

Into A Better Future

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Please open your Bibles to Zechariah chapter 8. And we'll read the whole chapter tonight. This is the word of the Lord Almighty.

Again, the word of the Lord Almighty came to me. This is what the Lord Almighty says. I am a very jealous God for Zion.

I am burning with jealousy for her. This is what the Lord says. I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.

This is what the Lord Almighty says. Once again, men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age.

The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there. This is what the Lord Almighty says. It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvelous to me, declares the Lord Almighty.

[1:04] This is what the Lord Almighty says. I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem. They will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.

This is what the Lord Almighty says. You who now hear these words spoken by the prophets, who were there when the foundation was laid for the house of the Lord Almighty, let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.

Before that time there were no wages for man or beast. No one could go about his business safely because of his enemy, for I had turned every man against his neighbor. But now I will deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past, declares the Lord Almighty.

The seed will grow well. The vine will yield its fruit. The ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people.

As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so I will save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.

[2:17] This is what the Lord Almighty says. Just as I had determined to bring disaster upon you and showed no pity when your fathers angered me, says the Lord Almighty, so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah.

Do not be afraid. These are the things you are to do. Speak the truth to each other and render true and sound judgment in your courts. Do not plot evil against your neighbor and do not love to swear falsely.

I hate all this, declares the Lord. Again, the word of the Lord Almighty came to me. This is what the Lord Almighty says. The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah.

Therefore, love, truth, and peace. This is what the Lord Almighty says. Many people, many peoples will, and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, let us go at once to entreat the Lord and seek the Lord Almighty.

I myself am going. And many peoples of powerful nations will come to Jerusalem and seek the Lord Almighty and to entreat him.

[3 : 38] This is what the Lord Almighty says. In those days, ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.

Well, the past can be a very terrifying thing. That's not so much that we are afraid of the past as we're afraid of repeating the past, that we think the future is going to be the same as the past.

And sometimes that can be a good thing. It can be a good thing to be afraid of repeating the past. If you fly a flag with a swastika on it in Germany, you will go to prison.

Because they've been down that road, and they're not going back. It's against the law. It's illegal. Maybe you've been deep in debt, and you know the fear of that, and you've worked yourself out of it, and you say, I'm never going back there.

And so that fear of the past changes what you do in the present and in the future. And so it can be a good thing to be afraid of the past.

[4 : 52] On the other hand, being terrified of the past can be a bad thing if you're its victim, if you're its slave. And in some ways, Zechariah 7 and 8 is all about Israel being moved out of that fear of the past into a better future.

So you remember in chapter 7, a delegation came down from Bethel, and they asked the Lord, do we need to keep mourning and fasting on those four occasions, those different months as we have been for so many years?

And you remember these four fasts, they all had to do with the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of their people, the deportation, of how that horrific time of them falling under God's judgment.

And they were asking, do we need to keep doing this? Do we need to keep repenting and mourning for what happened? Can we move on now? So that's the question of, can we move on out of the past, and can we move to a different kind of future?

And God's first answer was something that we all need to take to heart, a lesson that we all need to learn. And the past, you really only escape it by repenting.

[6 : 12] By repenting. Really repenting. Really worshiping, God says. Really worshiping me. Not just with your mouths, but actually out of your hearts. You want to come to me.

You want to do these things for me. Remember what he said. When you fasted, was it for me? And when you feasted, was it for me? It didn't matter what you were doing. You were doing it for yourselves.

And so you need to repent. But repentance always has another side of it. It's not exclusively God-directed.

Repentance always bears fruit in our life, outwardly, horizontally. And so it's doing right by your fellow man. Zechariah, in some ways, is a precursor to what John the Baptist preached.

You remember, he is on the shores of the Jordan. He's baptizing people with a baptism of repentance. And the tax collectors come and say, well, what must we do? How do we show our repentance?

[7 : 11] And he says, not do something towards God, but he says, stop collecting more than you should. And then he tells the soldiers, stop bullying people and extorting people.

And so that's, how do you move out of the past? It means you really repent. You really turn away from your sins.

You turn your face against them. You turn your heart away from them. You turn your heart to God. God. And the second part of God's answer came in chapter eight. And we saw this the last time we were here.

