

## Sarah's Enduring Faith

Genesis 23

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

In Genesis 23: 1 it says, "Sarah lived a hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah." By the time she was a hundred and twenty-seven, her son, Isaac, was about thirty-seven years of age. He was the one through whom not only God's chosen people would be born but eventually Jesus, the son of God, would be born on earth. So hers was a pretty successful life. Yet if you look at when she was ninety, when most people would say her life was finished, it was pretty much of a failure. Look back at it and you will see what she was doing at ninety, in Genesis 20:1-2. She was actually in a king's harem at ninety; "From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of Negeb, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, 'She is my sister.' And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah." That is what she was doing when she was ninety; pretty much a failure and a defeat. Then at a hundred and twenty-seven, the mother of a thirty-seven year old son who would beget God's chosen people, and who would eventually beget the son of the Creator of the world in this earth.

God's timing is different to that of fallen man and woman. At ninety she looked a failure, and if she had looked around and checked out everybody else, she would have said, "My life is over and it's a mess." That was only because she was measuring it by the same measurements as the fallen world has. Loved ones, don't do it, don't do it; God's timing is far different than ours -- his idea of time is far different from that of the fallen world. A thousand years are as a day in his court. He can accelerate time and he can accelerate the workings of nature as he did in Canaan of Galilee when he accelerated the turning of water into wine and speeded up the fermentation. He can slow it down so that people can live to be as old as Methuselah did. So God has his own power over time.

Don't ever get into the thinking of the world in this manner: that by this age you should be married, by this age you should have this kind of job, by this age you should have this kind of promotion by this age you should have this kind of bank account, by this age you should have a retirement plan. Don't do that because God does not operate that way. It's fallen man that operates according to those old boring deadlines and it's really part of Satan's trick. It's Satan's method of getting us all depressed because actually, very few of us hit them right on the nose like that. God has a completely different schedule, and you can see it with Sarah. At ninety she was in a king's harem as a result of her husband's lying yet again by saying that she was his sister. Then a few years later, that's really what it virtually is, thirty-seven years later, she died; having borne into the world the man who would beget the chosen people of God, and would eventually bring the son of God into the earth.

It's important for us to see that God's plan for us is entirely unique. He has a unique dream for your life. If you go according to his plan, then do not tie him to deadlines, don't. Don't tie him to deadlines, even in your faith. God doesn't work to deadlines like that. Faith is a great, spreading, broad confidence, that God is moving one way and he will move that way whatever, and however, and whatever the timing. It's God himself that will decide the times that are best in your life so don't think of your life that way. It's usually better and far more sensible never to think of your age at all. It's probably always of Satan to begin to count what age you are or how many years have past because it is all so meaningless.

Could you think of it this way? Do you remember Roger or Bill Wallace? Now what are years? They are meaningless aren't they? They are meaningless when you think that some of us go to be with Jesus at twenty-five and some of us at thirty. Some of us here won't go until we're ninety or ninety-five. The ages are meaningless. So don't get caught in Satan's deception of counting up how many years you have been on earth, or what you should be doing at this age or that age. That's walking by sight and it's not God's way at all. God can accelerate in a moment all of your life. He can take a man like Moses and not do anything with him until he's eighty years of age, and then in a few years change the whole course of history through him. It's the same with you and me; he may actually do nothing with us. Brother's -- I think we in particular have to realize this; he may do nothing with us for eighty years. Then the last year of our life he may do more through us than he would do through anyone else. You must admit that it isn't just a consoling thought; it is actually a fact that whatever Sunday school teacher led Billy Graham to Jesus certainly must be a very happy man. So in one month, near the end of your life, God can use you to bring somebody to Jesus that can convert one third of the world, so it's vital for us to go with God's timing and to be free. Be free; cut loose from all that walking by sight that is involved in numbering your years like that. You can see in Sarah's life it bore no relationship to what the world would have expected of a woman of that age.

