

95-06-11Mark

And without fear of reprisal, without fear of oppression, without fear of persecution, we gather and assemble ourselves together to magnify the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. We thank you for our salvation. We have been rescued from a hopeless condition, from a condition that had no future, a condition from which we could not extricate ourselves, and we have, by your supernatural power, been entered into a life, an eternal life, a life of great hope for the future and great potential in the present.

We pray that as we look at the truth of your word this morning, that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts. We pray that these things will become a part of the resources in our soul that will equip us for every good work. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, it's been a very eventful week. We saw, as a result of our involvement with the U.N. forces in Bosnia, we saw one of our pilots shot down, actually a little over a week ago, and his extraordinary survival for some six days in a hostile environment.

We saw that he is a believer and recognized the source of his deliverance. I admire Captain O'Grady for his class in handling the aftermath of this event almost as much as for his skill in handling the event itself. I think he has done a fine job of reflecting the presence of mind and the integrity that a believer should have under pressure, and there's nothing like media attention to place pressure on someone.

I think he has been a fine example of what a military officer should be and what a believer in Jesus Christ should be. It's a wonderful, refreshing thing to see that. It occurred to me that this situation has, in fact, happened many times in our history.

We know that we had pilots who were shot down in Vietnam. We know that just in that most recent of conflicts, of long-lasting conflicts there in Vietnam, we had pilots who were shot down, and they themselves survived for many days, perhaps, by their skill and by their training and by their endurance. Some of them were rescued by the Navy SEALs.

Some of them escaped to friendly territory. Others may have lasted for several days, but ultimately were overcome by conditions or were captured or were killed. And it is no less heroic to survive for many days and then be killed than it is to survive for many days and be rescued, is it? Those men are equally well-trained, equally dedicated to their mission and to their survival, but it's in the hands of God whether the outcome is deliverance or the outcome is death.

And yet it isn't a reflection on the person. We think about the roster of faith heroes in Hebrews chapter 11. We know that the author of Hebrews points out that there were many great believers in the Old Testament who, by faith, accomplished great things.

And then he goes on to point out that there were many others, some whose names we don't even

know, who, by faith, served God in their capacity as a prophet or as a priest or as some other believer in Israel, and yet they perished. They were sawed asunder. They were run out of town.

They lived in caves and holes in the ground. The outcome of the lives of some of those men and women of faith in the Old Testament was not always a great chapter in Bible history. It wasn't always a great memorable victory to which we could point and say there is a great hero.

There is a place where God was at work. And the author of Hebrews is careful to point out that some of these who were despised and rejected and killed, the world was not even worthy of them. And they have their reward and they have their recognition from God coming up.

When Jesus Christ returns and establishes His kingdom, we are going to see many great heroes of the faith of whom we have never heard. The outcome of their ministry was rejection. The outcome of their ministry was death.

The outcome of their ministry and their faith was obscurity. And yet they are no less heroes. They are no less men and women of faith.

From a human perspective, John the Baptist was a failure. He died a criminal in prison and was beheaded. And yet we know the measure of his ministry.

Jesus said of those born of woman in the age up to that point when Jesus spoke, He said there has been none greater than John. And yet in the kingdom of God, the least in that kingdom will be greater than John. What did He mean by that? John is well known.

Even though he died in jail and died by execution, we recognize the greatness of his ministry. But each of us as believers has the opportunity to be as great or greater than John by faith. It doesn't mean that we're going to be an internationally known evangelist.

It doesn't mean that we'll be a published theological author or that we will have a huge well-known church with a television ministry and dozens of outreaches and so forth. The question comes down to this. As we think about men in military service, and we recognize the principle every year.

We have it coming up here on Flag Day. We just observed it on Memorial Day. There were many men who went through training.

They were suited up. They were handed their equipment. They got into an amphibious landing craft.

They were sent ashore. And the first volley of bullets from the enemy laid them in the sand of Iwo Jima or Peleliu or half a dozen other Pacific islands. Were they any less courageous? Were they any less dedicated? Were they any less patriotic? Was the outcome of their life any less significant that they didn't survive to raise the flag on Mount Suribachi? They didn't survive to

write their books and tell their stories.

They're equally honored. They're equally respected. And so we don't measure the value of a life and we don't measure the dedication of a person by the visible outcome.

We know that in many areas of life. But today in Christianity, in Christian circles, we don't always recognize that in the spiritual realm. We don't always recognize that as we look at churches.

