listen, if God called you to go to Indonesia, then buy a plane ticket and go to Indonesia. If you can't afford a plane ticket, then well, just get on a boat. If you can't afford a boat, start swimming.

If you can't swim, well, then just fall in the water in the general direction of Indonesia and God will get you there. There's a real sense in which God, when He calls, He makes a way. And not only does He make a way, He gives the grace to carry it through.

To carry it through. God gives you everything you need in order to obey His will. That's why sometimes timid Christians will say things like, you know, I feel like God maybe is calling me to start a Bible study or the pastor has asked me to help in this area, but I just don't think I have what it takes to do it.

Well, that was never the question. Everyone is in agreement with you that you don't have what it takes. Come on, Einstein.

We all know that. No, the question is not whether or not you have what it takes to do it, it's are you going to depend on God? Like I was saying yesterday in the youth meeting, I was so excited. I saw something that just so encouraged me.

There wasn't a piano player or anything and Brother Bob asked a girl, he goes, do you think you could play that song? Most teenagers I know would slump down and say, no, I can't, and giggle and be embarrassed because they're afraid they're going to fail and no, I don't feel comfortable. This girl said, well, I'll give it a shot. I mean, I can play maybe with one hand.

You know, any other response is pride. Pride. Because fear of failure is many times just wrapped up in your pride, your fear of losing your reputation.

Sure, I'll give it a shot. What if you fail? Been there, done that. Got the t-shirt.

I don't care. Was it Theodore Roosevelt who said, I can't quote him, but it was a great thing that he said. He said he didn't want to talk to the critic or the person that's sitting there in the stands criticizing the man out there in the stadium that's fighting the battle.

He said, I don't want to hear anything from these men. I want to hear from that man with dirt on his face that's in there in the battle. Whether he wins or loses, I don't care.

He's the one I want to hear from. It's the same way. Sometimes I go to missions conferences and different things and theological discussions and all these men are talking about so much stuff and I'm going, go, go, leave me alone.

I don't have time for this. Be following the Lord with a childlike faith, not knowing where we're going. Now, we went through verse 9 and we came to the fact that he was in a tent and dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise.

Let me tell you something. If you're a parent and your child knows the Lord, to have your children, your wife or your husband and your children, fellow heirs with you in the kingdom, you never have a cause for the rest of your life to complain. You never have a cause.

I would think you would have to be bold to ask anything more from the Lord. What greater blessing! So many parents in so many churches, they desire for their children to be successful in the world. They desire that they go to college, that they do this and they do that, that they have money, that they have security, all these different things, that they be athletes and everything.

No! The greatest passion and desire we should have for our children is that they be fellow heirs to inherit the promise. To inherit the promise. I have two sons.

I hope one day they attain, through the grace of God, a higher level of relationship with their father. No longer father, but brother. No longer father, but brother.

In Christ. In Christ. Oh, those of you, those of you who have children that know the Lord, rejoice.

Rejoice. Now, here's something that I just truly love. Verse 10 He was looking for a city which has foundations.

Christians sometimes... Have you ever heard the thing, you know, they're so heavenly minded they're no earthly good? Well, in modern day evangelicalism in the United States of America, we could just totally reverse that. They're so earthly minded they're no heavenly good. So earthly minded they're no heavenly good.

And Christian, even those of you who are dedicated and want to endure and yet you struggle and you lack motivation and you're wondering if you can finish the race, and I think sometimes it's because you're not looking for a city. Are you looking every day for that city? Are you listening every day for the blow of the trumpet? Your eyes are on a goal. Your eyes are on a goal.

Your eyes can see it. I can remember going through the wilderness, the jungles of Peru and things like that, or going through the Andes Mountains and walking all night and being so tired and so tired thinking, I'm going to give up. I'm going to give up.

And then all of a sudden, maybe one of my co-workers, Paco Laos or someone would go, Mira, mira, la luz. Look, look. The light.

In a far off, it seemed like a far off range, you could see the light of that little town. You could see it. Maybe just fires burning, but you could see it and you'd go, okay.

Just keep looking at the light. Just keep walking towards that city. We're going to make it.

We're going to make it. There, we're going to be able to lay down, although it's going to be on straw and corn chucks. We're going to be able to lay down.

There, we're going to get some coffee. There, we're going to get some bread. There, we're going to be alright.

We're going to get out of this rain. Let's just get to that city. Oh, and it's such a beautiful city.

A beautiful city. A worthy city. And the most amazing thing about this city is it says He was looking for the city which has foundations.

I love that translation. Which has foundations. There's no other city that has foundations.

All other cities, all other things are built on sand. People live all their life for sand. Sinking sand.

