

00-10-01a

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning in your Bibles to Psalm 105. Psalm 105. This is a lengthy psalm and I'm not going to read the entire chapter, but the subtitle of this psalm in the New King James is, The Eternal Faithfulness of the Lord.

And as we have sung this morning in our hymns, and as we have been seeing throughout our study of Genesis, most recently in Genesis chapter 49, it is the faithfulness of God, it's His mercy and His grace that has sustained the human race from the beginning. He created us. He placed Adam and Eve in the garden.

He bore with them after the fall and made a way of deliverance. In spite of our failures, in spite of our waywardness, and in some cases our open rebellion, we're going to see that word in Hebrew this morning, the word for a sin of the high hand, a crime against God that is a rebellious sin. But in spite of all of that, God is faithful.

He is faithful even when we are faithless. This psalm is a rehearsal of the history up to the time of the psalmist of God's faithfulness and of God's provision. So we're going to read the first half of this psalm because we're going to take it up to the point that we have studied in Genesis, and then we'll return to Genesis to conclude chapter 49.

But Psalm 105, which speaks of God's providence and care of His people, begins this way, Oh, give thanks to the Lord. Call upon His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples.

Sing to Him. Sing psalms to Him. Talk of all His wondrous works.

Glory in His holy name. Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and His strength.

Seek His face evermore. Remember His marvelous works which He has done. His wonders and the judgments of His mouth.

Oh, seed of Abraham, His servant. You children of Jacob, His chosen ones. He is the Lord our God.

His judgments are in all the earth. He remembers His covenant forever. The word which He commanded for a thousand generations.

The covenant which He made with Abraham and His oath to Isaac and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute. To Israel as an everlasting covenant. Saying to you, I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance.

When they were few in number, indeed very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people, He permitted no one to

do them wrong. Yes, He rebuked kings for their sake, saying, Do not touch My anointed ones and do My prophets no harm.

Moreover, He called for a famine in the land. He destroyed all the provision of bread. He sent a man before them, Joseph, who was sold as a slave.

They hurt his feet with fetters. He was laid in irons until the time that His word came to pass. The word of the Lord tested him.

The king sent and released him. The ruler of the people let him go free. He made him lord of his house and ruler of all his possessions to bind his princes at his pleasure and teach his elders wisdom.

Israel also came into Egypt and Jacob dwelt in the land of Ham. He increased his people greatly and made them stronger than their enemies. He turned their heart to hate his people to deal craftily with his servants.

And this is the point at which we have arrived in our study of Genesis. We have seen all of the things that the psalmist describes here. And as you can tell, it goes forward to talk about the deliverance under Moses, all of the events that are recorded in Exodus and in Numbers and Deuteronomy.

And it goes forward if you pick up down in verse 42. He remembered his holy promise and Abraham his servant. He brought out his people with joy, his chosen ones with gladness.

He gave them the lands of the Gentiles and they inherited the labor of the nations, that they might observe his statutes and keep his laws. Praise the Lord. An overview such as this reminds us that there is a plan for human history.

God has a design that he is working out. And it is an amazing thing to see that even though human beings have free will, even though we have the ability to choose for or against God, God weaves both the good decisions and the bad decisions together to accomplish his purpose. And every one of his promises is fulfilled.

You may notice just as a point of interest in verse 8 when it says he remembers his covenant forever, the word which he commanded for a thousand generations. What is the length of a biblical generation? It's 40 years. So if you think about the thousand generations, a thousand times 40 is 40,000.

That's a long time. God never fails to honor his promises. And we sometimes think that we have taken ourselves out of the place of God's provision or out of his grace or out of his obligation to sustain us and to bless us.

But it's not the case. Even when we're under discipline, even when we suffer for our bad

decisions, God works those things together for good. You think about the suffering that Israel went through during the years of bondage.