Let's look at Genesis 23:2, "And Sarah died at Kiriatharba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." She had been his companion for years and years and years and he loved her. He knew that he couldn't be what he was without her. Part of that was because Sarah had gone through all the harrowing experiences with Abraham and so it is with you sisters here; I think one of the things God has begun to teach us very thoroughly in the [church] body is that being husbands or wives is not the issue. It is good to have a husband; it is good to have a wife, as God guides, but the most precious thing is to be brothers and sisters together in Jesus whether we are married or not. God needs us to go through the harrowing experiences with each other that alone draw us closer together and eventually mean that we go and we wait with you when you die and we weep -- not tears of sadness -- but tears of joy that we've had so much of Jesus through you.

Yet you remember that Sarah had to put up with a lot of things; she was with Abraham at his most unbelieving, low moments, at his most lying moments and she was the most cooperative wife you could ever ask for. She bore and put up and forbore with him. When he would tell lies about her and hand her over to some king's harem, she would accept and go on. She walked with him through everything.

What should a woman of faith be like? You sisters here, who are our wives, or are our sisters in the body, probably first of all be a woman of faith for us men. You have quite a precious thing, in a way, but it's a dangerous thing; you have a built in skepticism. Ladies have a built in skepticism of the big talk of all we great "faith" men. That's in a way a good thing. I think it probably comes from a built in instinct you have that says, "We have to provide real food, real shelter, real clothing for our family. Not just the stuff you're talking about in your prayers, but we need real stuff that you can pay the rent with." So some of it is a good instinct that you have, some of it probably has to put up with us and with our great ideas, and our great hopes and our great faiths, and often is dashing those hopes. So you wonder, "Do these guys really know what they're about?" Yet it's true that, that kind of soulish skepticism, because that's what it is really' it's something women seem to inherit and no doubt we men seem to inherit our supply of it, but it seems to me that women often continue to express it at times that are actually very valuable. Still, even so, it is a soulish skepticism; though it is precious, it needs to be transformed into something spiritual.

The truth is, that you need to see that the answer to unproductive faith, you know what I mean; we have big things where we believe in God for this, or believe in God for that, and it's not coming. But the rent still has to be paid, we still believe in God, but the rent's still due. Well when you're faced with that unproductive faith on our part, probably what is most needed is not skepticism, but real faith rather than that skepticism that says, "Well, we have to keep you guy's feet on the ground." In a way there is a lot of worldly wisdom and soulish "strength of the right arm" about that, when what is needed is real faith.

What is real faith? You'll find it in Ephesians 1:11; "In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will." That's real faith; where we brothers seem to be way out on some wild limb, and your own natural tendencies, sister's, is to think, "These guys are going to kill me if they keep going" what God most wants is for you to believe that he is able to accomplish all things according to the council of his will, and that he is able to take even the dumbest things that a brother does or that husband does, and to work them according to the council of his will. What you do when you exercise that faith is you link yourself up to the mighty power of God, because that's the way he's going. Whereas when you just have soulish skepticism, you're linking yourself up to nothing but Satan, because Satan is the one that's always tugging at the guys' coattails saying, "You must be wrong, this isn't working." When you side with that, you appear to be siding with Satan.

And that's what confuses so many in the husband-wife relationship, and so many brother-sister relationships; often we'll find ourselves, brothers and sisters, in Melbourne, Australia, Rio, South America, and we'll be facing critical crisis that need to be defeated and tackled at a certain moment. At that time it will be important for the best of our faith to go together. At that moment you don't need one of you apparently being the skeptic saying, "That might work" because all the time Satan is saying the same thing; "That might work, that might work." At those moments of crisis you need to have real faith; "Father, I don't know where this guy is going. I don't know where these brothers are going, but Lord; I believe that you are able to work all things according to the council of your will. Father, I can't see where they're going and I can't see what he's doing, and frankly it doesn't look to me to be hopeful. But Lord I believe in you; I don't have to believe in just a husband or a brother. I believe in you, Father, that you will work all things according to the council of your will." And then loved ones, you sisters set loose a power of faith on your own that is independent from us brothers. Submission doesn't mean bowing down to the "mighty one." Most of us are pretty dumb idiots, and we need all that God can give us, and especially all that he can give us through you sisters. But more than that skepticism that seems to be undermining us, we need that faith that adds to our faith; that believes with its own hotline to God.