We don't always recognize that when we look at ourselves as a church. And it reminds me, I've had this happen to me twice in the past week, and I know this has happened to you. Have you ever been invited to an event or you're supposed to attend some function and you know when it is and you know where it is and you know that there are going to be other people there but you didn't exactly get the word on what the dress is.

Is it formal? Is it informal? Is it suit or jacket and tie or jeans and a shirt or shorts and sneakers? You just, that information didn't really make it and then you sort of have to guess. Well, the very first date that Patty and I ever had, one of the few that we had in that three month period between meeting and marrying, we were invited to a reception for a couple that had recently been married. They were missionaries.

They were from the church that Patty attended at that time. And so it was the very first time that I had ever taken Patty anywhere and I took her to this reception. Well, we knew the place.

We knew the time. We knew what sort of event it was, but they had said this is informal. So I wore a dress shirt and a sweater and Patty wore a nice but not formal outfit.

And we went and when we got there, people were dressed as if it were the wedding itself. And you tend to feel a little awkward. I know this has happened to you.

Don't sit there with a frown on your face. I am not the only one that this has happened to. I know.

And you become self-conscious and you measure yourself by what you see around you. And you say, well, my goodness, I'm underdressed. And as a result of some of these experiences, my rule of thumb is when in doubt, overdress.

And if you get there and people are not dressed as nice as you, then just walk about as though they are the underdressed. You are the standard by which all others are measured and let them feel awkward. It would be very strange for everyone to feel awkward.

They are saying I am underdressed and you are saying I am overdressed and no one has a good time. But you put on the clothes and you look in the mirror and they are perfectly fine. You say this is appropriate.

This is good. I am happy with these. They are clean.

They are pressed. I look fine. Until you get in the company of someone that is dressed differently.

And then suddenly you feel unacceptable. You feel out of place. And this happens to us in the spiritual realm.

It is a hard thing. I grant you. I know this feeling very well.

It is a hard thing. Our church in the past has been very large. We have had lots of outreach.

We have had lots of ministry. Many of you all have relatives who may have been in the church at that time and they come back and visit. And we are not what we once were in terms of size.

We are not what we once were in terms of opportunities and ministries and outreach. And it can be a great challenge to our viewpoint, to our mental attitude, because we tend to feel a little embarrassed. We tend to say, Oh boy, I wish we had a few more people in the choir.

I wish we had a few more people in the pews. I wish we had a few more children in our Sunday school. I wish we just... And let's stop and think about that for a minute.

By the way, there are people who face and survive this test very well. And I am not saying that we always fail. I have seen in recent days that these people do a great job with this particular test.

But you know and I know that it's hard and we have to remind ourselves of some principles from Scripture. But let's think about this. Theologically and academically in our brain, maybe not in our heart, but in our mind, we know what God's measure is, don't we? We know how God evaluates us.

We know how He measures us. We know that at the judgment seat of Christ, He is not going to say, Dr. Jones, will you please bring the Sunday school records up and let me see how many people were there on Sunday, June 11th. God will never ask for those records.

God is not going to average the attendance at Tahlequah Bible Church and assign us our place in glory based on how large a church we were. And when we go before the Lord in prayer and when we meet together formally and informally, we don't generally have near as much problem with our size and our opportunities as we do sometimes when we're around other people who may go to larger churches or who start talking about their ministries and their outreach and their numbers. We had to print an extra page and stick it in the bulletin.

We had so much going on. Then we really start feeling that same kind of a feeling, don't we? Well, I should have worn a coat and tie. I'm feeling a little awkward here.

I'm feeling a little embarrassed. I don't feel like I'm really... And we suddenly, we've got to do something. I've got to light a fire under somebody and change that so that I don't have to hang my

head when I'm around other folks.

You know this happens. I know this happens. Believe me, as the pastor of this church, if there's anybody that is exposed to that temptation, it is me.

But I am here to tell you that that is a human standard and we have to remind ourselves, who are we? Who do we serve? Why are we here? If I were a prophet in Old Testament Israel and every town I went to and preached the Word of the Lord, they ran me out on a rail and I had shook the dust off my sandals so many times that I had blisters on my feet, I might start looking at my life and my ministry and saying, maybe there's something the matter with me. I'm not having success here. I don't have a huge following.

