

ATTEMPT GREAT THINGS FOR GOD

The

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IN HONOUR OF
WILLIAM CAREY



Fellow Servants in the Kingdom:

With this issue we are pleased to resume publication of *The Carey Pulpit*. This year, we have been considerably preoccupied with rebuilding from the January 2017 tornado. The Lord has been good to us, and we have completed rebuilding 80% of the campus that was damaged. New buildings to replace those that were totally destroyed are nearing completion. The Asbury Academic Building has been completed and is being occupied as I write, Ross and Johnson Halls will be completed this summer, and the new Tatum Court is scheduled for completion in December. Construction at the Tradition campus is also progressing well: the pharmacy building will be completed in early fall, and the academic building is scheduled for completion in August. It has been a year of rebuilding, and I feel something of what Ezra and Nehemiah must have felt rebuilding the City of Jerusalem.

This issue of *The Carey Pulpit* contains sermon outlines by university faculty, alumni and students. I pray that the outlines will give you guidance as you prepare, under the leadership of God, to feed your flock. Past editions of *The Pulpit* are archived on our website and are a continuing source of support and assistance to busy pastors. You can access these at www.wmcarey.edu/page/carey-pulpit-archives. We also invite you to submit sermon outlines for future editions. You may send your outlines to Dr. Scott Hummel, William Carey University, Box 19, 710 William Carey Parkway, Hattiesburg, MS, 39401, or shummel@wmcarey.edu.

At the end of the sermon outlines in this edition you will find a scholarship certificate for you to present to an outstanding student in your church. When you select a student, please send their name and contact information (mailing address and phone number or email address) to me so we can include them in our records. We also ask that you make a public presentation in your church. These scholarships are not for church related vocations students as they are already qualified for the CRV scholarship.

I also remind you that we are dependent upon the Cooperative Program for a major source of our support. I encourage you to lead your church to a proper understanding of how they are a part of so many ministries around the world through their support of the Cooperative Program. We solicit your continued prayers.

God bless you in your service to Him,

Tommy King

President

Photo on the front cover—Copyright: Dean and Chapter of Westminster

Known as "the Carey Lectern," the hand-carved pulpit shown on the cover stands in Westminster Abbey in London. It was presented to the abbey by the Baptist Missionary Society of Great Britain in 1949 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the BMS, which William Carey helped to establish. The lectern was donated as a tribute to the preaching ministry of Carey. The words of Carey's motto, "Expect great things from God," are seen by the speaker on the back of the top portion. "Attempt great things for God," is visible to the audience on the front. A dedication plaque at the base of the lectern states, "The gift of the Baptist Missionary Society in honour of William Carey, 1761-1834, missionary in India, translator of the Bible."

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William Carey University

Education and Church Relations Report

CAREY IS RECOVERING

- On January 21, 2017 Carey was hit by an EF3 tornado, damaging all but one building, destroying six buildings, and causing more than \$11 million in damage. Several students were injured.
- Every building has been fully repaired, and only new construction remains.
- The pulpit Bible, opened to Psalm 46, proclaiming “God is our refuge and strength,” was reported nationally, including on CNN.

CAREY IS GROWING

- In spite of the tornado recovery, enrollment continues to grow. Fall 2017 enrollment grew by 4.4% over last year.
- The Department of Christian Ministries has grown rapidly with 96 majors in Christian ministry concentrations, intercultural studies, and cross-cultural global management.
- The doctor of physical therapy program began in fall 2016 on the Hattiesburg campus, and the School of Pharmacy is scheduled to begin in fall 2018 on the Tradition campus.

CAREY IS COMMITTED

- The BSU provided weekly and special activities which reached nearly 1300 students.
- WCU students participated in international mission trips to Argentina, Chile, China, Haiti, Honduras, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand.
- BSU and music ministries saw 10 professions of faith.

CAREY IS EXCELLING

- Among regional universities in the South, Carey was ranked a “Top Tier Regional University,” the 2017 #3 Best Value Regional University in the South, and one of five universities with “Least Debt of Graduates” by *U.S. News and World Report*.
- Ranked the **Safest Campus in Mississippi**.
- Ranked #44 in the country by *Women’s Choice Awards*, the only school ranked in Mississippi.
- WCU is the first *All Steinway* school in Mississippi.

THE REFUSAL
Matthew 19:16-22

Introduction:

Matthew called him a young man (19:16). Luke called him a ruler (18:18). Both declare that he was wealthy. He was young, rich, and powerful. By the world's standards, he had everything needed for a happy life, but this man wasn't content. He had a quick question for Jesus. He probably expected a quick answer to it.

I. The Man Wanted to Know the Truth: What Good Deed Must I Do to Have Eternal life? (Matt 19:16)

- A. The rich man was eager to learn.
- B. He wanted to have eternal life and asked what good deed he must do.
 - 1. He was self-sufficient and used to doing what was necessary to get what he wanted
 - 2. Rather than looking to Jesus in faith, he was searching for something he could do to obtain eternal life.

