

Faith or Fear?

Genesis 20

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We should clarify again what we're talking about these Sunday evenings. We're talking about the right way to live. That is, the right way to deal with the wrong that we find inside ourselves and the right way to deal with the wrongs in the circumstances around us and in the people around us. There are two ways in dealing with those wrongs; the way most human beings deal with the wrongs in themselves is by trying to suppress them. So you find that you have a bad temper or you find that you have wandering thoughts; you try to suppress those by your own willpower and by training yourself. You try to deal with the wrongs in the circumstances around you, in the things that happen to you, and the wrongs in the people that are around you by manipulating them so they cannot hurt you or harm you, or so that you have the upper hand of them. Or by manipulating money or the circumstances in your job so that it will fit the plans you have for yourself. Most human beings live that way; they live by their own skill at suppressing the wrongs inside themselves and manipulating the wrongs in other people and in their circumstances. In other words most of us live by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By our own knowledge, our own shrewd understanding of good and evil, we try to bring our life into some kind of peace.

The other way is the right way. It is by believing what God had said he has done in Jesus and that is clearly stated in Galatians 6:14, "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." That's the right way to live and act: in the absolute confidence that that has happened. That you yourself, with all your wrong inside you and all your intractable personality traits, have been crucified with Christ and destroyed and recreated new and that the world itself, with all the people that would frustrate God's will for your life, with all the circumstances -- financial and professional -- that seem to be falling wrongly, all of that has also been crucified in Christ. In absolute confidence that in a great internal miracle in Jesus that was manifested in time on Calvary, God took all the elemental spirits of the universe that affect your finances, that affect your marriage plans, that affect your personal relationships and he brought them all together in his son and he squashed them to bits. Then when he raised Jesus up, he raised your life up -- whole and ordered and harmonious. And if you have faith in that, if you believe that and you live in that trust and confidence, then God through the Holy Spirit will make that real in your life.

I'd just like to add a footnote; it isn't really a matter of whether you have stocks or shares. It isn't really a matter of whether you work hard at your job or not; it's where you put your trust. Do you work hard at your job because you're utterly dependent on that for your security and your security is utterly placed on the amount of money you have in your bank account or the number of stocks and shares you have in your portfolio, or do you do those things because it's part of what God has given you responsibility to do; to bring his world into order and to fulfill your own abilities and you trust in that miracle that God has wrought in Christ? So it is important to clarify that rather simplistic adolescent objection that we used to make in the old days when we'd say, "Oh well if that's so, then we just can sit back." Well, no, you'd sin against God if you just sit back and don't use the abilities that he's given you. He wants you to work and he wants you to work in order to bring his world into order under his will. The issue is -- do you also trust and depend on your job for your security and your peace? In that case you're living the wrong way. Or do you live and act in complete confidence that God has wrought all that's needed and has destroyed

all that would harm you?

That's what we're discussing loved one, we're discussing the right way to live; not how to do it, because it's not a technique, it's a warm, personal, trusting confidence in your dear Lord Jesus. We are discussing these Sunday's evenings the lives of men and women whom God has described to us as living that way, because we believe that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

So we believe that in these Sunday evenings there will come silence in your own heart when God whispers to you, "Could it be that grace also would take care of these things in my life, and that I wouldn't have to live with this strain and this striving?" So if you listen to his word, and you judge it by your best judgment, and you begin to believe it in your head, there will come moments when the Holy Spirit will light it up and make it "Rhema" to you; will make it God's own word to you, personally, and that will free and liberate you into this right way to live. So that's why we're studying.

We're in Genesis, and right in these first few verses there is great reassurance for many of us. Genesis 21:1-2, "The Lord visited Sarah as he said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him." If you'll notice how that is repeated three times in the two verses: "The Lord visited Sarah as he has said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him."

What is God like? Turn to James 1:16 and you'll see, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." That's what God is like. God is a God in whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." If God promises that you are going to have son then you will have a son. If God promises that he will do something for you and in your life, then he will do it; it will be done. Now why this is remarkable is that we are able to look from the viewpoint of heaven by reading these few verses, because we are able to read these in the context of all of Abraham's life. But Abraham himself was not always in that position. Somebody today is able to look at what is happening in your life in the context of your whole life that is now past, that is, your whole life; you are already in heaven and someone besides God, some of the saints, are able to take the same view point of your life and they think the same as you would think: "Why did he ever worry"? Why did he ever worry? Here the son was just as God promised." Well I'll tell you why he worried – for the same reason we do.