And God's answer was, if you want to move out of the past, you have to look at what I'm going to do in the future. You have to begin looking at what I'm going to do in the future.

Look to me. Trust in me. Put your hope in me and what I'm going to do. I'm going to change you. I'm going to come to you and I'm going to bless you and I'm going to grow you.

[8 : 16] And as it were, I'm going to marry you all over again. It's going to be a renewal of our relationship. Now you see how important this is and how vital this is to all of us.

These things are things that we experience and that we have to deal with. Each one of us, each one of us has a past to leave behind.

Every one of us wants to move on in some ways. So how do you leave your sinful past? How do you get to this better future with God? Well, Zechariah 8, it's here.

He's saying you just can't add a little religion. Not just adding a little religion to your life. It's real repentance. It's not staying in your distrust and your suspicion.

It's believing what God says, that he means to do me good, that he says he will do me good, and that he means to do me good. And so that's the only way to break free from your past.

[9 : 22] It's that two-sided coin of repentance and faith in God's goodness. It's you doing those things. And so are you trapped in your past?

In your failures? Of experiencing those times of God's judgment? Do you say to yourself, I've tried and I can't do it. I've been here before, and this is just the way it is.

The self-talk that you have. Well, listen to what God says to Israel, and we're going to be looking at verses 9 through the end of the chapter. And what we have here are three encouragements.

God gives Israel three encouragements tonight. And the first is, it's not going to be the way it used to be. It's not the way it used to be. It's not the way it used to be.

That's the heart of verses 9 through 17. And the heart of it really comes down to verse 11. But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past.

[10 : 28] Things are different now. Things are different now. No one used to have to, or no one used to be able to work safely.

But now you can. It's different. People used to look at you and say, this is a cursed people. They are a curse. If you get them, if they come into your house, God curses you.

God curses your house. To have them as your friends is to be cursed by God. They are cursed people. But now he says, you are going to be a blessing. So when people come into your house, God blesses that house.

He says, I was determined to bring disaster. Determined to bring disaster. Now I'm determined to do you good. Things are different now. How wonderful it is, if you're a child of God, to know that God has a determination.

And that determination is to do you good. It's not the way it used to be. And those words need to be etched into our minds and into our hearts. God has moved on.

[11 : 37] If you are in Christ, God has moved on, and he has taken us with him. So you remember Isaiah's words, comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed and that her sin has been paid for.

The time of distress is over. Now it's the time for comfort. You see, it's not the way it used to be. Do you need to hear that?

Do you need to remember that? Are you stuck in the past? Well, you're stuck in the past when you think, if you're a Christian, if you think God is still against you.

You're stuck in the past if you think all that you can say about yourself is that you're still a sinner. That's what you are. That's all you are. Totally depraved. When you think of doing something, when you think of doing something good or when you think of the challenges that lie before you, the things that God has put onto your plate and said, this is what I want you to do.

By providence, he said those things to you. And you look at them and you think, I can't do it. And that's all there is to it.

[12:58] You end the self-talk with, I can't do it. Or you, when you think of your serving in the church or your life with God, do you think of yourself primarily as a sinner cut off from God, a weak, helpless?

Is there nothing in your heart that echoes what Paul says, that I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me? Well, all of that is acting and living and thinking and believing like nothing has changed.

that everything is still the same as it always was. But we can say, and maybe you say to me, but I am a sinner. I am a sinner.

Well, in one way, yes, you still sin. But, in Paul, in Romans 5 says, God demonstrates his own love for us in this, we know this verse is very familiar, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

There's a time we were still sinners. And the implication and the inference is we are not those kind of sinners anymore. Sin does not define us.

[14:12] Sin used to define us. And when sin defined us, that's when God demonstrates his great love for us in this, that Christ died for us. But it implies now that we are not still sinners in that same way.

Sin is, a sinner is not our identity anymore. You still sin, but you're a child of God. Peter says, as obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

There was a time of living in ignorance where evil desires and darkness dominated your thoughts and your heart. Well, he says, don't conform to those.