II. Jesus Told Him the Truth: Come, Follow Me (Matt. 19:17-21)

- A. Jesus' first response to the man was to follow the commandments.
 - 1. Jesus' answer didn't satisfy him. He asked, 'Which?'
 - 2. Jesus responded to the rich man by quoting commandments that emphasized a person's relationship to other people.
 - 3. The man said he had kept them all. He was still not satisfied and knew he was missing something in his life.
- B. Jesus could have rebuked the man for his naive response. But He knew that by coming to Him, the man was admitting that he lacked fulfillment and contentment in his life.

- 1. He responded to the man with love. Jesus sought to meet his need for eternal life.
- 2. A life without Christ is a discontented life.
- C. Jesus responded with five imperatives: go, sell, give, come, and follow. These imperatives make up one command.
 - 1. Jesus told him to dispose of his wealth (go, sell, give) and to come, follow me.
 - 2. Jesus was not condemning wealth nor praising poverty. He simply challenged the man to remove any obstacle holding him back from faithfully following Him.

III. The Man Refused the Truth: He Went Away Sorrowful (Matt. 19:22)

- A. The man loved his worldly treasures. The challenge Jesus gave was too exorbitant. He trusted in himself, his power, and his wealth. They were his gods.
- B. His retreat was sorrowful. He learned both the nature and the price of what he needed.
 - 1. He chose his worldly treasures and rejected Christ.
 - 2. Ironically, by rejecting Christ that day, he missed the greatest treasure of all! Sadly, this was his second mistake.
- C. This is one of the few times that Jesus' call was refused.

Conclusion:

We face the same profound truth today. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but through me (John 14:6). Christ's desire is for all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and to follow Him. Don't refuse the greatest treasure of all.

CHARACTER REALIGNMENT Daniel 1:8-9

Introduction:

I once owned a 1978 Mercury Cougar. Yes, I drove it like I stole it. The front end of that car was so out-of-line that I had to keep the steering wheel turned to two o'clock to keep it straight on the road. Once I had the front end aligned, the car was smooth and easy to drive. I have often felt my life was that out-of-line and that it was all I could do to keep it between the lines. There are times we need to revisit our core values for the purpose of character realignment. The prophet Daniel lived during a very difficult time in history. He was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and forced to live in Babylon, the epitome of corruption. Nevertheless, Daniel maintained a devoted life that was reflected in exemplary character. He demonstrates these core character traits:

I. Enduring Determination (1:8)

- A. Throughout his life, Daniel displayed a holy determination!
 1. He was determined not to drink or eat the king's food (Dan. 1:8).
 2. He was determined to point Nebuchadnezzar to the true God (Dan. 2:17-27).
 3. He was determined to deliver a harsh message to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:19-27).
 4. He was determined to deliver God's rebuke of King Belshazzar (Daniel 5:22).
 5. He was determined to faithfully advise King Darius (Dan. 6:21-22).
- B. The Hebrew word translated as determined is understood as internal courage, intention, determination or resolution. This includes a person's thoughts, emotions, knowledge and conscience.
- C. This type of determination comes from a deep commitment to God—a holy obstinance.

II. Exclusive Devotion (1:8, 19; 2:28, 45-48; 6:10-12)

- A. Devotion during times of prosperity. Daniel did not let money and success come between him and his devotion to God. He was sold out, loyal, and faithful (Dan. 1:19; 2:28, 45-48).
- B. Devotion through times of uncertainty. Daniel's life was threatened because of his devotion—the situation seemed hopeless. He refused to petition anyone but Yahweh. In the face of uncertainty, he would not recant. Daniel did not falsely accuse God, complain, or give up. His devotion was to God, regardless. This devotion was shared with his three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel 3:16-18). We see the same devotion (Dan. 6:10-22).

III. Exceptional Integrity (1:9)

- A. For the entire account of Daniel's life we have record of his exceptional integrity.
 1. His exceptional integrity dealing with the chief eunuch (Dan. 1:8).
 2. His exceptional integrity giving God glory (Dan. 2:19-23, 27-28; 6:22).
 3. His exceptional integrity handling administrative responsibilities (Dan. 6:4-5). (Those who opposed him could find no fault in all of his administrative dealings.)
- B. Integrity is defined as a standard of values that guide all decisions.
- C. "Integrity is keeping a commitment even after circumstances have changed." ~ David Jeremiah

Conclusion:

We have an account of Daniel's life from the time he was a teenager until he was likely in his 80s. There is nothing in the biblical record that suggests that Daniel compromised his belief, devotion or integrity. In spite of the fact that he lived among pagans and had the opportunity to abandon his convictions, Daniel remained faithful. You and I can do the same. What needs to be realigned in your life?

OUR GOOD, GOD’S GLORY
Romans 8:28

Introduction:

I love good movies. Movies have a predictable plot line: The characters are introduced, an event takes place that upsets the equilibrium, there is a twist, and then there is resolution to the problem that usually sets things back in order. Typically, things are going to work out in the end.

Like most Christians, I have found myself quoting Romans 8:28 through many difficult and dark days. As I look back, I can say that this verse is 100% true 100% of the time. However, I have learned to understand this verse in proper context. We must conclude that all things don’t work themselves out, all things don’t work out for everyone, and that some of those things are difficult or even tragic. There are three claims this verse affirms, and these three claims must guide our understanding and application of this verse.

