

The Life of John Bunyan (part 2)

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[0:00] We began last week a study of the life of John Bunyan, and we're continuing that study this morning. I'm not going to have a lot of time to pause and draw out principles this morning.

I'm probably going to try to press through to the end of his life. And then the next time we gather, I trust to slow down and to draw out from his life four or five principles, lessons from his life and how they apply to us.

Some of it will be obvious on the face of it, but we'll draw more of those lines of connection across the centuries to us next time. If at any time, though, you'd like to call a timeout and ask a question or raise a point of discussion, please hold up your hand and we'll do that.

And if I don't see your hand, just call out and we'll do that. But we saw last week the early life of Bunyan in which he was left to go his own way.

And the way that he chose is the way we all chose. We all like sheep have gone astray. We have turned each one to his own way. And for Bunyan, his own way was a life of blasphemy and and lying and cheating and all sorts of evil, even as a young, young boy.

[1:14] And then he tells of his marriage to Mary and how in marrying her, he he got two religious books and began to read them and and began to read the Bible and and felt guilt for his sin for the first time.

And remember, his first response on how to handle a guilty conscience was to try to construct a ladder to heaven out of the law of God and thinking that if I just keep these commands, then God will be pleased with me.

And and he began to reform his life such that people noticed the change and spoke of it. And oh, he was very proud of that. And he thought that God ought to be proud of him because he kept God's ways as well as any man in England.

But all that while he continued in his sin. Well, you remember, he finally came to rest on Christ and his righteousness alone. And he found that Christ doesn't change and his righteousness is perfect. And that just perfectly meets and suits the sinner's need. I need a perfect righteousness to put me in good stead with God. And Jesus Christ has that righteousness. And by faith in him, his righteousness is counted mine.

[2:27] And that radically transformed his life for time and eternity. Converted sometime in his early 20s. Remember all the struggles that he had in coming to assurance of salvation.

And hard to pinpoint when he was actually converted and went from death, crossed over the line from death to life in that moment of the new birth.

Somewhere in his early 20s, he finally came to peace with God. God reconciled in Christ was continually before his face. At age 25, Bunyan was baptized by the Reverend John Gifford, who had become such a help to him.

And he became a member of the Baptist Church in Bedford. It must have been a rather small church because he is listed as the 26th member when he was baptized on the role.

Still with many doubts and fears. Struggling over assurance. But he was much built up and encouraged by the ministry of Pastor Gifford. Remember, many of his doubts about salvation had to do with because he was mishandling the word of God.

[3:36] And there we saw the value of being a part of the church where others can bring to light the scriptures. Those given gifts in that area can direct us in the way.

So, he's there in the church at Bedford. Age 26, he had his second daughter, Elizabeth, was born to them.

His first daughter, Mary, was born blind when he was 22. Now, at 26, Elizabeth was born. Age 27, he moved to Bedford to be closer to the church.

And he became a deacon. Then they had two more children. Third child, John. And fourth child, Thomas. So, the first daughter was Mary, named after her mother, Mary. And the first son was John, named after the father. And that was a common practice in England at the time. Age 28, he preached for the first time.

[4:35] This is how it came about. Some of the most solid members of the church expressed their appreciation of Bunyan's understanding of scripture and his ability to express it in a way that they felt their souls edify.

Therefore, quoting him, they desired me, and that with much earnestness, that I would be willing at some time to take in hand in one of the meetings to speak a word of exhortation unto them.

At first, he tells us his spirit was dashed and abashed. But after more entreaties, he finally consented and spoke at two rather private opportunities. They told him they were affected and comforted and gave thanks to the father of all mercies for the grace bestowed on him.

When some went out into the country to preach, they would often take Bunyan along, who would sometimes give a word of exhortation. And in this way, was beginning to exercise that gift.

And they found it to be of great profit as he did so. So the congregation called him to a more ordinary and public preaching of the word. Now, he wasn't yet licensed by the church to preach.

[5:48] That would come another 17 years down the road. But at least they were widening his opportunities. And he was convinced from scripture that the Holy Ghost never intended that men who have gifts and ability should bury them in the earth, but rather did command and stir up such to the exercise of their gift, and also did commend those that were apt and ready to do so.

So the church is recognizing, I have gifts for the edification of the church. I dare not bury it in the earth, but exercise it to the glory of God.

So with much trembling and weakness and a sense of unworthiness, he began to preach. And when the country heard that the tinker had turned preacher, they came to hear the word by the hundreds, we're told, and that from all parts.