You think about God's deliverance with a mighty hand and then the wilderness wanderings for 40 years, an entire generation. You think about the ups and downs that they had once they came into the land. Israel has never been a model of piety and has never been a model of faithfulness to God.

In fact, they are a model of just the opposite. They reflect for us our sinful nature. We are built that way from conception, from birth.

And yet God is gracious. God makes us promises and he fulfills them even when we fail. We can arrive on the positive side of God's character.

We can arrive in the place of blessing and fulfillment through acknowledging our failures, returning to God. But we should never assume that we have stumbled so as to fall. Israel, with all of the record of their failures, has never stumbled so as to fall.

And that's what Paul tells us over in Romans. They have been set aside for the moment in God's plan, but they will be restored and God will glorify himself in that nation for a thousand years in the millennial kingdom. Every one of his promises will be fulfilled.

So it is never too late. We have never gone too far. We have never failed so greatly that God cannot restore us, that God cannot work those things together for good.

And that is what we have seen throughout the book of Genesis. And as we return now to our study in Genesis chapter 49, we completed last time our analysis of Jacob's blessing on his sons. It's hard in some cases to see this as a blessing because when he talks about Simeon and Levi and their violence and their anger and that they're going to be divided and scattered, when he talks about Issachar as a donkey lying down between his burdens, he decides that rest is good and he bows his shoulder and becomes a band of slaves.

You think, well, that doesn't sound like much of a blessing. Gad, a troop, is going to trample all over him, but he will triumph at last. And you think, well, the trampling part doesn't sound like much of a blessing.

You have each of the brothers mentioned in this oracle that Jacob delivers on his deathbed and he ends up in verse 28 of chapter 49 of Genesis. All these are the 12 tribes of Israel, and this is what their father spoke to them. He blessed them.

He blessed each one according to his own blessing. So if there's any doubt that this is a blessing, I think verse 28 pretty well clinches that. This, by the way, is the first time in the Bible that the tribes of Israel are mentioned.

And this is looking forward. Jacob has spent the last many verses looking forward, looking into the future for each of his sons and their descendants. And as he looks forward, he sees them as a nation composed of 12 tribes.

And so he speaks this blessing. He blesses each one according to his own blessing. The emphasis here is one that we've already observed.

Why is there a different description of each brother? Why is there a different oracle for each brother? Because even though it's a single nation that forms the people of God, there are different sets of pluses and minuses for each of the tribes. They are going to reflect their patriarch. They're going to reflect their father, whether it's Issachar or Zebulun or Dan or Naphtali or Gad or Asher.

And we think, well, this seems kind of unfair. If you happen to be born into the tribe of Gad, you're just going to be somebody that gets trampled all the time. But in reality, the same thing is true in the church.

We are one body composed of many members in the same way that Israel was a nation composed of many tribes. And all of us begin life, all of us enter into our spiritual life at the point of salvation with a certain set of givens. When you do algebra, you remember you have equations, you have operators, you have an equal sign and you have numbers.

But in algebra, you also have unknowns. You have X and Y and Z. But you also have constants or you have numbers that are given and they're fixed. And so whenever you go to solve an equation, certain things are given and certain things are unknown.

And that's the way it is with us. That's the way it is with the people of these tribes. Certain things are given, but those are not determinative.

Some of us are born with weaknesses in the area of mental attitude sin. Some of us are prone. It's just our nature.

Perhaps it's heredity, whatever it may be. But we have certain things that we may be prone to have a violent temper. We may be prone to be impatient or very critical.

We may be prone to be too trusting and too naive. And we just take things at face value. We don't analyze.

We don't think deeply. And lots of these different things can get us into trouble. Some of us are very well organized.

We can keep things neat and filed and accessible. Others of us are slob. And it's a major effort all of our lives just to keep things picked up and out of the way.

And we don't file well. I didn't know how to file at all until I got married to somebody who knew how to do files. And my stuff was, I did it by the sedimentary layer approach.