The Father will answer you. He will protect you. He will guard those who seem defenseless. He will protect you. That's the other side of faith, and it's an important piece that we have often read in Proverbs and it's very necessary for those of us who find ourselves in, the best way I find to describe it, is a position of cooperation rather than submission, because if there is any submission taught in the Bible, it's a mutual submission, "Let's be submissive one to another" but certainly many of us are put into that position of cooperation where it seems the husband is supposed to lead and this verse is a basis for our stand for those of us sisters who find ourselves in that position, Proverbs 21:1; "The king's heart is like a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." Trust God to protect you, sisters, from our foolishness. If we're wrong, believe him to work all things according to the council of his will, and then believe him; take your stand firmly on that verse. Say, "Lord, you can guide the heart of the king as I would guide a stream of

water in my hand. Lord I trust you to do that with this husband, or these brothers, of mine, or this leader. Lord, I trust you to guide him so that my life will not be destroyed by his errors." Loved ones as you exercise your faith positively like that, then I think both husbands and brothers feel a lifting coming from you. The big thing is that you're aligning yourself, not with what seems to be the negative discouragement of Satan, but your aligning yourself with the mighty power of God in a corrective way to bring us into line; you align yourself with God and not just with us men.

So it seems those are some of the qualities that are needed in the faith of a woman. A woman of faith needs love; love for her husband. She needs that kind of desire to stay with him as dear Sarah did. It's amazing, isn't it, how she stuck with that guy? He deserved to be thrown out of the house or never allowed back in, with the lies that he told about her. She stuck with him through thick and thin. That's really the most precious thing that you sisters can do with us brothers or you wives with us husbands; love us and put yourself in our shoes. There is that piece from one of the Trollope novels; if you can see with our eyes, hear with our ears and feel with our hearts then you can expect us to judge with your judgment. The moment we begin to sense that you are trying to see the thing from our angle and you're trying to put yourself in our hearts, that moment our own hearts are drawn on out towards you; that kind of tender love draws us towards you in love. That's probably the most precious way to influence anyone; to stay with them through thick and thin. Anything else is standing off at a distance and whipping the guy; never stand off and whip the guy, never do that. Never stand back and throw cat calls or jibes or criticism or rebukes. Don't, because you lose the tenderest value that you ladies have towards us men; you express the tenderness of Jesus and the understanding and softness of Jesus, and that is something that always draws us to listen and hear. So maybe those are the two most precious qualities in a woman, in a sister or wife; real faith and real love. I don't think you ladies need me to tell you that that is far more productive than anything else -- that actually works. The other breaks up and divides. If this doesn't win nothing else will; everything else just destroys and breaks down. Those things; real faith and real love, are certainly some of the things that Sarah had in an amazing way.

Let's go on to the rest of the chapter. Genesis 23:3, "And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and said to the Hittites." Maybe I should say this; the last part of verse 2 says, "Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." That would be precious; if we men wept for you sisters and for our wives. That would be good, if we felt that way towards you. That's the way to come to the end of life isn't it? I remember, this is a hard word, but I think it should be said because God must have wanted me to pause and go back to it. I won't tell you the name of the gentleman, but he was an outstanding man of God, I think everyone would agree. He lived in the Chicago area for years. Many of you know his name. His wife married again a short time after his death. And this is hard, but I think it's for someone here, she said, "I want this one, because the Lord had the last one." Don't be like that; let us, as husbands and wives, and brothers and sisters, be so given to Jesus that we will weep for each other when that time comes. So be like that -- nothing else is worth it. Don't let it come to the end of our lives and we feel we have resented each other and all we felt was sorrow that the other person gave themselves so much to the Lord. Let us go together, and let us go the whole way. Let us be in the position where our husbands will mourn for us and weep for us.

