

Nahshon

by Ron Bailey

The sermon explores the life of Narshan, his leadership role among the Israelites, and the tragic consequences of their disobedience during their journey to the Promised Land.

Duration: 39:42

Scripture: Exodus 18:21-25, Numbers 1:1, Numbers 11:16, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Bible Characters"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the book of Numbers in the Bible and the journey of the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land. The speaker highlights the tragic nature of the book, as the Israelites repeatedly disobey and rebel against God's intentions for them. The sermon emphasizes the importance of having the right qualification to fulfill God's plans, using the example of the spies sent to Jericho. The speaker concludes that our qualification is not based on our own abilities or gifts, but rather on our absolute confidence in God's ability to fulfill his promises.

Transcript

Well, it's good to be back again, as well. I enjoy coming here. I think I'm here more than I am at Reading at the moment, so they've threatened to put me on the Christmas card list.

That's always the ultimate deterrent. There's, um, I was just thinking, you know, when we were just having that time, just conscious of God's presence, that, um, it's an amazing thing. I understand, Peter, because there isn't anything you can say or do that's appropriate, and yet, you've got to respond.

You've got to say or do something, or just be absolutely quiet. Maybe that is the secret. Just, but there's something that, even then, wants to give thanks to God for who He is.

I want to do something really very simple this morning, by way of an illustration. I just want to take one simple truth, and look at the life of a certain group of people at a point in Israel's history, which just illustrates something very wonderful. I really want to think about our qualifications, what it is that we have to have.

What is the qualification for God to do something with us? And I'm going to take you to really quite an obscure part of things. If you, um, if you turn, say, for example, back with me to the book of Exodus. This is when the people of Israel were in Egypt.

And at this time, I often go back to Exodus, because it's just, uh, such an amazing parallel with the way that God does things in the lives of His new covenant people as well. They were in Israel, and God sends a message with Moses, that Moses is to gather together a group of people that the Bible just simply calls the elders of Israel. And that's the first time you hear anything about the elders of Israel.

While the people of Israel had been in Egypt, they had grown from being a family, which of course doesn't need elders, into something larger than that, which was something that did need a kind of a collective recognized responsibility. And when Moses goes into Egypt, he is told that he is to gather together the elders, and that they are to be the ones who first of all hear what it is that God is going to do. So he gathers these people together, and when they gather together, they bow their heads in worship when they hear what God is going to do.

They are beyond words as well. God is going to deliver them with a powerful arm. He's going to set them free, and all they can do is just thank God that He has remembered them, that He's heard their prayers.

And then there happen in Egypt the events of the exodus, these amazing displays of God's power. And these elders would have seen this. They would have been the ones who were prime witnesses to the way that God was moving powerfully on the behalf of His people.

And we're not given names of them, but later on we are given names which almost certainly include people who were the elders of Israel. If I just turn, say for example, to... Let's go... we didn't look at Exodus, but let's go to Numbers. By the time you get to the book of Numbers, all kinds of things have happened.

God has joined Himself in covenant to His people. He's given them the instructions for the building of the tabernacle. And really by the time you get to the beginning of Numbers, it's built.

And God has given the laws for the people, given the laws for the priests. And then they are going to make a journey. And this journey is really, it's very poignant the way it expresses this.

I don't know whether I've ever attracted your attention to this before. But in the next book to this, in the book of Deuteronomy, you've got a little statement which says there are 11 days' journey from Horeb, that's where they were in the wilderness of Sinai, to Kadesh Barnea. That's to say, it should take 11 days to get from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land.

And then it goes on in the next verse and it says, and in the 40th year. An 11-day journey took them 40 years. That wasn't the way God intended it to be.

God's intention was that they would be gathered around Sinai for about 12 months while they built the tabernacle. That was almost like a honeymoon period. In fact, God refers to it as that.

In the book of Jeremiah, if you remember it, God says, I remember your youth. I remember your espousals. I remember your kindness when you came out to me into the wilderness, into a land that wasn't sown.

So that was the time when they were available to God. And it was a time when God was beginning to get things in order so that they could make their short 11-day journey into the Promised Land and then possess it for Him and bring His authority to bear upon it. That was the idea.