He says, I had not preached long before some began to be touched and be greatly afflicted in their minds at the apprehension of the greatness of their sin and of their need of Jesus Christ. And at first he doubted that God would ever save anyone through his ministry.

But their changed lives and continual pressing to learn more of Christ convinced him at last that God had indeed used foolish and unworthy him to save sinners.

[7:08] And so these conversions were confirmations to Bunyan that indeed the Lord had called him to preach the gospel of Christ. He says he began with his congregation where the Lord begins with the sinner.

Gathering up all mankind as sinners condemned under his wrath. To show them the deservingness of the curse of the law because of their sin. Bunyan himself was still having fearful seasons of trembling before God for his own sins, thinking that he might perish under them.

He says the terrors of the law and the guilt of my transgressions lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment.

Indeed, I have been as one sent to them from the dead. I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to be aware of.

I can truly say, and that without dissembling, that when I have begun to preach, when I have been to preach, I have gone full of guilt and terror even to the pulpit door.

[8:20] And there it hath been taken off. And I have been at liberty in my mind until I have done my work. And then immediately, even before I could get down the pulpit steps, I have been as bad as I was before.

Yet God carried me on, but surely with a strong hand, for neither guilt nor hell could take me off my work. And so he continued in this way for some two years.

Then the Lord did more multiply his peace and comforts flowing from the promises of the gospel. And so he and his ministry set before the congregation more of the comforts and and encouragements flowing from the gospel.

He set forth Christ in all of his offices, relations and benefits to the world. And then God led him into the mystery of our union with Christ, that which we have just recently studied, being joined to Christ so that all that is his is counted ours.

And so he taught it to his people. And we see a pattern here in his early ministry that he passed on what God was teaching him from his word. So what came forth was something that had gripped his own heart and the congregation found was gripping theirs.

[9:35] Condemnation under sin, comforts of the gospel, union with Christ. These three things dominated his preaching over those first five years. He was a simple, plain spoken preacher who pressed truth home to the heart under the power of the Holy Spirit.

Charles Doe, a comb maker from London, said, Mr. Bunyan preached so New Testament-like, he made me admire and weep for joy and give him my affections.

In the days of toleration in the winter, with a day's notice, a crowd of 1,200 people would gather to hear him preach at 7 o'clock in the morning on a weekday.

Later, when he was in prison, a whole congregation of 60 were arrested and thrown in with him at night and one who was there said, I heard Mr. Bunyan both preach and pray with that mighty spirit of faith and fullness of divine assistance that made me stand and wonder.

John Owen, that great Puritan theologian and contemporary of Bunyan, was asked one day by King Charles why he, a great scholar, went to hear an uneducated Tinker preach.

[10:50] He replied, I would willingly exchange all my learning for the Tinker's power of touching men's hearts. One remarkable instance of this power of God that attended the ministry of the Word.

It was announced that he would be preaching in a church in a country village in Cambridgeshire.

And the people began to gather together in the churchyard.

And a Cambridge scholar, by no means remarkable for sobriety, which means often tipsy, inquired what the meaning of that gathering of people was.

It being on a weekday and being informed that one Bunyan, a Tinker, was to preach there, he gave a boy two pence to hold his horse, saying he was resolved to hear the Tinker Pratt.

And so he went into the church to hear him. But God met with him there by his ministry so that he came out much changed and was very solicitous for a long time after to hear him only.

[11:57] The scholar himself became a very eminent minister afterwards. And so we observe that the foolishness of preaching became the power of God to the salvation of a great sinner.

Bunyan speaks of some of the puzzling things to him in his preaching. He says, Again, we simply do not know what God is doing with his word in the hearts of people.

He is sovereign in bringing that word home in his own sovereign way. He was tempted to pride in his gifts.

You can imagine 1,200 people flocking out to hear this man. But he says the Lord kept him humble by making him to see what a multitude of corruption still remained in his heart as a Christian.

He didn't have to just look back and be humbled at what he was before he was saved. All he had to do was look in and see the multitude of corruption still remaining to be kept low before the Lord.

[13:22] Top lady, that hymn writer, wrote, Mr. John Bunyan, having preached one day with peculiar warmth and enlargement, some of his friends after service was over, took him by the hand and could not help observing what a sweet sermon he had delivered.

I said the good man, you need not remind me of that, for the devil told me of it before I was out of the pulpit. And so the devil attempted to ruin him with pride, and yet the Lord knew how to keep him low before him.

