

Forgiving and God

by R.T. Kendall

The sermon emphasizes the importance of forgiving God and trusting in His goodness, even in the midst of suffering.

Duration: 1:10:08

Scripture: Habakkuk 2:1, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Matthew 10:32-33, John 11:15, Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Hebrews 11:1, Revelation 1:7

Topics: "Total Forgiveness", "Faith And Trust"

Description

This sermon by R.T. Kendall focuses on the concept of total forgiveness, exploring the trilogy of Total Forgiveness, Totally Forgiving Ourselves, and Totally Forgiving God. The message delves into the need to let go of grievances, trust in God's justice, and wait for His ultimate vindication. Habakkuk's journey of questioning God's allowance of evil and suffering is highlighted, emphasizing the importance of faith and patience in understanding God's ways. The sermon concludes with a powerful call to accept Jesus' sacrifice for salvation and the significance of confessing faith publicly.

Transcript

By the way, you know, in England you've got the Welsh, the Irish, the Scots, the English. Do you know the difference between a Welshman and an Englishman, and a Scotsman and an Irishman? I'll tell you. Two Englishmen, two Scotsmen, two Irishmen, and two Welshmen were marooned on this island in the South Pacific, and discovered two years later.

The two Scotsmen had formed a bank and were trading shells with each other. The two Welshmen had formed a choir and were singing. The two Irishmen had killed each other off in a fight.

The two Englishmen were waiting to be introduced. But I come from the hills of Kentucky, and I wanted to inject a little culture into Hong Kong. I hate to say goodbye, but we've loved it, and thank you for having us.

Now, I made the decision to preach three different sermons. Normally, when I go to a place I've never been, I preach my sermon, Total Forgiveness. I've preached it hundreds of times.

But I just felt led, I think, of the Holy Spirit, to preach three different ones, because there is a trilogy. The book, Total Forgiveness, spawned the second one, Totally Forgiving Ourselves. It spawned the third one, Totally Forgiving God, and that's what I'm going to do today.

You must understand, and I cannot overemphasize this, that I feel a little uneasy with this title, because it could imply that God has done something wrong, that he's culpable, and we must forgive him. That's not the point. The point rather is, because God is all-powerful, he could stop things from happening that are not happy, but we must let him off the hook, and let him clear his name in the end.

In the meantime, we affirm him. That's the point. So, would you open your Bibles to the book of Habakkuk? I think the English would say Habakkuk, but in heaven they call it Habakkuk.

Hard to find, start with Malachi, Sam, that's the last book in the Old Testament, Malachi. You start with Malachi, go five books back, and you get to Habakkuk. I just thought you'd like to know that.

I didn't want to leave you behind. And so we read in chapter two, I will stand at my watch and station myself on the ramparts. I will look to see what he will say to me, and what answer I am to give to this complaint.

The Lord replied, write down the revelation, and make it plain on tablets, so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation speaks, waits at a pointed time, it speaks of the end, and it will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it, it will certainly come, and will not delay.

See he is puffed up, his desires are not upright, but the righteous will live by His, and I confess, the righteous will live by God's faithfulness, that's the meaning. Well Habakkuk wanted to know why does God allow evil, and he did not get his question answered. But something happened to him, and we now come to chapter three.

Would you turn over to Habakkuk chapter three, and I wonder if you noticed that Andrew the Scott began the service quoting Habakkuk 3.17, I nearly fell off my chair when I heard it in the first service. I turned to Sam, I said that's my text, and he said the Lord led him to that, and I have no doubt about it. You've got to remember that it was an agrarian society, they didn't have food in their freezers, they lived for sun and rain, and sometimes, I cannot read this verse without coming to tears, though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines, and though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen, and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

May God be pleased to bless the reading and the preaching of this, his most holy and infallible word. Brief word of prayer. Heavenly Father, I now pray for the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus by your Holy Spirit to rest upon every mind in this place, in order that their perception of what I say will be heard, received, and applied as you intend.

Cleanse my tongue that I will be your transparent instrument to say everything that needs to be said, nothing that doesn't need to be said, that there be no wasted words. I ask that I will be very, very clear, very, very simple, though we're dealing with a most profound and difficult subject. I pray that you'll give me the ability to get it over, so that every person here gets it, and that this will be life-changing and almost certainly pivotal in our understanding of the God of the Bible.