There's only one city that has a foundation that is permanent, that is eternal, that is everlasting, that will be there forever. Everything else is sinking sand. I don't care what you're holding on to, what you care about on this earth.

It is nothing more than sinking sand. So many people in their riches, but their riches cannot save them or redeem them from death. So many people in their culture, but culture is nothing.

So many people in their youth, in their beauty, but youth and beauty fade. So many people in their children, in this and that, but all things are a disappointment. Are you looking for a city that has foundations, that's built upon the rock? Are you looking for that city? A city where your house can dwell upon the rock and not upon sand.

Are you looking for that city? Are you looking for that city? There is a place, believer, prepared for you. Now that should be a great encouragement. I see so many believers.

Why do I keep saying that? I see so many believers who are just obeying because obedience is the right thing to do. Who are enduring because, well, we're supposed to endure. But they don't have this great hope.

They don't have this vision of a city with a foundation. That there's a place. There's a place out there where you're going to lay your head down.

The balm of Gilead is there. The fountain of life is there. Peace is there.

No more enemies there. No more sin there. A place to rest.

A place to play. A place where there is no fear, no insecurity, no anything but peace, peace, peace. Because the One who reigns is wonderful.

I'm looking for that city. It is so hard for some of you not to look at the world because for you, it's this. Okay, don't look at the world.

Don't look at the world. Don't look at the world. But you've stopped looking at the world in order to look at nothing else.

That doesn't last. If the world is the only thing you've ever looked at, if the world is the only thing you've got to look at, then even no matter how strong you are in your piety, you're always going to be turning back because you want to look at something. But the man... By faith, even Sarah herself received ability to conceive.

Now, let's think about this for a moment. I had a really big problem with God on this particular chapter. We had to really work some things out here.

Because he talks about Abraham, Noah, and Sarah, and just so many others on down the line. There's Moses. There's probably Samson.

There's just so many. David. So many of Gideon's and all these different people.

And I have a real problem with what God's doing in Hebrews 11. I had a real problem. I said, God, there's something that just doesn't seem right to me about this chapter.

You're just really making these people look good. I mean, there were a lot of times Abraham didn't believe you. And God, Noah, and then Sarah, she heard that she was going to have a baby.

God, she didn't really believe. She laughed. She laughed.

And people say, oh, no, it's a laughter of joy because of her. No, it wasn't. She laughed.

She said, I'm an old woman. I'm going to have a baby. She laughed.

But here, when God writes about all these Old Testament characters, look what He's saying. All of it positive. He doesn't mention their sin.

He doesn't mention all the problems He had with them. He doesn't mention all their failures. He just says all this good stuff.

And why is that? Because He's forgotten their sin. Because forgiveness really is what He says it is. Isn't that amazing? He's put their sins as far from Him as the East is from the West.

That's a marvelous thing. Think about that. He doesn't even mention them.

They're not really in His mind. It's not an issue. It's gone.

The only thing He has to write about is good things. Because all the bad things have been taken away. Now, if that's not an encouragement, that is a great encouragement.

A tremendous one. Forgiveness really is what He says it is. It's gone.

It's over. And when He writes about these people, by faith, even Sarah received ability. You would think that when He said, Sarah, you're going to have a baby, she says, yes, Lord.

You say it, I believe it. That's not what she did. Now, here's another thing that is so special about the Lord.

I believe that the Lord, our initial knee-jerk reaction to what the Lord wants us to do, He doesn't judge us for that. For example, He says, you're going to have a child. And Sarah goes, yeah, right.

And He goes, okay, fine. You have it that way. I'm going.

Alright, you don't believe it? I'll find somebody else. That's not what He does. That's what we do.

Fine, you don't appreciate it. You don't believe it. You don't accept what I'm saying.

You don't believe my character. Fine, I'm going. I'm out of here.

That's not what He did. He stayed. Yes, you are.

You are. And I'm going to do it. He worked with her.

Remember the fellow they brought to Jesus and he's spitting in the mud and putting things on his eyes and everything else? You ever wonder why he's doing that? The man had no faith. The man didn't even

have a clue what was going on. It's very possible that the people uncaringly just brought him to Jesus in order to see a miracle.

And he's like this going around. What are they doing to me? I hear voices and people laughing. Why am I here? What's going on? What? Maybe he's just wanting to see a circus.

And Jesus takes that man and what does He do? He does things. He touches him. He does things that would make this man think, Hey, hold it.

Somebody's working on me. Something's happening to me. He's touching me.

Is He going to heal me? Is He a doctor? Is this mud? Do you see the way Jesus is? He is so wonderful. He doesn't come to us and say, Okay, we're going to do this. And you go, No, Lord, no way.