So the devil tried to ruin his ministry another way by spreading slanderous reports and lies about him. It was spread abroad that he was a witch, that he was a Jesuit, a Roman Catholic, a bandit, and the like, he says.

You fill in and the like. He goes further. He says, It was spread about that I consorted with harlots, that I was the father of illegitimate children, that I had two wives at the same time.

Now he did, his first wife did die and he remarried, but they're saying he's a polygamist. And this is all before political commercials were ever on television, but lies, slanders were still being thrown.

[14:45] He says, I bind these lies and slanders to me as an ornament, for without such treatment from the world, I would lack one sign of a saint and a child of God, and that is the hatred of the world.

For blessed are you, Jesus said, when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you. And he says that he calls upon God as his witness, that none of

those things were true, and yet he says, I have not been kept from such sins through any goodness in me more than others, but God has been merciful to me and kept me.

He's 30 years old now, and it would be a trying year. Mary, his dear wife of 10 years, dies. He's leaving him with four children under the age of 10, and one is blind.

His beloved pastor, John Gifford, died the same year. And it would be a year before he remarried, and so it would be a year of preaching through his sorrow.

[16:05] At age 31, he remarries, and Elizabeth is one remarkable woman. At the altar, she not only gains a husband, but also four children under 10.

The year after their wedding, Bunyan was arrested and put in prison, and she was pregnant with their firstborn, and the whole ordeal caused her to miscarry. And so for 12 years, she cared for the four children all alone while John was in prison.

And she would also bear him two more children, Sarah and Joseph. The political winds were changing. The act of uniformity, which would be passed in 1662, that would eject 2,000 godly ministers from their pulpits, was crafted in 1660.

That's the age where we're at now, where Bunyan's 31. And that act of uniformity tried to press the whole of England into the same religion.

They would use the same prayer book, the same liturgy. You would all have the same doctrine. And so by an act of uniformity, the state tried to control the religion of the nation.

[17:17] King Charles II required everyone to attend worship at an established Church of England church, using their prayer book. And if you refused, you would be imprisoned for three months.

If you still refused, you could be banished from England. And if you refused, if you returned to England without permission, you could be executed, hung. Unordained preachers were also required to stop their preaching.

That would affect Bunyan. He was not yet ordained and licensed as a preacher. And so such religious persecutions were the backdrop that forced many dissenters, non-conformists, to leave those shores and to come to America.

This is the period. As I said, it was just eight years, I believe, after Bunyan's birth, after or before, that the Mayflower left for America with many dissenters on board who wanted to worship God according to conscience and scripture.

So all other churches except the established Church of England were to be closed. The Bedford Baptist congregation had been meeting in the building of an established Church of England, of an English Church of England church.

[18:33] They were then thrown out of the building at this point, so they met in fields and barns, and they risked imprisonment for not attending the established church. Bunyan's now 32, November 12, 1660, goes to a meeting held in a barn to preach to his congregation.

He's tipped off that the authorities have been alerted, and his friend questions whether it might be best for him to slip out while he could an hour before the meeting. He could be well down the road before they caught up with him or could catch up with him.

He says, I came to preach the Word of God, and I must do my duty, even if it means suffering for it, to preach God's Word is so good a work that we shall be well rewarded if we suffer for it.

Well, the constables broke in when he was about to expound his text. They took him away to the magistrate who asked how many weapons were found and what seditious plans.

There was one group of wild-eyed dissenters that did have a plan to overthrow the government, and so they just put the cookie cutter over all dissenters and said, well, you're all planning sedition and insurrection against the government, and so these private meetings are not allowed.

[19:49] You must worship in an established church. They said, well, we only found Bibles. They asked Bunyan if he would quit preaching. He said no, and so he was imprisoned in Bedford jail for seven weeks.

Quote, let the rage and malice of men be ever so great they can do no more nor go any farther than God permits them. But when they have done their worst, we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.

He was then taken out of prison to a hearing before a board of officials who asked him why he wasn't attending an established church. He cites disagreements with their doctrine in their prayer book.

Why are you preaching and not tinkering? That was the big thing. Get back to your calling. You're a tinker, not a preacher. He hadn't been licensed as a preacher. They told him if he would assure them that he would quit preaching, they would let him go.

Bunyan said, I'll assure you this, that if you let me loose this morning, I'll be preaching this evening. And evidently, it wasn't the answer that they were wanting to hear. And back to prison he went for three more months.