May this bring you great honor and glory, I pray in Jesus' name, amen. It just has happened so far. Of the various times I've preached this sermon, and when I preach it, it's never the same as the previous time, I never know just which direction it will take.

I suppose I've preached total forgiveness all over the world, I don't know, 300 times, maybe more, totally forgiving ourselves several dozen times. This sermon today, maybe 20 times, 25, but in each case when I've preached it, I found out that there was someone who, as I preached, they were in the greatest trial of their whole lives right then. And so, maybe this will be the exception, but could it be that there's someone here as I speak, you are right now in the middle of the greatest trial of your life? If so, this is for you.

And if you're not in the greatest trial of your life, try to remember it, because you may need it down the road. Now why is this word from Habakkuk so important? Well, it touches on one of the most common questions asked by everybody. Whether you are a Christian, non-Christian, intellectual, uneducated, everybody asks the question, why does God allow evil and suffering? The first question, the first reply almost anybody gets when you hear about the claims of Christianity, the first question is, well, if there is a God, why does He allow evil and suffering? It's the greatest philosophical, theological, even psychological question that can ever be raised.

And so, we're going into deep waters. This is why I pray to be so simple, because I'm not here to be clever or profound, I want you to get this. So why does God allow evil things? Answer me this.

Why did God create humankind knowing that we would all suffer? You have an answer for that one? So God, who is all-powerful and all-merciful, allows bad things, which He could stop from happening, just like that, but He doesn't. And watches evil go on. Look what we've just heard about in Syria, just for a start.

It's unthinkable. And you cry out, God, are you there? Your Word says you're all-powerful. Your Word says you're all-merciful.

And look, look, look, why don't you stop it? The two greatest men in the Old Testament were Abraham and Moses. They're the two greatest men. And both had in common that they were let down by God.

In fact, it's very interesting. God promised Abraham that Canaan would be his. And you read in Acts chapter 7, verse 4, that God gave Abraham no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground.

I wonder if you ever saw that verse before. It's Stephen speaking before the council. And every Jew knew that God promised Abraham Canaan.

And yet, he says, He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. John Calvin, in his commentary, says, it must have occurred to Abraham that he had been deceived. But did Abraham give up? No.

Well, why didn't he? Was he stupid? Was he crazy? Why didn't he? God said to Moses, I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, so I've come down to deliver them. And so I'm sending you, Moses, to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. But the next thing to happen is that Pharaoh commands the people of Israel to find their own straw and make the same number of bricks.

And so Moses then said to the Lord, Why? Why have you brought this trouble on these people? You have not rescued your people at all. Well, Abraham became known as the father of the faithful. Moses summarizes the Old Testament himself.

He embodies the whole of the Old Testament. In fact, in John chapter 1, verse 17, it summarizes, The law came by Moses, grace and truth by Jesus Christ. And so here are the two great men, Abraham and Moses.

You can't imagine the suffering that they went through. It's incalculable. And yet, they're the two greatest men of all.

What does that tell you? Is it possible that somebody here, you would like to be great? You're striving for greatness? Well, the road to greatness is following in the steps of Abraham and Moses. And it's not fun. And you may say, Well, no thanks.

I'm not interested in greatness after all. In a word, these two men suffered the most. Now, God, in fact, listen to me, is pure, just, without any guilt, a God of faithfulness, and without injustice, good and upright is He.

Now, you've noticed the word revelation. When I read from Habakkuk, the Lord says, Write down the revelation and make it plain. Then He says, For the revelation awaits at a pointed time.

It speaks of the end and will not prove false. Well, what was the revelation? Well, the revelation is the very answer to Habakkuk's prayer, because Habakkuk wanted to know, Why does God allow evil and suffering, and even seems to side with the enemy? And Habakkuk couldn't figure it out. He said, It doesn't add up.

Well, God is merciful and all-powerful. Why does He allow evil, when He could stop it in a split second? And by the way, don't ever doubt that. There are those who say, Well, He can't stop it.

Not true. Well, the revelation speaks of the end. What that means is that on the last day, by end, it means end.

The end, when it's over. You've heard the phrase, It ain't over till it's over. But at the end, it's over.

And that will be the day God will clear His name. The end. Well, Habakkuk might have said, I'm sorry, that's not good enough.

I'm checking out. I don't want to know the God of the Bible. But you know what? Though Habakkuk didn't get the answer he wanted, we come to the fact that Habakkuk becomes our hero.

He's your example. Let him be your model. Because it came to terms with what went on.

The book of Habakkuk doesn't tell us how Habakkuk himself was able to do this. But all we know is, he wanted to know why do you allow suffering? God says, I'll tell you on the last day, something happened to Habakkuk. So that as he closes the book, though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food, and though there are no sheep in the pen, and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will be joyful in God my Savior. In a word, Habakkuk let God off the hook. He totally forgave God and said, I'm willing to wait to the end.

Many years ago, when I was 17, student in Ashland High School back in Kentucky. One day about 2 o'clock, I was called out of the room to go to the principal's office. There was a phone call.

It was my uncle. He said, RT, your mother has just had a stroke. And your father is on the way to pick you up and take you to the hospital.

I said, oh, is she going to be all right? He said, I think your mother is a very sick woman. We rushed to the hospital and there lay my 43-year-old mother, paralyzed, couldn't speak. For the next several weeks, my father had everybody he could find to pray.

Anybody who claimed a gift of healing, he'd bring them in. They would anoint her with oil. They prayed for her.

And two or three sweet people said, I've prayed through. That was their phrase. I've prayed through.

She's going to be healed. And never will forget, one morning, my father came running up the stairs to wake me up. To go to school.

He says, son, I've got wonderful news. Oh, what? Your mother is going to be healed. I've just touched God.

That's my dad. He's revealed to me. She'll be healed.

And the funny thing is, I felt too that God had told me. I'm 17 years old. But I found the verse.

I was sure the Lord gave it to me. She's going to be healed. Well, in those days, I was a member of the high school band.

I played the oboe. You didn't know that about me. I played the oboe.

And our little high school band was chosen to play at the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. Great honor for our little band. And I didn't think I would be going because my mother was so sick. But she wanted me to go.

And my dad says, go. Because she's going to get well. Never will forget, overnight, train ride to Washington, D.C. The next morning, I get on the phone to call my aunt.

I said, guess who this is? She said, where are you? I said, it's our team. I know. Where are you? I'm at the Union Station, across the street from this restaurant.

Don't leave. Your uncle's coming to get you. I said, what are you telling me? She said, your mother just passed away this morning.

As you can see, I've never recovered. My dad was afraid I would lose my faith. For some reason, I didn't.

Now look here. That disappointment does not qualify me to preach this sermon. What possibly does qualify me is that I've dealt with hundreds and hundreds of questions.

I've been in the ministry for 62 years. And as I look back at the 25 years at Westminster Chapel, I dealt with every question you can imagine. I bet you would never guess what was the number one question I got in the vestry at Westminster Chapel.

It's not, why does God allow suffering? Why does God allow... It's not what happens to the heathen that never hear the gospel. You know what the number one question was? Dr. Kendall, why can't I get married? Yeah. That was tough.

I'd rather deal with the problem of evil. Yeah, those are the main ones. Why doesn't God answer my prayer? Why when I dedicated my life, I get fired the next day? Why when I started tithing, I get a bill from the Inland Revenue for 700 pounds? I look back, I think my most difficult case, in fact in my whole ministry, was a German girl.

She was not beautiful. She had muscular dystrophy. She would come in limping every week.

And before she would leave, she would say in her German accent, and with her speech impediment, Dr. Kendall, why can't I get a husband? And I would just say, I don't know. And out she would go. A few months after we retired, I was notified that she went back to Germany and took her own life.

And I would look back. Was there anything I could say? What does one do? It was my most difficult case. And so why does God desert me when I'm at my lowest point? Why doesn't God heal me? Why when I've served the Lord all these years, I suddenly lose my job? Well, Acts chapter 7 verse 5, God gave Abraham no inheritance here.

Not even a foot of ground. And yet God promised him that he and his descendants would possess the land. Even though at that time Abraham had no child.

Abraham could easily have felt betrayed. Abraham broke the betrayal barrier. Which all can do, but few do.

You ever heard this phrase before? Breaking the betrayal barrier. You will know that in the 20th century, aeronautical science broke the sound barrier. When a plane could fly faster than the speed of sound.

Major breakthrough. But I'm announcing this afternoon something harder to do than that. Few do it.

They break the betrayal barrier. When they hit a wall and everything is black. God apparently is just not there.

And you think, whatever happened? When you feel betrayed. It's very interesting. When you read the 11th chapter of Hebrews.

All these people did what they did by faith. You perhaps know Hebrews 11. It's the great faith chapter of the Bible.

But I wonder if you've ever noticed the next to last verse of Hebrews 11. I think people look at it and just go on. They don't think about it.

Listen to these words. These were all commended for their faith. Who are they? Abel.

Noah. Enoch. Abraham.

Isaac. Jacob. Joseph.

Moses. Samuel. A whole lot.

They were all commended for their faith. Yet none of them received what had been promised. What? They didn't get what they were promised? Why didn't they give up? Were they crazy? You're dumb.

You see, this is the way we can naturally react. Well, in my book, Total Forgiveness, I teach that the greatest blessing or anointing is promised to the person who overcomes the greatest possible injustice. As opposed to someone who overcomes a lesser hurt.

In other words, the greater the suffering, the greater the anointing. In Totally Forgiving Ourselves, the equivalent truth is this. That when you forgive yourself, despite the greatest of all skeletons in your cupboard, but you forgive yourself, you come in to the greatest blessing.

So, in Totally Forgiving God, the greater the hurt or feeling of being let down means the greater the anointing and reward if you persist in faith without getting your questions answered. So, if you've experienced the greatest sense of betrayal, and you have felt the greatest sense of desertion or rejection when you were doing your best to obey God's will, then you have just been elevated to the status of those people in Hebrews chapter 11. You say, well, I don't even care to be in that category.

Well, if you're going through your greatest trial, and you feel betrayed, but you don't give up, you get into their category, and that's good company. In fact, the writer says the world wasn't worthy of them. I want to be in that company.

And so, if your pilgrimage has led to the feeling of being betrayed, which is the worst scenario, but you didn't give up, you have been upgraded to the level of the patriarchs, Habakkuk, and all those described in Hebrews 11. None of them received what was promised. By the way, Hebrews 11 is not a description of people, how they get saved, but it's a description of persistent faith.

What people who are saved may accomplish by not giving up despite feeling let down, disillusioned, deceived, or betrayed. And so, today I announce this invitation. You're invited to break the betrayal barrier if you're going through a severe trial.

Something to which we are called, but which too few do. I suppose, if I look back on my pastoral experience, perhaps 9 out of 10 Christians, sooner or later, get let down by God. And most of them say, well, goodbye, you won't see me anymore, I'm out of here.

Perhaps 1 out of 10 don't give up. They persist. They break the betrayal barrier.

They're like Job, though he slay me, yet will I trust him. That's my message today. You are invited to break the betrayal barrier.

Something to which we are called, but which too few do. Now, let me say it again. God is perfect, pure and just.

He's done no wrong, ever. Past, present, future. But God has allowed things which we don't understand.

Sometimes He doesn't appear to keep His word. Sometimes He seems to break His promises. The question is, will we accuse Him or let Him off the hook? For example, if God does not answer your prayer, He allows evil when He could have stopped it.

You've been faithful to Him, as you know how to be. You've tried your best. But He appears to desert you in your time of need.

You've even watched wicked people get away with all kinds of injustice and evil. And they get blessed for it, apparently. You have prayed and read your Bible, but God hides His face from you.

Even the worst evil imaginable takes place. You've sacrificed for Him, but He seems to have taken no notice. Well, Habakkuk is your man.

The book of Habakkuk, that's your book. It is the book in the Bible that chiefly answers the question, or touches on it, the problem of evil. Habakkuk asks, why does God allow suffering when He's perfectly capable of stopping it at any moment? In fact, you might like to know, Habakkuk actually had four complaints.

Number one, God does not answer his prayer. Number two, God looked the other way when violence came upon His people. Number three, God's own covenant people are having to endure injustice.

Number four, God tolerated evil. Here's the thing, Habakkuk had a surprising breakthrough. And it's this, that God declares us righteous when we believe His word.

Habakkuk entered Abraham's league. Do you know about Abraham? He had no child. He was 85.

Sarah was 75, barren. And Abraham was very discouraged. He says, Lord, You've given me all this wealth, but I've got nobody to leave it to.

Shall I leave it to my servant Eliezer? And God said, Abraham, go outside your tent, look up. Clear sky. You see the stars? Count them.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Start over. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

God, I can't count them. There must be hundreds. Of course, we now know they are billions.

You know what God said to Abraham? So will your seed be. Abraham might have said, God, do you expect me to believe that? Don't tease me. This is no joke.

No. You know what Abraham said? Instead of saying, how do you expect me to believe that? You think I'm nuts? Abraham believed it. He believed it.

And God says, good. For that I count you righteous. And that became the Apostle Paul's Exhibit A. For justification by faith.

Now, Habakkuk gets an equivalent deal. Habakkuk wants to know why God allows evil. And so, he's given instructions.

Here's what I want you to do. You will station yourself on the ramparts. And I'm going to show up.

And the Lord replied, write down the revelation, make it plain on tablets, so that a herald will run with it. The revelation awaits an appointed time. It speaks of the end.

It will not prove false, though it linger. Wait for it. It will certainly come and will not delay.

Well, Habakkuk might have said, sorry, I want to know now. I don't want to wait till the end. But Habakkuk believed it.

And he was counted righteous. In fact, the phrase, the just shall live by faith, found three times in the New Testament, based upon this very point. In Galatians and Romans, it refers to justification by faith.

In Hebrews 10, it refers to waiting for God, because He's going to show up and you're not going to be disappointed. It all started right here. And so, the person who is willing not to challenge God, but is willing to say, okay, I'll wait to the end.

You are counted righteous. Well, one of the reasons God allows evil and suffering, I want to try to show you today. Now, this is the most recondite, profound question ever in the history of the world.

Only a fool would try to say, I'm going to explain the problem of evil and why God allows evil. Only a fool would make that claim. But I'm going to have a go.

Because what I'm about to say is true. It's certainly part of the reason. You see, there are two worldviews when it comes to faith.

There's the secular view, that is, seeing is believing. There is the biblical view, that is, believing without seeing. According to Hebrews chapter 11, verse 1, and it's in the pastor's office, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Or as one version put it, faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. You see, the secular atheist view is that seeing is believing. I will believe it when I see it.

I will believe it when I see it, not until. And you see, this is the view of the people that were hanging Jesus on the cross. Mark 15, verse 32, they said, Hey, Son of God, come down from the cross so we can see and believe.

You see, that's the order salutis, so to speak, of the secular atheist view of faith, so we can see and believe. I'll believe it when I see it, except for one thing. It's not faith if you see it.

If you see it, it ceases to be faith. And God, for reasons that He can explain when we get to heaven, has decreed that people will believe Him by hearing His word and believing it without the evidence. You say, well, count me out.

I'm not into that. It's okay. God will have an elect number that will do it.

And those that His Spirit touches are made a part of the family. Here's the thing. The secular view, come down from the cross so we can see and believe.

The biblical view, I don't have the evidence, but I believe it. Now, there's an interesting verse in the 11th chapter of John, verse 15. Many years ago at Westminster Chapel, when I was reading the 11th chapter of John, I wish these things would happen to me every day, but it did then.

When I came to verse 15 of John chapter 11, I saw something that I had never seen before. It was pivotal in my entire life in pilgrimage. Here's what Jesus said.

Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there so that you may believe. Now, I want to try to unpack that. Here's the background.

Jesus had a close personal friend. Not one of the 12. Somebody outside that circle.

His name was Lazarus. They were just great friends. And Jesus would go to Bethany just to be with Lazarus.

Lazarus had two sisters, Mary and Martha. One day, Lazarus took critically ill. So, Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus, who was possibly 100 miles away, but we don't know exactly how far away, but a good distance away.

They sent word to Jesus, Lazarus, your friend, is sick. Why did they send that message to Jesus? Well, they knew that wherever he is, that Jesus would stop what he's doing and come straight to Bethany to keep Lazarus from dying. Heal him.

They knew that. But then, turns out, Jesus doesn't move from where he is. In fact, he shows up four days after the funeral.

And when Jesus gets the word, here's what he says to the 11 disciples, or 12. He says, Lazarus is dead. And for your sake, I'm glad I didn't go there to heal him, so that you may believe.

Here's the point. God wanted to teach his disciples faith. If Jesus had just gone to heal Lazarus, like he did all the time, the 12 would have gotten nothing out of it.

But he said, I want to teach you. So I didn't go heal Lazarus, so that you may believe. Well, as I said, if you see, it's not faith anymore.

You take those who say, well, I'll believe it when I see it. A verse I quoted since I've been here, Revelation 1, verse 7. It describes the second coming of Jesus. Behold, he comes with clouds.

Every eye shall see him. They also who pierced him. And all the peoples of the earth will wail because of him.

Wail! As I said to you the other night, people don't wail just because they're disappointed. Chances are, many of you have never heard the sound of a wail. As I said the other night, when I was a little boy, I remember hearing a wail from this particular woman.

Maybe you remember a couple years ago in Connecticut, there was this madman who gunned down 26 kids, six, seven years old, in this school. And it shocked the whole nation. A close friend of mine is the pastor of the church nearest where the school is.

His wife was allowed to go to the fire station. Why fire station? Well, next door to the school, it just happens there was a fire station. They had the fire engines move out so that as the parents heard what was going on in school, they would come not to the school but go into the fire engine, fire station, and wait.

Because they didn't know whether one of their kids were going to be saved from death or what. And the pastor's wife told me that she went in and there were the mothers, the fathers, waiting for a word whether their child was dead or alive. An announcement would come in and a man would say, Mr. Jones, your child, Johnny, is fine.

You can go home. Is Mr. Scott here? Mr. Scott, you're worried about Janice. She's fine.

You can go home. But then after about 45 minutes to an hour, it began to sink in on those parents that they're not going to see their child again. And my friend Ruth said, I will never forget the sound of the wailing in that room as long as I live.

The pathos when they knew it's over. They won't see their child. Well, according to Revelation 1, verse 7, for the people who say, I will believe it when I see it, I have a word for you.

I have a word for you. You're going to get to see it. But it will be too late to call it faith.

Because what makes faith, faith is when you haven't seen it but you heard the word and the Holy Spirit convicts you and you say, yes. But those who say, well, I won't believe it until I see it, you'll get your wish. Every eye shall see Him.

They also which pierced Him. All the kingdoms of the earth shall wail. Why will they wail? Because they'll know it's over and they've been fools.

They missed out on everything. One of the reasons God allows suffering is that you might have faith. Have you ever thought how wonderful is the privilege of faith? You won't always have faith.

You won't always have that privilege. There will come a day when no longer do you get to believe because you'll see it. This is why the Bible says now is the accepted time.

The time when there's still the opportunity to believe. You should appreciate this moment. There will be a time when God will clear His name.

But there will be no opportunity to believe then. You'll just see it. Slightly to change the subject, can I ask you this question? Do you know for sure that if you were to die today, would you go to heaven? Do you? Do you know, I asked Yasser Arafat that question.

Many years ago, I had a special relationship with a Palestinian leader. And I didn't know if I'd ever see him again. So I thought I'll just go for everything while I've got him.

And I said, Rais, let me ask you a question. Where will you be 100 years from now? Then it won't matter whether you get Jerusalem or the Israelis. Where will you be 100 years from now? So I'm asking you, do you know for sure if you were to die today, would you go to heaven? And if you were to stand before God, you will.

And if He were to ask you, He might. Why should I let you into my heaven, whatever would you say? And imagine this is the real deal. This is it.

You're standing before God. And you'll stand alone. You won't have your best friend to whisper the answer to you or to coach you.

Here's what to say. No, you've got to come up with it. What would you say to God? He says, why should I let you in? The most important question that ever be asked to you.

We see, God says my ways are higher than your ways. My thoughts are not your thoughts. And so, God's ways refer to His omniscience.

He knows everything. His omnipotence. He can do anything.

His omnipresence. He's everywhere. His holiness, sovereignty, summed up, He's a God of glory.

Well, Habakkuk, he's our hero, did not get what he wanted. But he accepted the reply. Sorry Habakkuk, I'm not going to tell you now why I allow evil.

It speaks of the end. Because one day I'm going to clear my name. And Habakkuk said, okay, I'll wait.

Wait for the revelation, though it linger. Habakkuk could have said, no, I won't wait that long. But he said, yes.

And was justified by faith. In the meantime, we live by God's faithfulness. By the way, how do you forgive God totally? Well, this is the same thing as breaking the betrayal barrier.

You join the ranks of the patriarchs, Habakkuk, the people in Hebrews 11. Here is how you forgive God totally. Number one, be totally honest with God.

Tell Him your complaint. Psalm 142, verse 2. Tell Him your complaint. He's big enough to handle it.

He's not so insecure that when you give Him your complaint, He bites His nails and says, oh dear, oh, I didn't think of that. Tell Him. And by the way, don't tell the world.

Tell Him. Second, make a list of those things that you are truly thankful for. I don't know if anybody here has ever heard this song before.

If you do, would you join with me? Try it. Otherwise, it'll be a solo. And I'll have to send a bill to the pastor.

I get paid big for my singing. So save him some money. Count your blessings.

Name them one by one. Count your blessings. See what God has done.

Count your blessings. Name them one by one. And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

Third, fight self-pity and a feeling of entitlement with all your might. The curse of our age is a feeling of entitlement. Get over it.

Fight it. Giving in to a feeling of self-pity and entitlement pleases the devil. Fourth, choose to believe that God is just and has a purpose in what He has permitted.

Identify with Job, though he's slavey, yet will I trust him. And fifth, be willing to wait for things to become clear to you. We used to sing back in the hills of Kentucky, Someday He'll Make It Plain to Me.

Someday when I His face shall see. Someday from tears I shall be free. For someday I shall understand.

We'll talk it over in the by and by. We'll talk it over, my Lord and I. I'll ask the reason. He'll tell me why.

When we talk it over in the by and by, just remember, the devil doesn't want you to forgive God. He's the accuser. He accuses you.

He accuses God for all the troubles in the world. Don't give the devil that pleasure by dignifying his hate toward God. You know, I've been a Bible student all my life, but I have to come clean with you.

There's one book in the Bible I really don't understand. The book of Revelation. When I was 19 years old, I understood it perfectly.

Now I'm 81, but I only know three things. One, God wins. Two, Satan loses.

Three, those who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb will see the most glorious vindication of all time when God exalts Jesus to the highest place and every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Then God will clear His name. And when He does it, it'll be in such fashion that the most brilliant mind will say, Hmm, I hadn't thought of that.

But you see, it's kept from you. Do you know why? So that you can have faith. Thank Him for the privilege of faith.

One day God will wipe away every tear. From our eyes there will be no more death, nor crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away. I'm coming to a close.

Dr. Michael Aitken has put it like this. It is a biblical principle that when God promises something but which does not apparently come to pass, you are given a temporary substitute which is in fact far better than what you originally wanted. That's what you have in Hebrews 11.

I don't know if you've ever heard of Johnny Erickson Tata, the American girl who as a teenager in a diving accident became a quadriplegic. If she hadn't had that accident, we would never have heard of her. But now she's a world figure.

People all over the world who suffer. They want to go to Johnny Erickson Tata. I had her at Westminster Chapel.

You never saw so many wheelchairs in your life. There wasn't room for them. Crippled people came from everywhere just to see her because they knew Johnny would identify.

Here's the thing. God could have healed Johnny Erickson Tata but then the world would never know about one person who's willing to dignify the trial and say I know God is able to heal me but if he doesn't, I still love him. The Apostle Paul had a thorn in the flesh.

Don't know what it was. I've written a book on thorn in the flesh. I don't try to identify what his thorn was.

Got about ten chapters in there. Financial reverse. Having an enemy.

Having an unhappy marriage. I was in Northern Ireland. A man came up to me and said I love your book on unhappy marriage.

I said I haven't written a book on unhappy marriage. He said I read it. It really helped me.

Oh, thorn in the flesh. It was one chapter. That was all he got.

Whatever Paul's thorn was, he says Lord, this is killing me. Please move it. Remove it.

Take it. Please. In fact, he said I asked God three times.

And God finally stepped in. He says Paul, what if I let you keep the thorn in the flesh but give you a double anointing? Oh, I'll take it. That's the point.

Rick Warren put it like this. When I face any apparent contradiction in Scripture it is due to my limited capacity. In other words, when the Scriptures seem to contradict themselves the problem lies with my inability to understand not because Scripture contradicts itself.

That is the quintessence of breaking the betrayal barrier. You affirm God, but you don't have the proof. Well, I'm coming to the close.

What if you have to come to terms with something you never wanted to come to terms with? And you finally say, I guess my most earnest prayer will not be answered. You see, I went to Westminster Chapel. I so wanted to see revival.

I wanted it more than anything in the world. I came to terms. It's not going to come here.

It went other places. What if you come to terms with the fact that you won't be healed? What if you won't get married? What if you don't get the reconciliation you wanted? What if the revival that you've prayed for won't be coming? What if you won't have children? What if those people who won't forgive you will always hold a grudge? What if the faulty verdict from that uncaring judge will not be reversed? What if that enigmatic situation that has always bedeviled you will always remain an enigma? Suppose you go to your grave unvindicated and the people will always believe those lies. What if there will be no clarification of those difficult verses in the Bible? What if the prophecy given to you will remain unfulfilled? What if that disability you have lived with won't go away? What if your nightmarish marriage will go on and on? What if you won't get the job you wanted? What if you don't get to live in the house of your dreams? Can you say, though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, and though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice.