I. Guarantee of Divine Intervention

- A. We have a God that is actively participating in the daily events of our lives with the express purpose of working things out for our good and His glory.
- B. Things don’t work out by themselves; God works things out. The greater context of this passage affirms divine intervention.
- C. We do not affirm a cosmic karma or a natural law that guarantees that all things will work out in the end.
- D. We refute the idea that God is not involved in the daily activities of His creation. (cf: Psalm 23 and 139 for examples of God’s daily involvement in our lives).

II. Prerequisite of Loving Relationship

- A. This passage applies to believers only—those who love God and who have heard and responded to the Gospel call.
- B. God does not work all (things) out for non-believers.

- C. God does not work all (things) out for cultural-Christians (cf: Matthew 7:22)
- D. This verse is an assurance for those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
 - 1. Are we to decide how to love God? (cf: Mark 12:30-31)
 - 2. Are we to decide how much to love God? (cf: Mark 12:30-31)
 - 3. Only Christians living in a loving relationship are guaranteed the truth of Romans 8:28.
- E. There are promises guaranteed to only those who love God. (e.g. Romans 8:28; Exodus 20:6; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 97:10; I Cor. 2:9; James 1:12.)

III. Reassurance through Life’s Difficulties

- A. Properly translated this text should read, “All works together for the good...” Translators add “things” for clarity.
- B. Paul relates “all” (things, events) to the sufferings of Christians and the Spirit’s intervention in the life of believers.
- C. “All” constituting the full quantity or extent; complete.
- D. “All” includes all good (joy, prosperity, health)
- E. “All” includes all bad (sadness, poverty, suffering)
- F. We find comfort in times of trouble knowing that God is able to use the “bad” of others for our “good” and His glory. (cf: Gen. 50:20. Consider Joseph’s life)
- G. Paul has in mind the conformity of believers into the image of Christ. Thus, all things, good or bad, will be used by God to conform us to the image of Christ—and that is good!

Conclusion:

We will have trouble, disappointment, and tragedy in this life. Notwithstanding, we can be assured that God is actively at work in the daily events of our lives and that He will make all things in our lives work out for our good and for His glory.

GOD IS OUR REFUGE
Psalm 46

Introduction:

On January 21, 2017 an EF-3 tornado devastated William Carey University, destroying six buildings, damaging 98% of campus, totaling over 100 student vehicles, injuring several students, and causing over \$110 million in damage. While the chapel was heavily damaged with its stained glass windows broken and debris strewn all around, the pulpit Bible remained opened to Psalm 46, boldly proclaiming God is our refuge and strength. The story of the pulpit Bible was picked up by the national news, including CNN. As a result, God was glorified across the nation. In the midst of the storm and over the course of the recovery, we learned several lessons. Some lessons can only be learned in the storm.

I. Power of God's Strength When We Are Weak

- A. Creation (Ps 46:1-3)—earth, mountain, sea
- B. Storm—the power of God is greater than the power of the storm
- C. Stand in Awe—we are humbled

II. Power of God's Protection When We Are Vulnerable

- A. World is dangerous (Ps 46:1-2)
 1. Trouble is all around us
 2. Storms come upon us
- B. God is our Fortress (Ps 46:7, 11) – The God of Jacob is our fortress
- C. Martine Luther wrote “A Mighty Fortress is our God” which was inspired by Psalm 46
 1. This hymn is the most famous of Martin Luther's 37 hymns
 2. This hymn comforted those imprisoned for their faith, it was sung with determination by martyrs marching to their deaths, and it still encourages those who seek refuge in God's mighty fortress.

III. Power of God's Presence When We Can't Do it Alone

- A. Midst of the storm (Ps 46:4-5)
 1. Sense of serenity – “streams make glad,” and “be still and know I am God”

2. God is with us
 3. God helps us
 4. Morning is coming
- B. God is with us (Ps 46:7, 11)
 - C. Walks with us in the valley of the shadow of death
 - D. Examples: Moses to Joshua, Jesus to Disciples
 - E. Be still and know I am God (v 10)
 - F. Can't know his refuge without adversity

IV. Power of God Changes our Perspective

- A. A changed perspective is revealed throughout the psalm: “Therefore we will not fear,” “When the morning dawns,” and “Be Still.”
- B. Psalm moves from intensity to calm to intensity to calm
 1. Intensity: waters roar
 2. Calm: streams who make glad
 3. Intensity: nations rage
 4. Calm: be still and know I am God
- C. The storm changed perspectives
 1. What is most important—my top five concerns the day before the storm were different from the top five concerns after the storm.
 2. What is eternal—deep questions of faith as students faced with mortality

V. Power of God's People

- A. The body of Christ in churches and Christians helped us weather the storm
- B. One atheist group called, not to help or donate, but only to mock. Unfortunately, they will never know the blessings of God's Power.

VI. Power of God's Promises Create Hope

- A. Hope is not in buildings, institutions, safety.
- B. Hope is in God our refuge and in the resurrection of Christ.

Conclusion:

Whether or not you have been through a tornado or a hurricane before, you will face storms in life. In those storms you will need the power of God to be your refuge and strength.