[20 : 59] And that imprisonment would stretch into 12 years. of his life. It was a mercy, he says, that he wasn't banished because that was threatened for dissenters.

To be banished from England. Now, he's in the Bedford jail and he'll have opportunities to see his wife and children there. But to be banished is to never see them again.

To return is to be hung up by his neck. I told you, Elizabeth was remarkable. A year after he was imprisoned, she boldly went to the authorities in London.

She'd already been there once with a petition, pleading that he's being unjustly held. Now she was met with one question. Would he stop preaching? My Lord, he dares not leave off preaching as long as he can speak.

What is the need of talking? There is need for this, my Lord, for I have four small children that cannot help themselves, of which one is blind, and we have nothing to live upon but the charity of good people.

[22 : 06] One of the judges, Matthew Hale, with pity, asked if she really could have five children seeing that she was so young, or had four children being that she was so young. My Lord, I am but stepmother to them, having not been married to him yet full two years.

Indeed, I was with child when my husband was first apprehended, but being young and unaccustomed to such things, I, being smayed at the news, fell into labor, and so continued for eight days and then was delivered, but my child died.

Hail, one of the judges is moved, but the other judges are hardened and speak against him. He's a mere tinker. Yes, she replied, and because he's a tinker and a poor man, therefore he's despised and cannot have justice.

One Mr. Chester is enraged and says Bunyan will preach and do as he wishes if we let him go. He preaches nothing but the word of God, she says. Mr. Twiston is in a rage.

He runneth up and down and doeth harm. No, no, my Lord, it is not so. God hath owned him and done much good by him. The angry man continues, his doctrine is the doctrine of the devil.

[23 : 13] She replies, my Lord, when the righteous judge shall appear, it will be known that his doctrine is not the doctrine of the devil. And she recorded later, when I went out, I could not but break forth into tears, not because they were so hard-hearted against me and my husband, but to think what a sad account such poor creatures will have to give at the coming of the Lord when they shall their answer for all the things whatsoever they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad.

Bunyan's biographer comments, Elizabeth Bunyan was simply an English peasant woman. Could she have spoken with more dignity had she been a crowned queen?

Well, Bunyan made friends with the jailer. To read the account reminds you of Joseph, where the jailer just turned the jail over to him. He was so trustworthy and that's what happened at the Bedford jail.

And the jailer would even allow him out once in a while and friends were allowed in because he knew Bunyan would be back. He would come back. He wouldn't run. After six years of imprisonment, he was given a little liberty but it was soon taken away again.

He was put back in for another six years until he was 44 years old. So from 32 to 44 he's in prison. 12 years. It's the prime of his life because he will not agree to stop preaching the gospel.

[24 : 51] There's an interesting story of folks up at London. Down at London? Which is it, Jeff? Up at London.

From Bedford. Up at London. The government there heard wind that the jailer was letting Bunyan out. He was going in and out of jail like a hotel or something.

And so they sent their man down there. Rode all through the night to check up and to see whether or not Bunyan was in jail. And so happened that was a night that he had gone home. He's restless and he's laying there at midnight and he says to Elizabeth, I need to go back.

I need to go back right now. Goes back in and the jailer's upset with him for bothering him in the middle of the night. Goes into his cell. Sure enough, middle of the night, early in the morning, here comes the constable from London.

Open up the jail. I want to see if all the prisoners are well. He's John Bunyan in prison. And they show him. And ever after that, the jailer says, well, you're free to go whenever you want because you know when to come back whenever it's necessary.

[26:03] So, we find the friendship formed between the persecuted and the persecutor. Love your persecutors. Pray for them. We'll see more of that in the principles that we'll tease out from his life.

Do good to them that hate you. Bunyan was not idle in prison. He made shoelaces that his children would take and sell to maintain a living. He also wrote in prison.

He had two books with him. The Bible and Fox's Book of Martyrs. And he made good use of those two books. But he wrote many valuable books in prison.

Here's this man who only had a grammar school education. He'd learned to read and write but that was it. And yet the literary output of this man would be some 66 books in all.

His Pilgrim's Progress is his most famous book. A book that's enjoyed the greatest circulation around the world. Second only to the Bible. Translated into over 200 languages. The allegory of a sinner fleeing the city of destruction.

[27:15] Making his way to the celestial city. and all the troubles and trials of life that he meets along the way. And the individuals. People in this world that he meets up with. He shows a great knowledge of people.

He knew people's hearts because he knew his own heart. He was a careful student of his own life. And so he knows people and characters well and they stand out on the pages of Pilgrim's Progress. He knew his Bible well. And Pilgrim's Progress is full of quotes and allusions to it. And we'll speak more of that again in the future.

