

In the Midst of Storms ■ Trusting His “It is I”

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of gaining insight and understanding from God's providential work in our lives, highlighting the need to trust in His power and authority. It explores the disciples' response to Jesus walking on water, revealing how past unbelief can lead to a hardened heart and hinder our ability to expect the unexpected from Christ. The speaker encourages listeners to worship and adore the Lord, recognizing His sovereignty and purposeful plan in every situation.

Scripture: Exodus 14:21, Psalm 139:16, Matthew 14:27, Hebrews 3:13, Philippians 4:19, John 9:3

Topics: "Trust in God's Providence", "Worship and Adoration of God's Sovereignty"

Description

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Transcript

Yeah, something here stood out to me devotionally that I believe the Lord wants me to speak on. So Mark 6. Just let me read a quote from Hudson Taylor's biography. This doesn't really have to do with the message, but I just sent it to Evan.

He's still in the hospital. He's on the mend. But, I think this is from volume 2. It was not until many years later when Mr. Taylor could look back over all the way in which the Lord had led him that he was impressed with the fact that every important advance in the development of the mission had sprung from or been directly connected with times of sickness or suffering which had cast him in a special way upon God.

You hear that? Hudson can look back after decades and he draws that observation. And so, from a human perspective, you could look at individuals get sick and now they're not going to Pokhara and there's not this trip. And God is so much bigger than that.

And when He afflicts us, there are purposes for that. And Hudson Taylor's observation, it's not just Hudson Taylor saying that, it's the Bible teaches that reality. In a special way, when we're in the midst of suffering or a thorn in the flesh, God can draw near to us and teach us to know Him more in a greater way and He

has some deeper purpose.

So I thought I'd share that. Let's pray and then we'll look at something in Mark 6. Father, Lord, we thank You for sustaining us. Lord, we do have frail bodies, even some of the strongest among us, Lord, that can be knocked down by physical ailments.

And Lord, we are reminded of how frail we are. And Lord, ultimately, Lord, You are the One. You control everything, Father, and we're grateful that You've graciously given us to not only believe in You, but also to suffer for Your namesake.

And Lord, we hear of different missionaries and those on the field suffering in different ways. And Lord, we're delighted to see You sustain them. And Lord, also to anticipate that You have some purposes in all of this that You're going to work for Your good and for Your name and for Your advance of the Gospel.

Lord, even we think specifically of Nepal. And Lord, You're doing different things and it will lead, we trust, to churches in seven provinces in the decade to come. And so Lord, our eyes are upon You.

You are the living God. We thank You, Lord, as we saw at Grace Group. You're the living God.

Lord, You're alive today. Lord, You've always lived. You've always been.

And we're just grateful for Your supreme reign. And Lord, I submit this piece of manna that You've given me to You right now that You would feed Your sheep and take this small portion and use it even to remove any hardness upon anyone's heart. Lord, even hardness and callousness of unbelief that might be creeping in that they don't even recognize, they don't even realize what's happening, Lord, that there's something there that they're beginning to doubt You.

They're beginning to not trust in You. Lord, if that's happening to any here, if that's happening to me in my own heart and I lack the humility to perceive that, Lord, I pray that You would remove that callous layer of unbelief, Lord. Lord, I pray You'd help us to expect great things from You, our great God.

And so Lord, we look to You right now in Christ's name, Amen. Mark 6. We'll start just verse 42. We're just going to read the last part here of Jesus feeding the 5,000.

And then the main section is what follows. And they all ate and were satisfied. They took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of fish.

And those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men. Immediately, He made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while He dismissed the crowd. And after He had taken leave of them, He went up on the mountain to pray.

And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea. And He was alone on the land. So earlier in Mark, you've got a situation where they're on a boat.

Where's Christ at that point? He's on the boat with them. Here, He's not with them. When evening came, the boat was out on the sea and He was alone on the land.

And He saw, verse 48, and He saw that they were making headway painfully. Sometimes that's where we are, right? That they were making headway painfully. For the wind was against them.

And about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them. He came to them. Walking on the sea.

Walking on the sea. He came to them. Pretty remarkable, isn't it? Is that what you would have expected? Is that what you would have thought? I mean, maybe from your Old Testament knowledge, well, the sea's going to part or who knows.