Well, fine. Have it your way. You don't want to do it? I'm out of here.

He goes, No, we're going to do it. Here. He condescends.

He is the Lord who condescends. He is the Lord who gently, gently sculpts and molds and makes. I love to preach on the passage about the cane, the bruised cane.

He will not break. Smoking wick? He will not. He will not put out.

You go to Israel, there's cane growing everywhere. Kids want to go down and build them a flute, something to play pretty music out of. They just go down and cut them a cane, start whittling on it.

The cane breaks? They don't care. Take the cane, throw it out. There's more cane.

There's cane all over the place. Why try to fix this cane? This cane didn't work. It's a weak cane.

Throw it out. Get rid of it. Go cut you another one.

Jesus isn't that way. He called you out. He selected you.

He cuts you off from the world to play a beautiful, beautiful harmony through you. And then all of a sudden, because of your own whatever, you break and you mire and the music is horrible. And He doesn't throw you away.

He could go get other cane, but He doesn't go get other cane. He just keeps working. And He mends you and makes you finally able to do the same.

Kerosene lamps, they run out of kerosene and that wick starts burning. Some of you young people never smelt anything like that, but it is horrible. It is horrible.

You throw open the windows, the first thing you're going to do is grab that lamp and throw it right out the window. It's stunk up everything. It gives no light.

It just stinks. God begins to work with you and I. He calls us out. He saves us.

He begins to work with us. We grieve the Holy Spirit. We're just working in the realm of the flesh.

We give no light. We stink. He doesn't just throw open the door of the kingdom and toss you out.

He disciplines you. He cuts off that burnt part. He opens you up.

Maybe even having to crack you in the middle to open you up. Mends you, fills you back with oil again and lights you. This is what He's doing with Sarah.

And we talk about faith. Some people talk about faith in all the wrong ways. It's not this great faith and then God begins to work with you.

God begins to work with you to build your faith. You take baby steps and little by little. It's like when I talk to people, they say, well, you know, I don't spend any time with the Lord.

I don't spend any time in the Word. I don't spend any time in prayer. I said, okay, here's what I want you to do.

I want you to read a paragraph a day in the Bible, and I want you to pray a few minutes. Someone says, well, that isn't a whole lot. I say, well, it's better than zero, isn't it? You know, most people, the problem in their trying to have any spiritual discipline in their life, they go from barely reading the Bible and barely praying to setting up this plan in which they're praying and reading the Word two hours a day.

And they fall flat on their face and they give up and get discouraged. In everything, I have found that although many humans and many Christians do not have the patience, God certainly does. And He is allowing us.

He will walk with us. He will train us. He will allow us to go step by step just like He does here with Sarah.

By faith. Even Sarah herself received ability to conceive power. Literally.

Received power. Now, this is an excellent illustration of I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Now, before you can understand that verse and before you can understand what happened to Sarah here, you have to really come to grips with your inability.

You see, when we talk about truth, when we talk about truth, you have to understand something. You can understand truth here, but it is not a reality to you. You can quote Scripture.

You can affirm doctrine to be so true in certain aspects of sanctification and God dealing with the believer and everything else. You can affirm it. You can teach it, but you don't know it.

And it's not necessarily your fault. There are some things that only come with walking with God for a long time. And then one of the hardest things for us to truly come to grips with in a real way so that it actually impacts our life is our total inability and His total ability.

She received power. The power didn't spring up from within her. It's not something she went and grabbed and put inside of her like a battery.

It wasn't necessarily something she got at some meeting somewhere. She received power from God. God commanded something with regard to one of His children, but not only did He command it, He supplied the power for it to be done.

And when God calls you to do something, God will empower you to do it. Lazarus is a perfect example. You and I could have stood in front of that tomb all day long and screamed out, Lazarus, come forth.

But Lazarus isn't going to obey, because a dead man not only cannot obey, he cannot hear. But when Jesus commanded him to come forth, He gave him the power to come forth. And when God told Sarah, you're going to conceive, she conceived because she received power from the Most High.

Power from the Most High. Is it not available to you, believer, power from the Most High? Is it not available to you? It is available to you. Power from the Most High.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. In myself, I can do nothing. In Christ, I can do all things.

God can make me able. He can make me competent. I've seen this on the mission field so many times.

A dear friend of mine in Cuba, Rogelio Acea, and he was a refugee when Fidel Castro kicked a lot of his prisoners and stuff out of Cuba. Sent some of them here. He sent many of them to different parts of South America.

And Cuba, we called him Cuba. He was sent to Peru. When he was found, he was basically dying buried in garbage in a garbage dump.