ER: EARNEST RESULTS
Isaiah 58:1-9a

Introduction:

Our 21st century culture is consumed with results. We turn to magazines or the internet to get the facts and reviews, or “results,” on products that we are considering to purchase. Cars, appliances, carpet, televisions and electronic gadgets are all part of our search. Most churches hold a prayer meeting in the middle of the week seeking to get “results” from God. Do our prayers get to the one to whom we are praying? Do we get the answers that we are seeking in these “go-through-the-motions” weekly meetings? Many times, the answer is a flat no. In this passage from Isaiah, we find how God would like for us to seek earnest results.

We all identify the letters ‘ER’ with an emergency room. If we will allow this scripture to speak to us about our prayer life, then we will find that today’s emergency room treatment will bring us earnest results when we pray.

I. Empty Ritual (Isa. 58:1-4)

- A. Several types of fasting: normal; partial; absolute; supernatural; congregational; regular; occasional
- B. Reasons for fasting: strengthen prayer life; express grief; express repentance; express concern for God’s work; express love and worship for God; seek God’s guidance; seek deliverance and protection; humble self before God; minister to others; and overcome temptation.
 - 1. Hopes of pleasure (verse 3)
 - 2. Hear not your pleas (verse 3)
 - 3. Heart not pure (verse 4)

II. Evaluate your response to the needs of others (Isa. 48: 5-7)

- A. Free the oppressed
 - 1. Life before Christ
 - 2. Realize need for Christ
 - 3. How my need was met
 - 4. How life has changed
- B. Feed the hungry
- C. Find shelter for the poor

III. Reassurance through Life’s Difficulties

- A. Provisions of the Lord - recovery will spring forth!
 - * Forgiveness and plan for salvation
- B. Protection of the Lord – the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard!
- C. Presence of the Lord – He will say, “Here I am.”

Conclusion:

The Holy Scriptures are only words in a book if we do not take them to heart. What we do from this point on is our Earnest Response. We should:

- A. Eliminate Routine—reverse going through the motions of playing church or merely saying words that make up a prayer.
- B. Exercise Renewal—recognize those in need and refresh our ministry to them.
- C. Elicit Revival—encourage those we know to return to God’s way and help them to build a stronger rapport with Him

LAST CHANCE
Luke 23: 39-43

Introduction:

From my earliest days of traveling from my home in Sumrall to Hattiesburg for various reasons, I remember a sign on Highway 49 North of Hattiesburg, “Last chance for a cold beer.” Sumrall was in Lamar County which was dry, and Forrest County was wet, so you could buy alcohol in Forrest County. I will always remember the “last chance” sign. Most of us have encountered a “last chance” of one sort or another—an envelope arrives with “Last Chance” stamped in large red letters, a flashy commercial on television, stressing a “last chance” to take advantage of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The event in Luke 23 tells of a true “last chance.” Go with me to the ancient city of Jerusalem, teeming with Jews there for the Passover. Today the air is charged with a sense of expectancy; there will be a crucifixion. We see Jesus come forth, He passes Pilate’s house, and Pilate’s wife can be heard to say, “I’m afraid you have condemned an innocent man.” From there they take Jesus to Golgotha and crucify him between two criminals. This was their “last chance.” We will focus on one of them.

I. The Man’s Situation

- A. He was a sinner. You probably have not sinned as this man, a robber, murderer, but we are all sinners (Rom. 3:23, Isa. 53:6, Rom 3:10-12). The virus of sin flows through all our veins.
- B. He was helpless to save himself. Here he was, nailed to a cross, soon to die.

II. The Man’s Prayer (Supplication)

- A. When we cannot do anything else, we can pray; and when we pray, that is all we need to do.
- B. A simple request. “Lord remember me.” You cannot be in the presence of Jesus without realizing your sin. Peter’s realization is a universal one: “Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man.”

- C. A great faith. He believed what he heard—a head faith; and he trusted His promise—a heart faith.
- D. His prayer reflects his belief in a future life, “Lord remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

III. The Man’s Salvation

- A. His salvation teaches us some things about salvation.
- B. Some things that are not true about salvation.
 - 1. Church membership saves us.
 - 2. Baptism saves us.
 - 3. Good works save us. While on a train, Dwight L. Moody was in a conversation with a Mormon about salvation. Moody said, “The difference in salvation is in how we spell it, you spell it do and I spell it done.”
- C. Some important truths about salvation.
 - 1. Salvation is a gift from God.
 - 2. Salvation is an instantaneous transformation.
 - 3. Salvation is an eternal experience.

Conclusion:

This was the man’s last chance, and he accepted it. We never know whether it is our last chance, but we should respond as if it is. “My spirit does not always strive with man.”

FACING THE FUTURE WITH FAITH

Romans 15:13

Introduction:

Facing the future with faith is the theme of our text recorded in Romans 15:13. Here, we have a gracious benediction for the great benefits of God's benevolence; namely, joy, peace, and hope.

Patrick Henry (1736-1799) writes the following in his Last Will and Testament: "This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family, the religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed."

Dr. A.C. Gaebelien (1861-1945) explains, "This is our most blessed inheritance. The Holy Spirit indwells the child of God and in believing He manifests His power, the God of hope filling us with all joy and peace, so that we abound in hope, looking forward to that blessed day, the realization of our blessed Hope, when we shall be like Him and see Him as He is."

