



Message Transcript **When Adversity Escalates**

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All of us have plans for our lives and when it comes to being a Christian, we center that plan on the Lord. And oftentimes we think because our plan is centered on the Lord and we want to do things his way, we know that according to his word, it's going to work out. And yet many times we go through challenging circumstances. Many times we go through adversity. And when we do, it's not as if that adversity lasts for a minute or an hour or a day or even a week. Sometimes they last for seasons. And sometimes it's because of our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ that we're enduring adversity. What do you do when adversity comes? How do you deal with it when adversity actually escalates rather than quiets down? What choices do you have to make? I mean, the obvious answer is trust God. I mean, and that's an honest answer and that's where we need to go.

But what are some handlebars that we can put around that? How specifically can I trust God when adversity comes? Because the Bible makes clear that no matter who you are, if you're going to be a follower of Jesus, you're going to go through adversity in this world. Every character in the Bible, including the Lord Jesus Christ himself, went through adversity. The challenge is when adversity escalates, how should you respond? What choices can you make in your trust with God so that you can continue to journey with the Lord? And if you're in that season now, God has a word for you today. And if you're not in that season now, keep breathing. Adversity hits. Adversity means it's something that you didn't choose but is happening to you. And because it's happening to you, God wants you to know how to respond during these times of adversity so that you can continue forward as his servant.

And to look at that today, we're going to begin in a brand new book. We're going to be in this book for the majority of this year. We'll break off and do some other things, but I invite you to open your book Bible to the book of Exodus. We're going to be in the book of Exodus. And some of you might say, "Well, that's an Old Testament book. What's that have to do with me?" Here's the deal. Everything from Genesis through Revelation, all of it is God's word. As a matter of fact, Jesus told the Pharisees, the religious leaders in John chapter five, verse 39, he said, "You diligently study the scriptures because you believe that in them you have eternal life. Yet these are the very scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." Jesus was saying everything in the Old Testament is a testimony of him.

When we study the Old Testament, you're going to get a clear and bigger picture as to who Jesus is. And I love the book of Exodus. I've been led to teach from here for quite some time. There's going to be some super familiar stories that we're going to talk about like Moses at the burning bush and the plagues of Israel and the deliverance with the blood on the door posts and the parting of the Red Sea and all the different things that you're aware of. But what we're going to see is that God is always faithful to deliver his people. But as our story starts out, you know that they're in bondage. And the reason for that is Genesis spells out the patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And you'll remember Jacob had 12 sons and one son named Joseph, he gave a special coat of many colors, and Joseph flaunted that coat.

Not only did he flaunt the coat, but then he had the audacity to tell his brothers his dream, which was the fact that all 11 would bow down and worship him. Apparently

the brothers didn't like that vision, so they sold him away. Joseph ends up going to Egypt, he becomes second in command as he goes through these different hardships. Now he's second in command of Pharaoh. There's a famine in the land, and the brothers have to come from Israel to Egypt to ask for help, not knowing that their brother Joseph, is the one that they're talking to. And at the end of Genesis, we see in Genesis 50:20, Joseph tells his brothers what you intended for evil, God intended for good. He invites them all down, says, "Go back and get Dad." And they all come back down to Egypt, and that's where they begin to reside. With Joseph being second in command, he saves the nation that God is going to use to build. And that's where our story picks up here in Exodus.

So I encourage you this morning to open up your Bibles to Exodus, and we're going to talk about when adversity hits, when it escalates, what do we do? What do we do? Let's hear the word of the Lord this morning. First seven verses from Exodus say this, "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came out of Egypt with Jacob. They came each one with his household, Ruben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were 70 in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. Joseph died and his brothers, all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty so that the land was filled with them."

Now, as this story starts out in Exodus, Moses, who's the author of this book and

the author of the first five books, which are often called the Pentateuch of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Moses is the author. He's trying to tie in this entire story. And really he's talking about what's going on in the nation. And the first thing that you need to see here this morning is that when adversity escalates, trust in God's promises and the reality that he is personal. Trust in God's promises and the reality that he is personal.