A drug addict. When he was in our drug facility and everything and come to know the Lord, I mean, he couldn't even hardly talk. He couldn't hardly read.

But God gave him the grace of humility like no man I've ever seen. And he would, you know, if he was required to teach a class, if we asked him to teach a class there of two or three men, he'd stay up all night crying out to the Lord. Just this total inability.

So aware of his total inability, just crying out to the Lord, Who am I, God, to share Your Word with two men? I can't even hardly read. I can't even hardly talk. Well, years have gone by and the last time I was in Peru, I was coming into Barranco.

I'd just gotten off the bus and I was walking a few blocks away from the church and the church kind of has open windows so you can hear them preach from two blocks away. And I'm hearing somebody preach. And they're preaching on John 3.16 and I'm going, Who is this guy? Where did they get this man? I'm hearing the most eloquent, the most beautiful, the most biblically sound, you know, exegesis, homiletic on John 3.16 which is a very difficult verse to teach.

I mean, it's just fabulous. And I come around the corner and I'm thinking, Who on earth is in here? And I look around. It's Kuba.

It's Kuba. Kuba. Where? What happened? And then old Kuba, he stands like this.

He just goes and just tears running down his face. Help me. God has helped me.

Do all things through Christ. Do all things through Christ. If you've come to at least some recognition, some reality of the fact that you can do nothing.

You can do nothing. You are nothing. He is everything and He can do all things.

Now, verse 11. Ability to conceive even beyond the proper time of life. Now, two things I want to say.

First of all, theologically. Just to point this out real quick because it's very important. Have you ever noticed that there are so many cases in the Old Testament bearing women who give birth based upon the Word of God? Do you know why that is? That's not just to teach us a principle about faith.

It's to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. That a virgin would bring forth a child. That's the very purpose.

When you go through the Old Testament, you see so many women that would bear children, the children of the promise, children of Israel, that would be barren, that could not conceive and God would miraculously open up the womb. Yes, they would conceive by the power of a man. It was a natural conception, but there was a reality in which it was a supernatural conception.

The one who could not conceive because God spoke. And all of that was simply a preparation for the coming of the Christ. That we would not think it a strange thing.

When you read the genealogy of Jesus, you see all these cases of women in the genealogy that are rather immoral. Why? To prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. That Mary would give birth without husband and that she would be what? Slandered, and many would say certain things about her.

So one of the things, just a sidestep here, I want you to know everything in the Old Testament is about Jesus. And not only that, everything in life is about Jesus. It's God's call to take away every hope you ever had in any human deliverance.

And only then will He come. He will come that for us is at the improper time. So that when it happens, it happens at an improper time and there's no earthly explanation for what has gone on.

I've seen that. I've seen that. I've seen that millions of times.

Countless times. God cutting away all hope from me so that He's my only hope. One of the greatest things, one of the most important things, believer, you need to understand is God's zeal for you.

God's zeal for you and God's jealousy over you. If you could only understand that, it would help you with faith. God is so jealous, He will cut away everything in your life so that He becomes all.

He's so zealous that He will do it as a fighting man. He'll do it as one who swings a sharp sword. He'll cut away everything.

And if He doesn't, if you cannot sense, and you have never sensed God's zeal and God's jealousy with regard to you through discipline and trials and other things, then be aware that you do not know the Lord. This God of ours is a passionate lover. A demanding lover.

A jealous lover who burns over us with zeal. And so He will always cut away so that we'll not look to another help. He doesn't want us looking to another help.

To look at another help is to set up a God above the true God. To wrestle out something in our own strength is to declare our own deity. He brought her into the greatest place, the greatest state that a believer can be in.

A state of weakness. Of weakness. Your problem and my problem is not your weakness.

It's your strength. It's your strength. Now, even beyond proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised... Now, God doesn't lie.

But when we look in the Old Testament, we don't see really Sarah making any great declaration of faith. But in Hebrews, God says that she considered Him faithful who had promised. What does that tell me? That what we got in the Old Testament isn't the whole story.

The whole story is this. God took a woman who laughed and turned her into a mighty woman of faith. How long did it take Him? I don't know.

I don't know. The thing about it is though, He was willing to wait. He was willing to work.

He was willing. He was willing. You're there.

You're a new Christian. Maybe you're an old Christian. And you look at the progress so far that you've made in your life and you feel like you have no faith.

You feel like you have no obedience. You feel like you're just spinning your wheels. I want to tell you something.

The same thing He did for Sarah, He is going to do for you. If you truly belong to Him, He is going to do this for you. He is going to bring you to the point where a testimony is said about you that you believed your God.

That you believed your God. That gives me such great hope. I do not expect failure in my Christian life.