When did Abraham first get this promise? Look back to Genesis 12"2; "And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." Back there God promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation that could only come by him having a family. In verse 3, "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." What age was Abraham? Look at verse 4; "So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old." So at seventy-five God said to him, "You're going to have a son. Your wife is sixty-five but you're going to have a son." Then Genesis 13:16, "I will make your descendents as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted." So Abraham will then say, "That's the second time you've told me that Lord. Now where is the son?" Genesis 15:5, "And he brought him outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'" You could have understood Abraham saying, "Now Lord, it's going to be a little bit more difficult because I'm now eighty-six." He was now eight-six, it was now eleven years later, and Sarah was not sixty-five, she was now

seventy-six. But you see in verse 6 "And he believed the Lord; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness." So maybe he got the son then.

Now look at Genesis 17:5, "No longer will your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you." You could understand Abraham saying, "Lord you'll have to hurry" because if you look at verse 1 of Genesis 17, that happened when Abraham was ninety-nine years old.

So God came to Abraham when he was seventy-five and said, "I'm going to give you children." He came to him again at eight-six and said, "I'm going to give you children." And he came to him again when he was ninety-nine and said, "I'm going to give you children" and all that time Abraham had to keep believing God. That's why I say we're looking from an easy view point; we weren't with Abraham during those times, during those twenty-five years, and so it will be with us. If you ask why God kept Abraham waiting so long, remember, often Abraham prevented God from fulfilling his promise by his own precipitative actions. Often, too, God wanted to educate Abraham and strengthen his faith. But most of all God wanted Abraham to know, "I'm not going to give a baby to a sixty-five year old woman, or to a seventy-six year old woman. I'm going to give a baby to a ninety year old woman so that you may be in no doubt that I alone do all things and that you men and women do nothing by your own unaided strength." That was why God did it; so that Abraham would be in no doubt that this baby was a miracle gift of God. Maybe a sixty-five year old woman might pull it off, but not a seventy-six year old woman and not chance with a ninety year old woman. God was determined that Abraham would know that the power belonged to God and not to Sarah or Abraham, and so it will be with us and with the things God promises us. Don't be cynical; if you're a wife, don't be cynical or skeptical of that guy who's trying to walk in faith. If you're a guy, don't be cynical or skeptical of that dear girl who's trying to walk in faith. If you're a roommate, don't be cynical or skeptical. Don't mock. Don't be found among those that scoff at God.

There's a sure word to us in one of the prophets, and this is God's word to us all about his promises: Habakkuk 2:3, "For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end -- it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay." That's it -- "If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come. It will not delay."

How do you wait in faith? It's described clearly in Romans 4 and it's the Holy Spirit's commentary on the events in Abraham's life that had taken place 2000 years before. This is the way to wait; Romans 4:19, "He [Abraham] did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. That is why his faith was 'reckoned to him as righteousness.'" And "reckoned to him as righteousness" means not put in the place of righteousness; but his trust in God was regarded by God as his rightness with God. God wants us to trust him; he wants us to put our faith in him and not in the world of circumstances and people, and not in ourselves, but to put our faith in him. God regards that and that alone as rightness.

Now let's look a little more closely at the kind of faith that kept Abraham going for those 25 years, in Romans 4:18, "In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, 'So shall your descendants be.'" In hope he believed against hope -- how can you do that? Only if there are two kinds of hopes; only if there is a divine hope and a human hope, and that's what it means. In divine hope Abraham hoped against human hope: "I can

believe God to add a little extra to something that looks naturally probable. like to give him something easy -- I trust him – but I want to be easy on him.” Or maybe I want to be easy on myself; “I can believe God for something that looks naturally probable, because he only has a little bit to make up.” But do you see that that’s actually a harder thing to do then to have real faith because you are trying to mix two kinds of hope. You’re saying, “A woman of fifty-two, fifty-three it’s a little easier to believe she can have a child, even though it’s getting kind of late, but it’s just possible that she could, with her own natural ability and with a little grace from God, she might bring it off.”