Jesus could have gone to Nazareth and received that rejection and said, you know, maybe I need to change my message a little bit. Maybe I need to change my procedure. Maybe I ought to get a few more disciples in here.

Maybe 12 is not enough. That's not the right response, is it? We have to measure ourselves with God's measure. We have to look at God's goals and God's objectives.

And while numerical growth is a wonderful thing, and believe me, when this place is packed to the gills, there will be nobody happier than me. We can't get there by a shortcut and we can't make that our goal. That is a result.

There's a big difference in attaining your goal and achieving results of attaining that goal. And we have to keep that in mind. And it's a hard thing.

It's hard for me and I know it's hard for you. It's especially hard when we're in that interaction with other believers. I think that's what makes it the hardest.

This passage we're looking at this morning in Mark chapter 4, Jesus Christ has sent his 12 disciples out in pairs and they've gone all through the land. Now Jesus is bringing something new to Israel, isn't he? He's bringing this message. The kingdom of God is at hand.

It's a new thing. It's caused a stir. It's caused a reaction.

Some people are for it and some people are against it. And it's controversial. And people say, well, what's he doing? Is he starting a movement? Is he trying to create a new religion? Is he departing from Judaism? He seems to not observe the law the way we do and so forth.

And so now he's got these six missionary teams out preaching this message. Change your mind. The kingdom of God is here.

And he faces them with that decision. Now one of the things I hope we remember from last week is this was a special mission. Here's a quiz question for you.

Did Jesus and the disciples in the three-and-a-half years of his earthly ministry typically travel with no extra baggage, with no extra staff and no extra sandals and no bag and no bread? Was that their normal mode of operation for those three-and-a-half years? No, it was not. I guess nobody was here last week. That was not their normal mode.

Why did Jesus have to give them those special instructions? He didn't say, Go out and follow the usual procedures and I'll see you in a couple of weeks. This was unusual. That's why the instructions are there.

Don't take anything extra. This is special. This is a specific mission for you, the twelve.

It's going to last this long. You come back and report to me in a month or in six weeks. It was special.

It was unusual. And it's wrong for us to go to that special mission and start deriving lessons for our daily lives. That's not the way Jesus and his disciples lived their daily life.

That's the way messengers with a message that were commissioned to deliver it at a specific place and a specific time were told to operate. The fact that they operated that way was unusual. It was designed to alert the people who heard them, This is an emergency message.

This is the emergency broadcast system telling you that there's a crisis. Wake up and get ready. The kingdom of God is coming.

That was the message. And it was special. It was unique.

Now, these men are returning here. We saw encapsulated in this story of Herod and John the Baptist, we saw that this represents and symbolizes for us the reaction of Israel. Herod is the king in Israel, sums them up.

He's like the pharaoh in Egypt. God said, Pharaoh, for this reason I have raised you up, that I might demonstrate my glory in you. He's talking about the whole nation of Israel and Egypt and their bondage there and the fact that Egypt were their taskmasters.

And Egypt received the ten plagues and God brought Israel out under the blood of the Passover lamb. But he symbolizes the whole nation of Egypt in the pharaoh. He says, Pharaoh, I have raised you up.

He's saying, Egypt, I have brought you up. I've let you put my people in captivity for 400 years so that at a particular point in time, I could demonstrate my power and my glory in you. Now, what do you think in about year 390, the Israelites were thinking they're in bondage in Egypt.

Where is our God? What is the matter with us that we're in bondage for lo these many years? This isn't what God promised Abraham. I don't feel like we're multiplying like the sands of the

seas. I don't feel like we're alike to the Gentiles and we're doing all of those things that God commissioned us as a people to be.

We've been slaves for 390 years. What's the matter? There was nothing the matter. It was God's will.

It was God's timing. It was God's purpose. And the fact that they were slaves in Egypt didn't mean that they were out of the will of God, did it? It meant that that was their calling.

That was their task. If you are a slave, Paul says, be a good one. He doesn't say escape.

He doesn't say murder your master. He doesn't say pray God to be released from slavery. He says if you find yourself as a slave, you be the best slave you can be.

Honor your master. That's what Paul says. We're not always called to success.

Now, you think about a military man. Suppose he goes into the service, and God in a dream says, guess what? You're going to fly this next mission, and you're going to be shot down, and you're going to be killed. You're going to be one of those heroes that nobody knows about.

