

Dancing Your Way to Victory

by Michael L. Brown

Michael L. Brown emphasizes finding joy and victory in Christ amidst life's tribulations through faith and community support.

Duration: 1:09:26

Scripture: Habakkuk 3:17-19

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Faithfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing a personal story about his wife's experience with data loss on her computer. He then transitions to discussing the importance of trusting in God's faithfulness and not being swayed by circumstances or the voice of the devil. He encourages the audience to have faith and trust in God's promises, using examples from the Bible, such as Moses and the Israelites. The speaker concludes by emphasizing the need to persevere and trust in God's faithfulness until the end.

Transcript

Bless the Lord. I just want to share a quick testimony. It's not a, well, actually there's an email I just got this morning from, this afternoon from Holland.

The numbers are up to actually 130 that are there for the School of Ministry. Bert and Carolyn Farris were also over there teaching and they have 100 beds but 130 people. They had another event of just going out and witnessing and witnessing to a lost sinner on the streets when suddenly the power of God came on him.

He started shaking, repenting, and then speaking in tongues and then wanted to be baptized right there. So they went in some public place and found water and baptized him. And then next thing, a crowd, they started preaching and they stayed there until people were throwing mud at them and then they moved on.

Wonderful report from the team and crew. Some of you folks know Liz McDougal from Scotland. We found it interesting that when we were in England recently that even the folks in England don't understand her Scottish.

But she comes from a very heavy drug addicted background, wonderfully saved, and she's been reaching out to some real lost young ladies. Scott got to talk to her and find out in detail. And just some wonderful reports.

One of them completely, totally delivered and free and clean and another just about there. I mean, people that are in the cesspool that she's reached out to. And the one thing she said when she met with Scott was to please, if any testimony is given, make it clear that Jesus did it, not her.

What a wonderful heart. And I was just looking at another report that came a couple weeks back, but from Scott Gunderson. We met Scott and Louise when I taught on Long Island over 15 years ago, and then they came to our school in Maryland for a bit, and then we're in the school in Pensacola.

And they've been on the mission field for some years in Italy and gone back out. And their heart is really the Muslim world. So he's had this incredible time of ministry in Spain and Italy as Muslim refugees are coming out.

And he said the great majority of them are accepting scripture, and many are having encounters with Jesus and getting saved. I mean, God's moving in the midst of the pressure, the hell and all the bad news you see, God's moving. But there was a little thing that happened with Nancy and I that I just want to glorify God for also.

Okay. How many of you guys use computers? How many of you understand the agony and the ecstasy of computer life? Okay. Okay.

How many of you have ever worked on a project that took maybe hundreds of hours, and then that project was lost or destroyed? The data, something happened. Well, Nancy's doing a lot of video editing these days and stuff, and has been compiling some stuff ultimately to help with the school video. And the data is so big that she doesn't have room to store it even on the large computer hard drive.

So she has a backup drive, actually a couple of backup drives that are each 250 gigabytes. So for those that are familiar with this, you know, they're big storage drives. And one of them was the only place where she had all this video stuff stored.

How many hours of work would you say? A lot. She's not one to exaggerate, so she just said a lot. I mean, hours and hours and hours of compiling things and so on and so forth.

Late Wednesday night, we were going to be leaving for Charlotte Thursday, and she's up real late, I'm up real late, we're talking, and she's like, I don't believe it. Something happened to that backup drive, and it was completely destroyed, and all data completely lost, inaccessible, and she was taking it with a good spirit. But she ran this program to try to salvage things, and it came up with like this.

It's like you go in to see a doctor and say, you know, I'm in pain, I think there's something the matter, and he checks you out and he goes, this is big trouble. This is worse trouble than you realize. That was pretty much the message on the thing.

So we packed up, we came here, and it was now late, I guess two nights ago, and she emailed the disc recovery thing, and they wrote back saying this is a very severe error message and you might try this, but basically they didn't have much hope. So I was in a good place in God at that moment, and she asked me to lay hands on the hard drive again, you know, on this, and I just felt something rising, you know, another friend that had been over, you know, knew what happened, we were praying, so, what's that? Just lay your hands right here, John. Oh, okay, I'll try that.

We'll see, maybe after the service, I'll try. So I just, I didn't even say a word. I probably scrunched my face, but I didn't say a word, and I just said, Lord, I just take out everything that's wrong here and just put in everything that's good.

Just felt something happen. So she then goes, now she was running this recovery thing at the same time, but, you know, I thought, well, it's unlikely that'll work, but I would rather God got the whole glory if he did this. So anyway, all of a sudden, she looks, she's like, okay, everything is back.

Everything that was lost is back, but that's not the amazing thing. She had, let's say there were eight different things on this hard drive, okay, that were, that were, and by the way, you know how you go to a doctor with a medical testimony? We can go to our Belgian brothers to get this verified if this is a real miracle, you can look at it and tell us, our computer specialists. So anyway, she had, say, eight different things stored on that drive, and seven of them she actually had backed up elsewhere, but there was one major thing that had all this key stuff that, that, that had been gone.

All eight things seemed to be there. When she went through all of the others, all of the other seven that were backed up elsewhere were not recovered, were gone. And only that, that one massive thing that was not stored anywhere else is the only thing recovered.

So, Jesus name, the only thing, which you may get, you may end up now speaking Hebrew after that, maybe such as I have, I give. I may forget everything, you may have to write the books. I may have to be nice to everybody, just have kind of like a switch.

Praise the Lord for his grace and goodness. We can be here just a, a bit later today because there's not a, a worship team practice for Thans congregation, but the plan is to, to bring the words, just have time to just go back to time of worship and then we'll be clearing out of the building. And please do remember the different announcements.

If you need to, if you can help in any way, please remember to see Ken right after the service and, and those who are very spiritual, I guess they're going to pray and the Lord is going to tell them where, where Dr. Peter's home group is going to be this week. And they only have to hear God, whether it's one or two places. Was that the meaning of that announcement? If they're in Dr. Peter's home group, maybe they can give either Donna.

Oh, so it's one of those two. I thought you just prayed and it was 50, 50, so it's not that tough to hear. Okay.