But actually it’s harder to have that kind of extension of human hope then it is to have real faith; because real faith hopes in divine hope, against human hope. In other words real faith doesn’t look at the natural probability of the thing; it accepts that that is purely human hope and that that does not help faith, but that actually hinders faith. Many of us who pick little things to believe in think that we are helping and strengthening our faith and actually we’re not; we’re undermining it at the very time as we’re trying to strengthen it because we’re mixing the two hopes. Faith depends on divine hope, not human hope. So Abraham gave up all human hope. He was pretty near giving it up when she was sixty-five, nearer giving it up when she was seventy-six; but when she came to ninety there’s no point in hoping from a human point of view.

Look at Acts 7:23 and remember a little of his life. This is a blessing because it releases many of us men, but many of you ladies also, from all kinds of bondage as we as the years pass: "When he [Moses] was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking the Egyptian." Direct, with his own strength, that was his method. “He supposed that his brethren understood that God was giving him deliverance by his hand, but they did not understand. And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarrelling and would have reconciled them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren, why do you wrong each other.’ But the man who was wronging thrust him aside, saying, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ At this retort Moses fled, and became an exile in the land of Midian where he became the father of two sons. Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush.” Forty years later -- he was forty when he tried his big deliverance technique, and forty years later he is still on the backside of the mountain looking after his father and lost sheep. I don’t know if you remember; but he lived until he was a hundred and twenty. So it was from eighty to a hundred and twenty that God used him; it was the last third of his life. He was two-thirds through his life before God was able to get him to no longer have human hope in his own abilities.

It’s the same in your own life: don’t get caught up in that, “By this age I ought to be this. By this time I ought to be married. By this time I ought to have a house. By this time I ought to have a bank account.” Don’t -- because that’s human hope in the world that has been so evil that God had to destroy it in his son Jesus and he has created a new world where everything goes at an accelerated pace. That’s why Abraham was able to trust -- that’s why he was able to have faith through those twenty-five years; he knew that God was the one that could accelerate the fermentation so that water can change into wine in a few seconds. He knew that God was able to accelerate the development of five loaves and two fishes so fast that it could immediately feed five thousand. He knew that God was in charge of all the protons and neutrons in every body and in every material substance, and that God could do it at anytime; that God went to a schedule and a different time table completely. He knew that God has taken this natural world with its own particular rates of speeds and he has thrown them out of the window and accelerated them to a super-natural speed in his

son Jesus. In other words Abraham knew that Christ's resurrection life mocks at ninety year old wombs and hundred year old bodies. Christ's resurrection life mocks at wombs that run blood. Christ's resurrection life mocks leprosy because his life is able to bring strength and life despite those things, and to transform them. So loved ones, Abraham was able to live through those twenty-five years because he had completely given up human hope, and he knew that human hope was nothing but an enemy to God's own power.

It was the same with Gideon; God went to extreme lengths so that we men and women would be absolutely clear that all power is his, and no power is ours. Let's look at that remarkable story in Judges 7:2, "The Lord said to Gideon, 'The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt against me saying, 'My own hand has delivered me.' Now therefore proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, 'Whoever is fearful and trembling, let him return home.' And Gideon tested them; twenty-two thousand returned, and ten thousand remained.'" So twenty-two thousand went back, "And the Lord said to Gideon, 'The people are still too many.'" That is, he had only a third of what he had originally, less than a third. "And the Lord said to Gideon, the people are still too many; take them down to the water and I will test them for you there; and he of whom I say, 'This man shall go with you,' shall go with you; and any of whom I say to you, 'This man shall not go with you,' shall not go.' So he brought the people down to the water; and the Lord said to Gideon, 'Anyone who laps the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set by himself; likewise every one that kneels down to drink.' And the number of those that lapped, putting their hands to their mouths, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people knelt down to drink water. And the Lord said to Gideon, 'With the three hundred men that lapped I will deliver you, and give the Midianites into your hand; and let all the others go every man to his home.'"

That's how anxious God is that we'll be absolutely clear who has brought the miracle into our lives. So loved ones a lot of God's dealings with you and me are towards that end; to destroy our confidence in our own ability to bring about these things by our own power, and God will go to extreme lengths to do that. That's why it's essential that you can always say, "I can't see how God is going to do this." It's essential that you can say that because if you can see how God is going to do it, then we're in trouble; because you must either be God, or God isn't going to do too much for us. It's essential that you can say, "I can't see how God is going to do this" because God works on a different schedule, he works on a different power, and he works completely independent from impulse.