Now what do I mean? I mean that in the end, I might be totally broken, totally marred. I might have marks of discipline up and down my body. I don't know.

But in the end, I will stand before Him with great joy. I don't know how well it's going to go for me and I don't know what my performance is going to be like. Looking back on my last 20 years of performance, I'm not expecting a whole lot.

But I can tell you this, I'm going to stand before Him. He's going to shore me up on every side and He's going to make me stand. And I'm going to stand there with great joy because He's going to do it.

He's going to do it. That gives me such encouragement. That gives me such great encouragement.

Now, I want us to look at something here. Verse 11 is such an illustration of salvation. Here she is in her 90's.

Now, I want you to look at something. Verse 12, Therefore, there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that. So here we have a man that's as good as dead.

A woman that is as good as dead. In the sense, they were old. They had gone not just a few years beyond the age of being able to conceive.

I mean, they were way out there. I mean, this is something you would have seen in the National Enquiry if they had one there in that time. A 90-year-old woman gives birth.

As good as dead. As good as dead. I like to think that when a person is living by faith, they can say this, I am as good as dead if the Lord doesn't move on my behalf to stay.

I am so at risk, so challenged, so overcome by the circumstances around me, I am as good as dead lest the Lord move on my behalf to stay. And another thing, for salvation, this is such an illustration, every person is as good as dead. You see, salvation of a person is a supernatural work of almighty God, and that's the only sound explanation for it.

It is a supernatural work of God. I heard a guy get up one time, an evangelist, talking about the importance of child evangelism because, I don't know what he said, 75% of all the people who are saved in America are saved before they are 12 years old. He said, we've got to reach them before they get hard.

I'm like, man, does anybody even read their Bibles anymore? Before they get hard, they were born hard. Not only were they born hard, they were born dead. It's no more difficult for a Harvard professor, an atheist teaching evolution at Harvard to become a Christian than it is for a 13 year old boy raised in church.

It's no more difficult for God to save a man or a woman 100 years old than it is for Him to save a child that's 13 who was raised in Scripture and homeschooled every day of their life. All salvation is hard. Not only is all salvation hard, all salvation is impossible, but that which is impossible for men is possible with God.

You're sitting here thinking, maybe you're an older saint and you think, is it possible for God to just continue working in my life and to continue changing me? Yes, it is. Is anything impossible for Him? Remember what we read in the beginning part of this chapter? He created the universe. Is anything impossible for Him? Or you have a relative or a family member and they're cold as a stone.

They might be moral, they might be nice, they might be cultured, they might be anything, but they have no spiritual understanding whatsoever. They might have religion, they might have everything else, and you see them marching off to the tomb and you ask yourself, can God save them? He most certainly can. He most certainly can save them.

Verse 12, Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. Boy, I want to tell you something. When God makes a promise, He makes a promise.

I mean, He comes in, He doesn't say, He doesn't say, Look, Abraham, I'm going to come and I'm going to give you a son. No, He says, Abraham, come outside with me for a minute. Abraham says, Lord, can we just stay in the tent for a minute? I want to talk to you.

I mean, I'm barren. I mean, I don't have any children. Abraham, can you come outside for a minute with me? Oh Lord, I really need to talk to you.

I would really like to have a son. Abraham, come. Abraham, look up there.

Count those stars. Lord, I want to have a son. Count those stars.

Lord, I can't count those stars. There's too many stars. So is your descendants going to be.

Abraham, look down at your feet. Lord, would you give me a son? Abraham, look down at your feet. Count the grains of sand.

Lord, there's just too many grains of sand. I mean, no one can count that many grains of sand. Lord, so will your descendants be, Abraham.

Lord, would you just give me a son? Abraham, would you shut your mouth and listen to me? I am not only going to give you a son, I am going to make your descendants more numerous than the stars in the heavens, in the sand on the seashore, and in the desert. He does exceedingly abundantly above all we ask of Him. He was asking for a son.

God gave Him a nation. Now, I know that Jesus said according to your faith will be done to you. And I know that's true.

And I know there's a sound explanation for all of that. But I also know as I look through Scripture, I don't see Abraham getting according to his faith. I see God doing exceedingly abundantly above all Abraham could ever ask or think in that context.

I look at God's dealing with me. My grumbling, my weakness, lack of faith, my pathetic immaturity, my whining. That's the worst.

And yet, God continues to be faithful. And that's what we see here. When God does something, He does it in a tremendous, a tremendous way.

Now, verse 13. All of these died in faith without receiving the promises. It is so easy.

I know of one man. I haven't studied his life well. He's gone on to be with the Lord, but for years the Lord used him and mighty, mighty revivals occurred and mighty great things happened through him.