Here He's walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them. Verse 49, but when they saw Him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost.

That was their initial impression. And they cried out, for they all saw Him and were terrified. But immediately He spoke to them and He said, take heart, and I love this phrase, I was just thinking about this on the car ride here some more.

It is I. Isn't that amazing? I mean, there are situations that you face, Christian, where you don't recognize that it's the Lord and it's like He's got to say to you, it's Me. Look, this thing I'm doing in your life right now, Christian, it is I. It's I. We don't perceive it as Him initially. And He's there saying, it's I. It's Me.

And then He says, don't be afraid. Verse 51, and He got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased, and they were utterly astounded. They were greatly amazed.

And then verse 52 is really what stood out to me and what I want to focus in on. They were utterly astounded. Why were they utterly astounded? For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

And then verse 53, when they crossed over. So, it continues on. So yeah, let's consider some thoughts from this passage right here.

What we can gain from the disciples' experience and what Christ was saying to them. And how can we apply this in our own lives, brethren? Because there's something here for me. There's something here for you.

And I trust God's going to show us that in our own conscience and deal with us and help us in a specific way. So, first thing I want to just think about. Think of this.

A person with a hardened heart responded to Christ in what way in our text? A person with a hardened heart responded to Christ what way in our text? And I'm asking that question because the response is in a way that you wouldn't necessarily maybe have expected. It doesn't necessarily look like a bad response. But what was? In v. 52, their hearts were hardened.

That's the state of their hearts. In v. 51, how did they respond? They were utterly astounded. They were greatly amazed.

You catch that? You can witness the Lord do something and stand greatly amazed. And you can be utterly astounded that it is Him and that He's doing this. And yet, Jesus says they're acknowledging that, but they're actually in a state where they have some callousness and some hardenedness over their heart.

Meaning there's a problem there. So that's the first observation to consider. The person with a dull and a calloused heart can be completely amazed at something Christ has done.

I could be completely amazed at God saving Jimmy Downing's son and Jamie's brother and other people the Lord is working. I could be completely amazed in the last week about that and greatly astonished that it is I, it is the Lord doing that, and I could actually have some hardness over my heart that I don't even recognize is there. So that's the first thing we should consider here.

This is interesting. A second thing, which kind of goes with the first, is was this a positive response? And clearly, no. Because their heart was hardened and calloused, and Jesus is giving this as a reason why they responded in this way.

He's not saying this is how they should have responded. What then is Jesus' expectation of how they should have responded? If they had no hardness on the heart, and they look out there and they see Christ, which initially they thought it was a ghost, if there's no hardness on the heart, if whatever happened with the loaves didn't happen, if no hardness entered in at that point, what's Jesus saying His people's response should have been? His people's response should have been to have expected Him to do that which was totally unexpected, totally impossible. It's one thing to be on the boat in Mark 4 and the storm comes and, Lord, wake up, wake up, and He makes it cease.

And they say, well, who is this? Who even the winds and the waves obey Him? Well, here now, the winds and the waves, not just their obeying, He's walking on the sea. Coming to them. So Christ, He actually wants us to expect the unexpected.

I look at their response of being utterly astounded is the wrong response. He's describing how a people with a hardened heart, with a callous of unbelief responded to what He did. And He says in verse 50, this happened because of how they handled a previous situation.

Their unbelief in the midst of what happened with the loaves, which we'll look at that in a moment, that carried on with them into a future trial in a situation that they were facing. And this is something we've got to get, brethren. If you have unbelief three days ago, and you don't trust the Lord, you let a little hardness get around your heart, you will carry that with you.

And in the future trial that the Lord puts you in, you're going to respond in a way that isn't going to fully honor the Lord. It's not going to be the right response because you've had hardness enter in from what happened a few days earlier. And, you might not even recognize that that callousness has covered your heart.

That that unbelief has entered in. Christ wants us viewing Him as the Son of God and falling down and worshiping Him. Which, in Matthew's account of this, that's exactly how they respond in the end when He gets on the boat.

They fall down and they worship Him and say you truly are the Son of God. But lingering unbelief can cause us to not expect something to be the Lord's doing when it really is. Is this the Lord? Is this a ghost? Is this the Lord? What's happening right now in my life? It's I. It's I, James.