Verse 3, "And Abraham rose up from before his dead, and said to the Hittites, 'I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me property among you for a burying place, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.' The Hittites answered Abraham, 'Hear us, my lord; you are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our sepulchers; none of us will withhold from you his sepulcher, or hinder you from burying your dead.'" So that's what Abraham had become; a mighty prince among them. We have followed his life knowing how God had prospered him through his faith, and he became a

mighty prince. "Abraham rose and bowed to the Hittites the people of the land. And he said to them, 'If you are willing that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me Ephron the son of Zohar that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he owns; it is at the end of his field. For the full price let him give it to me in your presence as a possession for a burying place. Now Ephron was sitting among the Hittites; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the Hittites, of all who went in at the gate of his city, 'No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it; in the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.'" I know some of you here with that kind of background will enjoy the insight that Kiel Delitzsch gives on this, he says Ephron said he would give Abraham the field because he hoped by such a generous gesture Abraham would give him a gift that was worth far more than the field. That was the Semitic way of doing it. "No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it; in the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead." Abraham was no fool; he knew the system. Verse 12: "Then Abraham bowed down before the people of the land. And he said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, 'But if you will, hear me; I will give the price of the field; accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there.' Ephron answered Abraham" you can see how the formality goes, 'My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between you and me?'" So he gets the price. "'Bury your dead.' Abraham agreed with Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the Hittites, four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weights current among the merchants."

"So the field of Ephron in Machpelah, which was to the east of Mamre, the field with the cave which was in it and all the trees that were in the field, throughout this whole area, was made over to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the Hittites, before all who went in at the gate of his city. After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan." The amazing thing was that he buried his wife, and then Isaac, Jacob and Abraham were all buried in that field in the promised land, even before they had taken full possession. The field and the cave that was in it were made over to Abraham as a possession for a burying place by the Hittites. God blessed Abraham because of his faith.

I thought it might be an opportune moment to mention again what we have talked about in regard to faith. Remember how we often said, have a definite objective and then have a burning desire for that, and then pray through to an assurance that God wants you to have that? Maybe if anything, we would put the last one first, wouldn't we? We tend to say it's important to pray through to an assurance that God wants you to have a thing. It's important to do that however long it takes.

I thought it might be good to mention tonight that most men and women who engage in the enterprise of faith come through all kinds of defeats, disasters, difficulties and trials. A lot of us who have read a book like [Pastor] Cho's book "The Fourth Dimension" think it's all plain silly. We think that with George Mueller and the other guys it just flowed easily -- nothing flows easily in the conforming of our nature to that of Jesus. I'll read just a little of Pastor Cho's book, he is a Pastor in Korea, and although we differ a little with some of his ways, it seems that God had certainly blessed him and used him. "When God spoke to my heart in 1969 and told me to build a church that would seat 10,000 people I was frightened. Every moment I felt like Philip." Philip was the one who said, "What use are five loaves and two fishes? You'll never do anything with all that." But Andrew brought the loaves and fishes to Jesus. So Pastor Cho talks of "Philip faith" being one that always looks by sight and Andrew as one that looks by faith. "Every moment I felt like Philip. I talked with the board of elders and all of them thought like the disciples of Philip; they would tell me it was impossible. When I talked with my six hundred deacons, again I found every one of