Well, it's sort of chronological. Whatever's on the bottom of the pile is old and what's on the top of the pile is new. But we, all of us, and we know this.

We can look at ourselves. We can look at others around us. There are certain things that we really didn't ask for, that we didn't make by choice.

It's just strengths and weaknesses in our character. That's what this whole chapter has been about. The sons of Israel, the sons of Jacob, have certain strengths and weaknesses, and it has been manifested in their behavior.

Simeon and Levi, hot-tempered, impulsive, violent, cruel. Reuben, plotting and scheming, doesn't have a long-term view, unstable, even though he's strong. There's nothing worse than somebody that's strong, but unstable.

That's where we get the phrase, bull in a china shop. That was Reuben. Each of these brothers, you can see their strengths and weaknesses.

Some of them seem to have overcome their weaknesses. We get the idea that Joseph, in the beginning, was sort of a, you know, we talk about somebody being a mama's boy, or a teacher's pet, or something like that, where they're the favored one, and they seem to do everything right for the previous generation, and everybody else resents them for it. And that was Joseph.

And he seemed to be insensitive to his brother's feelings at the beginning. He had some strengths and weaknesses at the outset, but being a man of faith, God is able to diminish the strong negatives and supplement the weak positives. God can balance us.

God can round us out. God can give us the ability to function well, but we don't start out that way. And it is not that, and this is my, you can meditate on this and see if you think this is so.

I'm not sure I can give you a scripture for this, but I think you can demonstrate it from scripture. I would suggest this to you. I'll submit this for your meditation.

I don't think anyone in the human race is given a greater challenge than any other person in the human race. You think, well, wait a minute, what about someone who has a child born that has a terrible physical deficiency? Or what if they have someone that maybe their spouse comes down with a terrible disease, and they have to care for them for years. And we look around and we see people and we think, oh boy, I could never bear that cross.

That is just the most tremendous challenge. I look at people 150 years ago and 100 years ago as the pioneers who had such a hard life. And I think my life is not that hard.

But if you stop and think, the circumstances of life are there to challenge our souls. And

what is easy for one person is very difficult for another. We look at someone with a great challenge and circumstances and we say, oh, I don't know how they get through that, or I don't know how they can sustain themselves.

But there are areas in our own lives where someone else may be looking at us and saying, I don't know how they manage. I could never do that. Some challenges are visible.

Many challenges are invisible. I have always had to smile. A couple of times in my past, people have come up to me and said, you know, God has really blessed you.

You were sort of born with a silver spoon in your mouth because you were born into a Christian family. You've been in church all your life, and everything has just rolled in the right direction for you. You got to go to the Naval Academy and had a career as a marine officer, and you got to go to Dallas Seminary and this, that, and the other.

And describe my life as though it were charmed in some way. And they themselves have had challenges and so on. They say, you know, you just don't seem to have had very many challenges.

Well, you know, come walk a mile in my size 11 and a half, and if you've gone through that, you know that particularly given what what you have in your soul, some of those things were not the blessing that they might appear to be on the outside. And I think that that is true of everyone. All of us know that we have had challenges that just almost were too much for us to handle.

Everyone has that. Some of them were of brief duration. Some of them were of long duration.

But God is just and God is fair. God knows the hearts. God does not test us beyond what we are able to bear.

But I can attest, and I think you can attest, that he will test us up to what we are able to bear, doesn't he? We have had many severe challenges, no matter how young or old we are. And to look over at someone else and say, well, their challenges are greater than mine or their challenges are less than mine is due to the fact that man looks on the outward appearance. We don't know what people have been through.

Some people maintain a very, you know, what the Lord said when about the Pharisees, how they used to clothe themselves in sackcloth and ashes and wail and scuff around, trying to look like they were put upon. And he said, when you're, even when you're feeling bad, when things are down, he says, go in, wash your face, comb your hair, anoint oil on yourself, put on your good clothes and walk around and look respectable. He said, don't shamle around in sackcloth and ashes trying to engender sympathy.