You're now an obedient child child or act as an obedient children. Peter's full of this. You used to live an empty way of life, but he redeemed you out of that empty way of life.

You're not in that empty way of life anymore. You're out of it. You were once not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

[15:18] You were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the shepherd and the overseer of your souls. We were once children of wrath, but now we're dearly loved children.

We were once blind, but now we see. We were once dead, but now we are alive. Things are not the way they used to be. Sin clings to us, and it will until we're free from these bodies.

We struggle against everything, but as Paul says, we are more than conquerors. We're strugglers, but we're conquerors through Christ who loves us.

God's love, God's grace has made a fundamental and extreme difference in our lives. That's what God is saying to Judy, and he's saying it to us.

Things aren't the way it used to be. I'm not going to treat you that way anymore. Things are different now. Instead of cursed, you're blessed. So God's grace has come. We're forgiven.

[16:23] We're loved. We have God's heart. That's the first encouragement. Second encouragement is this. There's no reason to fear. There's no reason to fear.

Two times in these passages in verses 9 through 17, he says, don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. The past can be terrifying, but God says to us, it's different now, so don't be afraid.

Don't live in fear. When we live in fear, of at least sinful fear, paralyzing fear, fear that keeps us stuck, fear that prohibits us from obeying, fear that keeps us away from God, that kind of fear, that kind of fear is unbelief.

He says, don't live in fear. My grace rules in your life. The past doesn't rule in your life. The long past, the immediate past, it's not ruling in your life.

My grace rules in your life, and so don't be afraid. Let your hands be strong. Let your hands be strong. Build the temple. Work for me. Work for my glory. Now, isn't this true that what keeps us from being strong and working hard so much of the time, not exclusively, but a lot of the time, it's fear.

[17:59] fear that we can't do it. It's fear that God's against us. It's fear that he won't be there to help us. It's fear that it won't work out. It's just, everything's against me.

Well, he's saying, don't be afraid. Make your hands strong. Get ready. Flex your muscles. Put some oomph into it. Build the temple. Now, the temple was the place of God's glory. It was the place on earth where God's glory was manifest, was seen, was shining out, where his fame and his name were honored.

And he says, now don't be afraid. Don't be discouraged. That work is not in vain. It's not for nothing. I'm going to help you as you do it. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

And so I'm not going to scorn the work of your hands. I'm here to help you. Now, we don't have a physical temple to build. But we are all, every single one of us, you sitting there in your seat, you personally are called to get to work for the glory of God.

For making his name and his fame go forth. To make God famous on the earth. And so how do you live for the fame, for God's fame and glory on the earth? Well, if you go to work, men, women, whoever is going to work, well, you serve in such a way that God is glorified in how you work, how you act with your bosses, how you act with your customers, how you act with your clients, how you interact with your fellow employees, is that reflecting well on God?

[19:43] Is it bringing glory to God? God, the quality of your work. My college president used to always say that anything with Jesus' name on it should have quality stamped all over it.

Quality of your work, the quantity of your work. Zechariah, the Lord is saying, don't be afraid. Work. Make your hands strong. God is for you.

Maybe you're a student and maybe it used to be laziness or just doing enough or doing it for the wrong reasons, doing it for you.

Well, that's the old life. It's different now. If God has come into your life and changed you and brought about all that change, it's different now. And so God isn't against you. God is for you. And so the time of God's blessing has come.

And so work. Be a student for Jesus. And so teens and college age students or whatever classes you're in, when you have a problem, a big paper, a hard test, a hard subject that is not your cup of tea, that is really difficult, do you run to God with those things?

[20:59] Do you trust in God for those things? Or do you think, he's against me. He won't help me. Is it fear? Well, that's the old way. It's different now.

Well, what about here? The people of God. Well, how do we build the temple now? Well, not with bricks, stones, and mortar.

We build it with people. And we build it as we encourage one another. It says, build yourselves up in your most holy faith.

So how do you serve the church? Let me ask you, what's your self-talk like? How do you talk to yourself when you're thinking about, this is what I need to do, or this is what I can do, or this is what I should do, here?

Is it primarily, I can't do it, I failed before, it's not who I am, you gotta know your limits.