Dr. F.B. Meyer (1847-1929) explains, "The purpose of our life should be two-fold: first, to understand what is our position in Christ, and then by faith and by the power of the Holy Ghost to be lifted to that level."

I. Facing the Future with Faith Brings Joy

- A. Jesus' desire for His followers: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).
- B. Psalm 16:11 reads, "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."
- C. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary provides the following definition for joy: "The emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires." Bruce Hurt, M.D. with Precept Austin, explains, "Obviously this is not an accurate description of the JOY independent of circumstances that is available to every believer. Joy is linked with faith in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

II. Facing the Future with Faith Brings Peace

- A. Luke 10:38-42
- B. Matthew 6:33-34
- C. Philippians 4:6-7
- D. Have you made peace with God? To those who have made peace with God, Jesus affirms, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

III. Facing the Future with Faith Brings Hope

- A. Note this hope comes by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Note this hope comes through the patience and comfort of the Holy Scripture. (Romans 15:4)
- C. The future is as bright as the promises of God. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Conclusion:

Dr. Haddon W. Robinson (1931-2017) shared the following: "The only thing we know about the future is that the providence of God will be up before dawn.' As we face what lies ahead, we can count on that. Hope in the God of all our tomorrows provides optimism for the future and gives strength for today." Also from the pages of *Our Daily Bread*, we read, "God's faithfulness in the past can remind us to trust Him in the present —and with the future." Keep facing the future with faith!

HOW DID HE DO THAT? Matthew 12:22-32

Introduction:

Kate Kelly shares the following on Ehrich Weiss (1874-1926) aka Harry Houdini: “When the crowds witnessed Houdini’s escapes from handcuffs, chains, ropes, and straitjackets, or attended later performances when he perfected new feats like escaping from the Chinese Water Torture Cell or surviving a Buried Alive stunt, the people remembered Houdini and loved the new puzzles with which he presented them. Audiences were left scratching their heads and saying, ‘How did he do that?’” True magicians, of course, admit openly that what they do has nothing to do with the supernatural. They simply have learned the fantastic art of ‘deceiving us’ in various ways! And it’s fun.”

Acts 19:11-20 tells us that Jesus encountered demon possessed people, each with different manifestations. Each time Jesus cast out the demons, contemporary Jewish exorcists who were not successful in doing so wondered, “How did he do that?”

I. Wishful Connection

- A. The Messianic hope was alive in the minds and hearts of the Israelites. “Could this be the Son of David?” (Matthew 12:22-23)
- B. Was this just wishful thinking?

II. Wicked Comment

- A. They claimed the demons were cast out by Beelzebub. (Matt 12:24, Mk 3:22, Lk 11:15-16)
- B. Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven.” This was the answer of the scribes and Pharisees as to the question: “How did he do that?”
- C. Their answer was not just a wrong answer, it was a wicked comment with lasting repercussions and eternal consequences. This was not the first time they made this comment. (Matt 9:32-34)

- D. Don Fleming explains, “God could forgive the doubts and misunderstandings people had about Jesus, but he would not forgive their defiant rejection of the clear evidence that all Jesus’ works were good and that they originated in God. Those who called God’s Spirit Satan, who called good evil, had put themselves in a position where they had no way of acknowledging God’s goodness. Therefore, they had no way of receiving his forgiveness (Matt 12:30-32).”

III. Wise Corrective

- A. Jesus knew their thoughts (Matthew 12:25-32, Psalm 139:2)
 1. Dr. John Phillips (1927-2010) explains, “He read their thoughts and He rejected their theory.”
 2. Jesus explains in Matthew 10:25-26, “It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.”
- B. Jesus corrected the disciples for their unbelief. (Matthew 17:14-21)

Conclusion:

Jesus warns in Matt. 7:21-23, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

These words provide a warning to those who have spurious evidence of a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Having a personal relationship with God the Father, through God the Son, by God the Holy Spirit is the most important thing in the world! Remember the miracles of Jesus were done in obedience to the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, if someone should ask, “How did He do that?”

LOOK WHO'S HERE
Daniel 3:1-30

Introduction:

“Look who’s here!” is an expression drawing attention to someone who just arrived. Daniel 3:24-25 reads, “Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, ‘Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?’ They answered and said to the king, ‘True, O king.’ ‘Look!’ he answered, ‘I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.’” Essentially, King Nebuchadnezzar said, “Look who’s here!”

I. There Was Trouble

- A. Note the king’s announcement (verses 1-7).
- B. Note the king’s anger (verses 8-15).
- C. We see a problematic gridlock over the proper expression of faith.

II. There Was Trust

Dr. A.W. Tozer explains, “True obedience is the refusal to compromise in any regard our relationship with God, regardless of the consequences.”

- A. Note the king’s aggravation. (Verses 16-18)
- B. Note the king’s affirmation. (Verse 28)
- C. We see a proving ground for the principle examination of faith.

III. There Was Triumph

- A. Note the king’s amazement. (Verses 24-25)
- B. Note the king’s assessment. (Verses 26-30)
 - 1. Psalm 75:6-7
 - 2. Luke 16:10
 - 3. 1 Corinthians 4:5
- C. We see a promotion granted to praiseworthy exemplars of faith.