They'll never find your remains. You'll be listed as missing in action for 25 or 30 years before they finally declare you dead. Would that change that pilot's mind about flying that mission? Would it change his sense of duty? Would it change his feeling of responsibility to carry out the task that he was assigned, knowing that it would end in death? What if the prophets in Israel, God said, oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you, after you deliver this message, you're going to be sawed in two.

What if that prophet said, well, then I'm not going to do it. Why should I go out there and deliver this message and get sawed in half? We like to get those missions where the outcome is great prosperity and great success and wonderful testimony near and abroad, don't we? Do we have the faith to accept a mission that may not end in glory, that may not end in recognition, that may not end in a great glowing comet across the sky that everyone can see? Does it change our sense of purpose? Does it change our faith? Does it change our dedication to performing the will of the Lord, facing the possibility that we're not going to end in a great success? Well, it shouldn't, should it? What if our military men said, I'm not going out there or I might get shot. I might lose my life.

What's the principle in military service? There is an idea worth dying for. There is a country worth dying for. There is a set of principles worth dying for.

And I will go whether I get killed or not. That's the attitude you have to have in your military service. That's the attitude Captain O'Grady had.

And if he would be no less a hero, if on the sixth day, instead of being picked up by the Marines, he had been picked up by the Bosnian Serbs and executed, no less a hero, no less dedicated, no

less a patriot. It just so happens that in the outworking of the plan of God, he was rescued and brought back. And he has a platform from which to speak.

And he gave God the glory and we're thankful for it. But that's not always the outcome. For every Captain O'Grady, there are dozens of pilots that die and are never found.

There are dozens of men who get shot as soon as their boots touch the sand. It doesn't change their heroism. It doesn't change the outcome of their faith.

There are many believers in this life. You and I may be some of them. And we may never be well known.

We may never have a great glowing testimony. We never may be able to invite people into our church and have them be overwhelmed with our numbers and our programs and our outreach and our ministries. But is that why we're here? I was tempted this morning, I almost did this as a snappy introduction.

The seminary would love me if I did this. After my introductory prayer to say, now I'd like everyone to turn with me to Paul's great exposition on church growth. Would you all please go ahead and turn there.

I can't seem to find it. You know this happened to me. I can't seem to find it in my notes.

Those of you that were here Sunday night a few weeks ago, I could not read my own notes. I had a great passage to turn to and couldn't find it. So somebody help me out.

Where is Paul's great exposition in those epistles that he wrote on church growth? And that's exactly the response that I would expect, because there isn't one. And why is that? Because Paul knew, as Jesus knew, that church growth is a result of something. There's not a desire that you can desire if you are fat that will make you thin.

There is not a desire or a wish that you can wish if you are scrawny that will make you muscular. And you can pray when you're scrawny, Oh Lord, make me muscular. And you can pray if you are fat, Oh Lord, make me thin.

I don't want to discourage your prayer life if you've been praying that. But there are some things that don't come through prayer. If you're fat, being thin does not come through prayer, does it? And you can pray until you are blue in the face, and you will not get a direct answer of waking up one morning and finding yourself 30 pounds lighter.

Because being thin doesn't come by prayer. Now there are some things that come by prayer, and there are some things that don't. Church growth does not come by prayer.

Where in Scripture do you find Paul saying, Pray that your church will grow. Where in Corinthians

or Romans or Ephesians or Philippians or Colossians or the Thessalonian letters or the letters to the pastors, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, where in there does Paul say, Pray that your church will grow. He doesn't say that.

Church growth doesn't come by prayer. Where in those epistles does Paul say, Get out and mount a door-to-door campaign. Get on the phones.

Get out and pass out your church brochure. You cannot find it. There are people who will be so bold as to say, Well, the reason Paul didn't write that is that everybody already knew it, and he didn't have to tell them.

I beg to differ. If Paul can tell them that they need to pray, if Paul can tell them that they need to study the Word of God and all of the other foundational things, if the author of Hebrews can list the basics of the Christian life in chapter 6, the foundation of repentance, away from dead works and of faith toward God, etc., then I think if this was an important part of our Christian life, Paul would have written it at least to the Corinthians who were the most backward church that he addressed. He wrote them two long letters.

It's not in there, is it? How did we get this idea that we've got to build the church numerically? Where did it come from? It comes from our logic. How can we give adequately? How can we minister adequately without resources? Don't we see that underlying this is the assumption that that's God's mission for us? We are to be a great source of impact in the lives of others. Maybe, hopefully, but maybe not.