But the book of Numbers is a tragic book because you've got one disobedience, one rebellion after another as these people fail to be what God intended them to be. If you look at Numbers chapter 1, you'll see what happened here. This will date it.

Chapter 1 of Numbers and verse 1. The Lord spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai in the tabernacle of the congregation on the first day of the second month in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt. So they've spent one day getting ready, and now they're ready to go. It ought from now to take 11 days, and they'll be in the Promised Land.

And God says this to them, to Moses. Take the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel according to their families, by the house of their fathers, with the number of their names, every male by their pole. So they were going to count the people of Israel, working out how many people were available to them to accomplish the purposes of God.

And when they're taking this census of the people, they have with Moses 12 men, each one representing one of the clans or one of the tribes of Israel. And these people are going to stand with Moses. They're going to see how many people they have to hand, and then they're going to make this journey.

So these 12 men who stand with Moses are men of tremendous prestige. They were really the elders. They were the people who had been the leaders of Israel in Egypt during these troubled times, people who were respected, honored, people who had places of tremendous stature within their tribes.

And if you look at this little list here, it's one of these lists that you are tempted to read straight past, and you think, oh yes, another list of unpronounceable names. Where does it stop? We'll get back to the story. But if you do that often with Bible lists, you miss the story.

Let's see what it says. They're going to count these people, verse 3, from 20 years old and upward, all that are able to go out forth to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their families, and with you there shall be a man of every tribe, every one head of the house of his fathers. Okay, so you're going to choose the key men from every tribe.

That's what you're going to do. These are the names of the men that shall stand with you, of the tribe of Reuben, Elizur, the son of Sheduah, of Simeon, Shalumiel, the son of Zerushaddai. Have I ever explained to you how to pronounce these names? Well, I'll tell you, if you pronounce them with confidence, no one will ever question you.

Because your guess is as good as anybody else's. So don't worry about mispronouncing them. Verse 6, of Simeon, Shalumiel, the son of Zerushaddai, we've read him before, of Judah, Narshan, the son of Amenadab.

And I want to talk to you about Narshan. I don't suppose it's often that people talk about Narshan, but I want to talk to you about Narshan, because Narshan was a man of tremendous privilege and experience. He was a man who, in hard times at Egypt, had been recognized by the people of Judah as their key man.

The man that they could respect. The man that God respected. One of the men that God said to Moses, you're to gather together the elders of Israel, and you're to tell them what I'm going to do.

Narshan would have been one of these, but he was chosen. So he's going to stand by Moses now, as they take a census of the people. And they take a census, and it goes on, if you go on to the next, if you

look at verse 27, it says there were a number of them, even of the tribe of Judah, 76,600.

These are the fighting men. They're ready to go. 76,000, that's just of Judah.

If you look at chapter 2, it says here, the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard with the end sign of their father's house, far off about the tabernacle of the congregation they shall pitch, and on the east side, toward the rising of the sun, shall they of the standard of the camp of Judah pitch throughout their armies, and Narshan, here he is again, Narshan the son of Amenadab, shall be captain of the children of Judah. When you read the authorized version, it sounds as though he's just becoming captain. If you read other versions, you'll see that he was captain.

This word is sometimes translated prince or leader. In fact, the Bible refers to Narshan as Narshan the prince of Judah. He was the key man in Judah.

Let me say it again. He was one of those who had gone through hard times. He was one of those that the people respected, who God respected.

He was a man that God had his hand on for great things, Narshan. When they came out of Egypt, as you know, they came to Sinai, and there's a fascinating passage in Exodus chapter 24, where God tells them that the elders are to come so far up the mountain. Moses alone can go into the immediate presence of God, but the elders can come so far up the mountain, and it says of the elders of Israel, they saw God.

Do you remember this? Don't lose numbers. I'll just read Exodus 24. Let's see what it says.

And there went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were, the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel, he laid not his hand.

Also they saw God and did eat and drink. Amazing events, these men. In the presence of God, they eat and drink.

I presume this is some kind of memorial meal. They can't be in the immediate presence of God as Moses was, but they can come so far. Narshan would have been one of these men.

