

01.18.26

Luke

Chapter 9 - A Peculiar Kind of Calling

A Call Unperceivable (vs. 43-45)

Luke 9:43-45: And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, “Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

In your bulletins, you've probably received the “sanctity of human life” within your bulletins. And I just wanted to call attention to this. In the back of it, it says that you can pray, volunteer, give. There are things that you can do. And what we're talking about is, of course, taking a stand

as believers against the murder of children. Let's call it what it is, right? People are murdering children. And praise God, there's forgiveness for that. God can forgive and will forgive if we confess our sins. But we should never wash over it. And this particular passage that I'm calling attention to, is taking us even another step besides praying, volunteering, and giving, of course, praying being the most important.

But if you look with me in Proverbs 3, there's this wonderful verse, verse 27, that if I could just leave with you in regard to this.

It reads this way,

(Proverbs 3:27) “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due,

When it is in your power to do it.”

Strangely enough, God has given us in this nation of ours the power to vote. It is now your responsibility to vote in regard to the taking of life and the preservation of life. I'm asking you never to invoke your pocketbook but vote for morality. And you have an obligation. Now, I know that there's some people who say, “I just don't like voting. It's

just a pain." And I agree; I agree in the sense that I don't like paying taxes either. But Romans 13 says, pay taxes. Because the government that God has established, He has established as authority. And all authority, therefore, is ordained by God. And by submitting to the authority that God gives us and the responsibility and the powers that God gives us, God has actually made us stewards of things. So, let me encourage you, don't renege on the responsibilities that God has given you. And think in terms of the fact that we are called to be lights in the world and therefore we're called to preserve that which is truth. And what a wonderful opportunity we have to make a difference. And here again, I don't believe it's in our hands. I believe God is sovereign in all these things. But I do believe that God is going to hold us accountable for the things that He gives us. And so, are you being faithful with what God gives you? So, I just want to encourage you in that regard.

If you turn now back to Luke 9, what a great passage this is. And you begin to realize the confusion that the

disciples are feeling. And I am oftentimes comforted by the fact that, wow, these guys are just like me. And it is in that you

realize that God is taking us through this place of this old earth and how the world really has a hold on us and begins to manipulate us and control us. Of course, Paul talks specifically about the god of this world who is controlling the things and how oftentimes we listen to what the world is saying.

1 John 4, John deals with this particular issue. He says, “They are from the world, therefore they listen to the world. But we are from God, and we listen to God.” And it is a different voice that we hear. And we realize that we're in a place in which we're inundated by that which is false. But the truth rings true within us, and the Spirit of Truth is within us. It is bizarre that we don't mind listening to people's philosophies or their theories, even opinions, or in some cases, even gossip. But when it comes to truth, it's just a hard thing to swallow. And what we're going to be talking about today specifically is, of course, the truth of Jesus Christ. And I remember a number of years ago; I

think I was about 12, 13. I was a Christian at that time, and I was talking to an individual, a young guy, he was about two years older than me, and boy, was he on fire. I mean, he was just wanting to tell everybody about the gospel of Christ. And I thought it was pretty cool that he was as bold as he was. And I remember talking with him, and he would make statements like, “We have to be bold about this! We have to proclaim the gospel!” I'm going, “Yeah, that's right, that's right!” And he would tell me about the different exploits that he had in sharing the gospel, and I'm going, “That's great, that's great!” He goes, “Well, good, I'm glad you feel that way. You can go with me on visitation tonight.” And I go, “Yeah. What?” And at that particular moment, the whole gospel thing actually became real. And he was one of those that actually liked knocking on doors. And I'm going, “Well, I think I'm busy tonight.” And he goes, “No, no. Come with me now. We'll just go do it now.” And so, at that moment, I stepped into the realm of real. I actually came into something that I was talking about, and it became physical; it became tangible in my life. The disciples are having to deal with that particular issue, the reality of

their faith. I mean, how magnificent it is that you're with somebody that's healing people. I mean, the lame are walking, people that are blind or seeing; demon possessed, I mean, they're no longer possessed. And He is miraculously doing that. And the multitudes, I mean, there's kind of a hype that's going on.

In fact, in John 6, the multitudes began to gather, and they wanted to make Him king. And I can imagine, wow, everybody's just on board with this thing. And as a disciple of Christ, you're going, "We've got the Messiah, and He's friends with us." You know, you're going around going, "I know Him," you know? And so, what a wonderful day it is. The passage almost picks up in that way.