Just unnumbered people were saved and everything else. And then it seemed as though in the same way that the Lord came upon him, the Lord left. Now, the presence of the Lord was still with him, but literally the power in the ministry was gone.

It was a visitation that didn't last the entire extent of his life. And during the time of the power of God resting upon this man, he was bold as a lion. He was as strong as strong could be.

He was a man of faith and everything. But when he no longer saw all the great results and everything else, he fell into the sloth of despondency, became so depressed and almost suicidal. Now, I want to share something with you.

When you pray and receive the promise almost immediately, when God blesses you with answers to prayer and God blesses the work that you're doing and everything, or you see a man that God's got His hand on him and God seems to be blessing everything that he's doing, don't look at him as a great man of faith. You look at a man out there, a woman out there ministering and laboring for years and years and years and years and seeing nothing of benefit, nothing of regret, nothing of reaping from all their sowing, and yet every day they go out and continue the same thing. That is a man and a woman of faith.

And these fellas died. They died in faith. They didn't sit there on their deathbed going, well, you know, I'm going to die in five minutes and if God hasn't done anything in five minutes then all His promises have failed and I'm going to die in total unbelief.

No. No. They knew God was faithful.

There's also something very important and this isn't brought out enough in theology in my opinion. Faith is directly tied up, in my opinion, in the resurrection. Faith is very, very directly linked with the doctrine of resurrection.

Now, these men died in faith. They hadn't received the promise. They knew God had promised them that their descendants would inherit the promised land and everything else, but there's something deeper going on here and we can see it in Abraham when he offers Isaac and it's the idea of resurrection.

And I want you to know that for you it is also the idea of resurrection. In the New Testament church, they say that in the primitive church that what would happen is an elder would come forward in those little house churches or in the catacombs and the first thing he would say is he has resurrected and the congregation would stand up and say he has resurrected indeed. So that means that if we die, that means if we're martyred, that means if we suffer all the days of our life and we see no fruit from this Christian faith of ours, we need to understand there is a resurrection and we shall see our Redeemer and we shall stand before Him in the flesh and all His promises will be fulfilled.

Again, we go back to this idea that this is not our home and this life of ours is not it. That there is a trumpet to be blown. There are graves to be violated by the thief who comes in the night.

And so believer, what do you do? You go on and you press on and you press on. If you see fruit in your ministry, count that a privilege. Count that a blessing.

If you see many of your prayers answered and all these things, count that a blessing. But maybe, just maybe, if you're faithful to the Lord and you see absolutely nothing all the days of your life, then it is a greater privilege. Unto you has been given a greater privilege than has been given to an Edwards or a Whitfield or a Spurgeon.

Unto you has been given the greater privilege to demonstrate faith beyond what those other men were called to demonstrate. It's not hard to demonstrate faith when every time you open up your mouth, 10,000 people are standing there wanting to hear you. What's faith is when you got preached for 120 years and no one even listened to you.

Well, see, we've got it all reversed again. That's why Christendom, because it's not Christianity, Christendom in America makes me so mad, especially all these TV preachers. I wish we'd just put them on a barge, send them to an island and sing the doxology as they're leaving.

Because they got it all twisted around. There's this power in their ministry. There's this and there's that and there's every other thing and they're boasting big things in their great faith.

I heard a man one time I was asked to go to a conference and speak and he got up and said, I've been called here to speak, but I'm going to speak to you about big things because I do big things. I'm a man of God. I'm a mover and a shaker.

I said, well, yeah, you're a mover and a shaker, alright. It made me so mad I could spit telling all these young preachers these kind of silly, pathetic, fleshly lies. In Peru, I saw countless people come to know the Lord.

The missionaries in Peru right now are seeing revivals and people being swept into the kingdom and all sorts of things. It had nothing to do with me. You know what it had to do with? It had to do with those

missionaries who first went to Peru and labored there for 80 years without seeing one convert.

That's what it had to do with. They sowed and another reaped. They sowed.

Men and women of God sowed all their life and died in the dust, seeing nothing. But in the resurrection, when all that countless multitude of Peruvians is standing before the throne, then the true patriarchs of Peru will be called forward to receive their reward. While all us little boys who acted like big shots will be standing behind them.

So if you think that you're not one of those privileged men or privileged women who see so much fruit and so many things and everything else, just possibly it's just the other way around. Maybe guys like me need to see fruit because we're so weak in our faith. If we don't, we'll fall into despair.

The kingdom of God is so different than what American Christianity puts forth today. And it says, and we're going to finish up here, it says, all these died in faith without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. There is a real sense, and I don't want to sound voodooish here, but there is a real sense in which you and I are kind of in limbo.

