

Having Joy In The Midst of Fiery Trials

by Dan Young

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith and trust in God, highlighting the story of Abraham's unwavering belief in God's promises despite challenging circumstances. It encourages listeners to have faith in God's plans, to seek Him diligently, and to trust Him as the ultimate architect and builder of their lives.

Scripture: 1 Peter 4:12, Hebrews 11:1, Hebrews 11:8, Hebrews 11:6, Hebrews 3:1

Topics: "Faith in God's Promises", "Trusting God's Plan"

Description

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Transcript

It was very edifying. Sean shared a verse from 1 Peter 4, and I want to read it. 1 Peter 4, verse 12, it says, My brethren, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exaltation. You know, we don't understand why fiery trials come upon our lives, but we know the one thing or the outcome of those fiery trials is that we would keep on rejoicing. And that's a difficult thing to do.

I can't say that I've learned to rejoice in fiery trials. I usually grumble and complain a little bit, and then afterwards I get light that the Lord is doing this for my good, to humble me, to perfect my faith, so that it will come forth as gold, even much better than gold, and that it would be refined by fire, so that the Lord can mold my character and change me. The only way that we can be changed into the likeness of His image is to go through these fiery trials and to test us, to show us what's in our hearts, to remove the uncleanness and the dross that's in our lives.

A lot of us have uncleanness and dross, and we don't see it. We don't see it. In fact, a lot of the time we know nothing against ourselves.

I mean, I like the passage about the Lord leaving the 99 righteous to go after the one who's unrighteous, but there is the 99 righteous. And a lot of the time in a church setting, we can be those 99 righteous. And we don't know anything against ourselves.

We love the Word of God, but the Lord isn't satisfied with that. He's not satisfied with good preaching. He's not satisfied with hearing good messages or having a fellowship that's growing and strong in faith, and He doesn't want that.

He wants us to be conformed to His image, that we can be like Him, but most importantly, we can have fellowship with Him. And to the degree that we have fellowship with Him, I think is to the degree that we've allowed the fiery trials to burn off the chaff in our life. And that comes through these trials.

So He says, don't be surprised at the fiery arduoail among you which comes upon you for testing as though some strange thing were happening to you, but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing. You know, there's a persecuted church out there for being Christians, and they are sharing the sufferings of Christ. They are Christians, and they're being like that.

And in the same way, we can share the sufferings of Christ here in North America. It would almost seem as though we don't experience that same level of persecution that you would see in other countries, but we can share the sufferings of Christ sometimes even from our brethren, sometimes even from those close to us, even in the church community. And we have to not be angry in those situations.

We have to respond in the right way, and we can rejoice in those situations. What Sean was sharing about beforehand was Thursday nights we go up and we share the gospel with men who are coming out of addiction and sin. And on Wednesday nights there's men who go up there and say that there is nothing that you can do that will make you lose your salvation.

And a lot of the time these men get very excited about that, but a lot of them don't get free from sin and drugs, and it actually gives them a license to continue in the sin that they're living in. I don't want to get into the whole argument of once saved, always saved, or those other things, but it can lead to men believing in their heart that they're free and they're born again and they're not born again, and their lives are not changed and they have not experienced the great salvation that's in Christ. And so we experience sometimes this persecution when we share with them the hope that we have and that Jesus can actually set you free.

It's one thing to actually say that I'm free, but you're still a slave of sin, but another thing to actually experience the salvation of Christ where He sets you free. And that's the greatest thing that we want to strive for is that the Lord, You set me free. You set me free at one time in my life from drugs.

You set me free from immorality. You set me free from living a life of a foul mouth, and You set me free from all these things. But you know there's more cleansing that needs to happen in our life, you guys.

He needs to set us free from anger, and He needs to set us free from pride. He needs to set us free from bitterness. He needs to set us free from the love of money.

He needs to set us free from being lukewarm. He needs to set us free from being righteous in our own eyes. He wants us to continue to move forward, but a lot of the time we don't have light on ourselves.

And so we need to continue to grow into the likeness of Jesus from glory to glory, and we need the Lord to expose those things in our life so that it produces a humility. It produces a desire for the Lord. When you have a desire for the Lord, you know that you're a wretched sinner.

When you know that you're a wretched man, O wretched man who will set me free from this body of death, we know that we have need of Jesus. But many times we don't know that because we know nothing against ourselves. And so the men there, in their mind, we pray to prayer, we're this, but they're still living a life of sin.

They still believe that if they go and overdose and take the drugs and they die when they overdose, that they're going to heaven. They still believe that. And men out there are actually proclaiming that to them to their face.

And they're lying to them. They're lying to them to deceive them so that they will continue to stay in the same place. And so some of us would say, well, that's atrocious.

How can we hear such a gospel like that? The gospel isn't that. The gospel came so that Jesus would set us free from our sin. He would change our lives.

But at the same time, we put them in a camp. At the same time, we need to look inwardly at ourselves and we need to say, hey, what's in my life that is hindering me from moving forward in the gospel? What's in my life that's hindering my relationship with the Lord? Lord, I need you to give me light on myself, to help me see myself in the condition that I am in spiritually. And that's why sometimes these fiery trials come.