So loved ones if you're a partnership -- a husband or a wife or if you're two roommates or two friends; never, never say to the other person, "Well it doesn't look as if it's going to happen" because you're stating simply what is a cliché. Of course it doesn't look as if it's going to happen! If God is going to do it, it shouldn't look as if it's going to happen. If it's going to be by God's power, it can't possibly look as if it's going to happen; it can only look as if it's going to fail absolutely and utterly; because faith is filled with divine hope.

Now what is divine hope? You'll find it in Romans 4:17b. Maybe we should read the whole verse so you get the context. "As it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations' -- in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.'" That's it. That's what divine hope is; it's divine hope in the God that gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In other words, it's reminding ourselves that God is the one who said, "Let there be light" and whole cosmic light broke upon the universe. It's reminding ourselves that God said, "Let there be life" and life broke across the earth. It's reminding ourselves that God is the one that says, "Rise up from the dead" and people

rise up. God takes nothingness and makes something out of that nothingness. Your God is the one who made your body; every proton and neutron, so he knows every detail of it. Your God can replace you in a moment. It takes us all kinds of agony to replace a kidney or to replace a heart; God can replace a whole body in a moment. God is the one who calls into existence the things that do not exist and that's what divine hope is; it's absolute confidence in that God.

You know fine well that even though you think that you exist at this moment by your own skill and your own shrewdness and your clever manipulation of your own money that there are a hundred different places where you don't want to say luck was with you because you're supposed to be a Christian. But that's what you say. Looking back on your life isn't that true? Looking back on my life I can tell you of a dozen times on a motorbike when it was God that preserved my life. I could think of a hundred times when, if the checks had come in, in a different order and the bills had come in, in a different order it would have been disaster. You know fine well that even though you're standing up and saying, "I'd rather earn my money by the sweat of my brow and depend on my money" you know fine well that if it had been up to you and your money you would have been dead long ago; there were all kinds of things that fell right for you. In other words, the Father is in charge of you anyway; it's simply that you won't acknowledge it, and therefore you cut yourself off from the great miracles that he is ready to do in your life. It is in fact true that we are all dependent on the God who calls into existence the things that do not exist. We are all dependent on the God who is able to raise from the dead because we have experienced a lot of that in our life so far. That's divine hope.

Now how did Abraham behave; how did he grow in his faith, and was his faith realistic? Let's look at Romans 4:19 "He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb." So faith is not unrealistic or blind. Abraham didn't keep going by Sarah thinking; "I don't want to look at you; you're getting older and older and older and older." He didn't. He looked at her and he knew that that body had already been included in Jesus and whatever the outward symptoms were, that body had been completely renewed in Jesus and was capable of bearing as many children as God wanted. Nor did he keep trying to think, "That wasn't a pain I had -- it wasn't a pain. I'm not getting old -- I don't need a walking stick." Faith does not have to look away from reality.

You don't need to keep your bank book in chaos so that you won't know the worst in order for your faith to grow stronger -- you keep your bank book in order. You keep your books in order. You know exactly where your business is and you look at that business, not from human point of view, and not according to the flesh, but you see it as it is; destroyed and raised and made complete in Christ and capable of being whatever God wants it to be. So faith is not blind and it's not unrealistic. Faith is utterly realistic; it looks at an old ninety year old body and it sees that that body was one of those that Christ died for; Christ died for all therefore all died, and if we died with Christ we are certainly raised with him. Faith sees that body raised and made whole, so it looks bluntly at the real so called "facts", but they are only the appearance of this fallen world. Faith sees the fallen world crucified in Christ, raised and made whole and it interprets those "facts" according to reality. So faith sees the truth of things and that's why it doesn't weaken.

So loved ones don't think you'll avoid weakening your faith by looking away from what appears to be the situation in the world. No, look at it plainly and straight. Understand it and know it, but then see it in Christ; raised and made whole. That's something to remember: you ought to look at those things, and yet faith does not grow by contemplating the appearance of this fallen world. It

doesn't. Faith does not grow by anxious worrying: "The balance is that in my bank book, and I need to get this check out next week -- how will I do it. No I can't -- alright I'll stop thinking about it." Then you get your head on the pillow and say, "Now how will that work? I don't see how, well maybe I could swing this. Maybe I could get this loan." It's not that; faith does not grow by thinking and thinking about the thing. Certainly it's consistent with thinking plainly about the thing and understanding it, but faith does not grow by contemplating it.