You shouldn't be amazed. You should have expected this to be me. You should have expected me to be working in this way.

The reason you didn't expect me to work in this way is some hardness entered into your life with the whole situation of the loaves. You didn't learn something from that situation that you should have. And so, kind of a fourth thing here, what caused their hearts to become hardened and their understanding of faith in Him

to dim? Well, Jesus, He says right here, they didn't understand about the loaves.

Does anyone have an NAS? New American Standard Bible. Will anyone read from an NAS? I think the way the NAS says this, it's helpful in the English to reword it in this way. Listen to the NAS.

They had not gained any insight from the incident of the loaves. Hear that? They go through this whole situation where there's supernatural provision with the loaves, and Jesus right here, do you know what He's positively saying to them? You should have gained an insight in the midst of the provision of the loaves. Like there was something there I had for you to learn.

And if you would have learned it, it would have affected how you face this next situation. You wouldn't have been greatly astonished. You would have expected Me to have the power not just to say to the waves to cease, but to actually walk on the sea because I am the very Son of God.

I am He who you should bow down and worship. I am the One who's in control. But they failed to grasp the lesson that the Lord had for them.

So brethren, you and I, we can witness miracles in our lives. God does something incredible, and there's something for you to gain. There's an insight, an understanding about the Lord for you and I to gain.

And we go through the trial, we even witness all the bread being provided, and we don't learn. We don't actually learn. We don't learn how to think differently and more accords with the Word about how we should perceive Christ, His power, and who He is as the very Son of God, what He is capable of doing.

They didn't expect Christ was capable of walking on the sea. They had low expectations about the almighty power of the Son of God. Right? The first in Mark 4. You know, who is this? By the end, in Matthew, after this account, he records they fell down and worshiped and said He is the very Son of God.

They're starting to recognize, they're starting more and more to see, though at times it's back and forth, them realizing who Christ is. They're starting to see who He is and who His power is. And isn't that really a massive problem in our lives as Christians? We really think we understand who Christ is.

But then there's times we live in such a way where it almost appears we don't really believe that He cares for us in the way He does, that He's really in control of everything as in control as He is. In Hebrews 1, the Father says to the Son, You, O Lord, laid the foundations of the earth. And if you really believe that Christ was before all time, that He is the very Son of God, that He created all things, you stir yourself up to believe the Person of Christ and who He is, man, it's going to encourage you in the midst of different trials and things you face.

So we could fail to grasp a lesson the Lord had for us. So a fifth thing which kind of goes with that is do you realize the Lord wants you gaining understanding as He does things in your life? If you read through Mark, if you read through all the Gospels, where Peter starts, does he end where he started? No. There's a progressive growth in his life.

The same thing is happening in your life. It's not just progressively you're being sanctified. Absolutely, that's happening.

But the Lord is sanctifying you with certain lessons at certain seasons in your life. What lesson at this season of 2024 is the Lord trying to teach you in your life right now? And are you gaining the

understanding He wants you to have? When He looks at you and He says, when you look at all these hungry people and it's like, well, they need some food, do you automatically think, well, we don't have the money to get the food for the people? Or do you conclude that the Lord is all-powerful and He's able to duplicate supernaturally the food? Well, what did they conclude? They looked right at the money bags. They looked at the impossibility of the situation.

But as they grow and walk with the Lord, you're getting to the point where you realize when you face a difficult situation, this isn't impossible for the Lord. He could walk on the water. He could supernaturally duplicate the food.

He could save this person and that person. He could raise up seven biblical churches in seven provinces in Nepal. You expect that from God because He is the very Son of God.

He is the one to bow down and worship to. And you know what? You're on a boat now. Christ isn't laying there with you.

He wasn't far off, right? Christ is not far off from us here this morning. So, Mark 6, verse 51, "...He got into the boat with them. The wind ceased.

They were utterly astounded." Why were they utterly astounded? They didn't understand something that had happened with the loaves. Their hearts at that point and that experience in their walk had been hardened. Had been hardened.

And you could even look at that for a moment. Verse 37 of Mark 6. Verse 36. Actually, just keep going back.