To the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that at the revelation of glory, you may rejoice with exaltation. It says, verse 14, if you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. This is how in North America you can be reviled for the name of Christ, is you can preach a gospel where Jesus came to set men free, and you can have other Christians who say that the things that you're teaching are wrong, and that they can do nothing wrong that will separate them from their salvation.

They're saved no matter what they do. If they go and commit sin, they go downtown and they commit drugs and they die in an overdose, there's nothing that will separate them from having salvation. And that's a lie.

And so when we preach the gospel, sometimes we get persecuted for these things. But what are we supposed to do in those situations? Are we supposed to be bitter at them? Are we supposed to look down on them? No, we're supposed to keep on rejoicing. This is how in North America, when you hear men preach a true gospel, you will see that they will get persecuted for preaching that.

And so we can't not expect that. We have to expect that, and we can't lose heart when those things happen in our life. We can't expect it.

You can expect that a majority of Christians will actually persecute you for speaking things like that, that you can be free from sin, that you can get victory over these things in your life. And so we need light on ourselves to say, hey, I believe that. Not only are you convicting me, but I believe that you can set me free from this.

I believe you can set me free from anger. I believe you can set me free from getting frustrated with my kids. I believe you can set me free from looking down on other people.

I believe you can set me free from loving money. We need to have faith that the Lord can do this in our life. Many times we get so used to just having our day-to-day failures that we don't actually believe that the Lord can help us.

Do you know that many of us would probably, in my mind, in my heart, I want to have that closeness with Jesus every day. And you know what, I have to be honest, I don't experience that. I don't.

In fact, I would say that I experience dryness. I experience like He's not near to me. And you know what, I need to have faith and trust the Lord that He's leading me and guiding me, and that even though I don't feel His presence, that I know that He is near to me, and that it's in my heart's desire that I want to draw near to Him.

It says, draw near to Him, you sinners. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded men, men who love God but also love the world. We need to cleanse ourselves of these things so that we can have that close relationship with the Lord.

That's my desire, is that I would sense the presence of the Lord in my life. And if you don't have that desire, then you need to repent. You need to ask the Lord to change you, to say, Lord, I'm not sensing Your presence in my life.

Forgive me where I've gone off track. I'm asking You to search me, to know me, to see if there's any wicked way in me, to reveal in my life. And you know what the Lord will do? He will send the fire in your life.

So it will produce a love for God again, a devotion to Him. I remember when we first got married, me and my wife, we had this devotion one towards another. You know, you'd constantly be thinking about that.

But as you have kids and you get along with life and you get doing lots of things during the day, you know that devotion one to another, it tends to wane. You know, you come home and you say, hey, how was your day? It was good. How was your day? It was good.

And then you go about your business. You go about your business and you do that thing and you lose that first love, that first love for the Lord and even that first love for one another. And we can't have that.

We need to say, Lord, I need You to soften my heart so that we have that love for You again, Lord, where we don't just get caught up in the day-to-day Christian life, where we don't just get caught up in our day-to-day busyness of life, where we actually have a desire to hear from the Lord during the day. Say, Lord, what do You have for me today? Even while you're working with your children or while you're at work running your business or doing your job or when you get home and you're together and you're having a meal or even when you're not having a meal together because a lot of the time you don't have a meal together. You just eat as you go because there's lots of things to do that we would have that devotion towards the Lord.

You know what it says? If we love the Lord with all our heart, we are going to love our neighbor as ourselves. And sometimes we lack that love towards one another because we lack our love for the Lord. And you know what? We need the Lord to pour out His love on us so that we can have love for people.

We can have love for our enemies. Look at what it says here, that if you were reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. Know for certain that if the devil has no pickle with you, if the devil is not picking a fight with you, then you probably aren't in a great place.

But if you are going through trials and you are going through difficulties and it seems as though the fire is burning very hot, that's great. You need to keep on rejoicing. Find a way to rejoice.

Give thanks. It says, by no means let any of you suffer as a murderer or thief or evildoer or a troublesome meddler. The word troublesome meddler is one who oversees others' affairs.

You know what? I think I've suffered a lot for this because I like to oversee others' affairs. I like to get my nose in where I don't need to get my nose in. I think Brother Randy sent me a text once.

He who grabs a dog by its ears is sure to get bitten. And I've grabbed a few ears. But you know what? We do this though.

We have a lot to say about our brothers and our sisters, don't we? Especially in the church body. We have a lot to say about their faults. In fact, we don't say it to their face.

We just harbor it inside of our hearts. And that's not good. You need to ask the Lord to cleanse that from your heart.

I'm the first. Cleanse me of my heart because I can make a lot of judgments about things that I see in other people, other brothers, other sisters. And I can see that in my own heart I'm just a proud man.

And the Lord has a fight with me. And we need to be careful that we don't suffer for that. We can suffer as a murderer.

Now, I know some of you say, well, we're not murderers here. But he's actually talking to his church here. Can you imagine if there was somebody in the church who went out and murdered somebody? You would be like, what are you doing in our church? But I think he's talking about here as somebody who had bitterness towards his brother.

That's a murderer. When you have unforgiveness in your heart towards one another. I had an opportunity yesterday.

I met a man. And I was talking to him. And me and him knew each other from a long time ago with certain colleagues.

And I said something about a certain boss that I used to have at my old job many years ago. And this morning I woke up and I was so convicted about what I said. And I was like, man, I still have bitterness in my heart towards that boss.