Key men. He saw God. He'd seen the acts of God, setting the people of Israel free.

Now, in Numbers chapter 1, he's one of those who stands with Moses as they take the census. Now it tells you that when they actually pitch the camp, the way they're to do it is the tribe of Judah are to be the tribe who face the door of the tabernacle. I don't know how good your Bible geography is, but the tabernacle, the door faced eastwards.

So the people of Judah, they had prime position. They pitched their tents right by the door of the tabernacle. And the man who had prime position of all the prime positions was Narshan, the prince of Judah.

This was the man who would have seen the glory of God come down upon the tabernacle with such an intensity that this time not even Moses was able to enter into it. Narshan had seen this. He'd seen the God of Israel.

He'd seen the glory of God. He'd seen the power of God. He'd seen all this.

He's got another role if I can just find it in a little way. Remember, they're just about ready to leave now. And if I can find it.

There. When they come to move out... I can't see it, but we'll find it later. When they come to move out, you'll discover that the one who leads the march... Remember, when Israel are on the march, you've got 3 million people on the hoof moving.

And when they move, the tribe that's at the front leading them is the tribe of Judah. And the man who's at the front of the tribe of Judah is Narshan. This man is a key man.

This man is at the forefront of the things of God. He's at the cutting edge. He's a man of tremendous position amongst the people of Israel.

So that's the way they go out. I said that Numbers is a tragic chapter. It is in many ways.

But before you get to the tragedy, let's have another look at Narshan functioning. When they began the tabernacle services, they had several days of induction, several days of initiation when they had lots of sacrifices. And if you look at chapter 7 of Numbers, it says, And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle and anointed it and sanctified it and all the instruments thereof, both of the altar and of all the vessels thereof, and anointed them and sanctified them, that the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes and were over them that were numbered, offered.

And they brought their offerings before the Lord, six covered wagons, twelve oxen, a wagon for two of the princes and for each of them an ox. And they brought them before the tabernacle. I'll read on just a little bit.

And the Lord said to Moses, saying, Take it of them that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. And thou shalt give them to the Levites, to every man according to his service. And Moses took the wagons and the oxen and gave them to the Levites, two wagons and four oxen he gave to the sons of Gershon according to their service, four wagons and eight oxen he gave to the sons of Merari according to their service, under the hand of Ithamar, the son of Aaron the priest.

But unto the sons of Kohath he gave none, because the service of the sanctuary belonging unto them was that they should bear upon their shoulders. That's an interesting point, which has its application later on in Israel's story. Then it says this in verse 10, And the princes offered for dedicating of the altar in the day that it was anointed.

Even the princes offered their offering before the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, They shall offer each their offering, each prince on his day, for the dedicating of the altar. And he that offered his offering the first day was Narshim, the son of Aminadab of the tribe of Judah.

And his offering was one silver charger, the weight thereof was 130 shekels, one silver bowl of 70 shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary. Both of them were full of fine flour, mingled with oil, for a food offering. One spoon of ten shekels of gold, full of incense.

One young bullock, one ram, one lamb of the first year, for a whole burnt offering. One kid of the goats, for a sin offering. And for a sacrifice of peace offerings, two oxen, five rams, five he goats, five lambs of the first year.

This was the offering of Narshim, the son of Aminadab. That's quite an offering. When you've got time, you ought to read through that, and just try to put some prices on it.

This is an enormous gesture, an enormous contribution, that Narshim is making to this. I've actually missed out one intriguing thing about Narshim. Narshim was actually brother-in-law to Aaron.

Aminadab had a daughter, as well as a son. The son was Narshim. The daughter married Aaron.

And Aaron's four sons were actually the nephews of Narshim. The reason I'm telling you, is I want you to see how central this man was to Israel. He's at the heart of everything.

He is the chief one of the tribe of Judah. He is linked through marriage, intimately to the priesthood. He's right at the heart of things.

He's right at the front of things. He's a man to watch, Narshim. Okay.

Let's go on a little bit. You have these days of celebration, as they get things ready. And here's another part.