[22:03] Now, is there a degree of truth in some of that? Yeah. But if that's everything, if that's the last word, if that's the final paralyzing word, that's living like nothing's changed.

He says, don't be afraid. Let your hands be strong, work with vigor, work with zeal, don't hold back. Then in verse 15, he says, don't be afraid. These are the things you are to do.

Speak the truth to each other. Render true and sound judgment. Do not plot evil against your neighbor, and so on. He's saying, don't be afraid. Live righteously with each other.

Live righteously with each other. It's what he's already said back in chapter 7. In chapter 7, the motivation was warning and rebuke.

You remember, this is the word of the Lord that came to your forefathers, and they're not to plot evil against each other. They're to judge justly, and they didn't do it, and so judgment came. Now, do you want that to happen to you?

[23:14] That was the motivation. It was rebuke. It was warning. Do this, or judgment will come. Now, in chapter 8, it's the very same thing to do, except now the motivation is promise and blessing.

A few weeks ago, I don't know how long now, Pastor John reminded us in Sunday school that God doesn't just use one kind of motivation, and here's an example of that.

Chapter 7 is a rebuke, a warning. It's showing this, these people didn't do this, and so judgment came, and now chapter 8 is a promised blessing, and so again, new times call for new behavior, new kind of community life, and you see this all the time in Paul's epistles.

You used to live like this, but now you have to live like this, and the change in morality so much of the time is interpersonal morality.

It's community morality, how we act with each other, with other people, and that's why the law can be summed up with love your neighbor as yourself.

[24:31] It's other directed. It's not me being holy. It's not just about me. It's not just about me and God. It's about me and how I'm treating other people, how I'm loving other people.

Am I doing right by them? And so things are different for us now, and if God has come in and interrupted our lives, then that means that that changes how we have to act with one another.

We have to leave the past behind. And so what is the old way of relating? Well, just look out in the world and you can see how it's done presently, and that's how it used to be for us.

It's harsh. It's false judgment. It's coming to the worst possible conclusions about someone. We didn't give each other grace.

We needed to push other people down so that I could feel like I could stand up. We shaded the truth. We rounded it off to make me look better.

[25:33] We made more of ourselves than we should have. And what is interesting is that what Zechariah tells us is what is driving so much of that?

What is the emotion, the motivation that's driving so much of that wrong community behavior? Well, he says it's fear.

It was acting out of fear. So here he says, don't be afraid. So before it was all about self-preservation. That's why he says, don't be afraid.

Speak the truth and so on. So why do children lie? Well, isn't it mostly because they're afraid? They're afraid of the consequences.

They're afraid of what people are going to think of them. They want to maintain their reputation as righteous, mostly because if they can have that righteous reputation, then they're going to avoid the consequences.

[26 : 39] They're afraid for being seen for what they are. They're afraid of what's going to happen to them. And so much of the time, we are completely the same way. We pretend we're something we're not.

We put others down. We think evil of each other. We hide anger and bitterness and resentment in our hearts. And so much of that is fear-based.

It's self-preservation. It's self-righteousness. It's self-salvation. It's self-rescue projects. Because isn't this one of the standard arguments of, this is why I'm good, because I'm not like them.

And so I had this instinctual fear that if I'm just like everyone else, if I am wicked, then there goes my righteousness. But God in His grace comes to us and He meets us in our fear.

That's what you see here in Zechariah. He says, don't be afraid. You don't need to act that way. I'm for you. You don't need to maintain your dignity.

[27 : 44] You don't need to maintain your righteous standing. because in Christ we have that righteous standing. We are justified. And so we don't need to put on the false clothes of self-righteousness, the false clothes of I'm better than they are and the pretend righteousness of hiding and self-justification and self-protection.

God says, my son has died for you. And your filthy robes are gone. And now you're given glorious robes of righteousness. righteousness. The reason Christians live differently, the reason Christians can live differently and actually love each other, the reason why this can be so different and so much better and sweeter than what the world has is not because we know what is right and what is wrong and they don't.

At least that's not all of it. And it's not because the world doesn't know that they need to love each other. It wasn't a Christian who's saying what the world needs now is love, sweet love.