Like that's terrible. I was repenting. And I said, I'm a Christian.

I'm not like you, Lord. I need you to cleanse me. That boss was very hard on me.

He was very mean to me. He was. He took advantage of me a lot.

But I still harbored that bitterness because it still came out of my mouth. Lord, I need you to cleanse me. Show me that this is there.

That's a murderer. When you hold that bitterness deep down in your heart towards a brother or somebody who's done you wrong. And you've had it for 10 years.

That affects you spiritually, not them. They don't even know that they did you wrong. But it's in your heart.

And you need to ask the Lord. And so the next time we say something about each other or somebody that you know, we need to look inward and say, man, do I still harbor bitterness? That's suffering as a murderer. There's consequences to saying those words.

It says, but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed. Don't be discouraged when you share a true word. Because many people may not like it.

In fact, many who are on the wide road hate him who reproves at the gate. They hate him who speaks the truth. In fact, you know, they do not like it because it challenges them in their security.

So that they can continue to live the same stubborn lifestyle that they've always lived. But praise God for men and women who will actually speak the truth to somebody even though they're going in the wrong direction. It shows that they love him.

You know, I want to be able to speak the truth to people in love. So that they know that I care about them. But at least it's the truth.

Hey, it says right here, it's time for judgment to begin with the household of God. It's amazing that the Lord would allow the church here as Christians to suffer for being a Christian. That that's how he was judging the church.

Was that they would get to experience suffering and persecution for the things that they preached. It's time for judgment to begin with the household of God. And it begins with us first, what will be the outcome of those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? You know what guys, as our Christian journey, the Lord has asked us to go the narrow way.

He's asked us to take up our cross and deny ourselves. He's asked us to go through the difficult journey that the Lord wants to lead us on. But it's for our good.

It's for our sanctification. And it's for our holiness. It's for our holiness.

It's for us to be purified, to be made just like Jesus. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. And the Lord sees our hearts, so he has to put us through these fires.

He has to put us through these fires. It says, therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God, entrust their souls to a faithful creator in doing what is right. I want to skip ahead, chapter 5, verse 6. It says, humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon him because he cares for you.

Many of us have anxious thoughts. A brother sent me a verse this week that, Lord, when my anxious thoughts multiply within me, your consolations comfort me. Your comforts, they comfort my soul.

And so we have lots of anxious thoughts. I know I do. But we can come to the Lord, and the Lord is able to comfort us with his consolation and say, you know what, I will help you in this time.

But we have to be vigilant because the devil is a roaring lion seeking someone whom he may devour. It says right here, be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

How can he do this? He does it in your mind. He builds the case in your mind, and he comes like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. He's literally prowling around looking for someone whom he may devour.

And how does he do it? He throws his fiery darts at you. But what does it say? It says, hold up the shield of faith that you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the evil one. So there's the fiery darts.

That's the flaming trial. And a lot of the time it comes in your mind to buffet you, to build a case against somebody, to cause you to be unbelieving, to be discouraged, to not be able to rejoice in the situation that you're going in so that you will take your eyes off of Jesus and look at the problem and say, man, if only things were different, my life would be better. You know what? No.

The Lord has put you in this situation because he sees what's best for you. And so we have to be able to extinguish those fiery darts of the enemy. We have to put on the helmet of salvation, which is the hope of salvation.

Guys, this is our hope, is salvation. That when the Lord comes, we can lift up our heads with confidence and say, Lord, I did your will. Lord, it's because of you that I'm standing here.

It's because of what you did for me and how you helped me and how you carried me and how you led me and how you convicted me and how you showed me that I was wrong in that situation. I'm so thankful that you did that, Lord, so that I could repent, so I could stand before you and say, thank you, Lord Jesus, for doing that in my life. That's a wonderful thing.

So when the fiery trial comes to test your faith, know for certain that you are fighting against the devil. It says, resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. There's other brethren.

There's the persecuted church that we don't think about often, guys. There are brothers and sisters all over the world right now who can't get a job, who are ridiculed. They're considered second-rate citizens because they are Christians.

We don't have that here in North America yet. We have some of it, and it usually comes from the church, because we have a gospel in North America that's watered down that allows people to continue to live a sinful life while they believe that they're saved. And that's the greatest deception of all, and that's the greatest trick of the devil.

If he can get the whole community to feel that way, then there's nothing wrong with themselves and they're doing just fine while the whole world is going to destruction. No, we need to save those who are like a firebrand and pluck them out of the fire. We need to ask the Lord to help us in those situations.

It says right here, verse 10, After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory, will himself perfect, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. So after you've suffered for a

while, just a little while. It doesn't say a long while, a little while, even though it seems like it's a long while.

It says right here, the Lord will perfect you, confirm you, strengthen, and establish you. He will establish you so that you don't get moved by those circumstances where you don't get actually ridiculed by those things, where in your mind you can actually understand that this is not the voice of the Lord, and you can take that thought captive, and you can throw it to the ground, and you can say, no, Lord, that's not your voice. I've learned that this isn't your voice because I've entertained those thoughts before.

I've built that case in my heart, and it hasn't produced any life for me. So I'm asking you to help me to renew my mind. That's what happens, and you will become established, and you will start to discern the voice of the Lord versus the voice of the devil.