First, let's start with the fact that God is personal. Oftentimes when we come to church, we can go through religious routine, we can sing songs, we can raise our hands, we can clap, we can listen to the word of God being taught. We can stand, we can sit, we can go through the motions and all the time miss the very fact that God is personal. God is relational. God wants to have a relationship with you. What's really interesting about the story is God knows every single person by name that has traveled from Israel who is now living in Egypt. He lists the families of Joseph and who they are. I mean, and you see this family of Ruben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. Those are Jacob's 12 sons.

Now, here's what I love about this story and we don't have time to get into all of it today, but do you know that these 12 sons in this one family come from four different mothers? I mean, you talk about the all time messed up family. This would be a contender for that family. I mean, you have these first five sons that were birthed by Leah. You remember that Joseph had two wives because Joseph was smitten with Rachel. He loved her so much that his uncle Laban said, "You can have her, but you got to work for me for seven years." And so he is like, "Done."

And the Bible said seven years seemed like a day to him. I mean, the brother was smitten with Rachel. It comes to the wedding night. Don't know what happened on the wedding night, but when he woke up the next day, Rachel wasn't there. He's laying next to Leah and you get the picture from the Bible like it's Leah. The Bible says she was weak in the eyes. I mean, she wasn't all that fine. And he's upset. So he goes to his uncle like, "No, no, no, I wanted Rachel." He goes, "No, you don't understand. The tradition is we give the oldest away first you have to work for me another seven years." He's like, "That's done. I'll take Rachel."

Well, between Leah and Rachel, there was this childbirth competition because Rachel couldn't conceive. Leah did. She gave him sons, every time she gave him sons he'll love me, he'll love me. But he didn't love her the way he loved Rachel. So then she decided there were also two maid servants involved. You remember that Rachel had a maid servant who gave birth to Dan and Naphtali and Leah had a maid servant that gave birth to Dan and Asher. So now you've got four moms in this one family and there's tension going on. So by the time Joseph, who's the favored child, because he's the first born of Rachel comes around with his coat of many colors and he's flaunting. The brothers have had enough, they lie to their dad, they tear up the coat, say he was killed by a wild animal and they don't want to think about him ever again.

But because of the famine in the land, they end up back there and God sovereignly worked together a plan. And here's what God's saying, all of them, there were 70 in number. God knows all the men. He knows all the women. He knows them all by name. Here's what you need to know. God knows you by name. He knows you

personally. Having a relationship with God is not just a religious activity that you try to do before you die in hopes that you're good outweighs your bad. That's religion. It won't do much for you. A personal relationship is when you have a relationship with God, when you can relate to him like you can to any other person. Even when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, how does he start the prayer? He doesn't start the prayer, Lord God. He starts it how? Our father, it's relational.

Having a relationship with the God of the universe through the person of Jesus Christ is essential for you to grow in your faith. And when adversity strikes, don't try to be more religious. Try to grow in your relationship with the one who knows you and loves you. He knows your desires. He knows your hurts, he knows your emotions. He knows why you're feeling the emotions that you're feeling even if you can't explain, why am I feeling the way that I'm feeling? He knows he created you. He formed you together in your mother's womb. Psalm 139 says that you're fearfully and wonderfully made and all your days were ordained for you before one of them came to be. Means God set the birth date and the death date for you before you were even born. It also means in Act 17 that you were placed in this specific generation for God to do something specifically through you now.

So it's not like I wish I was born 40 years from now or if I would've been born 200 years ago. God has you alive right now in this season for his reason. And guess what? He knows you by name. He loves you and he wants to have a relationship with you. Our God is personal. Don't miss that, because I find that when adversity hits

oftentimes in the life of a believer, we try to get more religious in hopes that God will do more for us. Things get hard and I got to start giving money. I got to start attending church more and maybe I join a small group now. Then maybe God will... No, grow in your relationship with him, grow in your relationship with him. And when adversity escalates, trust in God's promises as well as the reality that he's personal. God made great promises to the nation of Israel.