Conclusion:

Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) writes, “Faith for my deliverance is not faith in God. Faith means, whether I am visibly delivered or not, I will stick to my belief that God is love. There are some things only learned in a fiery furnace.” To stand true to our beliefs, we, like Daniel, might face a den of lions or like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, a burning fiery furnace, but it will be worth it when we hear our Lord’s ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord’” (Matthew 25:23). The fiery furnace was part of the Lord’s plan for these three Hebrews. We must be willing to submit to God’s plan regardless.

In *Playing Marbles with Diamonds*, Dr. Vance Havner writes, “John the Baptist stood at the Jordan and said to his listeners, ‘There standeth One among you whom ye know not,’ and the next day he declared, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’ Every Sunday morning there stands among the churchgoers One whom many of them know not. It is the business of the preacher to present the Christ who is always there when we meet in His Name and bid the congregation, ‘Look who’s here!’” Dr. Havner comments, “One of these days, ‘it may be at morn when the day is awakened, it may be at midday, it may be at twilight, it may be per chance in the blackness of midnight’— in one mighty shout around the world we will look up and cry ‘Hallelujah! He’s back! Look who’s here!’”

THE NATURE OF FAITH Hebrews 11:1-3

Introduction:

When I was little, I had more confidence in my dad than I did Superman. When I was seven years old, after Hurricane Katrina, we were cleaning up our family's land when I saw my dad pick up and move a medium sized pine tree out of the road. To the seven-year-old sitting in the truck, at that point, my daddy became the strongest man alive. I would have put him in the ring with Rocky Balboa fully expecting Rocky to be KO'd in the first round. I just knew my dad could do anything. Whenever I saw a problem on the news, I would think to myself, "I know my dad could fix that one if he tried." One week in elementary school, I remember a kid making the monumental mistake of talking about how much better his dad was than everyone else's. It did not end well. I had faith in my dad like I have never had in anyone before. Looking back, I see how grand my child-like faith truly was.

As Christians we serve a big God, one that could probably even pick up a thousand pine trees and move them out of the road. Yet, instead of having faith that God can do anything, we doubt that He will ever do something. Our call today is a call back to child-like faith—a genuine belief that God can do anything and will do everything through His servants, us.

I. Faith Assures (1:1a)

- A. In this part of the verse, we see that faith is having absolute assurance that we will obtain the promises that is our hope of eternal life.
- B. How can some people have faith that enables them to live radical lives even amid adversity? Because of their faith, they are assured of the hope in God Almighty (Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Noah, and even recently Dietrich Bonhoeffer).
- C. Our faith in Jesus should assure us of things hoped for. Are you living in assurance today or do you doubt?

II. Faith Convicts (1:1b)

- A. While faith's assuring attribute is an inward confidence, faith's convicting attribute is an outward expression.

- B. Noah's inward assurance by faith that the rain was coming led to his outward expression seen in the ark. If we have assurance of things hoped for, then we also ought to have conviction of things not seen.
- C. Is your inward assurance resulting in external conviction? If not, make it so. Act upon your faith.

III. Faith Empowers (1:2)

- A. The Old Covenant patriarchs and matriarchs given as an illustration in Hebrews 11 did some commendable things (taken up into heaven, built an ark, conceived at old age, crossed the Red Sea, etc.) Note, though, that not one time did any of these people do any of these extraordinary acts by their own efforts. It was always by faith.
- B. Faith empowers us to do things we never thought were possible, and to man, they are not possible. We give up on things because we know not the power that lies within us.
- C. Are you living empowered by your faith? We try far too often to tackle problems we were not meant to tackle on our own.

IV. Faith Enlightens (1:3)

- A. We have the ability to understand what the larger population of the world will never understand: how the universe was created.
- B. Our faith enlightens us and helps us discern what the world cannot comprehend.
- C. If we live constantly in a state of faith, then we are constantly enlightened to God's truths. The lightbulb never comes on, it stays on.

Conclusion:

Have you seen the need for child-like faith today? Are you exhibiting this child-like faith in God's plan for your life? If not, would you start today? If you have never put your faith in Jesus, and today, He is calling you to redemption, would you accept Him? Live a life of faith; we do not have to walk through life's highs and lows alone.

GOD'S CHARACTER AND OUR EXPECTATIONS Genesis 48:8-20

Introduction:

We have all faced experiences in life in which our expectations didn't match the actual experience. You may have eaten at a restaurant that wasn't as good as the reviewer said it would be. You may have taken a job that turned out to be something you didn't expect. Your experiences may have been even more difficult than these. Marriages, moves, or unexpected reports from the doctor can easily cause stress when our expectations aren't met.

Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery, but God was with Joseph and caused him to rise to a place of power. When Joseph's family joined him in Egypt because of a famine in Canaan, he was able to care for them and give them land. In Genesis 48, we see the interaction of three generations, as Israel (Jacob) comes to bless Joseph's grandsons. This passage is structured, like many others in the Bible, as a simple pyramid, or chiasm. In south Louisiana we don't have many pyramids or mountains, but we do have po'boys. Think of two pieces of bread wrapped around the shrimp or oysters. Israel's blessing is located at the center of the passage, like the meat in a sandwich. This blessing would proclaim God's character from one generation to another. The actual narrative, or bread, shows us what it was like for Joseph and the grandchildren to experience the blessings. The blessing and narrative—meat and bread—provide two key points about how God works in our lives.