Every prophet didn't make a big impact in Israel, did they? Every teacher of the law did not have an impact on the Israelites in their generation. We don't know what God's mission is for us as individuals or as a church in terms of results in this life. We don't know if we're going to get our head chopped off or if we're going to live to a ripe old age on the Isle of Patmos and write Revelation.

We don't know. There are things we do know. We know that any result that comes from our life has to come from spiritual growth, and we know how spiritual growth comes.

It doesn't come by prayer. It comes by immersing ourselves in Jesus Christ. It comes by the teaching of the Word of God, by the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, and on a regular, consistent basis, walking in the light.

That's how it comes. That's why Paul wrote Colossians. That's why John wrote 1 John.

If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship each with the other. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. We know that the Word of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

So that the man of God may be mature, may be complete and thoroughly equipped for every

good work. If we want to be thoroughly equipped for every good work, it takes us as individuals being individually chastened and scolded and built up and shaped by the Word of God. That's how we become equipped.

If we are a church of five people and we are equipped for every good work, we can have a greater impact in the plan of God than a brimful church of people who are not so equipped. And we don't know what that impact is. I will say this though.

Nearly all of us have family members. I'm sure you can sit there as I stand here and think of people in your family who aren't where they should be with regard to the Lord. And there is no one closer to them than you.

You are in the strategic position to be used by God. If you want to have impact in the lives of others, there is an opportunity right there. Do you feel equipped? Do you feel ready for God to use you in that situation? Do you know what to do and what not to do with regard to that person or those people? The solution is in the Word of God.

That's where we find out how God works and how God ministers. That's where God takes His power and creates in us love and joy and peace and patience, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-control. All of the things that are necessary for you and I in that specific area of ministry that we have as individuals.

And then when we come together on Sundays and on Wednesdays and when we get together collectively as a church, those believers so equipped are ready to be used by God for whatever His purpose may be. God raised up prophets in Israel who were slain, and they fulfilled God's purpose because their blood will stand as a judgment against that generation when Jesus Christ returns and judges all men. That was God's purpose.

Now what if that prophet kicked his toe in the dirt and said, I wanted to be Elijah. I wanted to be Elijah on Mount Carmel. I wanted the fire to come down.

I wanted the water to be consumed. I wanted to have a great impact. I'm so disappointed.

I went out here, I preached the Word, and I got slain. That prophet is just as great a hero as Elijah on Mount Carmel. God's purpose for his life was different.

We can't assume that God's purpose for us as a church is to be huge and to have 16 different ministries. I pray to God that we get that opportunity, but that may not be it. If we knew that that wasn't it, if somebody stood up and had the New Testament early church gift of prophecy and said, five years from now, Tahlequah Bible Church won't even be here.

It will dwindle down to six people and the building will burn in a fire and it will be gone five years from now. Would that change your mind about what you're doing today? It shouldn't. Any more

than that military man's mind should change or that prophet's mind should change.

Why are we here? We are here to serve the Lord God and His purposes. How do we know what those purposes are? They're in His Word. And what does it tell us to do? Trust.

Israel standing on the shore of the Red Sea. Gideon getting ready to attack this overwhelmingly large force and God keeps whittling down His army. I have 30,000 men.

Whoops, now I've only got 300 men. What if those 300 men said, I'm not sticking around here. We're going to go in the middle of the night here and all I've got is a lamp and a torch and a pitcher.

300 of us going into this huge overwhelming force. We're nuts. It was God's purpose to turn 30,000 men into 300 men and they didn't even have swords.

They didn't even have weapons. Now if that group of 300 men had looked at each other and said, we're too small. We can't do this job.

Let's flee. Let's go back with the 29,700 that left. That's a bigger group.

God can do more with that group than He can do with us 300. We don't even have swords. Where would God's glory be in that story? Where would Gideon's fame be as a man of faith leading that group of 300 with no swords and watching God achieve a great victory in Israel? It wouldn't have happened because they fell apart thinking their numbers weren't great, thinking that their opportunities were limited because they were small and seemingly ill-equipped.

We have a great opportunity as a church because it doesn't matter if there are eight people sitting next to you in the pew or if you're sitting in the pew by yourself. If you are here under the teaching of the Word of God and the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, you have an opportunity because for all of the other hours of the week when you're not here at Tahlequah Bible Church, God can use you. God can reflect His glory just in your mental attitude.