And this is how we grow. I remember as a young Christian, I was very much into the charismatic gospel. But over time, I would find that these men would speak in tongues.

They would say that they're performing miracles. They would do these things. But afterwards, they would go and live in the same sin that I was living in.

And I started to realize this is not the voice of the Lord. I started to discern this is not the true gospel because I'm tired of my sin. I don't really care too much about this stuff.

I mean it's very exciting to see, but I'm tired of it. I want something different. And as I started to separate myself, the Lord started to give me light on these things, what the true gospel was, and that the Lord came to set us free from our sin, to conform us into the image of Jesus, and those signs will follow.

If we don't seek after those signs, they follow us. And that's something that the Lord gives us. He gives us authority over the devil.

He gives us authority over sickness. He gives us authority over the devils and those who seek to hinder us. We have that authority.

We have that unless the Lord is allowing those things to buffet us to keep us weak, unless the Lord is allowing those fiery trials. And sometimes He doesn't take those things away from us so that we learn that His power is perfected when we are weak, not when we are strong. I want to read from Genesis chapter 13.

I'll switch courses here a little bit. I just, about one thing that Abraham did with Lot. I shared last week about Abraham and Lot.

I want to read from Genesis 13 and 14 about a victory that Abraham had here as a spiritual man, and I pray that we, too, would learn from this lesson. Genesis 13, verse 1, it says, So Abraham went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife, and then all that belonged to him and Lot with him. Now Abraham was very rich in livestock and silver and in gold, and he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai.

So it's amazing that this is, and Pharaoh had gone, and when there was a drought there, he went down to Egypt, and his wife got taken from him. I can imagine his wife would be very bitter at him at this time. She'd probably be like, what kind of loser are you, Abraham? Like, here I am in Pharaoh's house, got kidnapped, taken from him, and you say you're being led by the Lord? Like, how do you do that? But yet,

she probably saw the hand of God there, how the Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his whole household.

The Lord is able to afflict the king and his whole household. There's no limitation with God. Pharaoh was the greatest king on the earth at the time, and the Lord just absolutely brought the hammer down and was able to rescue his wife from that place.

So Abraham humbled himself and realized, okay, I'm not going in the right direction here. I saw the famine, and I decided to run where there's opportunity. And so when he went there, that opportunity turned into darkness and difficulty for him.

His wife got taken from him, put in Pharaoh's household, and then the Lord delivered him. And then the Lord brought him back, and so what does he do? He comes back to the same place he was at before. He went right back into the famine land, went right back there, and what does he do? He pitches his tent there, and it says that he, between at the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly, and there Abraham called on the name of the Lord.

It's amazing that the Lord brought him full circle back to the place where Abraham started to call on the name of the Lord. The Lord is merciful. He delivered him, and there they were.

He brought everything back to his family. Now Lot, who went with Abraham, also had flocks and herds and tents, and the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abraham's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.

Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling in the land. And, you know, you can imagine when brothers fight amongst each other, there's other people watching, eh? Unbelievers, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, they were dwelling there in the land. That one little verse, you wonder why it's in the Bible.

I was wondering why would they just throw that in the land, the Canaanite and the Perizzite. Unbelievers, people who, you know, they were dwelling in the land, and they probably saw Abraham's men and Lot's men fighting amongst each other. That's such a disgrace.

You know, it probably brought, you know, a bad name to who are these foreigners who've come to take over this promised land. I'm sure they heard the story that the Lord had led them there, and then they probably heard the story that Abraham had gone to Egypt, and that God had afflicted Pharaoh. So here they are coming back, and they probably had a little bit of fear, but then they see them fighting amongst each other.

And this is a great warning to all of us, is that we have to be careful that we don't argue and fight amongst each other. We don't. So Abraham, being the more mature brother here, what does he do? Then Abraham said to Lot, Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.

It's amazing, he says, between me and you first, and then the herdsmen. And so Abraham, being the more spiritual brother, he just humbled himself and said, I'm not going to have strife. But Lot, you know, he's young and full of strength, full of energy, and he can have strife, you know.

So Lot, what does he do? He makes a decision. I don't want there to be strife here, too. So Abraham says to him in verse 9, Is not the whole land before you? Please separate me.

If to the left, then I will go to the right, or if to the right, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, and that it was well watered everywhere. This seems like a very good opportunity.

This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as you go to Zohar. So both times, Abraham, he took him to the land of Egypt, because it looked very beautiful there. But when he got there, it caused trouble.

So sometimes there's these beautiful opportunities, and you go there thinking that it's the Lord's will, because it's such a beautiful opportunity. But the actual place where the Lord was, was actually in the place of famine. It was actually in the place of difficulty, where it was going to be a challenge.

And that's where the Lord's protection was. It wasn't in the place where there was a golden opportunity. So the land of Egypt, that's where Abraham went.

He lost his wife. His wife this way. Next time, this time, Lot decides, I'm going to go down to the valley of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And I'm going to choose that, because the place was well watered everywhere. It was a great opportunity to go. This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, like the Garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as it goes to Zohar.

So Lot chose for himself the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. It's amazing that Lot chose for himself.

And a lot of the time, guys, we have to be careful that we don't choose for ourselves, ourselves, what we want. No, we have to choose what the Lord wants. There's safety when you do what the Lord wants you to do.