You may want to try that. You may want to try not calling. If you're part of the Peter's home group and ask the Lord, is it the buckwheats or the riches and see what happens.

Amen. Only three doors apart. That's the other thing that'll, that'll help this kind of like baby lessons and hearing the voice of the spirit where there's not much risk involved.

And, um, those that, uh, uh, that are praying about being part of, of a fire school, you've got to be serious, committed to Jesus. This is not a rehab place. It's not a place for the half hearted, but if you're serious about being trained and equipped with a sense of calling on your life to, to make an impact for Jesus or do the work of ministry, uh, I don't, I don't know that you'll find a place that's more focused and committed than, than what God's enabled us to raise up here.

All right, let's pray together. And if you have that tape brother, you can start it. Oh, if we can't tape then, then the message would probably be even greater in your memories than it was when it happened.

We are. Okay. Let's start it now.

All right. Father, we love you and thank you for your goodness. I thank you Lord for our family, for friends, for people committed to you, Oh God, for people who've been saved and washed in the same blood.

I pray, Oh God, for the opening of our hearts to hear from heaven, that you would speak to us with clarity, that your word would come with life transforming force, that we would be carried on the wave of your word and spirit this day into a new place in you. Speak to this community of believers here, father, your servants are listening in Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. You may want to entitle this message, dancing your way to victory, although it won't make much sense until we get to the end. All right.

I want to read a few verses to you beginning in John, the 16th chapter. We'll begin in John chapter 16. Jesus is speaking to his disciples shortly before they will betray him and he will be crucified and then risen.

And he says in verse 32 of John 16, behold, the hour is coming. Indeed, it is come when you will be scattered each to his own home and will leave me alone. Yet I'm not alone for the father is with me.

I have said these things to you that in me, you may have peace in the world. You will have tribulation. That word means pressure, tribulation in the world.

You'll have tribulation. Notice what he's saying in me. You'll have peace, but your experience in the world will be tribulation, pressure, difficulty, but take heart.

I have overcome the world and therefore in Jesus, we overcome and therefore we have peace. But notice the promise. It's a promise that is not what we call the refrigerator verse that, you know, you put that part of the verse on the refrigerator to remind yourself of and to claim, praise the Lord.

I'm claiming that verse in the world. I'll have tribulation, but it remains true. It is something that Jesus had assured us of just as he assured us that in him we have peace and that he's overcome the world.

Go over to Romans, the fifth chapter, Romans chapter five. Look at what Paul writes here. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God.

There's that peace word again, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have also obtained access by faith and to this grace in which we stand and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character and character produces hope.

And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. The sufferings that he speaks of in particular are sufferings for the gospel, sufferings that come our way because of our obedience in Jesus. Then go to the book of Revelation and the first chapter.

Revelation chapter one, John has been exiled and is writing from the Isle of Patmos. It would be like someone being exiled into Siberia in deepest, darkest Russia. Here he's in exile because of his obedience

to Jesus.

And notice what he says in verse nine, I, John, your brother and partner, in what? The tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It's been pointed out that the word kingdom occurs right in the middle of tribulation and patient endurance and that John says, I'm your brother and partner. We're in these things together.

And he says, this belongs to us. This is part of our lot in Jesus. And then lastly, for now, second Corinthians chapter one, second Corinthians chapter one, beginning in verse three, for those that are visiting, I'm going to share something with you that we normally say for our advanced classes at the end of the second year and the beginning of the third year.

But it's just one of the little secrets and keys that we share with our students in terms of how to get around the Bible. And you'll be amazed at how quick our people are here. If you forget where second Corinthians is, remember, it's always immediately following.

Okay. How do you find where second Chronicles is? After first Chronicles. Okay.

Where's third John? Okay. Watch this. Where's first John? Before I said, I don't want to intimidate those that are visiting.

You think I could never, I could never know this much and be like these people, but it's okay. After a little while, you get it. It's like a system.

So if you, if you haven't found second Corinthians, it's immediately after first Corinthians. All right. I stole some of Steve all Sunder because he waits for later in the deeper times with the students before he shares that.

But I just did it for everybody here. Second Corinthians one beginning verse three, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God for as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings. So through Christ, we share abundantly in comfort too.

If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation. If we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experienced when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. Our hope for you is unshaken for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort for we do not want you to be ignorant brothers of the affliction we experienced in Asia for we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself.

Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, but that was to make us rely not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril and he will deliver us and him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. You also must help us by prayer so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Pressure, tribulation, difficulty, challenge, in particular for obedience to the gospel. These things have been common to God's people in every century. These things are common to God's people around the earth today.

Nonetheless, it is still possible to get to a point in your own life, in your own walk with God, in your own ministry, in your own service where the demonic attack and the pressure gets so intense that you feel that you have reached breaking point, that you feel like Paul in a certain level. It's all over. We're not going to make it.

It's all coming down. In his case, it was clear we're all going to die. I don't know if you've ever been in a situation like that.

Maybe your first time flying, when you hit your first rough air, and you think this is it, the plane's coming down. Or maybe you've been in one of those situations. Scott's Uncle Robert was right next to the World Trade Center on 9-11, and he lived to tell about it.

But as he was trying to run for his life and run down a subway entrance, wasn't it? And there's just the covered in dust and can't see anything, it's all black. He thought, that's it, it's over. And sometimes you get hit with that.

Sometimes it is just a spiritual lie that is completely unrelated to circumstances. And sometimes it's completely tied in with the circumstances. The doctor comes with the report and says, this is very serious, it's cancer, it doesn't look good.

And the moment that word is spoken, that thing just comes all over you, it's over. You're going to die. There is no hope.

It could be something as simple as a bill coming in saying this is late and this has to be paid, and the thing just assaults your mind. It's over, it's all coming down. It could be a failure in ministry somehow where you fall short, you don't see God do the things you expect Him to do.