We've stepped out of one world and we're headed towards another. We're caught between a temporal that is passing away and an eternal that is coming. In systematic theology, especially among the neo-orthodox, you always study this thing called the already and the not yet with regard to the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God has come. It is already. But the kingdom of God is also coming.

And the kingdom of God is yet to come. It's just like standing at the platform of a train station. And part of the train has already arrived.

You can say the train has arrived. But you also look down and see the train is moving. You see the train is still coming and has not yet come.

That's the way the kingdom of God is. And so you and I, sometimes it's very difficult to get orientated. We've left one land.

We're headed towards another that we see from afar, but we might not receive. Not just yet. And that is why the Christian life is a life of faith.

Why are you waiting for some other world? Yes, I am. By what authority? God has spoken. By what promise? Sealed it with His blood.

God has spoken. Is that enough for you to set out on this journey? It's quite enough for me to set out on this journey. Because you can always go back to Egypt.

You can always go back to Egypt. But don't. Now, he says, they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Who are they strangers to? You guys aren't strangers to me. Some of you, you know, the first time I met you. It's like family.

I have no desire to exile any of you. Well, maybe a few of you. If you're a stranger among the people of God and not a stranger among the inhabitants of Canaan, then you are of Canaan.

If you would much rather fellowship with those who do not consider themselves pilgrims walking to a distant land, if you would rather fellowship yourself with them, you're not a pilgrim walking to a distant land. If your hope is in this world, if everything you've got and everything you are and everything you've been is wrapped up in this world, then you're not a stranger and an alien. In this world.

Remember, if you're truly a Christian, the Bible says in Philippians that our citizenship is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven. Fourteen, for those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

I am seeking a country of my own. An exile. An alien.

Waiting for another country. That means that a lot of opportunities in this world are going to pass and I'm going to let them pass. Because although there might be opportunities for someone of this world, they are not opportunities for me.

I have a different citizenship. A different citizenship. I love that it says, for those who say such things, make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own.

And indeed, if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. That's a scary passage in the Bible. It's kind of like an open door.

You want to leave? Go ahead. You're thinking about going back? Go. I don't know if some of you will understand this, but do you remember when you were a kid? Maybe you're playing in a game or maybe you're with a bunch of friends and things don't go your way.

And so you go off in a corner and mope. And the reason why you go off in a corner and mope is you're hoping that it will draw the attention of the others and they'll come over and beg you to get back in the game. Don't ever do that with God because He won't come back and beg you to get back in the game.

Don't play games with God. God is merciful. God is compassionate.

God is so many things of unconditional love that we cannot begin to describe. But don't play games with God. I've had that tendency in my life to just want to mope so that God would come looking for me.

And every time He's made it quite clear I'm not going to come looking for you. Now, there are other times, Paul, when you can stray. There are other times you can get lost.

There are other times you can be bewildered or dragged away partially by the enemy and I will come looking for you and I will find you and I will rescue you from your enemies. But, Paul, don't play games with me. This little childish thing of moping off in a corner hoping I'm going to come, I'm not.

If you're thinking about that country from which you came, then go back. It sounds sort of contradictory to the things I've been saying these last two days, three days, but it's not. Never forget, there's both sides to this.

You need to be really, really careful. Don't play games with God. When you fail, call out to Him.

When you're tired, tell Him. Whatever's in your heart, make it known to Him. But don't play games and don't try to manipulate God because it's not going to work.

He will not be manipulated. Now, verse 16, but as it is, they desire a better country that is a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

They desire a better country. You know what's amazing about the inhabitants and citizens of this world? If you even mention that you desire a better country, they get so mad they could spit. You hear scientists, you hear sociologists, you hear others always talking about Christians as those who don't live in the real world, who aren't wanting to fix this world.

They're just wanting to escape to another world. It always seems funny to me that most of the works of charity, most of the works of health organizations and things like that was either founded upon Christian principles by Christian people or continued by them. Christians do more work to heal this world than any other group.

What makes me mad is when the government says the United States of America this year gave this much money to charity. I just wish they would divide it up and say who really gave the money? Because most of it was Christians giving money to the churches to fix problems on this earth. We're not a goofy people.

We're not escapists. We're not dreamers. But God has promised us a country and we are waiting for it.

We are waiting for it. And we are believing God for it. And we are not doing good deeds in this world.

We are not feeding the hungry and helping the poor because we believe this world will reach a utopia. We are doing it not in the name of a utopia, but just in the name of compassion. And to reach out and tell people that another world is coming, another world is coming.

But as it is, they desire a better country. That is a heavenly one. A country.