That's the one thing there's too little of. It's not knowledge. It's not knowing that we should love each other, that we should care for each other. It's not knowing the law that tells us to love each other.

It's the grace of God. It is the gospel that comes in. It's the free love of God. We love because He first loved us.

[29 : 23] And it's the cross. It's Christ coming wrapped up in the gospel and saying to us, don't be afraid. Here's a righteousness. Here's a salvation.

Here's a rescue. It's not about you maintaining it. Don't be afraid. And so God's grace sets us free to stop worrying about ourselves. It sets us free to start worrying about other people.

It frees us to love others and care for others. And so because there's no competition now. So much of the world is competition. It's envy driving it. But now the war is over.

Jesus is our righteousness. And that frees us to love others. And so out of a sense of God's love, out of a sense of God's promise for them, out of this hope, they're to leave their fear behind.

Things are different for them. So they're to live differently. They're to change the way they live towards each other. They're to change their attitude about God and His temple and working for Him.

[30 : 21] Now the third encouragement is this. Things are going to be different. Now you notice this is pretty much the same as the first one except now it's in the future. Things are going to be different.

Verse 19, the fast of the fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth month, they're going to be joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals. Joy is going to overtake them.

Mourning will be turned to joy. The punishment, the sadness, the grief, the suffering of the past is going to be gone. Weeping may remain for a night where rejoicing comes in the morning.

Isaiah 35, they will enter Zion with singing. Put yourselves in this verse. They will enter Zion with singing. Everlasting joy will crown their heads.

Gladness and joy will overtake them and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Earlier, it was present truth.

[31 : 27] Well, now this is future truth. What is going to be true? The fasting is going to be turned to feasting and then the world and the peoples, the nations are going to come to God.

People from everywhere are going to join together with each other and come to the Lord. the Lord is going to begin binding up what is fractured.

It used to be nation against nation and city against city. Now, one man from one city is going to another man from another city and saying, let's go together to the Lord. Verse 23, ten men, and ten is that number of totality.

It's a representative number. It's saying, men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, let us go with you because we have heard that God is with you.

God's blessing, he says, is going to be so clear that people are going to want to come. I want what you have. We're going where you go.

[32 : 38] We're going to join ourselves to you. Now, Zechariah here is an echo of, I don't think it's an intentional echo, but it's definitely an echo of Bruce words to Naomi.

Naomi, remember Ruth, the young Moabitess widow, Moabite widow, she's a pagan, and her husband is dead.

She has no one in the world to take care of her. and in the middle of all that, she says to her mother-in-law Naomi, where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay, and your people will be my people, and your God will be my God, and where you die, I will die, and there will be buried.

Ruth is saying, Naomi, I'm going with you all the way to the end. I'm going to die with you. Ruth was taking firm hold of Naomi's robe, and saying, I'm coming with you, I'm with you.

Now, the Lord is saying here in Zechariah, it's not just going to be one or two saying that. It's not going to be a Ruth here, and a Rahab there, or a Naaman.

[33 : 56] There had been one or twos in the Old Testament. It's not just going to be those ones and twos. The nations are going to join themselves to God's people.

And I think we're so used to living in our own time, and we're so used to thinking that we're such a minority that we have a hard time seeing how true this has become.

And just to put this into perspective, most of our ancestors were living in the deep forest of northern Europe when Zechariah wrote.

So imagine, Zechariah is writing this word from the Lord, he's writing it to the Jews, and they wouldn't even have known about our ancestors. We're on the edge of the map. And our ancestors were painting their faces blue and going to war and sacrificing people in bogs.

Our ancestors were going down to the sacred groves and worshipping the three mothers. And if you were a Jew and you saw all that, so you're this brown skin, dark hair, dark eyed Jew, and you saw these blonde hair, pale faced, dirty faces worshipping in the sacred grove, what do you think, wouldn't you be saying, what are the chances that those people are going to come?

[35 : 31] What are the chances that those people are going to come to the Lord? They're so far away. Their beliefs are so different. They're not like us at all. How will they ever come?

But here we are. Here we are, just as God has said. I just read a letter this week from Charles Hodges. He was the Princeton professor in the 1800s.