You feel He's given a promise, you feel He's given an assurance, and the thing doesn't happen. Whatever it is, everyone that walks with God long enough will experience that kind of harassment. Everyone, especially if you want to be on the front lines, if you want to be used by God, if you want to, quote, be a world changer or a history maker or a real disciple or a real follower of Jesus, if you really want to go out and make a difference, you will come against demonic pressure and lies and hellish circumstances beyond what you in yourself are able to bear.

In fact, one of the first things, you've got to write it down and plan on it. The pressures will be bigger than you. The difficulties will be greater than you.

The obstacles will be more than you can handle. I've journaled regularly for years and probably the last eight or nine years journaled regularly on computer. And I've often made reference in teaching and things just to looking over the course of a year and doing a search, you know, looking up one word and just going through the whole year and just seeing how that particular thing was worked out in my life or what God was doing or what God was saying.

And I was just looking up, I looked up the word crumbling because I remember right when fire was birthed, right at the end of 2000 when there was a jarring separation, thankfully wonderfully repaired now, but there was a jarring separation and there was the pressure of starting a brand new school in less than three weeks and some of our faculty away ministering and no money whatsoever and bills of about \$100,000 that had to be paid right around then and no possible way of getting anything done. And it's on top of it, you know, a dark, rainy, miserable day, one of those things. And I remember just getting hit so severely.

It was one of the darkest moments, just getting hit so severely and so overwhelmed by the pressure. It was one of the rare times. In fact, I can't remember ever journaling anything like it.

I just wrote down in my journal, I'm crumbling. I said, this is too much. This is more than I can bear.

And I just listed everything that was going on, the circumstances themselves. I mean, if you could have just seen around the corner and God's provision and God's hand and just seeing around the corner, you know, the call from Scott that someone out of the blue had donated \$160,000 to the ministry work. And that's one reason that we were able to carry on and help fire be birthed.

I mean, that was just a few days around the line. Or the supernatural meeting with Pastor Greg Burns. The next thing they're building, opening up to us and this happening and that happening and God's favor and God's smile.

But in the midst of it, with the lies of hell and with the pressure and whatever we set our hand to do, it seemed was not working. It just got so intense. And I just looked at it earlier today, the journal entry.

And what I'd written down was, you know, the pressure in the midst of revival was overwhelming. The highs that we experienced, the blessings, the things that we saw God do, the joy that I'd be caught up with, that feeling of satisfaction in God with us was deeper than anything I had ever known on a consistent level. And so also was the attack from hell.

The highs were higher and the lows were lower. The buffeting, the tormenting attacks of the enemy. And what I just journaled there, I said that the pressure of revival was unbearable.

But the pressure of Jesus revolution is more than I could ever take. And I found one other entry when Nancy was under severe physical attack and was just really in agony at home and a bunch of other things just seemed to be crashing in at the same moment. And listen, it can be all imaginary.

Do you understand? It can be completely imaginary. There doesn't have to be any substance in it. It doesn't mean that you don't get attacked at that moment.

You understand? You could be sitting in a plane, okay? And the plane has not yet taken off. But you don't understand planes and flying. And all of a sudden you hear some noise.

Or maybe you hear, you know, if you get on the plane early and they're testing the thing. You know how they test each engine? They're doing this computer test. You know what it says? Fire, right engine.

Remember that? Fire, left engine. I remember the first time hearing that I thought, there's a fire in the right engine? There's a fire in the left engine? No, they're just going through their little computer test. You may be sitting there on the plane and you hear fire, right engine.

You go, oh no, the plane's coming down. We're all going to die. And the plane hasn't even taken off.

And it's just a little computer test. But the fact that you get hit with it is the reality at that moment. And then sometimes when you add in all the circumstances and like Paul's situation, it looked like they're going to die.

Or they're in a boat and this thing is coming down. I mean, it's day after day after day in Acts 27. There is no light at all.

It's just darkness. Who can imagine that? Out to sea. And it's clear there's no hope we're going to make it.

In the midst of that is when God speaks. When every earthly thing has failed and it is going down and it is all over. So I've looked at that journal entry when I come home and Nancy was under such attack and we were under such attack.

And I just wrote down in the journal that day that the pressures and the burdens are bigger than me. I don't remember writing those words, but that reality, the thing is too big. You know, if we are going against the enemy and the best strength and wisdom we have, we might as well quit now.

We do not know what we are attacking. We talk about wanting to make an impact at Patriots Point, one community. I believe God's going to do it.

I believe he's put people there and he's put it in people's hearts and there's no reason why we can't see God do great things. But that alone is bigger than us. Do you understand? When we lived in Maryland, and I'm going to make this very clear and practical and direct in a moment.

I remember when we lived in Maryland and there had been another physical attack on Nancy and it was just a strange condition that was tough to diagnose and it had been going on and it was very debilitating. It was very hard for me to just see her in that physical condition. And one night I was praying and I felt like I got hold of God and I was doing spiritual warfare and pulling down strongholds.

But I felt like, all right, I'm doing it. I'm pushing back the powers of darkness against my wife. I'm covering her.

And the Lord spoke to me in the midst of it. It was actually a word that encouraged me more than encouraged her. When I shared it with her, it wasn't that encouraging to her, but it encouraged me a lot.

He said to me, there's a lot you don't know. In other words, basically what you're doing is about 2% of the job at your best and the rest is my grace. You understand? It's kind of like the shield of faith that we put up is kind of like this.

You understand? I mean, there's a little bit of stuff that's going to get deflected by it. And the rest is just, man, I got my shield of faith. It's mainly the grace of God surrounding us and covering us.

And that which we do see that we can deflect, it's not like mighty warrior here. It's mighty warrior up there. You understand what I'm saying? And then God did touch her and she was delivering.

I began to think back because I know that many in our community here are under pressure. And many literally don't know just in this time of transition and pioneering and being replanted here, many literally don't know, okay, where's my next meal coming from? Or rent is due today and I don't have it. Or listen, we've got a sick child and we don't have money to take him to the doctor.

And there are real-life day-to-day things. And coupled with that is the pressure of the enemy and the lies of hell and the accusations. If God was really with you, why not this and why not this? He'll always construct something.