Verse 35. When it grew late, notice His disciples came to Him. They got something on their mind.

It's a good thing. It's a good thing to have on your mind, right? These people are hungry. That's very, very good.

You're worried about them getting some bread in their tummy. Some food. The hour is late.

This is a desolate place. We're far out of town. Verse 36, "...Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." Is there anything wrong with that? And I would argue there is.

That statement right there, at least in part to me, it seems that type of thinking, you're with the Son of God and you're thinking of sending these individuals away. Is that an insult to His power? Does that honor Christ? And look at His response. Verse 37, "...He answered them, you give them something to eat." So He doesn't support the idea of them going away.

You give them something to eat. And they said to Him, shall we go and buy 200 denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat? And He said to them, how many loaves do you have? Go and see. And when they had found out, they said five and two fish.

Then He commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups by hundreds and by fifties and taking the five loaves and the two fish. He looked up to heaven and He said a blessing.

And He broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. He divided the fish among them all and they all ate and they were satisfied. And they took up themselves 12 baskets full of broken pieces and of fish.

And those who ate the loaves were 5,000 men." Just the men was 5,000. There were more than 5,000 people. Immediately, He made His disciples get into the boat.

Verse 45. Okay, you recognize? You know what's really surprising to me? They witnessed the miracle. And I already said this, but I want to say it again.

They witnessed the miracle. They saw they had a basket of leftovers in their hand as they're leaving the situation. All seems well, right? You saw it happen.

It's incredible. God provided and you're moving on with your life. Everything must be well with my heart.

No. The very next interaction, Jesus looks at them and says their hearts were hardened with what we just read. They had hardness enter in.

The moment right at the beginning, yes, Christ came in and He responded and He did the miracle, but that didn't take away the hardness that had entered in when they initially had this thought of unbelief where they minimized the Son of God's power. Right at that moment when they're minimizing His power, when they're not looking to Him to provide for them right away, they're thinking of sending these individuals away. Hardness is getting over the heart.

And that hardness doesn't go away even though they witnessed the miracle firsthand. They see the supernatural provision. They witnessed it.

And Jesus says in the next passage, you didn't gain an insight from that. There's something. There's hardness on your heart.

There's a callus covering your heart. To me, that is very, very soul-searching. And I don't remember where it's at in my notes, but part of what I was just thinking about was what's happened recently.

Let's say you really doubted God three weeks ago that He could save anyone. And that was one of the themes of the men's retreat. Jimmy kept making the statement.

How specifically did he say? Believe God to save anyone. I think that's how he stated it. Well, let's say three weeks ago, you don't believe God can really save anyone.

You're doubting that. You're doubting His power. And now you've witnessed different people being converted, or you've heard about these conversions.

Miraculous things happening and God bringing people into the Kingdom. You and I could assume, oh, I really now fully believe God's able to save anyone. Brethren, there might still be some remnants of hardness around your heart that you've got to surrender to the Lord and acknowledge, Lord, I previously doubted Your power.

Now I'm witnessing Your power is true. Lord, I don't want to continue on from this point on with any remaining hardness over my heart. Lord, I want to believe You to expect great things.

I want to fall down and worship You. You truly are the Son of God. You can walk on the water.

Lord, You could save anyone and everyone. Your arm is not short. We tend to assume, well, I've seen all this now this past week.

There's no way there's hardness on my heart. No, don't be that fast. There might be something still there that you've not acknowledged before God.

Some unbelief that you've got to tear away from and believe the Lord. And again, it's all about seeing the person of Jesus Christ and who He is. And so that'd be a sixth question here.

What insight did He want them to gain? It's interesting here, when you think about what insight He wanted them to gain, if you look at the text, He says they didn't understand about the loaves. Now, what would you have expected Jesus to say? They didn't understand the previous time they were in a boat in Mark 4. I mean, you kind of expect Him to go back to another situation in Mark 4 where they're in a boat and similar thing happened. Mark 4.35, on the day the evening came and go across and He's in the stern.

He fell asleep on the cushion. They woke Him and said, Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing? He awoke and rebuked the wind and said to them, Peace be still. He said to them, Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? That's the problem.

Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey Him? You would have thought Jesus probably would have referred to that account. He doesn't. He goes right back to the loaves.