You can see the way faith grows if you look at the next verse Romans 4:20. "No distrust made him waiver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised." He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God -- you grow strong in your faith as you contemplate God and as you read about him and you find out what a magnificent God he is, and you see all the things that he did for all the people in the Old Testament and New Testament. You see that nothing is too hard for the Lord and that's how your faith grows; it grows by spending time in his presence and contemplating him and seeing what his nature is like and seeing how easy the most magnificent miracles are to him.

You remember the little piece that I quoted before from [Smith] Wigglesworth? He went to this home where there was a woman that seemed like a lunatic. She was thrashing around on the bed and the father brought over the new born baby to her and the mother just pushed it away. She was frothing at the mouth and had been like that for about seven weeks and the atmosphere was completely hostile. Wigglesworth said, "Have you anybody to help?" And one of the women in the room at the time answered, "We have done everything we could." And then Wigglesworth said, "Have you no spiritual help?" Her husband stormed and said, "Spiritual help? Do you think we believe in God after we've had seven weeks of no sleep in this maniac condition? If you think we believe in God you're mistaken. You have come to the wrong house." There was a young woman, about eighteen, that grinned at me as she passed out of the door as much as to say, "You cannot do anything." But this brought me to a place of compassion for this poor young woman. And then with what faith I had, I began to penetrate the heavens. I was soon out on the heights and I tell you; I have never seen a man get anything from God who prayed on the earth level. If you get anything from God you'll have to pray right into heaven, for all you want is there. If you're living an earthly life, all taken up with essential things, and expect things from heaven, they will never come. God wants us to be a heavenly people. Seated with him in the heavenly places and laying hold of all the things in heaven that are at our disposal. I saw there in the presence of that girl, limitations to my faith. But as I prayed there came another faith into my heart that could not be denied --a faith that grasped the promises, a faith that believed God's word. I came from the presence of the glory back to earth and I was not the same man. I confronted the same conditions I had seen before; but this time it was in the name of Jesus with a faith that could shake hell and move anything else. I cried to the demon power that was making this young woman a maniac, "Come out of her in the name of Jesus." She rolled over and fell asleep and awakened in fourteen hours perfectly sane and perfectly whole. But you have to pray into heaven. Your faith grows and you become fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised when you pray into the heavenly places and you spend time with God and you meditate upon him and contemplate him and you go back and forward. "But God you made this; you're real Lord; you have power now. You're going to raise me when I die; you are able to do this here; this is nothing to you. Here's a piece in the Old Testament where you did the same thing, Lord I know you are able to do it." You go back and forward with God and as you do, God begins to see you taking him as seriously as Abraham did, the Holy Spirit begins to bring about in you an absolute confidence and trust that God will do what he has promised. So your faith grows as you spend time in God's presence, and that's probably the center of it all isn't it; God will do what he has promised. But how do you know what he has promised?

Cho is that dear fellow who is the Pastor of what is called the largest church in the world and it's in Korea. He has a book called "Fourth Dimension" and he's talking about knowing and praying through to the point where you have the assurance that God has promised the thing. How do you know what God has promised you? He has some good words. He says, "Third, have a definite object in view. Have a burning desire for it. Third, you must have the substance or assurance. Substance in the Greek language is Hupostasis. In the English language this can be translated title deed or legal paper. When you have a clear goal and you have this desire burning in your heart to a boiling point, then you should kneel down and pray until you receive the substance, the assurance. When I was conducting a meeting in Hawaii one Japanese woman came and asked me how long she should pray to receive assurance. I told her that sometimes it takes only a minute and if she would have peace and assurance in her heart in that instant she would not need to pray any longer. But I told her it could sometimes take two minutes, two hours, two weeks, two months or two years. But whatever the length of time you should pray through until you have the substance."