Whatever it is that's different than your current situation, that's what He'll construct and challenge you with. I want to speak to you in the midst of some level of pressure attack. And with that, help to prepare us for the real attack and the real pressure and the real difficulty when it does come.

I've often thought of Jeremiah, the 12th chapter, where Jeremiah, looking at the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the godly as it appears to him, decides this is simply not fair. And he's going to have it out with God. He knows.

He basically says, look, I know you're right. I know you're going to win in an argument with me. You know, I'll have people tell me, I'll try to dialogue with them.

I'll say, well, there's no use, I can't out-debate you. You know, I just want to talk to them and say, there's no use, I can't win an argument with you, I can't out-debate you. Think of debating with God.

Think of trying to have an argument with God. And he says, look, I know if I'm going to, I know you're right, God's always right. I mean, that's kind of the tone of it.

I know you're always going to have an answer, but I'm still going to tell you I'm bothered. It's not fair, it's not right, that we're going to prosper. I mean, picture how you'd feel if people all around you, you know, they steal your money, they abuse your family, they take all your possessions, and then they go on and plant the church and it prospers.

It's like, what? How can it be? That's not right, that's not fair, that's terrible. And Jeremiah's dealing with this on a deep, large level. And he presents his case to God.

You know what God says to him? Poor prophet, it's a hard lot you have being there all alone. Listen, it was a very hard lot. We feel lonely and discouraged when we have 8,000 people standing around us, cheering us on and encouraging us.

And our family right there with us, it's a hard time. Picture being a lone prophet going against the other prophets, the other priests, the kings, the princes, and warning constantly, it's all coming down, that's your message. You know, Jeremiah, what's your message today? You're all going to die, and your kids are going to be slaughtered, and those that survive are going to wish you could die.

That's what the Lord says. What's the message for us? Those that are going to be killed by the sword, by the sword. Those that are going to die of famine, by famine.

I mean, it was not a pleasant message. It was wearing, as I'm writing this commentary on Jeremiah, I'm overwhelmed by what it must have taken for him to deliver word after word. It was hard, let's face it.

None of us in our own strength could have possibly lived up to what he lived up to. And yet when he comes with his complaint and his issue, you know what God says to him? He says, if you go worn out running with the footmen, how are you going to run with horsemen? If you're getting shaken in the easy time, what's going to happen when the real battle starts? You know, another time when he just pours out his complaint, you know what God says to him? He says, if you repent, I can still use you. That's basically what he says in Jeremiah 15.

If you repent, I can still use you. There is pressure, there is attack, there is difficulty, and if we will obey Jesus, if we will be people of the Spirit, if we will pray and fast and live pure lives before Him, and reach out and touch a dying and hurting world and live in obedience to Him, we will see God move and we will come under far greater attack and pressure than we've known, far greater testing, far greater sifting. The question is, how can we take hold of God in the midst of it? How can we be overcomers in the midst of it? How can we find peace in the midst of it? How can we avoid crisis and collapse and breakdown in the

midst of it? It is not God's will that we go around like basket cases.

God is not glorified through our failure. God is not glorified through our inability to move an inch forward. I actually compiled a list here.

Thankfully, journaling everything through the years enabled me to do this. I'm going to tell you what's on this list. I remember being 18 years old before college and really being assaulted by the enemy that I had taken too many punches already, you know, like a fighter, that I was too worn out, that my best days in the Lord were completely behind me.

I was saved like a year or something. Face it, I was worn out and through. I remember getting hit with that at 18.

I started college only because my parents really wanted me to and God spoke to me plainly through His Word to honor my parents' request. So I went to college but aimless because I had no intention of going to college. So I started as a music major.

And after a little while it was clear I could play drums, knew certain things, but I was not cut out to be a music major. So I just switched to liberal arts for a little while. So I had to take all these courses that I had no interest in taking whatsoever.

And it was towards the end of a semester and I had to write all these stupid papers. There was some play that Paul Newman or Marlon Brando had been in and I had to write a paper about this play. I remember taking History of American Art and these other classes just to fill a schedule somehow.

And psychology and stuff, and I'm not putting this stuff down, I'm just, all of it, but some of it I am. The only good thing with History of American Art was they didn't take attendance and you would sit there in a dark room and they would just show slides and talk about them. So you could effectively either miss most of the classes or close your eyes while you were there and still, if you could figure out what was on the test, quote, pass.

Of course, I walked away from that with a tremendous working knowledge of the History of American Art. And I can go to virtually any art museum in America or even just look at houses and designs and architecture and tell you the origins. Well, I did pass, though.

I remember at the end of this semester, I had all these papers and I thought, I can't do it. I just want to be reading the Word, I just want to be praying. Right after that, I switched and became a Hebrew major.

I thought, I'm not going to make it. And I remember distinctly, in my room alone, at my parents' house, where I lived all those years, getting so tormented that it hit with reality. The enemy just hit so clear.

You're going down. You're going to have a nervous breakdown. You are not going to make it.

You're going to crumble. I remember it was so overwhelmingly distinct. And what I did is I compiled a list I just went through it because I remember before finishing my PhD, the enemy said, you never finish what you start.

You never finish. You start well, but you never finish. You will never finish.

You will never finish this. You will never get your doctorate. You will never write a book.

You will never do this. It will never happen. So I compiled a detailed list.

And on this list is all of the nervous breakdowns that I actually have had in 32 years in the Lord. All of the terminal illnesses that have taken my wife. All of the times that we have had to declare bankruptcy.

And several other things. I've compiled a list of every time any one of those things that we were actually hit with. The time that she was going to die, the time I was going to die.

I've compiled a list of every, honestly, because I like to be clean and honest. Of every single time, not all of those, but any one of those things ever happen. And this is the list.

Can everyone see it? I asked Rowan, I told her I needed a piece of paper. She asked if this was big enough. I said I actually needed bigger, but it works.

Listen, you know the lesson? That when the lie came, the same lie that's hit you and tormented you and come against you, the same hell that you've been hit with, the same nonsense, oh man, you're never going to do it. I look at different people here and there are dreams in your heart and there are things God's put within you, and the same thing comes. Face the facts.

It's not going to happen. You're not going to see your country change. You're not going to see revival break out.