He goes right back to the loaves. Also, in a parallel account in Matthew, what do you find happening that Mark, who in many ways records everything from Peter's perspective throughout this letter, what does Mark not include? He doesn't include Peter's response to seeing Christ and going and walking on the sea, right? He doesn't include that right here. So what insight was he wanting them to gain? Is this all about how to respond to a storm in your life? No, again, that's not the point.

There's some insight from the bread that they should have got. And I don't think it's a complicated insight. Like I keep trying to emphasize, it's do you recognize who Christ is? He is the Son of God who created, sustains, and controls everything.

He is the Son of God. He is God in the flesh who has all power and authority given to Him. And yes, He can go and heal a leper, but it's showing He can cleanse you of your sins.

I think in Matthew's account, I don't know why Mark left it out, but when it ends and it says, and those in the boat worshiped Him, saying truly you are the Son of God, I think that was a big thing here. They're needing to recognize. They're needing to acknowledge Jesus is truly the Son of God.

Truly, He is the Son of God. The first place in Mark 4, they're asking who then is this? Then you've got the incident of the loaves and they're doubting His ability and His power. And now you end with them in Matthew 14 worshiping Him and saying He truly is the Son of God.

And so Jesus, He took the bread supernaturally, duplicated it. It should have risen their expectations of who He is to thus get them to a point where they're not astonished when He walks on the water, where they don't need Him to say, it is I. Where they actually see Him and say, it is He. Not who are you? It is I. It

is He.

That is the Lord. Look at the power. The impossibility of that.

That's Christ. We know who He is. In other words, witnessing the bread miracle should have prepared them to expect the unexpected from Christ.

They didn't expect it at the beginning of the bread because they're thinking of sending everyone away. And then they don't expect it in the storm. And so they have this low view not expecting the unexpected from Jesus.

Do you expect the impossible from Christ? Their hearts were slow to grasp the deeper significance of Jesus' miracles while they knew He had power over the wind and the waves. Right here, they're witnessing Him walking on water. It's like this new level of astonishment of His power in His person.

I mean, clearly they didn't lack trust in Christ to invoke God's power to rescue them from the storm. In Mark 4, they believed that. That's why they prompted Him to wake up.

However, it seems they failed to grasp the inherent presence of the power within Him. You see, that's something people point out and I think it's right. You can know that Jesus absolutely has the power to go to His Father and for this to happen and for this to happen.

But what about the power, the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as the very Son of God? Even though He didn't count a quality with God a thing to be grasped in those powers, but here His authority as the very Son of God. The Lord wants us to worship Him, to adore Him, to see Him for who He is. And the more we see Him for who He is, the more we recognize His power, the more it's going to exhilarate our faith and encourage us to believe God for the impossible.

So a seventh thing here, apply this to yourself. As the Lord is progressively teaching you and wanting you to gain insight from His work in your life, is there any area of past unbelief that has put a layer of callousness around your heart that you've brought on to this day right here in 2024? It's amazing. Pharaoh saw powerful plagues, but he repeatedly hardened his heart each time and refused to let the Israelites go.

It's incredible. And we can look at Pharaoh and say, that man was dumb. He was stupid.

We can do the exact same thing as a born-again Christian where the Lord does something. Let's say He does something to show you the severity of your sin. You know how it is.

There's certain sins, like impatience that some of us, we go back to it again, and you're looking at it and thinking, why do I keep falling into being impatient? I mean, today, we get out to the car, and lo and behold, we had undone all the kids' car seats because we went to Home Depot. So I spent hours wrestling those car seats back into their seats. It's a big battle.

You know, I sinned in that. There was impatience in my heart, and I pushed one of the car seats. I was pushing and it hit the seat belt and I got thrown back in my face, so I really just pushed it.

There's anger in my heart. That was sin before God this morning. Okay, Lord, You keep teaching me lessons.

You teach us lessons. We can get to a point where we just believe, Lord, I don't have to ever respond in that way again. You have the power.

You have the authority. You've come to cleanse us of all of our idols. You've come to make us holy like Christ.

But we could easily assume like the disciples, we could just march on. Oh yeah, I'm encouraged. I believe God now.