And I thought this was good: "Westerners are often wrapped up trying to live according to schedules. Everything is rush, rush, rush. Soon they start losing the time to have fellowship with family and friends and even the time to wait upon the Lord. Everything seems instant; instant breakfast, T.V. dinners, fast food counters -- all is ready in five minutes. So when going to church they seem to pray, 'Oh God answer me; I have no time. Five minutes, and if you don't answer me quickly forget about it.' They are not waiting upon the Lord." I thought he was right. And then he gives his own example, which I thought might help some of us. "When we needed five million dollars to build the church already contracted" so they had already contracted for the building of the church, "I had a clear cut vision, a clear cut goal and a burning desire to build this church which would seat 10,000 people." And I think this is what surprises some of us: "But my heart was full of fear. I was shaking, fearful, and I had no assurance. I was like a frightened rabbit and that five million dollars looked like Mount Everest. To rich foreigners it may mean relatively little, but to Koreans a million dollars means a great deal of money. So I began to pray like a person dying. I said 'Lord now they've started working, but still I have no assurance. I don't know where we're going to get all this money.' I began travailing. A month passed and still I had no peace and no assurance. A second month passed and I was praying into the middle of the night. I would roll out of the bed and go into the corner and cry, sobbing my heart out. My wife thought I was losing my mind but I was mentally blinded. I would just stand without thinking, worried about the five million dollars." I wonder how many of us would say that same thing. "I would just stand without thinking; worried about the five million dollars. After I prayed incessantly like that for three months, one morning my wife called, 'Breakfast is ready.' As I was walking out of my study just about to sit in the chair suddenly the heavens opened up and the tremendous blessings of the Lord poured into my heart and this great title deed, the substance and the assurance, were then imparted into my soul. Suddenly I jumped out of my chair like a shot. 'I've got it. I've got it. Oh I've got it.' My wife rushed out of the kitchen and as I looked at her I saw that her face was absolutely pale. She was frightened and taking me said, 'What happened to you? Are you all right? Sit down.' 'I've got it.' I replied. 'What do you have?' 'I have five million dollars' I strongly asserted. Then she said, 'You are really crazy now, really crazy.' And he said, 'But honey, I've got all these five million dollars inside of me. They're growing now. Oh inside me it's growing.' Suddenly those five millions dollars had turned into a small pebble on my palm. I prayed with assurance. My faith reached out and I grabbed hold of that five million dollars; it was mine -- I got the substance and once you get the substance, title deed, the legal paper, whether you see these things or not legally, those things are bound to come to you because legally those things belong to you. So pray through until you have this assurance fully convinced that God is able to do what he has promised." That's the way we are

to live -- by the promises in God's word and by our faith in him.

Let's pray.

Dear Father when we count up the hours that we have slogged and struggled and worried and sweated and we compare them with the hours that we have spent in your presence reminding ourselves of who you are and what you are like and trying to get to know the one with whom we will spend eternity, we are ashamed. Then when we see the frustration in our lives and the anxiety and the worry clouds under which we so often live, we can only conclude that an enemy has done this to us, has deceived us into so much misplaced trust in ourselves and in our own ability to overcome this world and so little trust in the only one who has said he has overcome the world. So Father we bow before you and apologize for being such foolish people and such stupid, independent little people. We could not lift our little finger if you withdrew your little finger. We could not open our eyes again after this prayer if you were not so kind as to keep our heart beating. Dear Father we apologize to you and repent. And Lord God we are going to step out on this way of faith and see something happen in our lives and see our lives go somewhere and see our lives achieve something worthwhile. Lord many of us are quite far on in our lives and many of us feel we are not on schedule and now we thank you that we're not. We thank you Lord that we can see that from our own point of view we are not going to achieve the things we hoped to achieve.

Lord we would like to abort that thing right now. We would like to start again tonight and begin to find some clear direction and some solid place to stand for the rest of our lives. Lord when we think of women like Mother Teresa, and when we think of men like C.T. Stud, Lord we want our lives to count for something. Father we want to be men like [David] Brainerd. We want to be the kind of women that were used by you in passed years to save thousands upon thousands. Lord we want our lives to count for Jesus in this passing world of sin. Dear Father we give ourselves to you tonight to begin to learn this way of faith by actually exercising it. And oh Lord we would rest back from the strain and the stress. We would ease back now from all our worry and anxiety and we would cast our care upon you because you care for us.

We thank you for your dear words to us: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication," however long that supplication takes, "with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God that passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" instead of them being constantly scattered from Jesus by the worry and the anxiety.

Dear Lord, tonight we give ourselves anew to you to work some kind of miracle that will make the world stop and stare and see your power and your might. Thank you Lord. Thank you for Abraham. And thank you for making him the father of all who believe so that we are his children and you are fully expecting us to walk in the same faith. Thank you Lord.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us now and evermore. Amen.