You may not have an impact in the lives of others. I will offer you an alternative. Here are two choices.

Ninety-eight percent of Christianity today will say your mission in life as a believer is to have an impact in the lives of others. Well, your pastor is not in that ninety-eight percent. I am in the two percent that says you are here for God to have an impact in your life.

I am here for God to have an impact in my life. And I promise you, if God has an impact in your life and in my life, that impact will spread to others. You cannot contain the supernatural power of God in your own soul.

It will make a difference. The Word of God will equip us for every good work. But we can't fall

apart under pressure.

We can't get our eyes on our size. We can't judge ourselves because we're around believers and we start feeling sort of embarrassed. Well, you know, I really hope so-and-so doesn't visit this Sunday because I know that we won't have anybody in the choir and so forth.

Nonsense. That's not the measure of the impact of God's work in our souls and in our lives. It's in the love and the joy and the peace and the stability that you have in your soul as we face this test.

We are the 300. We stand here without swords. We stand here without spears.

We stand here ready for God to work in us and through us to achieve a great victory. That's our opportunity. I pray that you all will remember that as I try to remember it as we face these different tests.

I went to my high school reunion last night. Of course, you know, you get the spectrum. Our high school motto, you know how you have this thing on a banner and on your program when you graduate and it says, ours back in 1975 said, We have crossed the bay.

The ocean lies before us. That was our class motto. And I thought, well, that's appropriate.

I'm going into the Naval Academy, kind of a naval motif there. That's pretty good. We've crossed the bay.

The ocean lies before us. Well, at our reunion here yesterday, as I looked at girls in my class who have collected four or five last names and when they stand up to speak of their family, they say, well, we've got his, mine, and ours, and, you know, mixing and matching of families. And some people didn't want to show up because they used to be married to somebody in the class and now they're married to somebody else and vice versa.

I felt like, you know, we've crossed the bay. The ocean lies before us 20 years ago. And now our broken ships are washing up on the shore of the ocean.

We sailed out into the sea and got hammered. And most of my fellow members of the class of 1975 were believers. We all were in church.

You know, we're here in the Bible Belt. Everybody went to one church or another. They're believers.

They know the Lord Jesus Christ. But when they sailed out into life, the bulk of us didn't have what it took to make good decisions. We didn't live the life of faith.

And we have suffered for it and been hammered for it and have drifted up on the rocks and shoals of the shoreline there after having sailed out into the sea. And a very few can stand up

and say, I've been married once. I've got kids.

We're happy. We're healthy. We haven't made a mess of our lives.

We haven't made a mess of training our children and so forth. And why is that? It isn't because of any merit on the part of the individual. It is simply attempting to operate by faith and letting God have his way in our lives.

Some of those folks in my class, they'll never be famous. They'll never be well-known. They'll never be making six figures of salary.

But God has glorified in their lives. Why? Because they got married in faith and they raised their children in faith. And on that day when God judges the thoughts and the words of men, they will stand vindicated because it's God's power that made them what they are.

And by God's power, they will stand. And it doesn't matter what church they attend. It doesn't matter how large or small it is or how many ministries it's got.

What matters is that they heard the Word of God, they latched onto it and trusted it, and were willing to stand like Caleb and Joshua looking across the river at the Promised Land and ignoring the people that said, You're crazy and we're not big enough and we're not strong enough and we don't have the resources to go in there and take that land. Caleb and Joshua trusted God, and God said, Well, fellas, you're going to have to wait 40 years, but you will go in and you will inherit because you trust Him. That's our challenge this morning.

Let's close and pray. Father, we thank You for Your grace to us. We thank You that everything that was necessary to save us and to enter us into Your family was accomplished by Your power.

We know that after salvation, we are to live by that same power. And we pray this morning that the Word of Truth that resides in our souls, the presence of Your Holy Spirit within us, will enable us and empower us to be reflections of Your glory. We pray that we can live that life of faith, that we can trust You, not measure by a human standard, not turn to human solutions, not fall apart under pressure, but remember that we are Your children.

We are members of Your family. We are here in Your church. You are the one who equips us.

You are the one that empowers us. You are the one that determines our destiny and our purpose. And we pray that whatever our purpose and our destiny may be, both individually and as a church, we pray that we will carry forward with a proper sense of our responsibility, with a proper recognition of how it is we are to operate by faith.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.