And there's a lot of people who have mastered that art and who have the spiritual strength to do that. And to look at them and say, well, they don't seem to have any problems, is just a reflection of the fact that we don't see into the soul. We have had a chance here in the latter chapters of Genesis to see Joseph's trials and to be unjustly sold into slavery, to be unjustly imprisoned, to be accused falsely, is a tremendous burden to bear.

There's nothing as hard on the attitude as being wrongly accused or being ill thought of and it's not justified. That's a very difficult thing to cope with. And beyond the imprisonment and beyond the restrictions and beyond being separated from his family and from his people, that is something that can grind on one daily.

And the question is, do you give in to bitterness? Do you give in to self-pity? Do you give in to saying, well, I'm a victim and I'm going to blame all of my future problems on the fact that somebody victimized me? That is a very difficult thing to overcome. But here's the point. This statement of Jacob, where he describes these weaknesses and strengths on the part of his sons and shows what is the problems in their soul, this is a reminder for us.

The New Testament tells us all these things have been written for our instruction. It's in our Bible for a reason. And what it tells us is we can still be blessed in spite of what we were born with, in spite of things that we may have given in to in the past.

Look at Levi of all the 12 brothers. I think Levi probably traverses the greatest distance. Levi is a liar.

He is a thief. He is a murderer. You remember the Shechem incident? He got upset because a man from Shechem took his sister and lay with her without benefit of marriage and kept her at his house and then came belatedly to ask for her hand in marriage.

And Levi thought, you know, I am justified. This is the same sort of thinking, by the way, that takes place with people who shoot abortion doctors. Yes, there has been a terrible wrong committed, but it does not justify committing wrong yourself just because you see an injustice doesn't give you permission to commit an injustice.

But Levi says, well, my sister's been violated, so no holes barred. All is fair now. And so he, along with his brothers, lies and deceives, goes in and cruelly murders and robs the people of Shechem.

How does Levi end up? And this is what we looked at last time, because we went forward to Deuteronomy, to the blessing that Moses gives on the 12 tribes at the end of his life. And the contrast, the comparison and contrast between Jacob's blessing at the beginning, the inception of the nation of Israel and Moses' blessing as they're just about

to go in and take the land and become a nation indeed, is quite striking because Levi is commended. We saw that last time.

Levi becomes the priestly tribe. They are the ones who are going to mediate relationship with God. They're going to teach the people.

Moses says of Levi in Deuteronomy 33, 8, let your Thummim and your Urim be with your holy one. Levi is described as the holy one, speaking of the high priest. And the Urim and Thummim, these were the means that God used to communicate his will.

They were a yes, no, or indeterminate thing. It's been a couple of years ago now, but I made a little model of the Urim and Thummim. And if you'll recall, I think these were probably tablets, small tablets, flat, so that if you toss them, they're going to land either face up or face down.

You could imagine two playing cards. And on one side is an Aleph, which is the Urim, the beginning of the Hebrew alphabet, or the letter A in our alphabet. On the back side of each card is Tav, or the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Aleph begins the word Urim. Tav begins the word Thummim. So you have an A and a Z, if you will, on each side of these tablets.

So if you toss these two down, what are your possibilities? You're either going to get two Alephs, two As, you're going to get two Tavs, or two Zs, or you're going to get one of each. That's the only three combinations you can have. So if you go before the Lord and say, Lord, shall we go up and attack this people, and you toss the Urim and Thummim, you're either going to get a double A, yes, go and the Lord will be with you.

You're going to get a double T, no, don't go, the Lord is not with you. Or you may get an indeterminate answer. And if you keep tossing them and they keep coming up, A-T, A-T, A-T, God is unwilling to speak to you for some reason.