And then we have a storm come and the Lord says, you actually still have a hardened heart. You've got calloused on your heart. That didn't get dealt with.

But you know what's encouraging about that? If you did get calloused, say in the last couple weeks, and you think, well, I really believe God can save anyone now. And maybe that's not really true. Maybe there's some callousness upon your heart.

Well, you know what the good news is right here? Jesus comes to you and He deals with you. He gets you out of that situation. That's what He does to the disciples.

He doesn't leave them in that situation. He pursues them in order to give them an experience to shake them up to all the more affirm to them who He is. Look, you're going to think this way about the loaves? I'm going to go walk on water.

I'm going to show you my authority and my power. I'm going to do something in your life where you're going to fall down and you're going to worship Me. That's what they did in Matthew.

When the Lord wants you and I, our heart's worshipping Him. Unbelief gets in the way of us worshipping and truly appreciating the Lord for who He is. Is there anything in your life where the Lord is saying you give Him something to eat? Well, if He commands it, what should we then expect? That He's going to provide.

He's going to provide for us to provide for that. He's saying give them some... But back up more than that. We shouldn't need Him to say, you give Him something to eat, right? It should already be in our own mind.

Rather than going, Lord, how are you going to provide for this? We should just go in believing. You know what? I don't even need the Lord to tell me, you go give Him something to eat. I know God's power is such that He's able to provide and I can just go to Him and ask Him to do that which I expect Him to do.

But the disciples, they didn't do that. And their little hardness gets around the heart and then, well, let's send them away. And Jesus says, no, you give Him something to eat.

And then even there, it's like, well, look at the money. They're not looking at His power. They're not looking at His arm.

I mean, guys, the Lord provided meat and food for almost a million Israelites day after day in the wilderness. They weren't ignorant of this reality. And they weren't recognizing that power.

Who was the pillar that went with Israel in the wilderness? 1 Corinthians 10 says it was the Son of God. And that very one is right there with them right now who provided for a million people and they're not trusting the Lord for 5,000 people. They're not looking to Him to do that.

Lord, help us. So, a couple applications and closing thoughts here. This passage, I believe, is a call for us to gain insight.

Right? That's what verse 52 says. For they didn't understand about the loaves. There's the NAS.

They didn't gain the insight they should have gained from the situation of the loaves. What is your loaves situation in your life, Christian? The Lord wants you to gain insight about who He is and His power and His authority. Is there some area you're doubting the Lord in right now? Well, it might be because you doubted Him in a past trial.

Maybe there's a present fear. Maybe you're really terrified. And the Lord, He's wanting you to know it's I. I'm there.

I'm with you, brother, sister. Don't be afraid. I'm going to provide.

Is there an area in your life where you are terrified and you don't realize it is I? It's just incredible, that phrase. Take heart. Yeah, I got a little hardness on my heart.

Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid. Verse 50.

That's an amazing statement from Christ. Brother, sister, whatever it is in your life, whatever you're going through, whatever trial, whatever frowning providence, the Lord is a Lord who's saying it's I. I'm with you, right? Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He is with me. It's I. Not a ghost.

The devil would love for you to doubt the presence of Christ in your life. Satan would love for that to happen. In some way, studying this, I've been thinking so much about God's providence.

Kevin Waddell had sent me a quote from John Flavel's book, *The Mystery of Providence*. So I'd read that. And then after the elders meeting, we did get home.

We left. It ended earlier. And I got home and tuned in to John Piper's sermon at the Shepherds Conference.

I was hoping to hear that. And man, right when he started preaching, he just got pulled right in. It was a glorious sermon on the providence of God.

On how God is purposely in control of everything in your life. He's not just sovereign, but He has a purpose behind everything. And Piper talked about all these sufferings of the missionaries that they support.

And children dying and all these anguishes the missionaries are suffering. And then talking about how those missionaries saw, like Hudson Taylor, that quote I read, they saw the purpose of God in that. And you know what? You want to have your heart not hardened? You want to have some of that unbelief get stripped away? You go look at your life, you look at things even leading to your conversion, and you just bask in awe of everything that God had as a purpose in your life to bring you to Christ, even to bring you here sitting here today.