Sometimes the Lord will keep you at a difficult job. When I worked at that job where I complained yesterday about my old boss, I worked at that job, and it was a very difficult place, but it was the best place for me. You want to know why? Because that was where the shelter of the Lord was.

That's where the protection was. Even though there was more opportunity elsewhere, I could have quit and gone and done the job easily. I could have made more money.

I could have easily done anything, but the Lord didn't want that. He wasn't concerned about that. He wanted me to be a witness and a testimony in the job that I was at.

He wanted to be a light there. Because one day the Lord, he's able to repay that back. He's able to give you back all those wages that you think you deserve.

He's able to give it back to you. But at that time, the Lord wanted me to be there. And in the same way, the Lord wanted him there.

But Lot decided, I want to go where there's a great opportunity. And so that's a great danger, especially when we're trying to make decisions as to what to do with our life. We have to trust that the Lord has us

right where he needs us.

And he will make it clear when he wants us somewhere else or to do something different. So Abram settled in the land of Canaan while Lot settled in the tents of the valley and moved his tents as far as Sodom. So Lot settled in the cities of the valley and moved his tents as far as Sodom.

Remember last week I shared that he started kind of here and then he went into the cities? It's true. There was a progression. He went more and more into the world.

Even though it says his soul was tormented day and night by the lawless deeds that hung him, he actually put himself there. And so we have to be careful about the decisions that we make that they don't lead to more worldliness. And even though we're bothered by it, sometimes our own choices can get us into trouble.

It says in verse 13, now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord. And the Lord said to Abraham after Lot had separated from him. Now this is the promise that the Lord gave to Abraham after Lot had separated from him.

It's amazing that God was now going to lift up Abraham. You know, it's funny here when I look at what God did here. You know, many times, you know, we're a small church and there's lots of opportunity to go to a big, beautiful church.

And lots of those things, but that doesn't mean that the Lord is there. I feel like the Lord wants me to say that, you know, that we can go to those big, beautiful churches. And it can be great, but it might not be where the Lord wants you.

Where he's going to minister to your soul, where you're going to hear from him, and it's going to cause you to grow. Abraham had that small little section of land in that place. And God had not given him all of the land, but God was going to give him a promise in that land.

And that promise was this. Now the Lord said to Abraham, now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are. Northward and southward and eastward and westward.

For all the land which you see, I will give it to you and your descendants forever. This is amazing that the Lord only gave him a small section of land, and yet God had given him a promise. So I want to ask you this question.

If the Lord puts you in a place, but he gives you a promise, is it better to be in that place with the promise of God than it is to be in a place where there's lots of opportunity without the promise of God? It's better to be in a place where the promise of God is there. Where God says, I'm going to give you this. I'm going to work in your life.

I'm going to finish the things that I started. I would rather be in that place with nothing than to be in a place with everything without the presence of God in my life. Without knowing that you're hearing from the voice of the Lord.

Without knowing that you're growing. I would rather be there in the will of God with nothing than to be outside of the will of God with everything. No, this is where we need to repent sometimes as Christians.

Where we've lost our love for the Lord is because we have everything, but we're without God. No, we need to ask the Lord to bring us back to that place to say, Lord, where's the place where I built the altar to you? Where's the place where you were first in my life? Help me, Lord. And in that place, help me to surrender my rights so that other people can have their rights and be blessed.

And there the Lord brought the blessing to Abraham. Now Abraham had not received the blessing yet of receiving a son. He'd only received the blessing of going to give you a land that I will show you.

So you can see the progression as Abraham walked with the Lord. That the Lord was going to give him more and more as he walked with him. We can hinder the promises of God in our life when we don't follow him.

We have to be careful in that. If we don't follow him, the promise can't be fulfilled. There's many Christians who end their lays.

They're Christians. They've walked with God, but they haven't fulfilled what God all wanted for them. They haven't.

They've fulfilled great things in their life. They've become somebody. They've done lots of things.

But they haven't done God's will. And they haven't had the impact. And so God, he's always searching for a man, a woman, who he can use for his kingdom to be able to fulfill the will of God on this earth.

And frankly, sometimes I think in my own life that I've missed some of those opportunities. But you know what? Today, I humble myself and I say, Lord, I still want to do your will. I want to do your will.

I pray that you would show me today what you want me to do. It says right here, this is wonderful. Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth, for I will give it to you.

Then Abraham moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron. And there he built an altar to the Lord. That's amazing.

He moved his thing there and he built an altar to the Lord. That was the first thing he did. He didn't build a house.

He built an altar to the Lord. Verse 4, chapter 14. Now this is the test.

This is the test that comes. Abraham allowed Lot to go. Now look what happens to Lot when he chose this.

Now it came about in the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariok, king of Eleazar, king of Elam, entitled king of Goom, that they made war with Bera, king of Sodom, and with Bersha, king of Gomorrah, Shinob, king of Admah, and all these other kings. And it came about, verse 3, all these came as allies to the valley of Siddam, which is the salt sea. Twelve years they had served Chedorlamer, but the 13th year they rebelled against that.

So Sodom and Gomorrah had served this king. This year they decided to rebel against the king. This is in Sodom and Gomorrah.