Look at chapter 11. We could go on a little bit like this, but I won't go on too much longer on this theme now. In chapter 11, you've got the time when the people of Israel begin to complain, and Moses doesn't know what to do with them, and God tells him what to do with them.

God is going to take of the spirit that's upon Moses, and put it upon 70 elders of Israel, so that they will share with him the burden, the glory, the responsibility for the whole of Israel, not just for their tribes. So, here it is, chapter 11, verse 16. The Lord said to Moses, Gather unto me 70 men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people, and officers over them, and bring them to the tabernacle of congregation, that they may stand there with thee.

I won't read on, but you probably know this. As a result of the Spirit of God coming upon these 70 men, which would have included Narshim, they prophesied. Narshim is not just a man who's important by his birth, or because of the accidents of circumstances, he's a man of the Spirit.

He's a man that God has anointed, equipped. He's a man right at the heart of things. All right? Have I made my point? He's important, isn't he, Narshim? All right.

Chapter 13. 13 is a notorious number, so you'll be able to remember what happens in this particular chapter. The Lord said to Moses, saying, Send thou men that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel.

Of every tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a ruler among them. And Moses, by the commandment of the Lord, sent them from the wilderness of Paran. All those men were heads of the children of Israel.

Now, you know that really the head of Judah ought to be Narshim. Now, maybe Narshim's an old man. Let's give him the benefit of the doubt.

This kind of thing is not for him to be going into this dangerous territory of this hostile land. But the man they choose for the tribe of Judah, maybe you know, is Caleb. Caleb is a fascinating character because he wasn't even a Jew.

Caleb was a Gentile. Caleb was the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite. He had been adopted into the family of the people of Judah.

That's all right. There's a boy who sneezed seven times in the Scripture and came to life again, if you remember that. So it's always a good sign, lots of sneezing.

So... I forgot what I was saying there. Caleb, yeah. So Caleb is chosen as the man to represent the people of Judah as they go to spy at the land.

It must have been that Caleb was chosen with the approval of Narshim. It must have been. It may well have been that Narshim was the man who said, Caleb's the man that we send for us.

I'm speculating. Maybe he said, I can't go. My son's too young to go.

We want the best we can do. Caleb, Caleb will go. So Caleb goes.

Narshim is one of the hidden tragedies of the Bible. Narshim is one of those men who came out of Egypt and never entered into the Promised Land. Narshim is one of those who began so well.

He was rich in privilege. He had amazing experiences of God. He had all the right relationships with all the right people of God.

He's linked through to Aaron. He has experiences of the Spirit. He has gifts that he can give in the service of God.

This is Narshim. Narshim never entered the Promised Land. When the spies came back, two of them gave as honest a report as the other ten, but their attitude was different.

The ten said, we don't stand a chance. We're like grasshoppers. There are anakin there.

We don't stand a chance. But the two of them who came back with a different attitude were Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh. We used to say Joshua, son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh, were the only two who ever got through to the land of milk and honey.

Narshim didn't. If you read this, let me read this little passage here in chapter 14. Verse 6. And Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, son of Jephunneh.

Remember, Caleb is representing the tribe of Judah. Which were of them that searched the land, they tore their clothes. And they spoke to all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land which we passed through to search it is an exceeding good land.

If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us. A land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord.

Neither fear ye the people of the land, for they are bred for us. Their defense is departed from them. And the Lord is with us.

Do not fear them. But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

If it had not been for this manifestation of the glory of God, we can only presume that Caleb and Joshua would have been stoned to death at this particular point. The whole congregation... Remember, we've got something like three million people on one side of this particular argument, and two people on the other side. That's what we've got.

So, majorities aren't always right, by any means. You've got three million on one side, and you've got two on the other side. And you've got these two men who, in their faith, stand against the whole of God's people and say, if our God delights in us, He will give us this land.

You've got your eyes in the wrong place. God is able to do it. God will give us the land.

This phrase, if the Lord delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it us. I want to emphasize that a little bit. He will give it to us.

He will give us this land, if the Lord delights in us. I can only presume that Narshan would have been one of those who, if they'd had the opportunity, would have taken up stones. Narshan passes from the scene now.