And that should promote the heart to just bow down and worship. Say, Lord, I am unworthy that You would have had any positive interest in my life to work anything for good and anything to even lead to the fact that I'm converted and here today believing You, just creates worship. Because He's worthy.

When you see God's plan, His permissions and how He plans everything. At our grace group, Steve was just rehashing everything Jimmy shared. I mean, it's not just Jimmy's in the military leading to his conversion.

Jimmy's in the military, then Brian gets in the military, then they end up in the same rank, then they end up at the same base, and then they end up at Hainer's one next to each other. All for a purpose for Brian to evangelize Jimmy Downing and see him come to Christ. Right? I mean, that's incredible.

God had all that planned. There's a purpose there. It wasn't an accident thing.

You don't look and say, yeah, is that I or is that He? You know, it's I. That's Him. That's the Lord. That's the Lord.

The Lord did this. The Lord did that. You think about Paul.

He got stuck in prison. Wow, what a bad situation. No, the jailer got converted.

Philippians 4, you read of some in Nero's household want to send Paul greetings. Why would people in Nero's household want to send Paul greetings? Because they got converted. Joseph, what man meant for evil, God meant for good.

We're reading in John 9 as a family for devotions, and you have a man born blind, right? And people are looking at it. They're asking questions, right? If someone's born blind, you're going to ask questions. The two questions were, what did his parents do? And what did he do? What were they not asking? What's God doing? What's God doing? John 9, it was not that this man sinned or his parents sinned, it was that the works of God might be displayed in him.

You see, the Bible is just replete with stories that highlight God's providential care in the lives of individuals. And brethren, it starts from your very upbringing. I mean, you look back however old you are, and you're going to see the hand of God and His provision in so many ways.

You're going to see things that you could say, that's like Christ walking on the water. That's incredible that that happened, that the Lord worked that in that way out of love for me. And so I'm going to just share a few more of these examples, I guess in the hopes of, if you've got any hardened heart right now towards the Lord, where you're saying, is it I? Is it I? Or not is it I, is it He? He says it is I. And maybe it could just kind of melt it away when you see God's goodness in these people's lives leading to their conversion.

It will remind you of your own. And if the Lord did that to save you, brethren, you better believe it right now as He's persevering you. He's doing incredible things as well.

Moses' early life, it's a profound example. He was born at a time when the Hebrew male infants were being killed by Pharaoh's decree. Moses was hidden by his mother.

Eventually placed in a basket on the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter found him, raised him as her own. Setting the stage for Moses to become a leader who would deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

Incredible providence. Joseph's journey from being sold into slavery by his own brothers to rising to become the second most powerful man in Egypt. That is a clear demonstration of the power and providence of God.

What about his ability to interpret dreams? Eventually led him to the preservation of his own family and the dreams he had as a youth. Though the Word of God tested him, it all came to pass. What about Esther? An orphaned Jewish girl raised by her cousin Mordecai became queen of Persia.

Her position was instrumental in saving the Jewish people from total genocide. It just demonstrated God's providence in her upbringing and rise to power. What about David? The youngest son of Jesse, chosen by God to be anointed as king of Israel while still a shepherd boy.

His faith and courage and victory over Goliath, all of this you just see the hand and the providence of God. And then we have one who did what all of these did. He delivered his people as Moses did.

He was raised from the prison to power to feed his people as Joseph did. And he was put forward an edict to save his people from total destruction as Esther did. And that's the man, Jesus Christ.

The ultimate example of divine providence and purposeful, predetermined plan is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's absolutely incredible. A miraculous conception being persevered in the midst of King Herod's massacre.

His growth in wisdom, his favor with God and man. God had a plan for His Son, His only Son. To His ruling over the waves, to His death on the cross, to even His raising Himself from the dead.

Don't pass over that verse in John 2. Destroy this temple. I will raise it again in three days. God had a purposeful plan with His Son, the blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

The more we love the Lord, the more we appreciate Him, the more we stand in awe of Him no matter what. Another biography I've been reading is Mary Winslow, Octavius' mother. She had ten kids.

They moved to America. Her husband died weeks later. Her newborn daughter died.

She raised her nine kids as a widow. All of them came to know Christ. But you know what brought her through all of that? Was knowing Christ.