And you can see in the later history of Israel, most particularly when they start, and this is the casting of lots, the casting of lots is the same thing, it's Urim and Thummim, when Saul is in battle and he's pursuing the enemy and he says, nobody eat anything until we've totally conquered this people. Well, that was a foolish order to give, and not everybody got the word, including his son Jonathan. And Jonathan stops, he sees a honeycomb, he stops and dips some honey out and eats it, and then goes on.

But all of the people are fainting from hunger, and then someone comes to Saul and says, there's sin in the camp, God's not talking to us. So they start casting lots to find out, and they designate the tribe, and then the clan, and it gets all the way down to the family of Saul. Someone has committed sin in Israel, and it comes down through the casting of lots, there's no one left except Saul and Jonathan, and there should be one more casting of the lots to determine who has sinned.

But Saul assumes that it's Jonathan, because Jonathan admits to eating the honey, but in fact, if they had cast the lots one more time, it would have been Saul, because Saul gave the foolish order. And anyway, that's a whole separate story, but here's the thing, Levi is the keeper of the Urim and Thummim. When Moses speaks in 33.8, let your Thummim and your Urim be with your holy one, the one who was rash and impulsive, angry, was cruel and a thief and a murderer, is now the priest of Israel.

The high priest will come from the tribe of Levi. You tested him at Massah, and you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. These are incidents that took place during the 40 years of wandering.

God has tested, God has refined the members of the tribe of Levi. He says of his father and mother, I have not seen them, and he doesn't acknowledge his brothers or know his own children. He's impartial.

He is indiscriminate in the performance of his duties. He doesn't favor his mother and father. He doesn't have special little brother-in-law deals.

Well, I'll forgive your sins. You just bring me a pigeon, and these other people are going to have to bring me three bulls and a goat. He is objective, because he is the intermediary between man and God.

They have observed your word and kept your covenant. They shall teach Jacob your judgments. The primary function of the priests was to teach, to use the symbolic elements of the ritual worship in Israel to communicate God's word.

They will teach Jacob your judgments and Israel your law. They shall put incense before you and a whole burnt sacrifice on your altar. The tendency toward violence, toward hacking and slashing, God is going to convert that to good.

Now they're going to be hacking and slashing animals for the altar. They're going to be up to their knees in blood every single day, but it is now a productive use of that characteristic. They will put incense before you and a whole burnt sacrifice on your altar.

Bless his substance, Lord, and accept the work of his hands. This was the whole problem when they went to Shechem. The substance that they took was not their own, and the work of their hands was evil.

It was murder and deception. But now Moses says, bless his substance, Lord, and accept the work of his hands. Strike the loins of those who rise against him.

Let God do the fighting for the tribe of Levi, those who hate him, that they rise not again. So what a reversal. Even though there's nothing different intrinsically about the members of the tribe of Levi, the difference is that through relationship with God, through learning during the 40 years of wilderness wandering, the next generation that

comes up in Levi has had their gold refined.

They have had their impurities boiled out, and now the characteristics of that tribe work together for good. And you can make that same analysis with each one of these tribes, and it's fascinating to compare Jacob's blessing and Moses' blessing as we have seen, because that's what's true of us. Sometimes we think, oh, you know, I have a besetting sin.

This is just the way I am. I'll have to wait till I go to glory before I'll be rid of my areas of weakness or my tendencies, and I just hate myself for certain things that I continually do or certain problems in my soul that I can't seem to shake. What these passages tell us is there is no problem too great for God.

He knows the way we're built. He wove us together in our mother's womb. He knows exactly what we started out with, just like Jacob knows his sons.

And the remedy is to be found in God's provision. How does the power of God enter our life? It does not enter by prayer. It doesn't enter by a sovereign decision on the part of God where he just reaches down and touches certain ones and says, I'm going to put my power in you.

The Bible teaches from Genesis to Revelation that there is one way that the power of God comes into the life of his people. In the Old Testament, in the New, in Israel, in the church, it is always the same. It is by grace through faith.