And if you look with me in Chapter 9,

(Luke 9:43) "And they were all amazed at the greatness of God..."

Wow. The greatness of God. The word that's used there, "greatness," is actually where we get the word "mega". But more specifically is kind of dealing with a sense of magnificence and glory. And they were going, "This is just..." I mean, if you've ever been in a place where either

the music was stirring, you know, as far as Christian surroundings; sometimes we can get really, hyped up with that kind of stuff or some evangelistic meeting. And they're wonderful. I remember we would have evangelistic meetings sometimes for two weeks. So, a guy would come in every night for two weeks, and wow, he'd really hound and pound the pulpit. And you'd see people coming to know the Lord, walking down the aisles. And if you've been to Billy Graham meetings, you'd see the people coming down. There's something exciting about this. It's wonderful to see something like that. I oftentimes think of the Welsh Revival. And as they went later and made a film, a documentary of the Welsh Revival, the name of the documentary was "God Has No Grandchildren". Because of the Welsh revival, though it was powerful and many people came to the Lord, within a generation it was totally lost. And actually the country has become atheistic. So, it's interesting how fast the flash in the pan lasts. And I've oftentimes commented when you go to the Old Testament in particular and you see whether it's Solomon or Hezekiah as kings, and they begin to create this great festival of celebrating the Passover,

and thousands and thousands of lambs and bulls are sacrificed, and people are just really celebrating. It's always a short time after that the kings fall. And it's a reminder that our faith is not in the realm of the fantastic and the marvelous, although God can do anything. I mean, He created the universe by word of His mouth, but it is in the humility and in the servitude. And it's just hard for us to go there. Because you get into the hype and you get into the excitement. There's nothing wrong with celebrating. But we can't stay there.

And it's in this passage that we begin to realize, as it says in verse 43, they were all amazed. You could just feel the excitement that's going on.

“... at the greatness of God. But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples,

(Luke 9:44) “Let these words sink into your ears...”

Actually, it would probably be, in the Greek, “get grafted in your ears. Don't let them leave your ears.” Because once again, we're very selective in the things that we hear. There are certain things that just whatever,

whoever says them, if it just doesn't settle right with us, maybe because it's unpalatable or maybe because it's just unpleasant, but there's something about what's being said... It's kind of like me talking to my wife about putting some fuel injectors in my truck. She goes, "Yeah." "Well, do you really understand where the O-rings go and how I ... that?" "Eh." And for some reason, she just doesn't get in it with me, although she has made progress through the years. But when you think about it, certain people are attuned to certain things. And when a certain word is spoken, there's just something inside of our psyche that goes, "You know what? I just don't hear that. It just doesn't interest me. It's not alluring to me. It's not desiring." I mean, sometimes you'll be in a surroundings and you bring up money and all of a sudden you see people's ears perk up, you know? And so, you realize that there are just certain things that just draw people. Having some psychology, I've got to come from this perspective of human growth and development one-on-one. There's an interesting point that's made with infants. When do they begin talking? When do they begin to communicate? When do they actually hear you? You know, I mean, you

could do the “Goo, goo, goo,” or whatever things you say to those little people, and they just look at you like, “I'm not interested in that, I'm hungry,” type thing.

But the writers write this about infants, “The infant makes distinct vocal sounds early in life, but it is not until he begins to listen to the sounds and seeks to repeat them that he is ready to get meaning from them.” That's pretty interesting, isn't it? I mean, God has so ordained that even in the growth and development of the physical, that it demonstrates that there is a necessity to come to a point of actually connecting with what's being said. And that it's not our natural proclivity to do that, but through the process of maturity, God brings us to that point. In some ways you see the disciples lacking the maturity and the ability to really fathom the things that Jesus is saying.

But His statement is, if you look at the passage,

(Luke 9:44) “Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”

He once again uses that phrase, “Son of Man,” and the reason why He does that is He's emphasizing the physical.