And on the 14th year, Chedorlamer and the kings that were with him came and defeated the Rephaim and those peoples in the valley. Verse 8, and the king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah and the king of

Admah and the king of Zeboiim and the king of Bela came out, and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of salt and against these other five kings. Now verse 10, now the valley of Siddam was full of tar pits.

So they had tar pits like probably quicksand. And the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them, but those who survived fled to the hill country. Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and they departed.

It's amazing. They took their food supply. And they also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and his possessions and departed for he was living in Sodom.

So it's amazing that they came and they took Lot. This was the result of Lot's decision. As he came in there to do business, he came in there to have this great opportunity where it was well watered everywhere.

It looked well watered, but it was full of salt pits, full of quicksand, a place to just get stuck. This is where they were. They went to this place.

It was a great opportunity, and that opportunity to enter into a place of just total dryness, quicksand. You're totally stuck. There's nothing you can do.

When you're stuck in quicksand, the best thing that you can do is actually not do anything. You have to literally sit there until somebody can come up and get you out. There's a few things you can do probably with survival skills.

You can watch. Yeah, anyways, Bear Grylls, he'll teach you how to get out of quicksand. But other than that, this is where they're stuck, all right? It says, so they took Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his possessions, and departed, for he was living in Sodom.

And then a fugitive came and told Abraham the Hebrew, now he was living by the Oaks of Mamre with these other men, and they were allies with Abraham. And Abraham had heard his relative had been taken captive. He led out his trained men, born in his house, 318, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

It's amazing that a fugitive comes to tell Abraham. Now, Abraham could have thought at that time, my brother made this dumb decision. He made it, and my nephew did this.

He deserves to be here. But Abraham doesn't do that. He takes 318 men to go against five kings, five kings and all their armies.

I mean, that's a much bigger army. You would think that, Abraham, what am I going to do in this situation? But Abraham doesn't think twice about it. He says, I'm going to help my nephew Lot.

This is the testimony of a righteous person. You can have people in your life, and there's quarrels, and so that one person departs, and you hold bitterness in your heart towards them. You hold bitterness towards them.

And that person goes and gets captive in the situation that they're in. And then they get taken captive, and difficulty comes in their life. And you can think in your mind, you know what, that person deserves it.

That person deserves it. But Abraham, being a righteous man that he is, he doesn't do that. He takes 318 men to go against these kings.

That's crazy. Not a chance. I would never do that.

But he did it. He did it. And he divided his forces against them by night, and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobna, which is north of Damascus.

So he divided them up. A hundred here, a hundred there, a hundred on the backside. Let's go at them.

Let's rescue all these people. The man was a righteous man. This is the testimony and fruit of a righteous person.

You can have a sibling in your life who is now going through difficulty, and you can think this person is deserving exactly what there is. And you can sit there in judgment upon them. You can have bitterness towards them, because they deserve it for the way that they treated you.

But yet here Abraham is giving us a testimony of what it means to overcome that bitterness. You want to overcome bitterness towards a sibling? You need to ask the Lord to give you love for them, to go out of your way to help them. That's how we need to do it.

A righteous person will do that. I don't know about you, but I struggle with my family. I struggle with family members in my family.

And when I see them make the decisions that they've made, and they end up in the situations that they are, I feel, you know what? This is right. They deserve this for making these choices. But that's not a right attitude.

That's a wrong attitude. We need to ask the Lord to give us love for those people in those situations. And no matter what, if they're in a sticky situation, you can help them.

And I'll testify to this, that the quick way to remind yourself is, what did the Lord deliver you from when you deserved it? What did the Lord deliver you from? If you have no sin against yourself, well, you can say, the Lord didn't deliver me. I prayed a prayer, and I'm good to go. Well, then I would question if you're born again.

No, you need to remember what the Lord did for you, and how he saved you from the great magnitude of sin in your own life. Many, many, many, many times over and over and over again. Over and over again, he decides to rescue you and have mercy on you and pity on you.

And you know what? You're going to start to remember what that person did. I remember, you know, I said, Lord, this man who had done wrong to me, I still had bitterness towards him. I said, Lord, like, I'm still upset with that guy.

Like, the way he treated me was so wrong. And the Lord said, Dan, you know, you spoke and exposed some of his sin. Would you like me to go ahead and expose all of your sin? All the things you did? Man, I fell on my knees in shame.

In shame, Lord. I need to cover those things. A righteous man will cover transgressions.

And he will go out of his way to help them in those situations. Can you imagine a lot being there, thinking in the cab, what am I doing here? How did this happen? I wasn't planning this. I came down here.

And he was probably thinking back to the time that he was getting a little bit frustrated with Abram. He was probably allowing his herdsmen to kind of take over the land, just give me a little bit more space here. And now he's probably remembering the righteousness of Abraham and thinking, man, Abraham was kind to me.

He let me make the choice, and I made a dumb decision. I made my own choice. Now what am I going to do? But look at what Abraham, it says right here, verse 16, and he brought back all his goods and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions and also the women and the people.

That's a wonderful thing. Abraham, just being a righteous guy, going out of his way to help his brother, his nephew Lot. That's a good man.

Then after his return with the defeat of Cherdolammer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Sheba, and Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. Now he was a priest of God most high, and he blessed him and said, blessed be Abraham of God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God most high who has delivered your enemies into your hand. It's amazing that the Lord quickly reminded Abraham, so Abraham doesn't get proud, that it was the Lord who gave you the wisdom to defeat those kings.