Faith is kind of a generic, indiscriminate term. What does it mean to have faith? It is not just a hoping and a scrunching of the eyes that every cloud has a silver lining. Faith has an object.

We trust something, and we believe it. What is it that we put our faith in? Well, it's in the Lord Jesus Christ, and specifically it is in the Word of God, because the two are synonymous. Jesus Christ is the Word of God, and the Word of God is the mind of Christ.

So, in practical terms, you can theologize and sermonize and all of this, but tomorrow and the next day and the next day, when we're going through our life and we're facing our challenges, interacting with people, traveling here and there, performing tasks, meeting objectives and deadlines, observing priorities, where does this transforming power of God come into play? It's by grace through faith. And so during the day when we are suddenly in a situation that makes us impatient or frustrated or in some other way destabilized in our soul, we no longer have our joy, peace, and patience, what do we do? Well, we go to faith. How does that work? Do we just sort of turn our eyes heavenward and say, oh God, help? That is not faith, that's prayer.

Prayer is a good thing, but that is not the way the power of God comes into our life. We claim the promises, the principles, and the doctrines of the Word of God. If someone

shorts us or someone in some way wrongs us, and we begin to get defensive and self-justifying and we want to react, we want to be angry or unkind or do something, we stop and say, it is God who judges, it is God who knows, God will vindicate, I'm going to commit this to God.

That's faith. We're treating what the Bible says as reality. It's not just pie in the sky, it's not just fine sounding words on Sunday morning, it is the fabric of reality in our soul.

We say, God is aware, God knows that I am doing this in good faith, and if I do things heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men, I'm not going to care if it's appreciated, I'm not going to care if it's misunderstood, I'm not going to let myself be thrown off track, I'm not going to let someone take away my joy, take away my peace, take away my patience because of what they do. My relationship is with God. I do what I do for the Lord God, and that stabilizes our soul, that makes us a different kind of person, that produces the fruit of the Spirit in our soul, and that is the substance of the Christian life.

That's why God leaves us here, to produce that fruit. And you can see why it can only be done by believers, because unbelievers, people who don't have a relationship with God, and also the people of God who don't cultivate their relationship with God, don't think that way. And we, when we're not walking in the light and walking in fellowship with God, we don't think that way either, do we? We let ourselves get dragged off into the darkness.

We let ourselves think petty thoughts, and have bad motivations, and this bile rises, and bitterness and stuff starts coursing through our veins, and pretty soon it comes out on our tongues, doesn't it? And we're on the phone, or we're whispering, or we're talking to somebody, we're shooting in the venom, we're getting our, we're putting in the penalties. Somebody has done us wrong, or somebody has disappointed us in some way, and so we become judge and jury, and we make them pay. They pay the penalty in the opinion of whoever we're talking to.

We cut them down to size. We diminish them in someone else's eyes. We elbow God aside and say, no, no, vengeance is not yours.

Vengeance is mine. I, Sam, will make sure this person pays the penalty. I will honk my horn at them incessantly for cutting in front of me, or I will not let them back in when they swoop around me, and then they get stuck.

I'm not going to let them into traffic. I'll make them pay. See, traffic is the bane of my whole existence.

If I could transport directly to work, I would probably have no sin at all. But each of us, we know the areas in our daily life, not on Sunday, not when we're praying, not when we're saying the blessing at the table. It's the substance of the tasks that we perform

day by day.

It's the fabric of our relationship with other people. This is where God wants to transform us from the sons of Jacob, who throw their brother into the pit and sell him into slavery, to the sons of Jacob that Moses blesses and says, you're going to be fruitful. You're going to make a positive contribution to the nation of Israel.

You're going to reflect the glory of God. Well, there is a way to do that. There is a means that you and I can implement every single day.

This must be an important lesson because we've had more distractions this morning between kids and cats and washing machines, and I don't know what all. But this is the last thing the enemy wants us to remember and keep in mind as we go through our day, because this is the way that God is genuinely glorified in your life and in my life. It's when we remember who we are and why we're here, and we let the power of God transform us.