I. God Always Acts According To His Character (Gen. 48:15-16)

- A. He is a director; He guides His people. (Gen. 48:15a; cf. Prov. 16:9; Isa. 30:19)
- B. He is a shepherd; He compassionately provides everything we need. (Gen. 48:15b; cf. Psalm 23)
- C. He is the redeemer; He takes what looks to be evil and turns it into good. (Gen. 48:16a; cf. Gen. 50:20; Ruth 2:20)
- D. He is faithful; He has given His people a hope and a future. (verse 16b; cf. Jer. 29:11)

II. God Does Not Always Act According To Our Expectations (Gen. 48:8-14, 17-20)

- A. Joseph should have seen this coming...and so should we.
 1. Joseph's expectation: "No, not that way blind old man; do it *this way!*" (paraphrase of verse 18)
 2. God's Plans: Genesis 4 (Abel above Cain); Gen. 17 (Isaac above Ishmael); Gen. 27 (Jacob above Esau); Gen. 41 (Joseph above his brothers).
- B. We have two possible responses when our expectations and experiences don't match.
 1. We can redefine or doubt God's character.
 - a. Example—open theism
 - b. Danger—forming a god in our own image and according to our own expectations
 2. We can submit our expectations to God's character. (cf. Hab. 3:17-19; Dan. 3:17-18; Job 1:21)
- C. God's character and our expectations meet at the cross. (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22-24)

Conclusion:

Me—God, how have You worked in my life in ways that I did not expect? Do I know Your character? Have I submitted to Your character and work of salvation through Jesus Christ? Will I worship, trust, and follow You no matter what?

Us—God, do we recognize that You may work in the life of this church in ways that we do not expect? Are we open to Your work and ready to submit our plans and our expectations?

PRAYER
Luke 18:1-8

Introduction:

In the fifteenth century a family with 18 children lived near Nuremburg. Albrecht Durer worked as a goldsmith many hours a day but still had trouble providing for all his children. Two of the Durer children had great talent as artists and wanted to further their dreams at the academy. They came up with a plan. One Sunday after church services they flipped a coin. The boy who won would go to the academy for four years while his brother paid the way by working in the mines. Albrecht Jr. won the toss and moved to the academy while Albert went into the dangerous mines to finance his brother's art training. Albrecht Durer, Jr.'s work became an immediate sensation. By the time he graduated, he had earned a considerable amount of money from his commissioned works. He came home to send his brother to the academy, but found it was too late. "Look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once. I can no longer hold a brush to make delicate lines on parchment or canvas." Albrecht Durer, Jr. was so moved by his brother's sacrifice that he drew a picture of his brother's hands with palms together and fingers stretched skyward. Albrecht called his most famous drawing, "Hands," but it became known as "The Praying Hands."

No hands ever sacrificed and no voice ever prayed like Jesus did. Knowing the value of prayer, He advised us to "Pray and not give up." (Luke 18:1)

I. The "Oughtness" of Prayer (Luke 18:1)

- A. We ought to pray because of the teachings of Jesus about prayer.
- B. We ought to pray because of the example of Jesus in prayer.
- C. We ought to pray because of what prayer accomplishes.
- D. We ought to pray because we need it.

II. The "Always" of Prayer (Luke 18:1)

- A. Examples of praying at various times
- B. Examples of praying in various ways
- C. Reasons for continuing in prayer

III. The Energy of Prayer (Luke 18:1-8)

- A. Knowing what Jesus taught keeps us motivated to pray. (verse 1)
- B. Knowing what God is like keeps up energized to pray. (verses 2-8)
 1. Jesus gave the parable of the unjust judge to show what God is not like.
 2. Jesus showed us, by contrast, what God is like: a loving father who delights in answering the prayers of His children.

Conclusion:

Ruth Noland, a missionary to Argentina, felt a strong burden at 10:30 one night to pray for the Ed Abell family, another missionary family 600 miles away in another part of Argentina. After an intense time of prayer, she felt the burden lift. Ruth phoned the Abell family but received no answer. She called a neighboring family and discovered from them that a thief had broken into the Abell home. The robber put a gun to Ed Abell's head and pulled the trigger. Ed heard the pistol snap but it did not fire. When the police caught the man they told Ed that type of pistol wouldn't fire unless loaded. Ruth Noland asked what time all this happened. She discovered the robber broke in at 10:30. Ruth Noland knows the power of prayer. Ed Abell knows the power of prayer. Jesus knows the power of prayer. We ought always to pray and not give up.

TO JESUS . . . RSVP
John 14:12-14

Introduction:

A ship captain had no place for God. When a terrible storm arose his crewmen asked him to pray. He refused. When the storm worsened, they begged their captain once more to lead them in prayer. The captain replied, "I can't pray. It's been 15 years since I've prayed." The storm continued to worsen, and it seemed the ship would capsize. The captain finally relented. He knelt down with his crew, looked up to heaven, and began to pray, "Lord, it's been 15 years since I have bothered you. If you will deliver us from this storm, I promise you it will be 15 more years before I bother you again."