He's emphasizing the humanist. Why would He do that? Because what He's going to demonstrate, once again, is our faith is not just some ethereal thing. It actually is not something that we philosophy about or perhaps even hypothesize about. It is something that we actually live. See, this is why John will be adamant about this in 1 John, that you must believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. What is he talking about? Well, that the Spirit of God actually changes the way we act. I mean, we don't mind really talking about doing good. We don't mind talking about taking a stand for what is right. We'll debate it. We'll chat about it. We'll say what everybody else is saying. But oftentimes when it comes to you doing something about it, that's where it becomes a little bit iffy. And quite frankly, a little uncomfortable to hear things when people say, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" That's what James fundamentally is about. Faith without works is dead, you see.

The way that it's put in 1 Corinthians 2:14,

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”

He says in 1 Corinthians 2:12,

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.”

There's a different spirit that can detect certain things. And if you have the spirit of the world, you're not able to detect the things of God.

We come to this Luke 9; Jesus is well aware of the fact that the disciples are having a hard time hearing what He's saying.

If you back up into Luke 9, and if you look in particular in verse 22, He's made this statement to them,

(Luke 9:22) “saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes...”

I mean, these are all the people that you want to impress, really.

“... and be killed...”

I mean, I could just imagine after He says something like that, and then He turns to them and He goes, “Follow Me.” And they're going, “Okay, I thought we were just going to talk about this.”

(Luke 9:23) “And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

(Luke 9:24) “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

So, they know exactly where He's going with this statement, and His point is, “You're not listening to Me.” They're going, “How wonderful, all the miracles, and wow, we're like rock stars.” I don't know if they had rock stars, but “Like, we're really important people.” And here they are basking in the glory. He goes, “You've got to stop listening to this. And you've got to focus with Me. You're going to die for this message with Me. I'm about to go and show you what's going to happen.”

I mean, the statement that He makes in John 15 is, “Look, they hated Me. What do you think they're going to do to you? In the next chapter, in John 16, He goes, “They're going to bring you before the courts. They're going to bring you before the chief priests. They're going to make fun of you. And some people are actually going to kill you and think that they're doing a favor to God,” which would probably be Saul. “You've got to listen.” Unfortunately, oftentimes when we proclaim the gospel, we kind of leave out this minor detail. Because the thought is, “I'm going to follow Christ, and that means that not only has He forgiven me of all my sins, but He's going to make my life easy, and I'm just going to have a wonderful, wonderful time. All the bad people are just going to dissipate from around me, and I'm going to be so powerful in my walk with God that nothing's going to affect me.” And Jesus is saying, “You've got to listen. You're going to be hated. And you've got to deny yourself your pleasures to follow Me.” And really, as you go through this whole chapter, and this is what basically fundamentally this whole chapter is about, it's about this peculiar kind of calling that God has called us to. Because really, when you think

about it, I mean, aren't we called to just have fun? And God goes, "You are called to joy, but it's a different kind. It's a kind in which will call you into suffering for My name's sake." And you're going to rejoice over that. You're going to say, just like the disciples, "We are so thankful that we had the opportunity to suffer for the sake of Christ." But suffer you will. And this is not going to be easy. Oftentimes, when we are despised and rejected, as Peter says, "You look at this like some strange thing were happening to you. But it's par for the course. I mean, it's what God has called us to do."

(Luke 9:44) "Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men."

In other words, this is a very physical thing that's about to happen. Son of Man. It's really a test of flesh and blood. Why would God put it into the realm of flesh and blood? Because surprisingly enough, we don't get real until flesh and blood gets in the mix. It's just a bizarre thing. You know, the whole philosophy thing is where we like to stay. And quite frankly, coming into churches, oftentimes

we think, “Well, I heard the message, Okay, that's it. Sang the songs. I felt warm fuzzies by virtue of the music. Whatever happened, that's it.” And God says, “No, that's just the beginning. Because now you're equipped for the battle. And it is going to be a battle.”

“Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”

“This deliverance, this suffering, This physical treatment of this body is that which is going to test the validity of your faith and of your walk. Do you love Me?” See? Isn't that the question that is asked at the end of the Gospel of John to Peter himself? “Do you love Me? Really? What are you willing to do? Peter, when you get older, you're going to be bound and people are going to lead you to places that you don't want to go.” And I can tell you there have been times in my life where I have had discussions with God and I go, “I didn't sign up for this.” And God in His grace responded to me, “Yes, you did. Yes, you did.”