He was a family man. He loved to play the child with his children, his little children. He says, The parting with my wife and poor children have often been to me in this place as the pulling the flesh from the bones.

And that not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and the needs that my poor family was likely to meet with should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child who lay near my heart than all besides.

[28:30] Oh, the thoughts of the hardship I thought my poor blind one might go under would break my heart to pieces. And then he tells how he got comfort from the Scriptures.

Romans 15.4 These things were written down that you, through the encouragement of the Scriptures, might have hope. I had this consideration, he says, that if I should venture all for God, that I by that act engage God to take care of all my concerns.

But if I forsook Him in His ways for fear of any trouble that should come to me or mine, then I should not only falsify my profession, but should count also that my concerns were not so sure if left at God's feet while I stood to and for His name as they would be if they were under my own care, though with the denial of the way of God.

This was a smarting consideration and as spurs to my flesh. If the thing that would move me to back down from what he saw as his duty was the fact that his children would be taken out of his hands and he's thinking, well, I must take care of them and I can do better than God.

He says, I saw that I was defaming God and I was acting like I could take better care of them than God could and that was enough goad sometimes to keep him in prison another day.

[30:04] I had also another consideration and that was the dread of the torments of hell. Now, sometimes we hear people say Christians should never be afraid of the torments of hell.

They should never be motivated by the dread torments of hell. Bunyan says that was one of the considerations he had which I was sure they must partake of that for fear of the cross to shrink from their profession of Christ his words and laws before the sons of men.

Isn't that what Jesus said? Don't fear men who can take your life and can do no more but fear him who after taking your life can also cast soul and body into hell and whoever does not acknowledge me who is ashamed of me in my words before this wicked and adulterous generation of him the son of man will be ashamed in the day of judgment.

So he saw the issues to deny Christ is to have Christ deny him that some days was a goad enough to keep him from the sin of running when he knew that he must stand by his duty.

But then all the way to the other end he says I also thought of the glory that God has prepared for those that in faith and love and patience stand to his ways before trials.

[31 : 21] And these things helped him when he thought of the miseries that he and his family would face for remaining true to the Lord. God has promised many glories to those who will indeed love him more than father, mother, wife, husband, son, daughter.

The Bedford congregation decidedly decided unanimously to call their 44 year old Bunyan to be their pastor when he got out and was released from prison.

Difficult years continued with the authorities. Meetings were still broken up. Pastors still imprisoned and so they would change their meeting places from time to time.

Sometimes they would just not have any congregational singing lest that would draw attention to where they were meeting. Preachers came into their pulpits through trap doors in the floor or ceilings or in secret doors in the walls of these places for quick escapes.

He preached for four years and then he was imprisoned again as a 48 year old. the king had rescinded all the earlier pardons to prisoners and he rounds them up and puts them back in prison.

[32 : 34] So he had another six months in prison and he was released from that imprisonment largely through the efforts of John Owen, his friend, who had friends in high places, even in the king's court.

So he would live for 12 years after his final release from prison, from 48 to 60. and these years were filled with preaching, writing, counseling, visiting the poor, the sick, planting church, helping to plant churches.

He remained the pastor of the Baptist church in Bedford, though he had many offers to go elsewhere. They built a meeting house at Bedford through the gifts of his friends that would seat around a thousand people.

He continued to preach at Bedford to large congregations until his death. One who knew him well says he spent his latter years in imitation of his great Lord and Master.

He went about doing good. His last year was the year 1688, one year before the London Baptist Confession of 1689.

[33 : 45] He's 60 years old, and a young man who had lived like the prodigal son now repented, of his sin, but his father would not receive him back.

So it was a twist. It wasn't like the prodigal son in Jesus' story, in that the father there welcomed him back. This father was like the older brother and didn't want him back.

And Bunyan tries to do what he can to see these two reconciled. Now, Ken Sandy wasn't born yet, but here is a peacemaker. Blessed are the peacemakers.

And Bunyan has a peacemaker's heart. He has tasted the peace with God, and so he sees these two have fallen out, and he wants to bring them together. So he goes to reading on horseback.

He met the father who was first hardened and then melted to receive his son. Bunyan rides on into London to deliver a manuscript to the printer, and he's caught in a terrible rainstorm.

[34 : 48] He catches a chill, and he turns sick. But he'd earlier made arrangements to preach to a congregation while he was in London. So on August the 19th, 1688, despite a severe cold, he goes to church to preach.