He would have been one of a whole generation of Israelites, whose bodies were buried in the wilderness, having come out but never entered in. That's a tragic story, isn't it? It's a sober warning story too. I'm not trying to terrify you.

But the Scripture says that these things are written for our admonition. They're written as a challenge, as a warning, as a sober reminder that we ought not to take things for granted. We may have had amazing blessings of God.

We may have had amazing experiences. We may have had tremendous privilege. We may have had amazing gifts that we've been able to give to the service of God.

None of that guarantees anything. Narshan is missing something. He's got all these things, but there's something missing.

There's a qualification that is missing. There's a missing ingredient in Narshan. Let's go on 40 years now, and whole generation perish, and the time comes for them to go into the land that God has promised to them.

And Joshua decides that he will send in two spies to spy out particularly the city of Jericho and to see just how they should take it. Now, at this point, I always say that Bible teachers shouldn't speculate. It's the 11th commandment, thou shalt not speculate.

But there are times when you can put things together, and speculation doesn't do any harm. And I want to speculate. We're not given the names of Joshua's two spies in the way that we are given the name of Moses' 12 spies, but I think I know the name of one of them.

They went into Jericho. They went to the house of a prostitute whose name was Rahab. In many ways, it would have been the obvious place to go.

There would have been lots of to-ing and fro-ing of strangers at that house, so two other strangers wouldn't have attracted any suspicion. It was an obvious place to go just to have a look around. While they're there, Rahab, the prostitute, does something which is really quite incredible.

She risks her life for these two men. When the king of Jericho comes looking for them, she hides these two men on her roof. And the only condition to hiding them is this.

She says, I know that your God has given you this land. Isn't this extraordinary? Do you remember Joshua? Forty years before... I'll read it. I'll read it to you so that we don't miss it.

Joshua chapter 2. Thank you. Here it is. Now, just remember this.

We know very little about Rahab. We know that she didn't come from the royal tribe. We know that she didn't have any of the kind of privileges that Narshan had.

We know that she'd never seen God on the mountain and ate and drank in His presence. She'd never seen God's arm made bare in setting God's people free. She hadn't been baptized into Moses.

She wasn't one of the covenant people. She hadn't had any of the kind of privileges that Narshan had had. But just listen to this.

Verse 8. Before they were laid down, she came up to them on the roof and she said to the men, I know that Jehovah has given you the land. This is amazing. Jericho is a fortress city.

It's all safely shut up. It looks as though it could stand a siege for months and months and months. And there's this woman who says, I know God's given you this land.

And that all your terror has fallen upon us and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you. That's 40 years ago.

Isn't this an extraordinary thing? The people in the land have been terrified for 40 years expecting the Israelites to come. The Israelites had been wasting away in the wilderness because they were terrified to go. Their hearts melted and the hearts of the people in the land melted.

We've heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt. And what you did to the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted.

Neither did there remain any more courage in man because of you. For the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath. Where has this woman got this from? Remember, she's had none of the privileges of Narshan.

None of the privileges of the promised people. Maybe in people coming and going she'd heard things. And in hearing things she had exercised the missing ingredient from Narshan's life.

Maybe you know that there's one particular man in the scripture and almost every time the scripture wants to illustrate one particular virtue, it goes for this man as illustration. It's Abraham. He is the father of those who believe.

And James, when he wants to illustrate faith, he goes to Abraham and he puts Rahab right next door to him. James says, if you want illustrations of faith, Abraham and Rahab. These are the illustrations of faith.

This woman heard something, she believed. She put her life on the line. I don't know where the phrase came from, but this woman's life literally hung by a thread.

They put a thread, they put a cord out of the window. Just imagine, this woman now is in hostile territory. What she is doing is high treason.

If the king of Jericho finds out what this woman is up to, she's dead. And she can't even keep it a secret because she is engaged in evangelism. That's to say, she is trying to get her friends, her relatives, into the house, because she's made a contract with these two spies, one of whose name I think I know.

She's made a contract with them that when Israel take the city, she and anyone who is in her house will be safe. And they say, OK, but we need... You put this red scarlet thread from your window. The scarlet cord will know the house and will make sure that everyone who stays in that house is free.