You're not going to see God do this. You're not going to see God do that. Face the facts.

Listen to me. At a certain point in life, we must recognize lies for what they are. At a certain point in life, we must simply say, I'm going to take hold of the written Word, the promises of God, and things that I know that He's spoken to my heart.

I remember before revival broke out in Brownsville. I had been so sure and journaled it and prayed it and spoken it for years before that a wave of revival was coming that we'd get to be right in the thick of it. I remember right leading up to it is when it seemed to hit the most.

When is it going to happen? It's not going to happen. How long, Lord, watching people cry their eyes out, weeping before God for Him to move when it wasn't happening. I remember just saying, God, how long? And then, boom, thing bursts out here and there and another place.

Boom, next thing we get to be in the middle of it. And boom, here we all are together. And that wouldn't have happened without God doing it.

You've got to realize the very same way that when He comes and says, you're not going to make it and the purposes of God are not going to be fulfilled, and they're going to reinstitute debtors' prison, and they're going to start one right here in Charlotte, where they throw you in jail if you can't pay your bills, and you rot there, and your own family forgets you even exist. At a certain point, we have to say, devil, you're a liar. At a certain point, we have to speak to our own little mind, which tends to race and get all worked up.

And some of us that think we're so spiritual, the devil just comes and whispers. Nothing's actually happened. Nothing's actually gone wrong.

And the devil just comes and whispers, and next thing we're in a tizzy. Somehow we put more faith in what circumstances tell us, and what people and things tell us, and what the voice of the devil tells us, than

what the Word of God tells us, and our experience in God tells us. I want to stand here as a witness today to the ongoing faithfulness of God to say that He finishes what He starts.

I want to stand here as a witness to say that you can put your complete trust in Him, and you can get out of the boat and walk on the water, and you can go into situations that seem absolutely impossible, and if you look to this thing until it gets to the end of the chapter of the story, you'll see the faithfulness of God. You'll see the kindness of the Lord. I was preaching in New York some weeks ago at our New York school on a Monday night meeting, preaching from Exodus 4, 5, and 6, when God sends Moses to the children of Israel for their deliverance, and he doesn't want to go, and fights it, and God gets him to go, and then He says, all right, perform these signs, and He does, and all of Israel believes, and then He goes marching on into Pharaoh.

All right. This has been supernatural, sovereign, hand of God, called out, set apart, anointed for the miraculous. Now, he goes into Pharaoh and says, all right, let my people go.

That's what the Lord says. Yahweh, tremble when you hear that name, Pharaoh. Pharaoh says, I don't know Him.

What are you talking about? I'm not letting anybody go. He says, you're just idle. You're not working hard enough.

And then He makes everything worse, and the oppression gets worse. And now listen, they were specifically and exactly in obedience to God. Do you understand? Moses was right where God told him to be, full of the Spirit, and it looked like the whole thing was a myth.

I remember when we prayed for someone that subsequently died. But we prayed, and it looked like there was a breakthrough for healing. About 13, 14 years ago, we were just in the process of moving.

Actually, it was a little longer than that. We had a late night moving, and we were just a little disheveled just because of that. Some of you can relate to that.

You know, things weren't where they're supposed to be. We had to store everything somewhere else. And then late in the process of that, we get a word that so-and-so that we thought had a breakthrough and healing of his brain tumor.

Instead, lo and behold, he just had a terrible seizure. And when I got that report, I remember it came two prong. The first prong about the attack on him, and he's not healed.

And then the second prong, right behind it, there is no God. This is not something I wrestle with. I don't have to read lots of books on the existence of God.

And a philosophical discussion to convince myself that he really exists. I don't need him to, every morning, to say, It's time to wake up, Mikey boy, I'm here. You know, and then, Okay, Lord, you're still there, you're still God.

You know, I don't go through that. And yet, in the midst of it, boom, that thing, I'm talking about getting smitten. There is no God.

Just boom, the bottom fell out. The intensity of the lies, the hit. I want to stand here as a witness and declare the absolute, utter, and complete faithfulness of God.

And he will finish what he started. And he will bring to pass the dreams that he's put in our hearts. And we may be like Moses going into Pharaoh, and we make our, Alright, Pharaoh, that's it.

Over for you, boy. And he goes, Get away. And it's like, not only where's your anointing, Moses, but where's your God? There is no God.

Yahweh, who is he? And everything gets worse, and it gets so bad, it gets so bad that the next thing that happens is that the people, they're furious with Moses. And when he tries to encourage them, they don't believe anymore. And then God says, Now watch what I'm going to do.

I mean, why did they hit that first wall? Sometimes that wall can last for a period of time. Why did it happen like that? Is there any spiritual lesson from it? I was preaching on that, and out of the blue happened to make reference to Smith Wigglesworth, Brian Parkman's good friend, Smith Wigglesworth. Brian's a man of faith and a teacher of faith, and knows the Wigglesworth story well.

But I happen to mention the story of Wigglesworth, who lived from 1859 to 1947, was called an apostle of faith. And Wigglesworth, in the midst of his greatest miracle ministry, got heavily assaulted in physical attack with kidney stones. And if you've never had the pain, I haven't, and I'm trusting my brother's description of it without having to find out for myself.

The pain of dealing with these kidney stones. Wigglesworth had, over a period of years, more than 150 jagged, ragged kidney stones that he passed. You heard a groan of sympathy from Brian in the front.

He actually saved them in a jar. He would preach publicly a miracle service and go back to his hotel room, rolling on the floor in agony, and his underwear blood red. And as I was preaching, and yet endured the test, endured the struggle, and preached faith all the more strongly, and would not have surgery, he said, because no knife would ever touch his body.

No sooner do I preach that, than Brian gets attacked. In fact, I preached on Wigglesworth a couple of weeks later, and he got attacked again. Then I thought, all right, we'll talk about John G. Lake or somebody.

That was the agreement, that I wouldn't preach on Job that much. I first want to put something in context, and then I want to share with you what I believe is a promise from God. All right? You can get all bent out of shape sometimes over very small things.