Is prayer a bother to God? Does prayer irritate God like a rebellious child might irritate his parents? No. Proverbs tells us God delights in the prayers of His children. However, a lot of people misunderstand prayer—particularly what it means to pray in the name of Jesus

I. Answers to Prayer Come When Prayer is Asked in Jesus' Name (vs. 12-14)

- A. The meaning of asking in Jesus' Name—in His nature or authority.
- B. The context of asking in Jesus' Name—doing His work. (v. 12)
- C. The extent of asking in Jesus' Name—"whatever" (v. 12) and "anything." (v. 13)

II. Answers to Prayer Come Not by Prayer but by Jesus (vs. 13-14)

III. Answers to Prayer Come in a Way That Jesus Receives Glory (vs. 13).

Conclusion:

A guest visited a church I pastored. After the service I warmly greeted her. She shocked me, though, by bluntly saying, "Pastor, I'm never coming back to this church." "Why?" I asked. "Was it the friendliness of the people?" "No," she replied, "the people warmly welcomed me." "Was it the music?" "Oh, no," she replied, "the music inspired me." "Was it my preaching, then?" Once more she said, "No, your words ministered to me, but I'm still not coming back." "Why?" I asked. "Because when you closed your prayer, you didn't say the words, 'In the Name of Jesus.'" And with that she quickly left.

Her words sent me to the Bible to study what it meant to pray in Jesus' Name. What I discovered was that Jesus' model prayer doesn't close that way. Also, the disciples—those who lived with Jesus three years and heard His teaching—never closed their recorded prayers in the Bible with the words, "In the Name of Jesus." Yet, they prayed biblically and according to the authority and character of Jesus. Simply saying, "In the Name of Jesus" is not necessarily praying in the Name of Jesus. To say the words as if they were a good luck charm, a lucky coin, a talisman, or a rabbit's foot is not what Jesus had in mind when He asked us to pray in His Name. Prayer "in the Name of Jesus" is not a magic charm. Praying in Jesus' Name is a means of relating to the Lord in order to see Him accomplish His work in a way that gives Him glory.

HELL IS FOR REAL Luke 16:19-31

Introduction:

Over the past five to ten years, numerous books have been written about heaven. This is exciting because it gets people talking about heaven and because it reminds us of the believer's final destination. We do not need new books or movies to tell us the validity of heaven or the existence of a very real hell because the Bible already confirms the existence of both heaven and hell. In Luke 16, Jesus gives the most explicit description of hell. He tells the reader who will be there and what they will be doing. The secular world does not believe in hell and has portrayed it as a cartoonish place. The church, on the other hand, has in most cases portrayed hell as a dark place where its occupants are apologetic for their sins against God, but Luke 16, reveals shocking truths about the suffering and horrors of hell. Those in hell remain conceited, concerned, and corrected.

I. The Rich Man Was Conceited (Luke 16:19, 23-26)

- A. On earth, he had the best of all that he wanted and shared with no one. (v. 13-17)
- B. Lazarus, in contrast, was poor/sick, neglected, but died saved.
- C. As a son of Abraham, the rich man should have been convicted for the poor and perishing.
- D. In hell, the rich man remains conceited.
 1. He is in torment and demands mercy from Abraham. (v. 24a)
 - a. He is unapologetic for his earthly ways.
 - b. He is crying out in prayer to a man instead of Jehovah.
 2. He demands Lazarus give him water to relieve his agony and preach to his brothers. (v. 24b) Even in hell, he still believes he is above poor Lazarus.
 3. He has to be reminded that he has already passed through judgment and was found lacking. (v. 25; 6:24)
 4. Who you are when you die is who you will be in eternity.

II. The Rich Man Was Concerned (Luke 16:27-28)

- A. Because the rich man was in the reality of hell, he didn't want his brothers joining him.
 1. There is more concern for the lost in hell than there is on earth.
 2. On earth the lost do nothing with the gospel; in hell they can do nothing.
- B. Don't wait until it's too late to be concerned about your eternal destination.

III. The Rich Man Is Corrected (v. 29-31)

- A. The rich man thinks that the ghost of Lazarus will convince his brothers to receive salvation.
- B. As a Pharisee, the Word was available to him his entire life via Moses/the Prophets.
- C. Even in hell, he is still arguing with God about His sovereign process of salvation.
- D. If you will not accept salvation by the means God offers it, there is no other way you can or will.

Conclusion:

Each one of us knows someone who would spend eternity in a devil's hell if they died at this very moment. As recipients of the gift of salvation, will we put aside our conceited attitudes and give to others what has been given to us? As evangelists of the gospel, will our concern for the unsaved be renewed knowing that today is the appointed day of salvation? As soldiers of the Lord who have been girded with the belt of truth, will we tell this lost, condemned, and dying world that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life?

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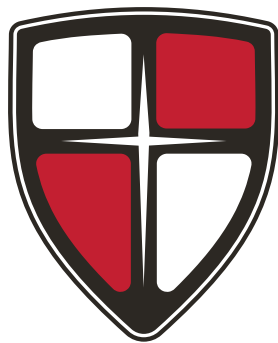
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PSALM 46:1-2, 11