And this is a letter that his two children wrote. And it's a strange letter and it's written to the heathens. I don't know where you send that to, but it was written to the heathens.

And listen to a part of it. Or listen to the whole thing, I guess I have it all. Dear heathen, the Lord Jesus Christ has promised that the time shall come when all the ends of the earth will be his kingdom.

And God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. And if this was a promise made by a being who cannot lie, why do you not help it to come sooner by reading the Bible, attending the words of your teachers and loving God and renouncing your idols?

[36 : 42] Take Christianity into your temples. And soon there will not be a nation, no, not a space of ground the size of a footprint that will want for a missionary. my sister and myself by small denials procure two dollars, which are enclosed in this letter to buy tracts and Bibles to teach you.

Archibald Alexander Hodge and Mary Elizabeth Hodge, friends of the heathen. So why should we be encouraged? Because of being who cannot lie, promised that the ends of the earth are going to be Christ's kingdom.

people from all over will be saved. And so our labors, little Judah's labors, the people of God there, God was promising them the world, and he was going to give it to them, and so they needed to be encouraged.

And so in the same way, our labors are not in vain, they will not be in vain, because there's more than evil at work in this world. It's not only evil that has a plan. It's not only Satan who is working for his ends.

the king is on his throne, and his kingdom is coming, and he has a plan, an agenda, and he knows the end from the beginning. So we should be encouraged.

[38 : 01] Well, as we end, I want you to notice one last thing. How are people everywhere going to be saved? Well, it has to do with personal relationships, doesn't it?

For one, they're going to take firm hold of one Jew. That's how most people are saved. They know someone who is a Christian, and that Christian leads another person to Christ, brings them to church, is a light to them.

How are people going to be saved? Well, they're taking hold of people like you. Are you taking other people to God, as you have opportunity? community. But then I want you to notice something else.

It says they'll take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe. The Hebrew literally says they will take hold of a man, a Jew. And in a real and a special way, who is that one man, that one Jew, that people have to grab a hold of in order for them to go to God?

Well, there's only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. And he's not just a Jew, he is the Jew. He is the seed of Abraham, seed singular of Abraham.

[39 : 23] And he is the way, and he is the truth, and he is the life. No one comes to the Father except through me, he says. And he's willing to take you to God.

He's willing to take you straight to the Father and make you right with him. But you have to hold on to him. And that's the perfect picture of faith, of just grabbing hold and holding on and saying, I'm with you.

I'm yours, you take me wherever you want. And just like Ruth joined herself to Naomi, you have to leave your past behind. Ruth had to leave Moab behind, and her old gods behind, and her extended family behind.

She had to leave it all behind, to bind herself to Naomi. And you have to leave your past behind, your old life. And you have to say, where you go, I go. Your God will be my God.

I'm yours to the end. And it's realizing that you can't come on your own. You can't come all by yourself. You have to go with Jesus.

[40 : 31] It has to be with Jesus. And so you have to be like that woman who was sick, bleeding for 12 years, and she saw Jesus in the crowd, and she reached out, and she touched his robe.

Well, you have to do more than touch. You have to touch, and reach on, and grab it. Faith is grabbing onto Jesus, and not letting him go. So, it's tonight, the night you grab on, and hold on.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for such a Savior. We thank you for such a rescuer that meets us in our darkness, in our ignorance, in our death, in our wandering, in our unfaithfulness, in our sinfulness, in our vile and evil ways, hating and being hated, of judging and criticizing and ridiculing and our proud thoughts for one another, and our proud thoughts towards you.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you came, and you interrupted that cycle and that life of death, that is miserable in this life, and is eternal misery in the next life.

Thank you for breaking into our lives, for your great grace to us, to shine in our dark hearts and bring life where there was death, to bring love where there was hatred.

[42 : 01] We thank you that you have promised to be with us, so help us to live lives that are different from now on, because we know that you have made a difference. Things are not the way they used to be, and things are not going to be the way they used to be.

We have no reason to be afraid, because you are with us. You are for us, and so help us to work vigorously. Help us to love generously.

pray that you would bring salvation to hearts here this evening. Wonderful, glorious change.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.