Because definitely couldn't defeat five kings with all their army with only 318 men, but the Lord was quick to remind Abraham, so he couldn't be proud that he would remind him and say, man, it was the Lord who brought that deliverance. You get wisdom in your life. The Lord does something for you and your family.

Maybe your family is a little bit more successful. Maybe you have a better family. Maybe you have more children.

Having more children doesn't make you more blessed of God. It just means you have more children. If you want to go to Haiti, they must be all blessed because they have lots of children.

There's lots of kids running around there. That doesn't mean you're more blessed. We need to remind her that it's the Lord's kindness that he's given us these things.

It's kindness that's given us. It's not because of us or because of our righteousness. It's only because of the goodness of the Lord.

And he reminds Abraham, Abraham, the only reason you got this victory was because I helped you. And so we need to be careful that when we get victories that we don't look down and become proud in our own heart. And so the King of Sodom said to Abraham, give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.

And Abraham said to the King of Sodom, I have sworn to the Lord, God, most high possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal throng among you. That is yours. Lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich.

And I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who are with me. And after these things, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision. Do not fear Abraham.

I'm a shield to you. Your reward will be very great. And then he cried out to the Lord with this complaint.

Oh, Lord, God, what will you give me since I am childless? And the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus. And there the Lord gives him the promise. It's after he's walked with the Lord that the Lord gives him the promise of having a son.

Gives him the promise of having a son. And so when we get victories as we walk with the Lord, the promises become more and more full for us. Our Christ nature becomes more and more rich.

Our relationship with the Lord becomes better. And if it's not getting better, you need to ask yourself this question. What is hindering me from my walk in the Lord? Have I gone down to Egypt? Have I gone down to Sodom and Gomorrah? Have I gone to a place that looked great and afterwards it was not a good place? Lord, forgive me.

Help me get back to the place where there was an altar. It's amazing here. If we look in verse three.

And Abraham said, since you have given me no offspring to my one born in my house is my heir. Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying, this man will not be your heir, but one who shall come forth from your own body. He shall be your heir.

And he took him outside and said, now look towards the heavens and count the stars. If you are able to count them. And he said to him, so shall your descendants be.

Then he believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. You would think that he would have believed in the Lord first, but when he heard the word, he believed in the Lord. And when he believed in him, it was reckoned to him as righteousness at that time.

Guys, it starts with faith. We have to believe that the Lord has us right where he wants us. If you were in the will of God and you followed the Lord, and now it seems as though it's a difficult place.

It seems, Lord, why did you bring me out to this place? Remember that it's the Lord who brought you there. And you believed in the Lord. And I think of one instance where the Lord asked his disciples to get in the boat, to go to the other side.

And as he got in the boat, they went to the other side. And what happened to him? The waves beat against the boat. It was difficult for them.

And I would think, why wouldn't the disciples at that time question the Lord and say, Lord, why did you send me out here? Like you told me to get in the boat. You told me to come here. And it's not going the way that I wanted it to.

This is an opposite situation of what Lot did and what other people did. There's times when the Lord asks you to get into the boat, to take a step of faith, to walk with him, to obey. And as he goes, the Lord reveals his plan for our life.

And as they went, the disciples went, difficulty arose. And we can't be distressed when difficulty arises or trials come up when we start to follow the Lord. That's what happens.

The moment you start to follow the God, it seems as though all the Lord, it seems as though all these difficult things come, trials come, situations change, and you start to wonder if it was the Lord who sent you there in the first place. And we have to remember that it is the Lord as he asks us to do things and as we be obedient to him. I'll finish here in Hebrews 11 about faith.

He believed in the Lord and he reckoned to him as righteousness. And in Hebrews 11, it's the wonderful passage about faith. Guys, we can't be discouraged.

We have to trust the Lord. Hebrews 11 verse 1, it says, Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Do you have faith or do you have unbelief? We need to have faith.

We need to trust the Lord. We have to have conviction of the things not seen. I was pouring out my heart to the Lord, saying, Lord, what's going on in my life? What's going on in my life? I literally was having lunch with a brother yesterday and I was complaining and saying, Lord, I see no fruit from the things in my life.

None. I'm starting to wonder if this is really the direction that you want me to go. And literally while I'm sitting there, I get a text about the passage of Peter.

And it says, after they had finished their meal, Jesus said, do you love me more than these? And he said, yes, Lord, I love him. And he says, feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my sheep. And he gives him that challenge and says, I want you to continue to feed the sheep, feed the lambs, do those things that God asks of you.

And Peter, being in a discouraged state that he was in, he probably could have given up and said, man, what's the point? I'm going back fishing. What's the point of going this way? I failed the Lord. I've made mistakes.

It's not gone the way that I wanted it to go. And yet the Lord still comes to meet with him. So what does he do? He goes back fishing.

And yet the Lord still in his mercy comes to meet with him. And Peter, when he hears the voice of the Lord, he doesn't hesitate. He dives out of the boat.

He dives out of the boat to swim to land because he's so happy that Jesus has come back. Jesus could have given up on him at that time. Can you imagine denying the Lord? None of us here have denied the Lord.

We haven't. None of us here have denied the Lord. Peter denied the Lord and it's written in the Bible.

You would think that there's no room for repentance in a situation like that. But there was room. There was room in that situation because the Lord allowed it.