Has that ever happened? I ordered it without the pickles. It's not, it's, I knew it was a bad day. I knew I shouldn't have been in Charlotte.

I knew God wasn't calling me to fire school, and everything's going wrong, and they put pickles on. I mean, little things sometimes. There are straws that break camel's backs.

Some of you have such a fragile back, that all you need is one straw. You don't even need to load with it, just the one straw is enough. It can happen.

First thing, just to put stuff in context. When God spoke to me a couple weeks back that everything was right on schedule, right on target, that it was His will that we began here, the hospitality of Pastor Thant and the congregation, and not start with our own building. We had planned it.

We thought we were supposed to. It was very clear to us. I mean, we didn't even ask God if we were supposed to, because we knew, of course, we need our own building, et cetera, and prayed much to that end.

And we had friends working real estate and others helping us. And God made it very clear to me a few weeks ago, you're never supposed to start with your own building. Everything's right where it's supposed to be.

And I also knew we will have as a community, and in particular some of our fire staff, some challenges, but we'll make it through the summer. We're not going to die of starvation. Even if some of us didn't have money to eat for the next month, we wouldn't die of starvation.

And, in fact, it could be the best thing that happened to some of us. We're not going to be in debtor's prison. We will not lose our minds.

We will not need to get an insurance policy that covers mental illness, corporate mental illness or something, corporate breakdown. We will make it, okay? And I just want to put something in context, okay, that even though we've been through pressure and test and challenge and different things, everything's really not so bad. Everything's really all right.

The worst crisis that most of us have known would still not make it into a footnote of an appendix of an added chapter to Fox's book of martyrs, light version. Scott and I were in Kirkland, Washington last weekend and had an unexpected opportunity to minister on a Saturday morning at a Messianic congregation, old friends of Scott. By the way, everyone, everywhere I travel with, anywhere around the world, there's an old friend of Scott and his family.

Scotty Volk, I don't care where we are. We're in the Mojave Desert. Do you know Volks? Do you know Sheldon June Volk? Where were we? Just in a little motel in the middle.

In an elevator in Illinois. In an elevator in the cornfields of Illinois. In an elevator in a little motel in an out-of-the-way place.

You don't need a car to get around the entire metropolis of that city. Just walk here, walk there, and you've done it. I mean, it's cornfields.

It's the middle of nowhere. We're on it. Scott Volk! And the thing is, everybody stayed with his family.

Now that you get to know him, you can understand that. Everybody. So there happened to be an old friend of Scott's invited us to speak at their congregation.

And we got there a little early, and I noticed a recent addition of Voice of the Martyrs, where there was a photographer who was an insider, was known by the Communist Party, and had access to places that most Christians couldn't get to, and some house church Christians were brought in there to be beaten and tortured. And he took pictures telling them that this would be a great thing if their superiors could see what a good job they were doing when they look at these pictures, that they would get promotions and things. I mean, he was dishonest, but he did it for the purpose of getting these things out.

So there are actual pictures of Chinese Christians with electrical prods stuck on their face and hung and being tortured in different ways. And there's just a report here. Sister Ma and her family were sound asleep

one night in May 2001 when Chinese Public Security Bureau police burst into her house and arrested her son and her daughter-in-law.

The police left her five-year-old grandson alone with nobody to take care of him. A 27-year-old woman, a friend and fellow Christian named Yu Zhongyu, don't know how to pronounce it, dropped by the house during the raid and was also arrested. According to interviews with members of Sister Ma's house, church, and statements smuggled out of prison, dozens of church members were arrested at the same time and beaten with clubs, jolted with cattle prods, and burned with cigarettes when they fainted buckets of water were poured on them to revive them.

Interrogators stomped on the fingers of male prisoners and stripped off the clothes of young women prisoners and abused them. Mrs. Ma said they used electrical prods on me all over. They wanted to humiliate us.

Additional details about Sister Ma's arrest and torture were learned by New York Times columnist Nicholas Christoph who reported on November 26, 2002, that police in a remote region of China had interrogated a woman named Ma Yukin, but their efforts seemed unsuccessful. Christoph wrote she never broke when she was tortured with beatings and electrical shocks. Even when she was close to death, she refused to disclose the names of the members of her congregation or sign a statement renouncing her Christian faith.

While the physical abuse was almost unbearable, the mental torture was even worse. Throughout her ordeal, Ma could hear the sounds of her son being tortured in the next room. They could hear each other's screams, additional incentives to betray their friends and their faith.

Recalling this, Ma Yukin began to sob. They wanted me to hear my son's cries. She said it broke my heart.

According to Voice of the Martyr sources, Sister Yu was beaten to death while in custody. Christoph verified what Voice of the Martyrs had been reporting for the past 36 years. This kind of treatment has been common in China for more than half a century.

Christians whose only crime is worshipping God are burned with cigarettes, beaten with clubs, and martyred for the faith. And then the testimony at the end of Pastor Lam, who had spent 20 years in prison. He said, before I was arrested, my church had only 200 members.

After I was released from prison, the first time I found, the church had grown to 900 members. Then came the confiscation of books and equipment in the church. Before the government confiscated our church, the church numbered 900 members.

After the confiscation, the church had grown to 2,000 members. With a broad grin on his face and a twinkle in his eye, the elderly Pastor Lam looked our Voice of the Martyr representative in the eye and exclaimed, Persecution good for church. I just read that simply to say we've not yet been beaten.

We've not yet suffered to the point of blood in our walk with God. We met with Fire School of Ministry staff in Pensacola around April of last year. And we said to them, listen, just in the midst of our pioneering work, I mean, what God's doing in our midst is extraordinary.

We didn't need to say that. And the quality of what's being produced around the world is extraordinary. But in the midst of the pioneering work, there are financial challenges.

No mystery to it. And I sat with the staff. I spoke with them, and I said, listen, I don't know what we're going to be able to do for the next week.

I don't know what's going to happen with payroll. We don't have money right now. What do you think you should do? Do you need to get secular work on the outside? Are you able to continue? Speak to us honestly.

And one of them raised their hand and said, listen, you know, we talk about revolution, Jesus' revolution by life or by death. This is nothing. I mean, this is what we signed up for.