them thinking in the same way. So I too joined the school of Philip and I came to Jesus and told him I could not build the church. But in my heart Christ commanded me; 'I did not ask you to confer with your deacons and elders; I told you to go and build.' 'Lord, I replied, 'You know I don't have anything to build with. It will take so much more money than I have now.' Then through the Holy Spirit, Jesus spoke to my heart, 'What do you have that you personally could give?'" I don't know if God has spoken to you this way. "In my heart I knew what he was asking, but I refused to recognize his request. 'Jesus, don't ask me to do that. I married when I was thirty years old and throughout the years I have saved my money so I could build a beautiful home and give it to my wife. I can't sell that house.' But the Lord replied, 'Give what you have.' 'Father, its just \$20,000. That can't build a church and apartment complex, they cost \$5 million. The amount my house would bring would not possibly be enough.' But God said, 'Sell your home, and bring that money to me with faith.' 'God, this is terrible, how can I do that?' 'If you're ever to believe my word,' the Lord admonished me, 'you must first be willing to give of what you have and what you own.'" Then he explains; "To a Korean wife the home is everything; it is the place where she raises her children; it is the place she builds her life; it is a precious possession to her. So I was afraid to tell my wife and I began to travail in prayer. I prayed that my wife would consent about the selling of her home." Then he did a little of Jacob. "That evening I bought gifts of flowers and scarves home to my wife. She was no dummy! 'Why are you bringing me these gifts,' she asked? 'Are you worried that I don't love you anymore?' But she was pleased and she made the evening meal happily. 'Praise God,' I responded, 'For I'm so happy that I have chosen you. If ever God wanted me to choose another girl again I would still pick you.'" I don't know how he got away with that stuff, but he did! "Concerned, she looked at me insisting; 'Tell me, what is your problem?' He said, 'We're going to build this big church that is going to seat 10,000 people. It's going to cost \$5 million dollars. As I was praying about this matter, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart and said if I was to get the money from the church I would have to start from my own household. God wants us to submit five loaves of bread and two fishes and those five loaves and two fishes are our house.' My wife turned pale. Then looking straight into my eyes she said, 'This home is mine, not yours. Don't you dare touch this house; it belongs to me and my children, you cannot give this house up.' Her reaction was just as I feared. Then I went to the Lord and prayed that, 'Now I have done what I can, and the rest is up to you. Send your Holy Spirit to prick her heart so she'll surrender.' That night as I prayed..." Then it goes on, and it's very touching. So the dear girl comes around and she lets him have the house. They go further on and he's going to build it and there's a funny piece that he writes. He says that a problem about the land they planned to build on came up. "The Korean government was developing a piece of land called Yeouido Island. This piece of property was going to be molded after New York's Manhattan Island. They were building government buildings on the land and would allow only one church there. Church bids came from all over Korea; Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Catholic, Buddhist, Confucius applied to the government. All were screened and passed through congress for permission to build a church on this special land. I also submitted an application. The man in charge looked at me and asked 'What denomination do you belong to?' 'The assemblies of God', I replied. 'You mean that church where they shout praises to God in such a loud and noisy way? And pray for the sick and speak in strange tongues?' 'That's right', I responded. He shook his head. 'You know this church is going to be right in front of the new congress hall. This church has got to be dignified and your church is not. We can't accept your application.'"

We often think these fellows like Cho never had any hesitation, but he says, "I was happy in my heart, however, because this would excuse me from building the church. I returned to the Lord in prayer. 'Lord you heard that didn't you? We are not dignified enough to build there.'" You can bring every excuse you can think of to the Lord, but the Holy Spirit always has the answer. "The Holy Spirit responded 'When did I ask you to go and apply for a building permit?' 'Am I not supposed to?'

I questioned. 'My child, you should not follow the path you are now walking. You should walk the other way; the way of prayer and faith.'" Eventually they got permission to build and he began to build.

I thought this would be helpful to some of us because I trust that you will be out in other countries tackling the whole challenge of establishing a colony of God abroad. This is some of the stuff that you'll come into contact with. "I then went and signed a contract with a construction company. Shortly afterwards they dug the foundation and began the building of the church and apartment house complex." Then he says, "In a similar way your faith is bound to be tested. If you have a small project you'll be tried in a small way. If you have a big project you'll be tried in a big way. Never think that your faith will only travel through a field of roses. You will go through turbulence by which God tests your faith. So far, in the building of the church, I still belong to the school of Andrew, faith; and with great faith, prayed through each new problem. But then the dollar devaluation came and the contractor broke our contract. He said they wanted to renegotiate and he increased the costs of building the church. Then the oil crisis came and all the banks closed.