So here's this woman. She's doing something which is high treason. She's got a flag out through the window showing everybody that something is going on.

At the same time, she's trying to persuade her relatives saying, you come into my... My house is going to be safe because I've got this special arrangement with the people of Israel. I mean, this is... She's playing with her life, this woman. She's risking her life.

And let me put it into this context as well. These two spies, they go back. They go back to their home.

They go back to their loved ones. They're welcomed with a big embrace and people say it's wonderful. How brave you've been.

It's good to have you back. You know, we're going to get ready now. We'll take the promised land and here they are in the bosom of their families, wonderfully safe and Rahab's on her own in Jericho.

She hasn't got a church around her. She hasn't got lots of people who are supporting her. She hasn't got lots of people who will cheer her up if she's feeling down.

She's on her own, Rahab, in Jericho. You ought to trace through this story. See how long it takes them before they get back to Jericho.

It's probably somewhere like a couple of weeks. And for a couple of weeks, this woman is waiting. Her lonely vigil of faith waiting.

Well, they come back, finally, to Jericho and they begin to walk around it. They walk around it one day without anyone saying a word and no doubt every Israelite who goes past Rahab's house looks and they don't say a word, but there it is. There's this cord hanging down and maybe this is the Mills and Boone part of me kind of operating, but I think one of these spies looked at this cord and thought, what a woman! What a woman! So they do this for six days.

On the seventh day, they do it seven times, they go round. And then the trumpet blows and the people shout and the wall falls flat and every man goes straight as a die and I think one of the spies went straight as a die as well. One of them who would have known Rahab by sight because he had spent some time on

her roof, hiding.

I think I know his name. I think his name was Salmon because Salmon married Rahab. So I think it was Salmon.

The interesting thing about Salmon is that Salmon is Narshan's son. Salmon is Narshan's son. This young man who had seen his father with all the privilege, all the prestige, all the status all the blessings, all the benefits, all the spiritual gifts all the enablings and his father had missed this vital ingredient of faith and he never entered into the land and he is a woman with nothing, perhaps worse than nothing but she has the missing ingredient, faith.

And I think there's something in this man who sees it and he says, that's the woman for me. They had a son. His name was Boaz.

Amazing, isn't it? Just the way that God just gathers together these little cameos to show us something. Qualification, just one qualification that you believe him. Remember Paul on the boat I believe God, he says that it shall be even as it was told me.

All the experts around him, all the sailors know they don't stand a chance the boat's going down and Paul says I believe God. He's Rahab. I know that God has given you the land.

That's all that matters. You see, it's not any qualification we bring to anything it's just our absolute confidence in the God who is utterly qualified to do everything that he says he will do. And this God has promised to save us and to keep us.

He's promised to guide us. He's promised to bless us. Now, what will you be? Will you be a nation with a wonderful history? A wonderful spiritual record? A wonderful pedigree? Or will you be someone who has nothing at all to offer in way of qualification but who simply says, I believe God.

Let's pray. She sends a shiver down my spine, Lord, this woman. This wonderful woman.

This epitome of faith. This woman with nothing but the word of God ringing in her heart. Oh, Lord.

I think I understand why you said these are the kind of people who will enter into the kingdom of God ahead of all the people with all the benefits. Lord, we thank you for the benefits. Thank you for godly Christian families.

We thank you for the promises that have been upon our lives maybe for generations. We thank you for the spiritual blessings into which you brought us, for the visions of God that you've given to us, for the equipings of your Spirit. We thank you.

We thank you for it all. But in the end, Lord, it's yesterday. And you're the God of now.

And we come to you again today, Lord, and thank you for all your blessings in the past, but we want to be a now people, people who believe you now in the face of every impossibility. Oh, God, do take us on. We do thank you, Lord, that our qualifications and disqualifications are all alike of no avail.

By grace are you saved through faith. And it's not of yourself, it's the work of the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship.

Thank you, Lord. Make us men and women of faith. Make us believing believers.

Not just with the name, but with the instinct, Lord, to take you at your word and to do what you say and to see the blessing of God resting upon it. Amen.

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