And then Mike Lebonovic raised a point along those lines. And he said, you know, he remembers learning about John Lake and then reading about him, John G. Lake, who lived from 1870 to 1935 and another forerunner, an apostle of faith. And he said, listen, Lake said that the reason they had such an extraordinary impact in South Africa, God willing, we'll teach again on giants and the faith in the school in the coming year.

Look at some of these lives. He said, but the reason they had such an extraordinary impact, I mean, unbelievable miracle ministries and church planting and explosive work that grew to hundreds of thousands over a period of years. Mike was remembering that Lake said the reason that we were able to do what we did was because there was a spirit of martyrdom on the men.

And he said, you know, we've not we've not come to that anywhere near it. This is about as close as we come. And he he was recalling the story.

There had been slanderous reports sent out about Lake and his work, reports that they had all the money and materials they needed and no more money needed to be sent. And all of the support dried up. He had 120 men on the field with their families and they had no way to continue to pay them.

So Lake called them back. They sold furniture that they own and clothes and watches and things just to get money for train tickets to bring them back in from all over South Africa. And they all came back in.

And then, excuse me. And then Lake met with them and he said, listen, he said, we don't have any money. We don't have any support.

We have no way of paying you men out on the field. And they met together for three days. And on the third day, they asked Lake to leave for a little while.

He went just across the street and got a cup of coffee. And when he came back in, they had chairs set up in a circle, 120 chairs with the elements of communion, the bread and the wine in the middle of the room. And they said to Lake, we're going back to preach.

If our children die, we're going back. If our wives die, we're going back. If we die, we're going back.

Only you must come and bury us. And when they took communion that day, they were participating and joining in the sufferings of Jesus. And they were saying also, my blood for the gospel.

And Mike remembered that story and then just asked me about the end of it, what happened in the end, how many died. And Lake said, in retrospect, he said that next year, he said, I buried 12 of the finest men and 16 of the finest women and children that the world has ever seen. And if they had just had any kind of a normal meal that would have sustained them, they could have lived.

When you look at sacrifice and suffering to pioneer works and to do something for the kingdom, on that line, and then you look at what God has allowed us to go through together and those that are joining in and becoming part of the family, sharing it together. It's a privilege and an honor, but really, it's not a test that's going to drive us into the ground and into despair. And it's not one where we're burying men, women, and children by willing sacrifice to go and do it.

Thanks, man. Scott also did that as an example. Also wanted the reward.

It's cold, too. Actually, I just coughed as an example so that Scott would get the water as an example so we could remember to have water for the speakers next week. Everything we do here is always teaching and instructing.

Where are we at right now? Why are we here in Charlotte? I'm going to say this quickly and come to a close. We heard a lot of different things about Charlotte. And this is not to speak negatively of the deeper south, of lower Alabama or Pensacola, but culturally it's been very different.

Trust me, you put somebody from Seminole, Alabama in Manhattan and they will not last as long as we lasted in Seminole. It's been kind of a cultural exile, living down in that neck of the woods. And there was only one reason why so many... How many lived in Pensacola for a while? Just raise your hand.

Okay, there's only one reason. And when we would do a survey at a fire service, maybe it's 600 or 700 at the height of attendance, and we would say, how many of you were born in Pensacola? We'd have one or two. Almost everybody else was a transplant.

And almost nobody actually liked being there, but they were all there for some other reason. And we were there for a God reason. It's not like you survey the place and think, you know, I think I'm going to settle down in Pensacola.

I mean, I wouldn't as a New Yorker. Some would, okay? Again, I'm not saying good or bad. You know, trust me, there are plenty of places that Southerners could go to in America that I find to be wonderful that they'd run out.

I mean, I enjoy the horns honking in New York. It doesn't bother me that you go into a store and people are nasty to you, that they're supposed to be waiting on you. Can't you see I'm busy? I've got stuff to do.

Sorry, just coming into your store to buy something. Not everybody's like that. I'm exaggerating.

Tom and Carolyn Barrier are some of the nicest people you'll meet, and they're New Yorkers, right? My wife and I, same thing, New Yorkers as well. But, you know, we're coming out of Pensacola and we hear all this stuff. Well, you know, Charlotte is a much bigger city, and a lot more places for outreach, and international airport, and second leading financial district in America, and one of the more rapidly growing places, etc., etc., etc.

Listen, I don't believe God has us here primarily for any of those reasons. Do you understand? I don't believe that he looked and said, all right, where could I put these people, move them out from Pensacola into kind of like an ideal paradise ministry setting, and the angels said, Lord, there's only one place, Charlotte. Charlotte, that's it, Charlotte.

Oh, yeah, trust me, the international airport, or just a national airport, you know, will be great. I won't have to fly north to go south, or fly west to go east, or whatever. Scott and I did constantly.

I will not miss the Atlanta terminal. We actually found out that if you're saved in Pensacola, you go to heaven by way of Atlanta. There'll be a lot of things, you know, a lot more people to reach, a lot more places to do outreach, and so on and so, that's all wonderful.

But I came to a very clear conclusion a few weeks back, very clear conclusion. When Nancy and I were here and driving around and appreciating so much of the nice new things, and developing this, and the universe, and so on and so forth, I came to a clear conclusion. There's only one reason that God has us here.

It's because he's promised revival for this area, and we're to be part of it. It's that simple. It is not a matter of, you know, all the other explanations are going to come and go.

This may be the worst financial district in America, or the best, the international, USAir may go out of business, and we may have to take a boat to get across the ocean. I don't know. It's not for any of those reasons.

It would be like being called to Pensacola two years before revival, and God doesn't tell you why. Think of that. This is where I'm calling you.

This will be your home for the next ten years. Why Pensacola? Well, it was one of the earliest settlements. That's not why.

Well, you know. None of that. None of that.

It was a God thing. There was a promise here. For weeks and weeks and weeks now, I get flooded.

I'm talking about heavy. I'm talking about strong. I'm talking about at times overwhelming.

Get this overwhelming sense from God, flooded with it, of another wave of revival coming. Something that will be greater than what we've seen. Something that will be deeper and more impacting than what we've seen.