What takes us from the squabbling in Genesis to the victorious, God-honoring, land-dwelling, blessing-possessing Israelites in Canaan, the land of milk and honey? It's faith. God has made all of the provision. God has the power to transform us from one to the other.

But we have to claim. We have to accept and receive the power of God, and we have to know how that is done. And there is a lot of piety going on today that doesn't claim the power of God.

People think, well, if I work hard enough, if I do enough good deeds, God's power will come into my life. My good deeds will transform me. There's a whole philosophy that says, oh, these people, we need to get them in the church and get them involved in some of our committees and some of our projects, and we'll get them to be an usher and usher.

We'll get them to teach Sunday school class, and we'll get them involved in the life of the church. And by doing these things, they'll sort of absorb the goodness and the life and become good Christians. We'll get them to go out and witness and shake off that cold-heartedness and that desire to not knock on people's doors and not accost them in the street and so forth.

And by going through something unpleasant, it's sort of a catharsis. You do this unpleasant thing where you witness to someone against all of your instincts, and this will sort of purge your soul out and make you a better Christian. There's nothing wrong with working in ministry and working in the church.

There's certainly nothing wrong with evangelism. We are all victims and happy to be so of evangelism. Somebody evangelized every one of us.

Praise God. But that is not the way the power of God comes into our life. Those things are a manifestation of the power of God in our life after it has been there and done its transforming work.

To be transformed, to have our minds renewed, takes faith. And faith has to have an object. There is no merit in faith all by itself.

I've said this many times, but every time the month of October rolls around, I think of it particularly because on October the 23rd of 1983, there was a man of great faith who put a bomb in a truck and drove it into the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon and killed eventually about 260 sailors and Marines. Why did he do that? Why did he incinerate himself in that blast? Because he had faith. He believed that as a Muslim, he would be ushered into the hallowed halls of whatever their Valhalla is by doing this act against the infidels, this little one-man jihad against the incursion of the Americans that shouldn't be there.

That was great faith. I haven't had enough faith to go drive myself into a building and blow myself to smithereens, but he did. But that faith has no merit because the object of that faith is a falsehood.

He's not going to Valhalla or anywhere else. He's going to be bobbing around in the hot place, as far as I know. The merit of faith is in the object.

The power in our lives is not the power of our faith. It's the power of what we put our faith in. And what we put our faith in is the Word of God.

When God makes a promise, He keeps it. To a thousand generations, He is faithful. It may not look like it.

I'm sure Joseph wondered many times when he was in prison in Egypt, am I going to ever see the light of day? What about those dreams where the sheaves were bowing and the sun and moon and stars were bowing? What about that? I'm a slave. I'm probably going to die of some disease down here in the dungeons of Egypt. God is faithful.

God's promises are always fulfilled. And when we begin to treat His promises as reality, when we begin to claim them in the small little skirmishes of life, that's when God's power enters our soul. That's when we are transformed by the renewing of our mind.

And that's when the hit, something wrong is done to us. We get put under stress. Something bad happens.

And when we don't produce the typical human response, we're patient, we're kind, we return good for evil. We are pleasant and have joy and peace in our soul instead of being bitter and angry and upset and intransigent. Well, that is a super human.

That is a divine manifestation of power because we don't have that power in and of ourselves. It is something that comes from God and it reflects His glory. That's why we're here.

So if there's one thing we take away from this lengthy chapter, chapter 49, it is to remember that we can't look down our nose at the sons of Jacob. We are this way. All of us have strengths and weaknesses, but it is a place for God to glorify Himself if we choose to let Him.

The way we do that is through faith. It's when Israel has the faith to enter the land that the positive side of the oracles for them is fulfilled. That's when they reflect the glory of the God of Israel.

And the same is true for us. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to finish chapter 49 and move into chapter 50.