I don't want to sound cliché, but it's so cliché. A country where I never have to say goodbye to anyone. A country where I never have to say I'm sorry.

A country where I never have to ask for forgiveness of sins. A country where I never have to stay up at night wondering in confusion about who I am or what I'm going to be doing. A country where I never have to fight terrible moral and ethical battles within myself.

A country where I never have to be insecure. A country where I never have to die. That is one of the foundational things that just demonstrates to me the spiritual blindness of men.

I've seen so many people die. My brother died. My father died.

I preached my sister's funeral. I've seen people die in war. Every day, hundreds of thousands of people are swept off into death, and yet I watch the old, I watch the old go to funerals of their friends oblivious to the fact, in denial of the fact that soon it will be them that we come to bear.

And without any remorse, any fear, any trembling, any message of the Gospel that they hear, they simply dismiss it, maybe with anger or worse, politely. And they remain unconverted until the day of their death, and they go to hell. Fine old gentlemen and little old ladies.

Fathers who worked very hard. Women who raised ten children go to hell. Because unlike Noah, they never took serious the warning.

They were trite with God. Grandmotherly with God. And they died, and they went to hell.

They were never looking for a better country. They were never looking for a better place. They were content with this world, which is the worst thing you can be is content with this world.

And God would be ashamed to call them His children. And they would be ashamed to call Him their God. Where are you today? Where are you? Just like God, when Abraham, when Adam fell, God coming into the garden saying, Adam, where are you? Where are you, Adam? God knew where Adam was.

The reason why I ask the question is Adam didn't know where Adam was. Where are you today? Young person, sitting there, teenager, this, that. Maybe you're homeschooled.

Maybe externally you're really religious and you look really fine. When someone's watching, boy, you can really march to the beat of the drummer. But the moment eyes are turned off of you, you have no fear of the divine view.

And you live without the fear of God and you live without the love of God and there's nothing in you but straw. Straw for the burning. Straw for hell.

Or maybe you're here in your middle age and you're working all the time and you're busy, busy, busy and you've got things to do and everything. You just don't have time. You too, sir.

You too, ma'am, will die and go to hell. Or maybe you're older. You've been a good person as people go.

You've raised families. You've done things. You're respectable.

Maybe you're cultured. Maybe you have even a little bit of wisdom to you. Maybe you're kind and gentle and all sorts of things, but you've lived a whole life as someone who's never looked for a city whose architect and builder is God.

You've got just enough religion to send you straight to hell. Even though maybe people around you have cried out to you to hear, to listen, begged you, prayed with you, everything. You seem as dull as a stone.

You're on your way to hell and there's no one to stop you except God. If it causes fear in you, young person, if what I said causes you to tremble, middle-aged man, if old man or old woman, this bothers you and even angers you but sets a bit of fear into your heart, then throw yourself down right now and cry out for the mercy of God. Call on Him to save you from the wrath to come.

Because oh, my dear friend, no one will escape on that day except those bought by the blood of the Lamb. No one will escape on that day and no good work, no good work will be able to pay a price to redeem you on that day. Oh, that fear would be just driven into your heart like a dagger that you would come and call out to Christ for salvation once and for all.

Stop kicking against the goads and cry out to Him, Save me, O Lord. Save me. So many around you perishing and so many around you being saved and yet you sit there and you do nothing.

You look at the one and you see that it's true. There's some that seem to have a measure of salvation, a measure of a love for God that is totally foreign to you, but you just sit there. You see others without God who seem worse than you morally and they're perishing and going to hell and you don't realize that they're just paving a road, a clear way for you to follow.

What will you do? What will you do? For those of you who are Christians, are you content in this land? Are you content in this land? Or are you sick of this land but your eyes aren't set upon another? Do you have very little hope? Do you have very little excitement over the kingdom, over the city that's coming? Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Turn your eyes upon His promises and His Word. Hold on.

Hold on. Hold on. Rejoice in Him.

Rejoice in Him. Speak about them to one another. It's one thing during the war in Peru, I was amazed at how the conversations of Christians were always about glory, about the coming kingdom, about deliverance from this present age of evil.

And then when everything gets common and war dies down, it's back to battling with the world. The world doesn't do you much good when you're in the middle of a war. The world doesn't do you much good when you've got one foot inside of a casket.

But the world doesn't do you much good now. You've never gotten into the world, believer. You've never stepped back into that world without feeling disgusted and losing your peace.

So come out. Come out from among them. Be ye separate.

And follow God in obedience. Bye. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

If anyone is concerned about their soul, their salvation today, please come and talk to me. Or talk to someone. There are many here who could tell you about the right path of salvation.

Let's pray.

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