If you've ever read the Book of Jeremiah, we went through it a few years ago. How many years ago was it that we went through the book? Anyway, we went

through the Book of Jeremiah. And to me, it's such a great book because you have a young man that comes into play and God goes, "Okay, now I'm going to use you to be a prophet." And Jeremiah goes, "No, You got the wrong guy. I'm too young. I'm in the wrong group here. I'm not in the know. Nobody's going to listen to me. Clearly, I just want to correct you, God, no offense. You got the wrong guy." And He goes, "Nope, got the right guy. You're going, and this is what's going to happen. They're going to attack you, and I'm going to make you strong. Now, here's the deal. Just tell them what I tell you to tell them." So, he goes into the whole battle, and as you begin to follow him into the battle, you realize that, wow, he's really hated. In fact, he begins to cry out to God, "I wish I'd never been born." I mean, that's suffering pretty intense stuff. His family have all come against him and nailing him literally to the gates. And he goes, "I don't want to be here." And I think in some degree, we've all kind of had those feelings, especially when we've gone against the depth of darkness. Nevertheless, it's exactly what God has called us to do. Be willing to suffer for the sake of righteousness. Basic fundamental theme of 1 Peter.

If you look with me,

“Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”

(Luke 9:45) But they...”

What's the response? Are they listening? You know, you think of the Israelites as they go into the promised land, and God says, “Go in there and go get it.” And they go, “There are giants there. And we look like grasshoppers.” That's a quote. And Joshua says, “No, let's go.” Caleb says, “Let's go.” Now, the question is, why can't the rest of them hear that? And the answer is because they're looking at the wrong thing. Their focus is on the wrong thing. And the same thing is true with the disciples.

It says in verse 45,

“...But they did not understand...”

They were literally ignorant (*agnoeō*) of this statement. It did not enter their mind. It could not enter their mind because they couldn't perceive what was happening. And the way that it here again is stated is,

“... and it was concealed from them...”

It was hidden from them. It was actually veiled to them.

“... so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him...”

I mean, there's nothing worse than being unable to perceive something and then being afraid to ask somebody, what do they mean by that? But the question is, why are they unable to perceive it? And really, in the rest of the text, not only do we see it in this passage, of course, they just got finished with the whole individual that had his son was demon-possessed, “Your disciples couldn't cast out this demon.” And so, now they're facing a failure, and what's the human way of actually dealing with failure? Well, we kind of bolster ourselves up. That's in the Book of James as well. He says, “Look, don't say you're going to go to such and such a city and do this.” He says, “All such boasting is sinful. It's a lack of faith.” Well, what are they trying to do? What they're trying to do is they're trying to boost themselves up because of they're failures. They've lost homes, they've lost things. So, things that are happening, they're saying, “Well, I'm really important.” So, they begin to talk themselves up. And

that's what man does. He begins to talk himself up, and begins to say, "Well, I really am important." "Well, you know, you weren't able to cast out that demon." "Yeah, but that was just a bad day. You know, I'm really very important."

So, if you look at the passage, verse 46, which we're not going to fully go into, but what are the disciples arguing about? "Who's the greatest?" Right. That's exactly what they're going to be doing. And of course, when you come down to verse 51, you go into verse 54, they're trying to command fire from heaven to literally destroy the Samaritans. Of course, they're very powerful disciples, and they're going to help Jesus out. They're going to help Jesus out by destroying people! Of course, He came to save, but they're going to help Jesus out by destroying people. So, you see them doing this, and then you have at the end of the chapter, verses 57 through 62, people coming up to Jesus and going, "I'll follow You wherever You want to go." And He goes, "You have no idea what you're saying."

(Luke 9:58) “... “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.””

“Do you have any idea what you're talking about?” “Well, first, let me bury my father.” “Let the dead bury the dead. You come and follow Me.” I mean, that's all within this passage, if you look at the passage.

One guy says in verse 61,

(Luke 9:61) “Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.””

(Luke 9:62) But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.””

I mean, you have to shake your head, and go, “I think Jesus is serious about this.” And the point is that it is in the suffering that really validates the reality in your life.

There's a passage in the Gospel of John, if you look at me in John 6. And just to let you know, I mean, we're kind of following up the feeding the 5,000 where people were

wanting to make Him king. So, I mean, there's a lot of greatness that's going on within the passage.

Jesus will make a statement,

(John 6:38) “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

I mean, how is it that a king would say something like that? You begin to see that He's literally undermining this thought of greatness within the passage.