He made the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis chapter 12 and he confirmed it in Genesis chapter 15. He told Abraham, he goes, "I'm going to make you a great nation, a father of many. Your descendants will outnumber the grains of sand." The only problem was Abraham didn't have any children and his wife was barren. And God said, "This is my plan." Why? Because God wanted to know that when God established the nation of Israel, it was God, it wasn't man's idea. God is the one who does this. God is the one who opens the door. God is the one who's doing it. God is personal. He knows every single person by name. He knows you by name and you can hold him to his promises. Did you know that? God loves it when we take his word seriously and we hold him to his promises

God is personal and faithful to his promises in every generation. He has not forgotten you. So when you read John 15:15 and Jesus says, "I have called you friends." Guess what you are. You're a friend of God. A friend. God's personal love and redemption endures in every generation. And when we read in the New Testament that all of God's promises are yes and amen in Christ Jesus, we read that in second Corinthians 1:20. We know that they're true. Like in Jeremiah 33:3, Jeremiah chapter

33, verse three, he says this, "Call upon me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things you don't know." That's not a religious call. That is the God of the universe saying, "I love you so much and care for you so much. I want to have relationship with you. I want to share with you things you don't know about who you are, about the world that you're living in. Call on me. Let's have a relationship. Let's talk with one another. Let's get to know each other. I know everything about you, but there's still some things that you can learn about me."

Amen. It's an invitation. Hold God to his promises. You say, well, what are some of the promises? Now, we've gone over this before, but I'll give you a few this morning because I think they're important that we highlight this. We sang a song this morning that comes from one of my favorite Psalms in the whole Bible. Psalm 27. You know what Psalm 27 verse 13 says? I love this in times of adversity. I love it when I'm pinned up against the wall. I love it when I'm wondering, I don't see how there's a way out of this. Psalm 27, verse 13 says, "I would've despaired had I not believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

You know what that means? I would be desperate right now if I didn't believe that God was going to move on this side of heaven. I'm not just waiting for the rapture. I'm just not waiting till I die and then it's going to get better. I would be desperate if I didn't believe that I would see God's goodness in the land of the living. Psalm 23, God's goodness and mercy chases us down and overtakes us. We'll dwell in the house the Lord forever. God's goodness is coming after you. God's love is coming after you. You can claim that promise because when you're going through adversity, there's a

tendency to forget the relationship that God has with you and you begin to think because the enemy lies to you, you're all alone. You did something wrong. God doesn't love you. How come it's not going well for you and it's going well for all these other people?

No, the reality is sometimes because you're walking with the Lord and sometimes because you're doing the right thing and sometimes because you're honoring him, adversity strikes. The Bible makes a promise. Anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. It's a guarantee. But Isaiah 43 tells us, "Fear not, don't be afraid. For I have redeemed you, I've called you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I'll be with you and the fires you won't be burned for I am the Lord your God, the holy one of Israel. Nothing can take you out because I'm your God." Hold onto that promise. Or Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the plans I have for you to declare the Lord. Plans for prosperity and not for harm. Plans for hope and a good future." When you're desperate and adversity is escalating and it's rising, these are great promises to hold onto when you can't see the end of it.

When you're wondering how long, oh Lord, how long's my kid going to be wayward? How long's our marriage going to struggle? How long is it going to be difficult in my job? How long are we going to stress about our finances? How long until I'm recognized for what I do? I mean you gave me these promises, but I'm having a hard time walking them out. How long? These are great promises to hang onto. And for some of you, you're like, well that's Old Testament stuff. Let me tell you, the Old Testament is the word of God as well. Amen. You can hold onto the Old Testament,

but just so you know, the New Testament has a lot to say too. Matthew 11, Jesus says in verses 28 to 30, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest."

I mean that's a verse for somebody here that's all you needed to hear today. You're stressed and you need rest. And Jesus is saying relationally, come to me in the midst of all your circumstances, come to me. I'll give you rest. Some of you're stressed about money. Philippians 4:19 says, "My God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Second Peter 1:3 I don't know what to do. I'm not a mature enough Christian. Second Peter 1:3 says, "God has given you everything that you need pertaining to life and godliness." Yeah, but you don't understand, Pastor Jeff, I'm kind of new to this Christian thing, or I'm not new to this Christian thing, but I'm living in sin. I know Jesus is the lord of my life, but I can't get over the hump. I mean, I'm embarrassed by my sinful patterns. Well, first John 1:8-10 says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sin, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins."

And what else? Cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So hey you pagan sinners out there that aren't feeling worthy, come to Christ, confess your sin. He will wash it all away. It's his promise. