

Faith That Is Alive Because of Jesus

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and hope in God, using the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as an example. It highlights the unchanging nature of God's promises and the need to hold on to faith even when facing trials and uncertainties. The speaker encourages the listeners to trust in Jesus, their forerunner, whose fingerprints are on the rope of faith, leading them all the way to the throne of God.

Scripture: Jeremiah 33:3, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 6:19, Hebrews 6:17, Hebrews 1:3, Romans 10:17, Romans 8:28, Daniel 3:16, Genesis 22:16

Topics: "Faith in Trials", "Hope in God's Promises"

Description

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Transcript

I want to start by sharing with you something great and mighty that I didn't know or didn't pay close enough attention to until I called to the Lord and He answered. Let's turn there to Jeremiah chapter 33 and it's really blessed my heart to see it and I have to share it. Jeremiah 33, verse 3, he said, Call to me and I will answer you.

I believe that perhaps the greatest regret Christians will have in eternity will be that when we read something that God promised to do, that we didn't experience the reality of that in our lives somehow, that we just memorized it or didn't even know that verse was there, maybe. I wonder how many Christians actually know there's such a verse as Jeremiah 33, verse 3. Now we know, we have no excuse at RLCF at least, on top of that we memorized it, but the tragedy would be that we get there and God shows us that day when you memorized it between March 17th and March 24th, when you memorized call to me and I will answer, I wanted you to actually do that, to actually call to me and if I didn't answer you, you should have come to me and said, Lord, I didn't get an answer, what's the answer? You said you would answer and your answer wouldn't be what I wanted it to be necessarily, but it would be showing me great and mighty things which I didn't know. I hope that at least going forward, if that's not been your prayer until now, from now on your prayer will be, Lord, when I come to you and want an answer, I'm not asking you to show me, should I take this job or that job, or should I do this or do that, or should I take this other decision

or not take this decision, that I believe you'll guide me, but I want you to show me something great and mighty about yourself that I don't know.

You said you would do it, Lord, you never promised that you would show me the future, you never promised that you would tell me exactly how Monday, March 25th would be, you never promised me that, but you did promise me that you would show me great and mighty things, and that would carry me through today and tomorrow and the rest of this week and the rest of my life. But in order to find the great and mighty things, I had to go back a few verses and to see the condition of Judah at this time, and by their own sin, by their own failure, by their own idle worship and forsaking of God, they were in a horrible situation. But then comes the promise, before the reality, before their salvation, and even before their captivity, God has already promised, call to me and I will answer you.

And you know God proved that? He brought out a remnant from Babylon and placed them back in Israel and rebuilt the city and rebuilt the temple and continued the posterity of Abraham so that Jesus could come. He didn't forsake his people in Babylon. They called to him, Daniel called to him, read how he prayed, fasted and prayed, putting his face towards Jerusalem, saying, Lord, you said if I turn towards your temple and pray, you would answer.

Before the temple was built even, you promised that, and I'm doing that. And Daniel interceded, and God heard his prayer, and he saw great and mighty things. Read the revelation of the future that we haven't even seen yet, that Daniel saw, because he called to God and God answered.

God wants to show you great and mighty things to set you free from the things of this earth. We sang, captivated by his beauty, worthy tribute to him bring, his peerless worth, wonderful words, big words, but do you ever sing that and think, Lord, you know, sometimes you're not that beautiful to me. When the cross seems heavy and the way seems thorny, the last thing I think about is beauty, when I think about your nature and self is just so much there in my face.

Lord, will you change it? He says, call to me, I will answer, and I will show you such great and mighty things about me that you'll never again thirst for the things of this earth. This is the Christian life I want, brothers and sisters. I don't want a life where I'm constantly being pulled and pulled and pulled and pulled by the things of this earth and falling into it and falling into it.

I want to see Jesus so peerless, so exalted, so lifted up, that the last thing I want to do is lick another one of those toilet bowls ever. That's what we sang about. What have we to do with that toilet bowl, that idol of a little bit more money, a little bit more of this that will feel nice for me, a little bit more comfort? What have I to do with that when I've seen Jesus, when I've walked with him and seen him? And that's all I want.

So go back to chapter 32, and in the midst of this horrible, devastated situation that Israel, that Judah's in, now therefore, thus says the Lord, Jeremiah 32 verse 36, thus says the Lord God of Israel concerning this city, concerning this life of yours, concerning your life, concerning your marriage, concerning your home, concerning your children, concerning any situation in your life, thus says the Lord, it is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, by pestilence, the devils run havoc, wreaked havoc in your life. Sure, behold, verse 37, it starts to change, look, I love that word behold, we don't use it as much in our English language these days, but it means, hey, sit down, I got to tell you something, I got to show you something great and mighty, look, behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I've driven them in my anger, in my wrath, and in great indignation, and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. They shall be my people, and I will be their God, and I will give them one heart and one

way that they may fear me always.

Do you find that the lack of the fear of God is in your life? That's why you sin, you still live a self-selfish, self-centered life, because the fear of the Lord is in you. I will give them one heart, one way that they may fear me always, for their own good, and look at this, for the good of their children after them. The greatest gift you can give your children, fathers, mothers, is the fear of the Lord that comes from one heart and one way.

Let me say it again, the greatest gift you can give your children is the fear of the Lord, that you fear the Lord, and they see that, and that controls all of your life. That's much better than a homeschool education, or working hard all day, and having enough for them to be warm and fed. If the fear of the Lord is in your life, you don't have to fear anything else.

Isaiah 8 verse 13, I will give them one heart, one way that they may fear me always, for their own good, for the good of their children, and I will make an everlasting, Jeremiah 32 verse 40, I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good. I will not turn away to do them good. I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so they will not turn away from me.

Look at God doing this for you. I will put the fear of me in them, so that they will not turn away from me. And 41 is where it became great and mighty for me.

I want you to see it, please. I will rejoice over them, to do them good, and will faithfully plant them in this land, with all my heart, and with all my soul. See, I knew you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul.

I knew that. And then it became great and mighty, when the Lord says, I'm going to do something with all my heart. And it starts there.

He says, I'm going to put all my heart, and all my soul into this, into setting your life right, into turning you off of that old selfish way of living. Let's read it together again. I will rejoice over you, with all my heart, and all my soul.

Who do you think sang louder today? God or you? Do you think God sang louder over you? You're my son. You're my daughter. I love you.

I'm so happy with you. I rejoice over you. Or was it you singing loud? Oh, I praise you.

Be to our God. Whose was louder? God's was louder. Your father's rejoicing over you was much louder than you could ever rejoice over him.

I hope you heard it. And if you ever want to hear the Lord singing even louder over you, raise up your volume a little bit. And he'll say, oh, Santos is singing louder now? I gotta sing louder than him yet.

It's a beautiful picture I like to think about. I want to sing loud to you. You're rejoicing.

I will rejoice over them, with all my heart, and with all my soul. I will do good to them, with all my heart, and with all my soul. I will faithfully plant them, with all my heart, and with all my soul.

This is the God we serve. This is your father. For thus says the Lord, verse 42, just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I'm going to bring on them all the good that I am promising now.

Fields will be brought in this land. Fields will be bought in this land of which you say it is a desolation. Without man or beast, it is given into the hand of Chaldeans.

When you look at that area and your life says nothing good will ever come out of that, I'll always be like that. I'll always be defeated by bad moods. I'll always be jealous.

I'll always have the love of money. I'll always be full of lust. I'll always have no control over my tongue.

No. Fields will be bought in this land of which you said it's hopeless. Men will buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the low land, and in the cities of the Negev.

For I will restore their fortunes, declares the Lord. Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the second time, while he was still confined in the court of the garden. Now, Jeremiah is locked up in prison because he's been a true prophet.

And God says to him, this vision, thus says the Lord, verse two, who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it, the Lord who, the Lord is his name. He says, I made this earth. I made all of these things.

There was nothing here. It was void, and I made it. The same God.

Look around at Long's Peak. Look around at the beauty of the trees and the birds that you heard about and all those other things. It says, God made that.

He says, that same God who made this earth says, call to me, and I will answer you, and I will show you, tell you great and mighty things which you do not know. If you didn't do it last week, do it this week. Say, Lord, I'm holding you to your word.

You said I could call to you. You said I would answer. You would answer.

And you said that you would show me great and mighty things that I do not know. Show it to me, Lord. Oh, the delight you'll see in God's hand.

You're finally holding me to my promise? Yes! And let's live that way until the end of our lives, holding God to his promise. I'd like to turn to Galatians chapter two. What I just shared, I hadn't planned to share, but I felt the burden as I heard you all share your memory verse.

I tell you, I'm so thankful so many of you get up and share your memory verse. I sit there and my heart burns, literally like it was for those two disciples who heard from Jesus. My heart burns within me every when I hear it over and it called to me.

And then the next child gets up and says, call to me. And then the next child gets up and says, call to me. And I don't, I think maybe it's good we have so many children because I might need to hear it 20 times before it finally gets in and says, Santosh, I was waiting for you to call to me.

And then my heart gets lit up and says, Lord, I didn't do it as much this week, but I'm going to, and I'm going to wait for you to answer. And I want to see the great and mighty thing of what it was for Jesus to be made like his brothers in all things. What a wonderful thing that was, something that the old covenant people knew nothing of.

Jesus was made like Santosh, this filthy me. Jesus didn't have any sin in him, let's be clear about that. But Jesus was tempted.

He brought himself down into filthy situations like this and allowed himself to feel the pull of sin, which God could never experience before he came down in flesh. He had to be made like his brethren so that he could make a way of salvation for us. Call to me.

And it'll be more than just something you hear in a message or something you read in the Bible, but God will answer you and show you in a personal way how Jesus had to be made like you. More than just, you know how sometimes scripture can be general. That verse, Hebrews 2 verse 17 says, he had to be made like his brethren.

Yeah, sure. All of us kind of in a general way. But when you hear God's answer, you specifically, he says he had to be made like Santosh.

He had to be made like you put your name there. Oh, it becomes wonderful. It becomes precious.

It becomes great and mighty. Galatians 2 verse 20. You know this verse very well.

This verse has come alive to me in a fresh way in the last couple of weeks. I have been crucified with Christ. I'm dead.

I'm dead. What does it matter then that you spoke evil about a dead person? What does it matter then that you cut off on the road a dead person? What does it matter that you passed over for promotion a dead person? I am dead with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh, even though I'm physically alive.

See, it's from a spiritual perspective. Paul's saying, I'm dead. The Paul you knew, he died a long time ago, but there's a new person living in here.

It's the same body. I have the same address maybe. The body looks the same, a little older, but the life that you see, what you see on the outside is lived by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.

It's a lot that's packed into that verse, but the essence of what recently has come alive for me in this verse is this, that he's saying there that I am alive because the literal word there in the middle of that verse where it says the life which I now live in the flesh, the literal word there is as much as I am alive in the flesh insofar as, or I would put it this way, I am only as alive from the eternal perspective. I'm only as alive as Christ is living in me. Think about a man or a woman that's dying and their, you know, the heartbeat is getting slower and their life is waning from them.

There's less and less life. They're getting weaker. The heartbeat's getting slower.

There's life, very little life left in them. What he's saying here is that I am as alive as, I'm only as alive as Christ's life is in me. This is truth.

It's right here in the Word of God, and I want to tell you not me, but God's Word says that you are only as alive as Christ's life is in you. If you have a little bit of Christ's life, that's it. That's all you have.

You might be vibrant in the prime of your youth or whatever that youth is, or you may have all the strength. You may be going to the gym and working out. You may have your career path set out.

You may have plenty of retirement, but that's nothing. Your life is only as valuable from eternity's perspective as Christ's life is in you. That's it.

And therefore, Paul could say, I am dead. I want as little of this earth as possible so that I can have as much of Christ's life. In a world that competes for reputation and success and how far are you in your career, and it's good, work hard and all that, but remember none of that has any value in eternity.

None of that. Maybe you've been successful in your career. That's great.

Maybe you haven't. That's great, because what will matter in eternity is how much of the life of Christ did you have. You are as alive as you have the life of Christ insofar as I live by faith in the Son of God.

And this faith, you look, if you turn back to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, I want you to see what Paul's life was like. What does this faith, and what I'm speaking about today is a faith that results in life. A faith that produces life.

This word believer, to be a believer, has become, I believe it used to be a powerful word once upon a time, but it's kind of become a casual word. Oh, I'm a believer. We've had many presidents of the leaders of countries.

I'm a believer. I'm a believer. People say I'm a believer.

Are you a believer? And that word has become so commonplace that it's lost its power. It's lost its value. It used to be like a dollar was worth quite a bit 100 years ago.

If you had a dollar, man, keep it safe. Today, you'd see a dollar bill, and you think, what's that? Or 10 cents used to be quite a bit. If you were a child and you found 10 cents, you knew you could go to a store and do something with 10 cents.

Today, you see 10 cents on the street. You might keep in your pocket, but you don't put as much value in it. There are many things like that that have lost their value.

One of those is the word believer, but when it first came about, the word believer meant that you had a faith that changed your life. Your life was controlled by one thing, and one thing only is that faith that you had in Jesus Christ. That's what made you a believer, and oh, that we may come back to that life where we are true believers.

That means that I have a faith in me that is changing my life in some way, where I can say, I'm a believer. Come and see my marriage. You can see the difference between before I was a believer and how I am a believer now.

I'm a believer. See how I have more self-control. I have control over my tongue.

I have control over my eyes. I'm a believer now. I'm being freed more and more from the love of money.

This is what it means to be a believer. It's not just a prayer you say and continue on with the same defeated life, but it means coming into freedom like we sang about. I'm a believer.

I have faith that's alive. So maybe instead of using the word believer, we'll say, I have a faith that's living, a faith that's alive in me, and Paul says, see for faith it was, for Paul it was, 2 Corinthians 4 verse 13, he says, having the same spirit of faith according to what is written, I believed, therefore I spoke. We also believe, therefore we also speak.

I thought about that. We just sang, spent about a good half an hour singing. Why did you sing? Is it because the words were there and you knew the melody, or if you didn't, you figured you could learn it? That's what everybody else in this room is doing, so I might as well sing.

Or was it, I believed, therefore I sang. I tell you, I knew I was going to share this, so it was a little bit different for me, but I hope the next time you sing, and the next time you pray, and the next time you speak, it's coming out of a living faith, something inside of you, not something really, but someone, Christ himself inside of you, who speaks, that causes you to sing, where you sing because Jesus is alive in you. I have a faith in me that's alive.

It's living. It's active. It's doing things.

It's functioning, and the function of faith is speaking, one of the functions of faith, so I hope the next time you'll sing, you'll say, Lord, let me sing because of the faith that's alive in me. Let me sing because there's a living faith inside of me that believes that you will finish your plan for my life, and what is this faith? Verse 14, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. Now, this faith, as we've heard, even a few weeks ago, I spoke on it.

I want you to see it again. It's worth seeing. He says in verse 13, but having the same spirit of faith, I believe, therefore I spoke.

Look at what Paul's life was like when he believed, when he sang glorious freedom, when he sang whatever it was he sang, when he spoke boldly, when he proclaimed the goodness of Jesus and the gospel of Jesus Christ. What was his life like? Verse 7, we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and that word earthen really has an ugliness to it, painful vessels, afflicted vessels, suffering vessels, ordinary vessels, despised vessels. My life on the outside looks not like the kind of life anybody else would want.

It looks like people would feel sorry for me. Man, you're going through such a hard time. I feel sorry for you.

That's the earthen vessel, unattractive, despised, like I would never trade places with you, Paul. That's the life he had. He goes on to describe it.

Verse 8, we are afflicted in every way. I don't think any of us is facing that testimony. Every moment of every day, afflicted.

Somebody else is poking at Paul. Somebody else is afflicting him, but not crushed. Perplexed.

Perplexed. Perplexed means I've asked God for an answer, but he hasn't told me why. He hasn't explained to me why he's allowing this to happen in my life.

I would have preferred it to be a little bit different. I would have preferred if he could have answered that way, that prayer the way I wanted him to answer. I would have liked it if he had done this.

I would have liked it if he had done that, but I'm perplexed. Why didn't you? Why have you allowed me to face this trial? Why is this my lot in life? Perplexed, but not despairing. Crushed.

Perplexed, but not despairing. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed.

Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live, here's again Paul saying like Galatians 2.20, even though I am alive, I'm constantly being put to death. The little bit of Paul that's still there is still being put to death.

Still being put to death. We who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.

But in the midst of all of that affliction and perplexing and persecution and being struck down, Paul is singing. And I've said this before. I'll say it again.

This is what the world needs. The world doesn't need another God who answers all your prayers and says, I'll give you money if you ask me for it. This is the message that's going out today.

Sow your seed. They use the word faith. It's so horrible that they pick faith.

It's not at all the word of faith. It's exactly the opposite of it. Sow your seed and you'll get a plenteous return.

Pray and God will heal you of all your sicknesses. This is completely different. Paul in the midst of all of these things says, according to the same spirit of faith in the midst of this affliction, I believed and therefore I spoke.

I believed in something that I haven't even seen the answer for. Why? Paul says earlier in Romans 8 verse 28, you know this verse, we know that all things work together for good. God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

And so Paul could sing, Paul could rejoice, Paul could proclaim boldly that Jesus Christ was still who he said he was, even though people would look at Paul's life and say, Paul, how can you believe in Jesus when he's allowing you to go through this? And this is the question that we ought to be able to answer the world. Let's say you found out tomorrow that you've got cancer, terminal cancer, and you've got a few weeks to live, and you've got young children, and you're hoping against hope that Lord would heal you, and you think, Lord, you're able to heal. Is God able to heal? Absolutely.

There's nothing impossible for God. But faith is to say, Lord, I'm going to trust you and hold on to you until the very end, no matter what I face, no matter how I'm persecuted or afflicted, no matter what I face in life, faith is to hold on to Jesus Christ, no matter what we face. Because of Romans 8, verse 28, and I thought of Romans 8, verse 28, like a bubble.

Imagine if you had a bubble that you lived in, and most people falsely think, many Christians falsely think that this bubble means that God will protect me from all the bad things that other people face. Lord, I'm serving you, I'm going to pray before I eat this meal so I won't get that bacterial infection. I'm going to pray before I go to work so that you'll bless my work.

I'm going to pray before I take this test so that I'll pass this test. I'm going to pray before I do this because you'll bless me, you'll bless me, you'll bless me. No, that's not the bubble we live in.

Christians can expect suffering as much as everybody else in the world, and I would say, in fact, even more. Let me say it again. Christians can expect even more suffering than everybody else in the rest of this world because we have this privilege of being placed in this bubble that takes everything that comes into the bubble and turns it into good.

That's the bubble. It's not a bubble that makes me immune or protects me or prevents any bad thing from ever happening to me. I will never catch any of those diseases or anything like that.

No, that's a false gospel. That's a God that's not powerful enough, actually, if you ask me. And the God we believe in, in whom Jesus Christ is, is a God who is causing all things, good, bad, and ugly, to work together for good, which means that the devil throws the worst at me, throws the ugliest at me, and it comes through this transformation bubble that turns it into good.

So now I'm not afraid of suffering. I'm not afraid of affliction anymore because I'm in this bubble and God can say, Santosh, is it okay if I send you through even more suffering? Because guess what? I'm going to turn it into good. That's not going to change.

And I'm not trying to advocate asceticism where we say, okay, Lord, let me live an ascetic life and always choose suffering and never use medicine. Don't buy into all of that. God wants you, if He's given you medicine, use it.

If He's given you, He's created all of these things on which medicine's based. If He's led you to a doctor that can help you, that's great, but don't put your trust in Him. That's the thing.

And I'll tell you this. I've met some people who don't go to doctors but have more confidence in their not going to doctors than in God. And sometimes it's a step of faith to say, Lord, I'm going to trust that you're going to use this doctor if you will.

My faith's not in that medicine but in you, and I'm going to trust you. So however the Lord leads you, whatever opportunity He places in front of you, the point is the faith in God who causes all things because at the end of the day, even medicine only goes so far. There are many things that medicine doesn't have a cure for, many cancers that are terminal.

They'll never find a cure for it, and then why? So our trust is in God and in this bubble He's placed us in that no matter what He allows us or our children to go through, He will turn it into good. And what is that good? When do we decide that it's been turned into good? The last few weeks I've been thinking about the timelines that we put on God where we say, Lord, I trusted you. It's been a couple of hours now.

Why haven't you answered? And then we get a little bit better and says, well, Lord, I trusted you. It's been a couple of days now. Why haven't you answered? Or it's been a couple of weeks, two months, two years.

When will you call time and say, well, Lord, it's over? You haven't answered now. You're not really faithful. And the world is full of people that are putting timelines on God saying, Lord, you haven't been faithful.

I've trusted you for so long. I'm still trusting you, but there's no sign of an answer. And the good news of the new covenant and this, I started with Galatians 2 verse 20, but I want you to go back to 2 Corinthians 4 and see where is it that we finally say, well, God was faithful after all? At what point do we say He was faithful? Is it after you wait for two days? God waited for two days and He finally answered, or two weeks.

I waited two weeks. I waited two years for an answer. Abraham waited a hundred years.

Is that long? Have you ever waited a hundred years for something? Is Abraham your example? Of course, we know he's not. He's an example in some ways. We have a greater example.

What about Noah, preacher of righteousness, 120 years preached, no sign of anybody. He didn't convert a single person other than his wife and his three sons and their wives. That's it.

But he kept preaching. One day, he built the ark, God closed the door, and he and his family were saved. And everything that he preached came true.

How long is too long before you'll give up on God and say, well, Lord, I trusted you for a hundred years? Our hope, 2 Corinthians 4, is verse 14. Knowing this, that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and present us with you. So I'm saying, Lord, I'm going to keep trusting you no matter what I face, no matter how much it seems like the answer is nowhere in sight.

I'm going to wait until you raise me from the dead. Are you willing to wait that long? This is the hope of us Christians. This is where you say, Lord, I don't need to see the answer.

I'm going to pray. Will you heal? Will you do that? Will you take care of this problem? But I'm going to wait until you raise me up from the dead like you did with Jesus, and then you will prove to the whole world that it was worth it, that I was worthy of Santos's trust. See, this is what it was like for Jesus.

He's our forerunner. When do you think Jesus' life was validated? Was it when he was 18 years old? No, even his own brothers didn't believe him. Was it when he was 30 years old, when nobody else believed him? But the father said, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.

And then later on, three years later, again, the father says, this is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased to hear him. When was it that Jesus' life was finally validated? What is it that proves that Jesus Christ is the only true living God? You know when it was, is when they came to the empty tomb and found it was gone. He was there.

He was not there. On that Sunday morning, that first day of the week, resurrection day we call it, when they went to the empty tomb and he wasn't there, we saw Jesus' trust in his father was proved true. Before that, you could put a timeline on trust.

You know, Abraham said, well, Lord, you said I would see a son. I'm 100 years old now. And finally, Abraham could say at the end of his life, yup, I've reached the end of my life.

God answered the promise in my lifetime. And that was true with Noah. That was true with all the others you read about in the Old Testament.

Jesus could say, Father, we haven't seen the answer yet and I'm dying. And with his last breath, he says, Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. You take care of it, Lord.

The last acts of Jesus are a great, tremendous example to me where he just holds his hands out and says, I'm willing to die. I'm just hanging here. I won't fight back.

Jesus told his disciples I could call legions of angels. And the Pharisees who were students of the law said, prove that you are the true son of God. How are we Christians going to prove that Jesus is the true

son of God? Is it the way they taunted him to prove? Saying, come down from that cross.

Show us that your God is powerful enough to save you from that cross. You know what Jesus could have done? He could have just moved his hands and the nails would have come out. You know, they spent a lot of time hammering those nails in.

Jesus, the son of God, could have just pulled the nails out. I mean, if Samson could tear the gates of Gaza with his own hands, don't you think the son of God could just move his hands and say, yeah, I am the son of God. Take my hands out.

Yeah, kick off the nails. I'll get down from this cross. I'm the son of God.

This is the Jesus many Christians want to believe in, who will rescue them from their trials. But the Jesus we believe in, the true Jesus says, you can kill me. In fact, you can bury me.

That's how dead you can let me become. And the answer will be seen when I rise up from the grave, knowing this, that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us up also from the dead. Now, I don't think I'm doing a good enough job expressing what's in my heart.

It's become faith for me, brothers and sisters, that as I go through trials in my life, as I go through my battle against sin, as I go through my longing to be more like Jesus in every area of my life, and I see how long it's taking me and how far I fall from that, I tell you this, I know this, that he who raised up Jesus from the dead will also raise me with him. And that one day you will see me standing there, even though you've had to put up with me for all these years, while it's taking a long time for the of sanctification in me, I have not lost sight of that faith. He who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us up.

I was reading this story in Daniel chapter three, a story that you children also will know well. It's a story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And I think you know the story well, so I'll just summarize it.

These were three teenage boys who had every reason to be angry at God. The time may come, little children, young children, even maybe adults, when you feel embittered towards God because of his dealings in your life. The temptation will be there at least.

I've had in my life and I think, Lord why? I am a little bit embittered towards you because of what you're allowed to happen in my life. They had every reason to be. I think that their parents were killed.

The Babylonians came and captured, after Jeremiah's prophecy, they came and captured the people from Judah and took the many of them into captivity. So here were these three 16, 17 year old young boys taken into captivity. Some of you are that age here, around that age.

Imagine if some soldiers came and killed your parents and took you off to a far country. And earlier that day you had just been praying to Jehovah and singing songs to Jehovah and you had observed the Sabbath and you didn't bow down to idols. These three were godly young teenagers.

They weren't compromisers. Yes, many in Judah were compromisers and worshipped idols and that's why God allowed them to be in captivity. But these were three God-fearing young men.

And imagine that they were taken into captivity and now they're slaves. You know, maybe they were sitting in school one day and getting ready to do the math test or learning something else and they made plans for their life. I'm going to get this job.

I'm going to go to college and I'm going to get this job. I'm going to get married and they're sitting there envisioning how their life is going to be and here come the soldiers and they're taken away as slaves and in a moment their whole life has changed. And don't you think they could have sat there and said, God, it wasn't worth trusting you.

I put my faith in you and look what you've allowed to happen. Have you ever faced that? I've faced that temptation. Lord, was it worth trusting you? Because look at what's happened.

Look at my life. Look at how things are right now and look at how far I am. Or if you fail, if you fall into sin, you think, Lord, I keep trusting you that you'll give me victory and I keep falling in that same area.

Is it worth it? You said you would rescue me. And in the midst of that, they needed faith. Faith is what you will need, my dear brothers and sisters, children.

Faith is what you will need in that moment when you're all alone. Daddy and mommy are not there. Your brothers and sisters in the church are not there.

It's just you and God, you and Jesus Christ, your example, the forerunner of your faith. And if you don't have faith, you will fail. That's why Jesus prayed for Peter.

I have only one prayer, not that you won't go through trial and sifting and shaking. I pray that your faith will not fail. That's my prayer for all of us.

Whatever's coming, we might live to see a great tribulation that's coming on this earth. And if we do, I pray that your faith will not fail, that you won't have become so embittered by God not answering little prayers that you prayed. And I don't mean that in a way to discount that you're facing hardship right now.

But don't let the little unanswered prayers and circumstances cause you to lose faith in the God who will never fail anybody who's trusted because the time is coming when we'll need it. We'll need it. The fire is going to get hotter.

And like it says, if you couldn't even fight with 10, how are you going to face 10,000 when the battle gets worse? If the little circumstances and the little things that people do to annoy you, bother you, and the little ways people take advantage of you, or what they say about you, or how they treat you, and you start to lose faith, and you fall out of love, how's it going to be when the devil steps up his attack? And so here were these three young men sticking in slavery, and the devil says, I know how to get the three of them. Yeah, they seem, they're still praying out to God. I'm going to put them in a situation where they are going to have to stand for their faith in front of everybody.

Nebuchadnezzar puts up a statue, and here's a multitude of people, Babylonians and Jews, standing in front of the statue. The music starts, and Nebuchadnezzar had said, you must all bow down. And these three boys, I know what was going through their mind, the devil says.

What good is it? Just give up. This God you believe in is not worth your trust. Just bow down.

Make money, like look at this. The Babylonians who worship idols, look at how successful their country is. You can become a successful person here in Babylon.

Compromise. Just a little bit of compromise. I mean, bow down, it's okay.

They said, no, you can't bow down. And I hope you can see that picture, a sea of people bowing down in front of that idol, and three 16-year-old boys standing strong, saying, we will not bow down. And they get hauled up to the king.

We'll pick up the story there. Daniel 3, verse 13, Nebuchadnezzar is in a rage. This is the most powerful man in the world at that time.

He's angry at these three teenage boys. He's yelling at them. And he says, you dared not to bow down to me? How dare you? He says, I'm going to give you one more chance.

Verse 15, I'll give you one more chance. Go back out there, we'll play the music again, you bow down, and we'll call it even. And look at them, these 16-year-old boys saying, verse 16, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need another chance.

We don't need you to give an answer. We don't need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, that you're going to put us in this furnace that's over here, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he will deliver us out of your hand.

Look at how they start. They're saying, our God is powerful. I mean, he could in a moment just blow from heaven and that fire would be extinguished, and you would see who is the true God.

But even if he does not, five words, even if he does not. This is faith. This is the faith I hope you'll hear Jesus offering you today.

Even if he does not. That means it doesn't matter whether the outcome of this circumstance is for my benefit, my earthly benefit or not, because I am dead. It is no longer I who live.

This body you're going to burn up is already dead anyway, and it's Christ living in me even if he does not. I hope you remember those five words in the trial that you're going to face, young people, little boys, little girls, and adults as well. Even if he does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up, and God save them.

You know what they experienced? Them being put in the fire and God himself with them. Would you rather be with God in the fire or without him saved from that fire? This is faith. Say, Lord, I want you.

I want to be with you. I want Christ to be living in me no matter what I face. Before I close, I want to go to Hebrews chapter 11.

It talks about this faith a little bit more. Hebrews 11, verse 1. You say, okay, Santos, that sounds fine and dandy. I want faith.

How do I get faith? Romans 10.17 says, faith comes by hearing the word of Christ. This is why we stress knowing God's word. The devil will keep you away from the Bible because he knows that's how you will get faith.

So he'll keep you away from the Bible as much as he can. He'll keep you away from here, listening to the voice of Christ every morning. If you're not doing that, if you're not in the habit of doing that, children, however old, if you're old enough to understand what I'm saying, every day say, Lord, I want to hear from you.

I want to hear from you, adults. I hope you're doing that. I want to hear from you.

Spend time hearing from God's word as well. Because once you have faith, the devil knows the battle's over. If you've got true faith that comes from hearing the word of Christ, he's lost his power over you.

This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. And he knows that. So you say, well, okay, how do I get that? And it says here, Hebrews 11, before he spends this whole chapter speaking about faith, he says, faith is being absolutely sure of what you have hoped for.

Faith is being absolutely sure of what you have hoped for. And I've found in my own life that the reason I often lack faith is because I didn't have hope to begin with. I lost sight of the hope.

And because I lost sight of the hope, because it was a shaky hope, all of a sudden my faith started to shake as well, and my faith failed. Faith is being absolutely sure of a hope that you're given. And he tells us about that hope earlier if you go back to Hebrews 6. Hebrews 6, verse 19.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast, which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. This hope we have as an anchor. And I brought a little rope here, and that's why I took the platform off so you could see it.

This is a big rope. And this rope is anchored in there within the veil to someplace steadfast. And I can't see it.

I can't see where it's anchored. And this is what I have in front of me today. This is faith.

It's holding on to this rope. Faith is the assurance of something I'm hoping for that I can't see. And this hope I have as an anchor, verse 19 of Hebrews 6, a hope both sure and steadfast, which enters within the veil where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek.

So this faith is on the basis of the hope that I've been given. And I can't see where that anchor is. And that's why you can't see it either.

I put it back there where you can't see because this is the reality of the life we live. We are told that Jesus is there. We believe based on His word that He has entered as a forerunner within the veil.

I still can't see it with my eyes, but my hope is steadfast. My hope is fixed. And listen to how the writer describes it.

First of all, he says, use the example of Abraham. He says, verse 13, when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself. And you know, we never swear.

You should never swear. Your yes should be yes. Your no should be no.

Jesus said that to us. But God, as it were, to show us exactly how certain we must be about that hope, says, listen, I'm going to swear. That's what the writer of Hebrews says.

God made the promise, even though since He couldn't swear by anyone greater, He swore by Himself, saying, I will surely. I promise to bless you. I promise to fulfill my purpose in your life.

Think about it, children. Think about this question for a moment. Does God ever have to say, I promise I will? It's not good to say.

I don't even say that because my yes is yes. If I say I will, I will do that. If I say I won't, I won't do that.

And if I don't, if I forget to do it, then I should set it right. But in the world, it's common. Oh, I promise.

It's as if normally I tell lies, but this time I'm not going to. So I promise I will do it. Does God ever need to do that? No.

It says it is impossible for God to lie. He goes on to say. So let's keep reading.

And so having patiently waited, He obtained the promise. He talks about Abraham verse 15. Men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath is given as a confirmation or an end to every dispute.

When a man says, I promise I will, okay, now you said you promised, so you better do it. In the same way, God, because He wanted to show us the unchangeableness of His purpose, He wanted us to be absolutely certain my purpose for you hasn't changed. And in that moment in 2024, on March 24th, when you feel like, Lord, I've lost it.

There's no hope for me. I'm, you've given your purpose. Somehow if I had done things a little bit better, maybe you could have fulfilled your purpose, but it's too late now.

He says, no, I want you to be absolutely certain that my purpose for you will never change. So I'm going to swear. I'm going to say, I promise, I will surely.

In the same way, God desiring even more to show to the, to who? You know, when God told Abraham, I will surely bless you and multiply, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you, verse 14. You know who it was for? I used to think it was for Abraham, and Abraham got his son, but verse 17 says that this, verse, yeah, verse 17 says that when God was speaking to Abraham with us, with an oath, He wanted to show Santosh, the heirs of the promise, read it carefully, in the same way, God desiring even more to show Santosh, who was not even born yet. I mean, we're talking three, four thousand years ago.

God, picture this, God speaking to Abraham saying, I will surely, surely, I promise, I'm going to bless you, Abraham. I will surely multiply you, and God's not even thinking about Isaac. He's thinking about Santosh, thinking about you, in your trial, in your circumstance.

My purpose for you is unchanged. I'm going to finish it. It's not going to change.

God desiring even more to show to Santosh, the unchangeableness of His promise, took an oath. It wasn't just for Abraham. It was for you and I. So, verse 18, by two unchangeable things, that is God saying it, He cannot lie, and on top of that, God swearing it, these two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge, would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

This hope, this hope, we have as an anchor, which enters within the veil. So, I'll leave you with this picture. Faith is holding on to this anchor, knowing who's at the other end of it.

Jesus Christ, Hebrews 1, verse 3 says, He has sat down at the right hand of God. Why can you hold on to this anchor today? Because you know it's an anchor that's steadfast, is sure, it's never going to change. God made His plans for your life in Jesus Christ, not in you, because He knew you would change.

He knew you would go up and down. God made His plan for your life in Jesus Christ. He wrote it in Jesus Christ's book, and if Jesus Christ is sitting there at the right hand of God, it ought to be confidence and assurance for you that His plan for you has not changed at all, even though you've messed up so much, even though even this last week maybe was something that you wish you could put behind you.

I say, forgetting the things that are behind, press forward to what is ahead. God's plan for your life was written in Jesus Christ, and it's never changing, because Jesus is never leaving the right hand of God, and neither is His purpose for your life. Our faith goes beyond the grave because of Jesus Christ, and even though I can't see Him, I'm holding on to this faith, but that's not all.

Faith is greater. Faith is believing, it's holding on to the rope, the anchor, because I know who's at the other end of it. He's holding it fast.

You know, sometimes you go to the climbing gym and you climb. Would you ever go to a climbing gym where you didn't see where the top of the rope is? I mean, the first thing I do when I go to a gym is, I see, I look at the anchor. I said, do I trust that thing that the rope is tied around? Is that going to collapse? Because if not, I don't care who else is belaying me, I'm going to fall.

But I look at there, okay, that looks solid. That's in the wall. That's part of the building itself.

That's not falling. The building is going to collapse before I collapse. This is faith, knowing that our hope is steadfast and sure.

It's in Jesus Christ, who has entered within the veil and is seated at the right hand of God. So I can hold on to this, knowing that this is never going to fall. I can't pull on this rope hard enough where it would collapse.

Never. But it's beyond that. It's looking at the rope and seeing the fingerprints of Jesus himself on the same rope.

That's why it says he is our forerunner. That means he was here holding on to this rope once upon a time as well. He was here on this earth, and he was walking just like I was, and he was tempted in all points as I are.

And I look down and I see Jesus' fingerprints on this same rope, that he too had to lean on his father and say, if you let go of me, I'm going to collapse even though I am the son of God. And he held on to his father, and his father held on to him and says, I can just hold on to this rope and just follow the rope, follow the rope, follow the rope. So this is my encouragement.

I'll leave you with brothers, sisters, children. There's an anchor in front of you today. There's a rope that's there that maybe you've set it down.

Maybe you've lost sight of it. Maybe you feel like giving up, but pick it up again and look down and see the fingerprints of Jesus right there in front of you in the circumstance you're facing, in the perplexing thing you're facing right now, and the unanswered questions and the what ifs and the why nots and why this and

why that. Look down and see Jesus, your forerunner, your example, who not only held on to this rope, but he says, if you stay on this rope, you'll find my fingerprints all the way to the throne of God, all the way to the right hand of God.

You'll see. They don't stop halfway. They would if his body was still in the grave.

But the fact that the grave's empty, the fact that he died and was raised up again by his father is proof that if I stay on this course, if I read his word and I seek for the power of the Holy Spirit to keep following this rope, Jesus Christ's fingerprints will be revealed to me, and I'll follow this rope all the way until the very end when I will be like him. He who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us with him. What hope, what faith.

This is a living faith, a faith that actually changes the way we live, where we say we're believers not just because I said a prayer years ago. That's just where it started. That's this.

That's the date. I don't remember the date. Maybe you do.

But that's where it started. But it was a journey of believing in Jesus Christ, knowing that his fingerprints would be on this rope all the way to his throne, like we sing in that song, Footprints of Jesus that lead me to his throne. Let's follow him.

Father, thank you for this way of salvation. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came and made yourself like us in all things. What great and mighty things you've shown us in your word, in your promise, and above all, in your life.

Make it a reality, Lord, not just an idea. These pictures are worth only that they might turn us to you and that your Holy Spirit might write this on our heart and make it a reality. Help us from the youngest to the oldest.

We lean on you. We need you. Pour out your spirit within us, Lord, I pray, and send an anointing of your Holy Spirit that will give us the same spirit of faith.

Oh, will you pour out a spirit of faith upon this church. Lord, we're helpless. We're weak.

We're needy. Will you pour out a spirit of faith, Lord, that will change our lives, every single one of us. Thank you.

We believe you will do it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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