Experientially walking with the Lord in the midst of those trials and putting away unbelief and doubt. Satan wants us to doubt. H. Thicke-Leckl, it's a hard name to pronounce, he wrote this, One day, perhaps, when we look back from God's throne on the last day, we will see with amazement and surprise if I'd ever dreamed when I stood at the grave of my loved ones and everything seemed to be ended, if I'd ever dreamed when I saw the specter of atomic war creeping upon us, if I'd ever dreamed when I faced the meaningless fate of an endless imprisonment or malignant disease, if I'd ever dreamed that God was only carrying out His design and playing through all those woes, that in the midst of my cares and troubles and despair, His harvest was ripening, and that everything was pressing on towards His last, keenly day.

If I had known this, I would have been more calm and confident. Yes, then I would have been more cheerful and far more tranquil and composed. See, we're going to say the same thing.

We get to eternity and everything comes. It all makes perfect sense. We'll look back.

Well, if you can look back with regret then. But we would look back and say, Lord, if I would have known, I would have been more calm. Well, brethren, you do know.

The real question today is, are you and I going to let any hardness creep over our heart and create unbelief where we doubt God? Because then we're not going to know that. But the Lord looks at us and He says, it is I. Let's pray. Lord, we thank You that it is You.

Lord, forgive us the times we wrongly perceive Your power. Lord, when we look at a situation and it can't be Him, the Lord can't be doing this. Lord, it is You.

You're the One with the hand at work. You're the One with the authority. Lord, as it's been said, there's no rogue molecule in all the universe.

Lord, we want to believe that. Lord, we acknowledge here today, Lord Jesus, You've been given a name that is above every name. And at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

And every ton will confess that You are Lord, that You are Kurios, to the glory of God the Father. And Lord, we want to live in such a way. We want to call You Lord, Lord, and do what You say.

We want to do what You say and believe that You will provide, for that You have said You will do. Lord, You have said that in Philippians 4.19, my God will supply all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Oh Lord, help us to trust You more.

Lord, help us to trust You. Even as we seek to advance the Gospel on the campuses, the co-workers, the lost family, Lord, on the mission field. Oh Lord, we want to believe You, Father, to save.

Lord, even just pray, Vess, even going back to Nicaragua this next season, You'd save people in Leon. Lord, why do we sow seed? We sow seed, Father, yes, another might come, and then it will grow. And Lord, we want to trust You with that.

But Lord, You are able to save any and everyone. Lord, yes, You're able to come down this year and save Matt Haney as we've been knocking and knocking for years. Lord, to take him up as a trophy of Your almighty compassion and power.

Lord, we all here this morning need more reasons to weep at how loving and kind You are. Lord, we don't see it, or at least I don't, I don't see how compassionate You are and how merciful and long-suffering You are as I should. And so, Lord, I pray You'd save Matt.

Lord, I pray You would save, Lord, others who the brethren have had specific burdens for. Lord, forgive us when foolish doubts come in. Lord, we can be so easily shaken from our persistence in prayer because some thought of unbelief.

We want to send them away. Go get food elsewhere. But Lord, You want us to be the ones to provide and pray them into the Kingdom.

And so, Lord, we want to believe that and pray them into the Kingdom and not shrink back. So Father, help us. Lord, we're here to be exhorted.

To exhort one another every day as long as it is called the day that none of our hearts would be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Lord, we want soft hearts. We don't want any hardness to callous our hearts.

Lord, we don't want anything to creep in and choke out faith and confidence in You and Your power. Lord, we worship You. You are worthy.

Thank You, Father, for all You've done. Thank You, Father, for sending Your Son. Lord, we don't deserve a Redeemer.

Lord, reading of men on death row this week who were converted in the very end. Lord, You saved them days before they died. Lord, just like with John recently.

Lord, no man deserves anything from You. Lord, we deserve Your wrath. We deserve Your judgment.

You've extended such a hand of mercy and compassion. Lord, I pray You'd do that to this east side. Pray You'd do that.

Lord, we're thankful for those here today from Haven for Hope. Lord, we want to see those who don't truly know You truly follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Lord, You are worthy.

Thank You for purging our sins and removing them as far as the east is from the west. Father, we just thank You. You're good.

You're God. We're unworthy servants. In Christ's name, Amen.

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