The minister sees he's in no shape to preach, but Bunyan says, I've agreed to preach, and preach I will. And so he preached on sons of God from John 1, 13. His last words from the pulpit were, live like the children of God, that you may look your father in the face with comfort another day.

Live like the children of God, that you may look your father in the face with comfort another day.

After he was done, he was taken back to the house of friends under a violent fever.

Perhaps it was pneumonia. They asked what they could do for him. Brothers, I desire nothing more than to be with Christ, which is far better. And with outstretched arms he cried, Take me, for I come to thee.

And so he died, away from home. It's unlikely in those days with the slowness of transportation and communication that his wife ever had time to get down to where he lay and breathe this last.

[36 : 10] And so it's somewhat touching, isn't it, that this man who lives so much of his life separated from his wife and family, should die separated from them, but in the arms of Jesus.

Buried in the grave of a friend at Bunhill Fields, many other Puritans buried there. And so ended that pilgrim's progress to the celestial city.

So that's just a quick run through his life. As I said, next time we'll try to stop and chew on that and say, what, what, so what, what does this have to say to me?

I'm not living in the 1600s. I'm not a preacher, you might say, not married to one, so what does it have to say to me? And we'll try to draw out some lessons from it.

Any questions, comments before we close? Well, when you were talking about the false accusations, I couldn't help the thing about Daniel and his three friends. I take something to say, thank it.

[37 : 21] Daniel wasn't great three times in that and when there was that and he wasn't done it anyhow. I got to think about Daniel and his three friends would not bow down before the king's statue and he heated the furnace up.

Seven times harder than normal. And they come out of the skates. Even when Daniel put the lions down, it showed to me that even in the time of Daniel, it's even true in this man's life.

The Lord still had his plan and nobody could afford it. You can't help but feel that Bunyan's a man of duty. And if this is the word of God, then come hell or high water, I'm going forward.

And he suffered for it. He's a very simple-minded man in that if the Bible said it, the deal's done. We must obey. And you see it even in his I've agreed.

He was very careful with his words, his financial arrangement. If he gave his word, he'd keep it. You can see why that's important for a preacher. If you don't keep your word in these agreements and people start to say, well, his yea is nay and his nay is yea, then what he says up in the pulpit doesn't hold weight.

[38 : 34] And so he was very careful that once his word was given, he kept it, even if it meant preaching as a sick man. Now you say, well, he was wrong in that. Perhaps he pushed it too far, but you can't help but admire something that it seems is so lacking in our own day, and that's a sense of duty that this is what God calls me to, this is what Christ calls me to.

It's the same spirit we see in our Savior who when all he needed to do when he was on trial was just say, well, I'm not the son of God. No, I never really said that, and these guys are all washed out that think that.

But no, he spoke the truth, and he suffered for it. And Daniel and his three friends and John Bunyan and many others have shown that same spirit of Christ will stand, believing that standing in the circle of obedience to God is the safest place in the world to be.

and whether life or death came, it's still the best. I think when I read the story about myself, it was a year ago, but I read where his son or his daughter came to jail one day and was just begging, begging him, Dad, all you have to do to be released and come home with your family is to just not preach.

And I know how that really impacted me. How could a man, you know, not give in to a child's plea like that, but then you had said, you know, this morning, and I can see it now, where he had committed his family to the Lord.

[40 : 08] He was doing the Lord's work and entrusting his kids and his family to the Lord to take care of them. That's a bold step. I mean, I know how good it was for me to commit my kids to the Lord when they weren't saved and how I could let them go.

Like, you know, I've got to see him say that. Even though I said I'd give them up, I in my heart had him. And he had given them up. And I'm thinking, wow. Yep.

That is a principle I trust we will come back to. If we don't, you remind me to come back to it.

Because yes, he has a powerful quote about how we need to die to all these things.

That we're really not fit and ready to suffer until we have gone the whole way. Not just relinquished our children and our wife and our possessions but our very life also.

And you see, once we have died to it all, well then persecution can't harm us. We're already dead to it. And it's a powerful quote on that very thing. You're right.

[41 : 07] He had already been to the altar, as it were, and put it all on. And so, though it was a struggle for him, yet that's why, yeah, when they tried to move him, whether it was the authorities or whether it was the pleadings of his own children, he had already died to that on the altar by the grace of God.

Good point. Any questions? Oh, our time's gone, so may the Lord help us then as we come to worship him.