And what did he say to Peter in that situation? I pray for you, Peter. Not that you wouldn't fail, but I pray that your faith wouldn't fail. And that's what we need.

Our faith doesn't need to fail. We need to ask the Lord. Lord, I need you to help me that my faith does not fail.

That that mustard seed would grow into a tree. That that thing in my life would grow and become fruitful in my heart. Lord, help me not to lose that little mustard seed of faith.

Because with that little mustard seed of faith, you can move a mountain. With that little mustard seed of faith, you can overcome the difficulty in your life. With that little mustard seed of faith, you can please the Lord.

What does it say here in verse 6? Without faith is impossible to please Him. If you don't have faith, you're not pleasing to Him. It's not going to be all your obedience and all your doings that are going to please Him.

No, it's your faith in Him that's going to please Him. And Abraham, what did he say? Lord, what am I going to have? Since I'm childless and the only descendant I have is Eleazar. And he says, no, one from your own body is going to be coming to you.

Do you know how long he had to wait for that? Thirteen years. Thirteen years before that promise was fulfilled to him. Until he was as good as dead, it says in Hebrews 11.

Without respect to the promise of God. He was good as dead. But in Romans 4, it says, with respect to the promise of God, he hoped against hope.

He believed in the Lord. He didn't go weary in unbelief. Even though his body was as good as dead.

And Sarah's body was as good as dead. And she was totally barren. And yet he still believed in the promise of God.

I mean, that is an impossible situation. But the true men of God, the true women of God written down in the Bible are always the ones who say, Lord, let it be done according to your word. For nothing shall be impossible with the Lord.

Nothing shall be impossible to Him. Lord, you're able to encourage me. You're able to revive me.

You're able to lead me in my life. You're able to give me a hope and a future. With respect to the promise of God.

We have to trust Him. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him. For he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He's a rewarder of those who seek Him.

He's a rewarder of those who seek Him. The Lord will reward you when you seek Him in faith. And we can't be discouraged in those situations.

God said to him, Abraham, even though you're dead, one from your own body is going to come. And it says that Abraham believed in Him and it was credited to him as righteousness. You know, I struggle with unbelief.

I struggle with unbelief. I struggle with discouragement sometimes. You know what? But yet in regards to the word of God, we have to get my eyes off of my problems and I need to look to Jesus.

I need to look to Jesus who is the author and perfecter of my faith. And He's working all things together for my good. To those who love God, who are called according to His purpose.

And I have to trust Him. I have to trust Him. It says, by faith, Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place where he was to receive for an inheritance.

And he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith, he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise. For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

He was looking for the city who was built by God. And I'm going to leave that question with you. Are you looking for the city, the house that's built by God? Who is the architect? He's the architect and builder.

You know, in building, in construction, you have an architect who gives the instructions to the builder. And then the builder has to build it according to the specifications of the architect. The architect who does the design and has to meet the guidelines of the city that you're living in.

And if you don't build it according to those guidelines, then that house will be, that house will be, you won't be allowed to build it. You won't be able to live in it. You won't be able to do anything.

But it says Abraham, it says of God that he is both the architect and the builder. So we must be reminded, not only does he have the plans of our life, but he's the one who will build in our life. He's the one who's building in our life.

And we have to have faith in him who is the architect and the builder. He's the one who's given us these precious promises. He's the one who's given us this great reward.

He's the one who is doing things in our life so that we become conformed to his image. He is the one who's working all things together for good. So if we don't know what to do, we can go to the architect and we can go to the builder and say, Lord, I need you.

There's something wrong in my life. I need you to help me to change it. I'm asking you to build in my life.

I'm asking you. Last verse in Hebrews 3, verse 1, it says, Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. He was faithful to him who appointed him as Moses also was in all his house.

For he has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. You know, the builder of the house always has more honor of the house. Jesus has more glory than anything that we could ever have, guys, even our own righteousness.

The righteousness of the law is not as great as the glory of Jesus. So we can be perfect outwardly, but there's still something greater, and that's Jesus. He gets more honor.

And he is the builder of the house, and he gets more honor than our house. He gets more honor than us. So remember, remind ourselves next time we want to be proud that it's the builder who's done it.

Next time we get a victory, it's him who's done it. He is the one who's given me the wisdom and the skill to do it. He's the one who's given me even the ability to make money.

He's the one who's given us even our health and our situations. We need to remind ourselves of even these natural things because he's the one who gives us the ability to get up in the morning and do the job that we need to do. And that's why we need to give him the honor, and we can't take any honor for ourselves.

What a great job that I did today. Well, great job that you did today, but it's the Lord who's given you the ability to do that. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

So even though we have our tasks in our life, we're building our families, we're building our careers, our future, the builder of all things is God. So let's entrust our souls to him who is faithful and say, Lord, not my

will, your will be done. Not my glory, this is your glory.

I'm so grateful for all that you've done in my life. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you.

A simple message to remind us to look to you. Lord, we rejoice in all that you've done. Forgive us where we've been proud.

Fill our hearts fresh with your Holy Spirit. We ask that you fill us with your Holy Spirit, Lord, because you are the builder of all things, Lord. We look to you, the architect and builder of our lives, but mostly for your glory, Lord.

For your glory, we ask that you would help us, encourage us, strengthen us.

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