I will be joyful in God my Savior. If you can say that, congratulations. You just entered the big league.

You've joined the realm of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses. Your anointing will be greater here on earth. And not only that, you will receive from the lips of Jesus himself one day.

Well done. I'd rather have that than anything in the world. My sermon is over, but I want to ask you this.

I can't finish quite yet. Just a couple of minutes. When I asked you the question that if you stood before God and he were to say to you, why should I let you into my heaven? What did you answer? Suppose you were given a sheet of paper when you came in.

You don't know why you had it, but I'm now telling you. Go along with me. Just pretend you've got this sheet of paper and you're going to write down right now in your mind what you would say on that sheet of paper.

God says, why should I let you in? There's only one answer. Give the wrong answer. You have to go someplace else.

You don't want to go there. One answer. What would it be? And now pass all your sheets to the end of the row and ask us to come and pick them all up.

And I've got here now a couple of hundred sheets of paper. Would you like to hear some of the answers? Well, here's one that says, I've tried to live a good life. I would look at you, whoever you are, I believe you, but you're lost.

Oh, here's another. I was brought up in a Christian home. Good for you.

That means you had a head start. They won't save you. Here's another.

I was baptized. Really? I'm sorry, they won't save you. Here's another.

I was baptized by a Baptist preacher. You, my friend, are lost as a goose. Here's another.

I've kept the Ten Commandments. Well, you're a liar for one thing. Here's another.

I've lived by the Sermon on the Mount. You're a bigger liar. Last but not least, I've done my very, very best.

Thank you. And I'd have to say to you, I'm so sorry. But do you realize at your very, very best, you will come short of God's glory? In the book of Habakkuk, it says God will not, His eyes are so pure as to look upon sin.

He can't do it. You don't have to be a bank robber to be a sinner. You don't have to kill somebody to be a sinner.

Jealousy is sin. Pride is sin. Lust is sin.

If you only sin three times a day, you'd be a walking angel. There'll be a thousand sins a year. Do you know how many sins it takes to keep you out of heaven? One.

You say, well, R.T., how can anybody get in? It's because God sent His Son into the world to die on a cross. And on Good Friday, at some point between 12 o'clock noon and 3 o'clock, all of our sins were transferred to Jesus as though He were guilty. He took the blame.

He paid your debt. And the blood that He shed cried out for justice. And the blood satisfied God's justice.

There's only one answer. I will go to heaven because Jesus died for me. And I don't mean to be unfair, but if you wrote down anything else than trusting His death or the equivalent of that, I wouldn't want to be in your shoes for anything in the world.

But that can all be sorted out right now. I'm going to give you a prayer to pray. Say it, in your heart, not out loud, if you need to pray this.

If you don't need to pray it because you're trusting the blood of Jesus, this is not for you. But if there's anybody here, if just maybe one person, you need to pray this prayer. Here goes.

Lord Jesus, I need You. I want You. Tell Him that.

I know I'm a sinner. I'm sorry for my sins. Wash my sins away by Your blood.

I welcome Your Holy Spirit into my heart. As best as I know how, I give You my life. That's it.

Did you pray that prayer? Did you? Question, are you ashamed that you prayed that prayer? Why do you ask, R.T.? Jesus said, if you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. If you prayed that prayer, I had no idea I was going to do this when I walked into this room today. But I'm led to do it.

If you prayed that prayer, in 30 seconds from now, I'm going to ask you to stand up. You say, in front of all these people? Yes. Oh, that's kind of scary.

Jesus said, if you confess me before men, I'll confess you before my Father. Not going to ask you to make a speech. Not going to ask you to join this church.

But if you prayed that prayer, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. If you prayed that prayer, I want you, right now, stand up. There's one. Good.

There's the others. Well done. Look at this.

Beautiful sight. Remain standing. You that are standing, you need to speak to somebody near you, the pastor.

Identify yourself, so that he can be in touch with you. You need follow-up. Okay, you can sit down now.

We just want to keep in touch with you. Now, it's possible that somebody stood. You were saved before today.

That's possible. But when you heard the gospel so clear, you wanted to stand. Well done.

But it's possible that somebody just stood. You've never done this before. This is a breakthrough you've never had until today.

The Bible says you've just been born again. So to you, I say, happy birthday. Goodbye.

God bless you.

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