He then ultimately states in verse 44,

(John 6:44) “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

We're going, “Okay, what do you mean by that?”

So, He goes on, and He makes a statement. Of course, He's fed the 5,000. They're going, “Wow, what miracle is this?” He goes, “Well, I'm the bread of life that comes down out of heaven, like in the Old Testament.” And of course, that really gets the Pharisees upset that He's making Himself analogous to the bread that comes out of heaven. But if you think about it, it's a perfect picture.

Because the bread is a picture of the grace of God feeding them. And it's grace coming down of heaven. John 1 says, "We beheld the glory of God full of grace and truth," literally coming down out of heaven. And the fact that it's something real and tangible that could sustain you is telling us that God's not just throwing out words. God's actually beneficial to you. But as it goes on, He says, "I am the bread of life."

And then He states this in verse 52,

(John 6:52) "Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?""

"I'm the bread of life," He says. They're going, "How can that happen?" And at that juncture, probably if I were Jesus, I'd go, "I'm starting to lose audience here. I'll probably kind of need to apologize to them, or maybe, "Did I offend you in what I said?" But He does just the opposite.

I mean, He starts digging in within the text, and He says,

(John 6:55) “For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink.

(John 6:56) He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

(John 6:57) As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.

(John 6:58) This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.”

(John 6:59) “These things He said in the synagogue...”

That's pretty bold, I think.

“...as He taught in Capernaum.

(John 6:60) Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, “This is a difficult statement...”

“This is too offensive to us, too harsh, too violent.”

“... who can listen to it?””

And you're going, “What do you mean, who can listen to it? You don't understand what He's saying?” I mean, He

goes on and says, "I'm speaking of spiritual, but I said it in the physical to test you." And what we see within the text is that truth will be tested by the limits of your devotion and your trust. "I don't understand why He's saying that. I don't understand how it fits in my life. This is offensive to me. It's unpalatable. I mean, there are 1,001 things. I don't like what He's saying." Listen, I can give you a lot of verses in Scripture where, I'll be truthful with you, I do not like what it's saying. I mean, when the Bible tells me in Philippians 2 that I have to hold others in higher esteem, I'm not talking level, in higher esteem than me, I'm not real fond of that verse. Because that's telling me that I have to die to myself and my wishes and my desires and my program and my pursuits for their sake. And I have to constantly be thinking of what's good for them rather than what's good for me. When God tells me that the greatest in the kingdom is the servant of all, that just doesn't register. I mean, you know, aren't we looking for the accolades and the people recognizing us for doing great things? I mean, you do something and nobody notices, don't you have a tendency to get a little upset? "Nobody noticed?" But Scripture says that's what the

Pharisees do. They do all that they do to be seen by men. Now, that offends me. And the reason why it offends me is it reveals my hypocrisy. It demonstrates, and that's exactly what Jesus does in Matthew 15 in particular. You don't need to turn there, but in verse 12, the disciples turn to Jesus after He actually quotes out of Isaiah 29, and He says, "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." And the disciples turn to Jesus, and they go, "You have offended the Pharisees." And He goes on, of course, within the passage, and He says, "Don't listen to them. Don't go with them. Don't be a part of them, for they're hypocrites." And once again, if you go into Matthew 23, over and over again, He calls them hypocrites. The point of the matter is that Jesus was exposing their fakery, and nobody wants their fakery exposed. Nobody. Nobody likes that. And so, you begin to turn it off, "I don't want to hear that message. Don't tell me." You know, probably the most threatening words that somebody could ever say would be, "The truth of the matter is..." And once you get to the truth, that becomes extremely offensive to people, if in fact it is the truth. And you realize that this offense, just, especially to people

that are duplicitous, they're saying one thing to one person, and another to another. James talks about this as well. So, why is it necessary that Jesus emphasizes, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered up, that He's going to suffer these things"? And the answer is because the suffering in the flesh is going to prove the reality of your faith. It's a necessary ingredient that the truth calls out duplicity, it calls out superficiality, it calls out hypocrisy, and it says, "Let's talk about real." You see a brother in need, you can't walk up to him and say, "Be warm, be filled, and be clothed." You've got to do something. Now, are you concerned for your brother or are you not concerned for your brother? You say that God is more important than anything. Did you put Him first in everything in your life? "Well, I mean, now you're prying." But that's what truth does. See, it actually goes into the realm of your world, and it begins to reveal things that you don't like.