I get overwhelmed with it for here, for Charlotte. I get overwhelmed with it for New York. And you say, well, everywhere you go in America, people say there are promises.

Well, maybe there are, and maybe God's going to pour out His Spirit all over the place. But this much I know, for years and years and years, He spoke to me about what was coming, and it came, and it happened, and He's speaking to me again, and it's heavier on me this time. And it has to do with us.

It has to do with this place. It has to do with all those that have been here, praying and crying out for years. There's something God wants to do.

And we're to be part of it. And the trials and the tests and the challenges and the difficulties, in light of what He's going to do, are ridiculously minor. And we can either bow down to them and let those things be our master, or together, honestly, take one another by the hand, help one another stand together, get through together, and see God move in power.

So here's what I just want to end with. Dancing? Your way to victory? I was very much in the Spirit, encouraged in faith, praying late at night, two nights ago. And I've got this tablet PC, you know, you write down, it's got handwriting recognition.

So I was just interceding for fire finances, just for grace to get us through the season of intense pressure. Or the year of intense pressure, or the decade, whatever, you know, experience of it. But this, just grace now, just interceding, but not in a way of hopelessness or fear, but in a way of just, God, the needs are great.

So I'm writing out, and as I'm writing, the computer's just recognizing the handwriting. So I'm saying, God, we need money. Again, not in unbelief, but in faith, you know.

God, we need money. Cash. Dollar signs.

I'm just having fun writing it. What's another good word for money? Moolah. That's what I wrote.

Moolah. And then I said, we need a breakthrough. And when I wrote the word breakthrough, I wrote it all in caps.

And when it came up on the screen, it was we need a, and it didn't get recognized. And instead of breakthrough, it said foxtrot. We need a foxtrot.

And the first thing that struck me, you know, and I started laughing out loud. Nancy was in the next room, didn't hear me. I started laughing out loud, this breakthrough to foxtrot.

I'm bringing the urgency of the situation to God and asking for help and grace. We need a foxtrot. And the thing that hit me, what, you want to waltz? You want to waltz your way? Is that what you just want to, waltz, no battle, no testing, no difficulty.

You just want to waltz your way through? And then that got me thinking about something else. And of course, my mind went, my heart went to Habakkuk, the second chapter, where the prophet has the great revelation from the Lord that the just will live by faith. He saw all kinds of problems and injustice and he prayed about it.

And God answered him, I'm going to judge. And then the judgment was worse than the initial problems and he didn't know what to make of it. And the Lord said to him, the just will live by faith.

And in the end of the third chapter of Habakkuk, verses 17 to 19, Though the fig tree should not blossom nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food. The flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stall. That means it's over.

That means everybody's going to die. That means there's no food. That means there's no provision.

That means there's no hope. That means it's in a far worse situation than probably any of us have ever been here in America. Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord.

I will take joy in the God of my salvation. And look at what he says, God the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the deer's.

He makes me to tread on my high places. And I really felt clearly that for all of us under pressure, it was a practice I had years ago not to ignore bills and financial pressure, but whenever we started ministry, what I was paid was never enough. We always had to believe for more.

The salary that I got at a Bible school was not nearly enough to just live even modestly. We always had to believe for more. There was always that pressure.

And there were times when I would just take all the bills. I've shared this with you before. It's not to throw them out or ignore them, but it was to deal with the pressure.

I'd put all of them on the ground in a pile and dance on them before the Lord just to get a mentality that I'm going to worship God. I'm going to rejoice. My joy is not going to be based on circumstances.

My rejoicing is not going to be based on how things are going and what the latest report is. My rejoicing is going to be based on who God is. And one way or another, He comes through, He comes through, He comes through.

And where He needs to change our habits or our lifestyle or speak to us, He does it. We respond. We move forward.

Amen? So I want to invite you to stand together with me. And we're just going to do a song of rejoicing, but I want to encourage you, if you've been under pressure, if you've been tested, if you've been squeezed, if you've been under it, if things have not been going well, if promises you've expected to happen haven't happened, if there are money needs, if there are directional needs, if there's crisis in the family, I want to invite you to be among the first just to step out. And we're just going to do a song of rejoicing.

Do you guys know So Good to Me? You do that? Alright. We're going to do this, but listen, this is a participatory song. And what we're going to do is if every... Here, these are the problems, these are the difficulties, these are the challenges.

We're going to dance on them. We're going to rejoice. We're going to cut loose.

We're going to celebrate. We're going to honor Jesus. And together, look at me, together, we will see the glory of God here in this city.

Together, we will see the glory of God here in this city. Together, we will see the visitation of heaven. Amen? So everyone that's been struggling, under pressure, under attack, having needs stretched, get out from your seats, okay? Just in case.

Unless this is the wrong message for the wrong people, and this doesn't apply to anybody here. I didn't say you've been losing your mind. I didn't say that the pressure's been there.

Step out. If you step out, it doesn't mean you have to run around the building. Okay? We're going to do this.

Thank you, Jesus. And we're going to rejoice. So this song is jumping and shouting and singing and spinning.

And if you're just not free, you need to get free. And just, come on, we need to put the devil under our feet. If you've never danced before the Lord before, you know the phrase, dancing in the Spirit does not occur

in the Bible.

It's not like you wait. It's like, woo! My foot's moving. Woo! No, you just enjoy the Lord.

Thank you, Jesus. Yeah, I'll join in. Sure.

Thank you, Lord. So let's cut loose, alright? Oh God, you've been so good to me. You came and found this orphan and you brought me right into your family.

Oh God, you've been so good to me. You threw away my past and you never count my sins against me. You got me dancing and now I'm shouting.

You got me leaping and now I'm spinning out of New York. Oh God, oh God, you've been so good to me. And every day I wake up I breathe another breath of your mercy.

Oh God, you've been so good to me. And my delight is in you because I know that your hand is upon me. You got me dancing and now I'm shouting.

You got me leaping and now I'm spinning out of New York. Jesus, you're the one. Jesus, you're the one who saved myself from me.

you

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