My people began to lose their jobs and even with my total income per month, I could hardly meet even the interest on the loans. Not only could I not pay my staff in the church, but I received no salary myself. Then the company began to sue me because I could not pay their necessary fees. I would come to the church and notice after notice came, filing suit; the electric company, the sewage company, the construction company. Papers were piled on my desk yet I had no money to pay any of them. I didn't even have the money to hire my own lawyer. I would sit behind my desk and one by one the workers in my church began to leave because I could not give them their salaries. Nobody wants to stay on a sinking boat and I was sinking fast. Since we had sold our home and had no place to go I brought my family to an unfinished apartment on the seventh floor of the unfinished apartment complex. There was no running water and no heat and it was very cold.

Each evening, I would come home to the barren apartment and all night we would shiver in the cold weather. We had no food and everything seemed so dark. I was hitting rock bottom and fast becoming a disciple of Philip, walking by sight. I said to myself, 'Yes, I made a mistake. I should never have believed God in such a way. I should have thought in the traditional pattern. I should not have started to walk on the water. All this business about faith is a fake. All those voices that I heard in my prayer life must have been the voice of my own consciousness and not from the Holy Spirit. Yes, I made a mistake.' And I began to feel sorry for myself." Maybe it's important that you know that this is after he had three or four successful pastorate where he had built massive churches. So this was further on in his ministry.

"People were beginning to leave my church and all reports were negative. My family even began to doubt me. Everything seemed impossible and I was tired and hungry. 'This is it.' I said. 'This is the end. If this is the so called life of faith, I'm going to finish my life. I'm going cast myself down,' he continued. 'I'm going to die, but I don't want to go to hell. I've been working for you for all these years and at least I should get something in return. If hell is worse then this place why should I go there? But I can't live in the world like this. I'm committing suicide, but please accept my soul and send me to heaven.' The impact of prayer was more powerful then I realized and as I prayed I heard a voice saying, 'You're a coward; you want to cast yourself down and become an object of ridicule for people. Will you remain a coward, or are you a man of faith?' 'Yes I am a coward,' I admitted. Then the voice spoke; 'Not only will you go to hell, but you will also pull down many of your members that put their trust in you. You borrowed money from some of the elders

and members. Remember the thousands of dollars you borrowed from the precious sisters in the church? They all put trust in you and now you're throwing yourself down, committing suicide. You will cause a train reaction. Because of your coward acts they will lose their faith. They will have broken homes and some will also commit suicide. What a repercussion you'll cause the Christian world to feel.' These words poured into my heart. I slumped down crying, 'Oh God, then what can I do? Why won't you let me die?' God replied, 'You cannot die, for you must persevere. You must see all the debts paid. All the people's debts must be clear.' I stood up, left the seventh floor and went to my office. I knelt down travailing and crying. News of my desperate state began to spread among the people. Suddenly they experienced a reawakening of faith, including those that had already left the church. 'Let's save our preacher, they cried. 'Let's save the man of God.' In this way a "Save our Pastor" movement began. It was a cold winter, and we had no heat but by the thousands the people began to flock into the ground floor of the unfinished church, thousands also fasting and praying through many nights. They cried and prayed. Then God began to move. Ladies would cut their long hair bringing it to the platform to make wigs that could be sold. One day in an especially moving scene an eighty year old woman who had no children, no support, barely living by the help of the government came to the platform crying and trembling. She brought an old banged up rice bowl, a pair of chop sticks and a spoon. As she stood there crying she said 'Pastor, I want to see you delivered from this situation. I want to see you helped for you're ministry has been such a great blessing to me for many years. I want to do something but I have no money. This is all I have, this old rice bowl, a pair of chop sticks and a spoon. I want to give it to the Lord's work. I can eat out of cardboard. I can eat with my fingers.' My heart was broken. 'Lady, I cannot accept this. It's all you have. You need these to eat your everyday meals. I can't accept it.' She broke down in tears. 'Wouldn't God accept this gift from an old dying woman? Wouldn't he? I know that this can't be of much help to you but I want to give something.'