There's a great text in 1 Peter, if you turn there with me. 1 Peter 1. I love the way this book opens up. And of course, this is Peter, one of the disciples, that is having trouble

with this statement. So, what happened? And the answer is that the Spirit of Truth came within him. That's what happened. And the wonderful thing of Pentecost is the Spirit of Truth came into these men. And no longer was Peter just saying, "You know what? I'll never leave You." But now the Spirit of Truth said, "We're not going anyplace." And he didn't. This passage in 1 Peter 1, and I think it's an important point and doctrine that if I could have you embrace and understand.

Read with me in 1 Peter 1,

(1 Peter 1:3) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope..."

Now, what he's talking about is that this is real. It's His Spirit that comes upon us, once again defined in John 14 and 15 and 16, as the Spirit of truth. So, the Spirit of truth comes within you. One of the first things that the Spirit of truth does is you begin to realize, "I'm a sinner," and you begin to confess, "That's the truth." And then you begin to turn to Him for everything, because the truth is we

need Him for everything. In Him, we live and breathe and have our existence.

But as the passage goes on,

“... has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”

What a demonstration of power. I mean, Jesus isn't just talking about power over death. He defeated death. He actually did it.

(1 Peter 1:4) “to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,”

I mean, this is real stuff.

(1 Peter 1:5) “who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(1 Peter 1:6) In this you greatly rejoice...”

Watch, I love this. I love the way he puts this. It's just so subtle.

“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials.”

Sorry, too bad. Moving on, right?

(1 Peter 1:7) “so that the proof of your faith...”

Now the evidence here, what he's talking about is actually genuineness of your faith. Do you really believe? All right, let's go die for Him. “Wait, I've got another schedule today.” You see how immediately the suffering thrusts you into reality? I told my wife, I said, “I think I'm a pretty patient person and I'm pretty good at serving.” And a few years ago, God goes, “Let's see.” And guess what? I'm not very patient and I'm not a good servant. I appreciate all you women that do a lot better than I do. I kind of look at you as paragons, so I'm just letting you know, don't mess up. Because we're all on shaky ground here.

“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

(1 Peter 1:7) so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In other words, what is God looking for? Real. And, you know, I'd like to tell you that there's an easier road to go here, but it's through the pain and the suffering, in particular, the suffering for doing what is right, that is going to demonstrate the reality of what you say. To what point are you willing to do what God says? The Bible says you need to constantly and ever forgive. Another one of those phrases I'm not really fond of. Because I can show you a lot of people that I don't think are worthy of my forgiveness. But that puts me a step above God, doesn't it? For He forgave them. And quite frankly, just to bottom line it, He commanded us to forgive. And I know that emotionally it's going to hurt. I mean, every time I forgive somebody that I don't want to forgive, I feel, ow. You know? That's very uncomfortable for me to do that. That I'm placed in a place of humbling, I'm not really fond of that. But Scripture tells me that I have to love my

enemies, which means that I can't just sit at home and say, "I'm not going to throw a rock at them." It actually means that I need to reach out to them. And that's going to hurt. There are 1,001 things that God is going to tell you to do that your ears are going to start closing. You're going to go, "I don't understand. How would that help anyway?" You know? Or, "You know, I wish I heard it, but my hearing aids weren't on that day, and sorry, it just didn't make contact." But the fact of the matter is that we did hear, and the Spirit of Truth is telling us. So, we can't say we didn't hear it, can we? Yeah. The physical pain will reveal the legitimacy of your devotion and love. That's why you have to go through it.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, You died for us, that You would be despised, rejected, spit upon, reviled, and yet You would not revile in return. You would give a blessing instead. And we would say, "How could somebody do this when their body was beat up, when their hands and their

arms were nailed to a cross? When spears were placed at their side, when crowns of thorn were placed upon their head and they were mocked, how could anybody love at that point?" And at that point, we realize that love was tested and came out like gold.

Dearly beloved, you're going to be tested. You're going to go through hardship. There are going to be times where the Lord's going to call you to do something for Him that's not only not going to be easy, it's going to hurt. But this will prove whether you're just a bunch of words or if you really mean it. So, where do you sit?