Suddenly one business man stood up and spoke. 'Pastor I want to buy that.' And he paid nearly \$30,000 for just that old banged up bowl, chop sticks and spoon. This began to light a fire. People began selling their good houses and moving to small apartments. There were young couples who gave their whole year's salaries to the church and decided to live by faith. This great movement brought results, for soon money began to flow in and I could pay the interest on the loan. Banks began to open their doors to me and amazingly in less than a year things began to work out. I paid all the debts and was cleared until 1973. Not only was I able to pay the interest but I also had the \$5 million dollars to finish building the church and apartment complex. God again proved that the school of Andrew is best and that to think in terms of miracles is to think as God would have us think.'

Many people think when you have faith things will flow easily with few problems encountered. But it's important to remember this is not so. Look at Abraham; he had faith, but he endured trials for twenty-five years. Do not be discouraged after going through a few weeks of difficulty, or a few months of trial. Do not throw your hands up in defeat and cry, 'Where is God?' God is always there and he is testing you. Sometimes God wants to stiffen and strengthen your back bone. Sometimes while being strengthened you can almost hear the bones cracking, but if you stand on the word of God and have faith, then God will never let you down.

So; we need giants; giant men and giant women. You're all we've got, so we have to start with us! Loved ones, that's where we have to go; there are four billion in this dear world and it's only by miracles that God is going to touch them for Jesus. It has to be done in our generation. It has to be done in every generation, and this is our generation. We cannot be responsible for the next generation, that's our children's. But we are responsible for the four billion in this world today.

There are four billion that don't even know of Jesus. The only way we are ever going to touch all of them before you and I die is through miracles of faith. That means every one of you has to start thinking in those terms. There are the promises and there is the history [indicating the Bible]. What other way would you live anyway? Who would choose any other life?

Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank you for showing us so clearly that we can live like snails or we can live like eagles. We can spend the rest of these years here on earth burrowing through the earth like moles, or we can live the rest of this life soaring like eagles through the mountain tops. Father, we have something inside our own hearts and consciousness that tells us there is only one choice to make.

So we know, our Father, that there is a way of danger and a way, certainly that is exhilarating but a way of great hardship; of long nights and, in prayer, many times when we walk alone; when no one else really has the faith that we may have ourselves. So Father we realize that. We know too Lord, that if we walk this way we will know our God when we come to the end of this life. We will know him and we will know him by experience. We will know the power of his resurrection.

Father, that's what we want to do. We care not whether we become rich or whether the world thinks us successful but we do care, our Father, that we do come to heaven knowing you by experience because we have been in many scrapes together and you have always come through. So Lord, we thank you for this dear land, and we thank you for the servants in the Old Testament. We thank you Lord that you give us such a clear call tonight to come and follow you, and you will make us fishers of men. You will enable us to throw out our nets on the side of the boat that no one else is bothering with, and you will fill it with so many men and women that we will not be able to pull the nets in. Lord we thank you. We thank you that that's your call to us. We thank you Father that you have called us to attempt great things for God and expect great things from God. So Father, we commit ourselves to you now to do that, and to believe that you have a plan for each one of our lives that is built only on miracles that come from Calvary.

Then we know, our Father, that Satan has another miserable, low, sneaking, crawling plan that we can follow that seems safe and seems to put our feet firmly on the ground. Lord, we know that it can be lived by our own native power and ability, without yours. Lord, we would choose the plan that could only be lived if the power of Calvary is real, and if Jesus, in fact, has overcome the world. We give ourselves to you tonight Father, to pursue that plan for our lives, so that at the end you may say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

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.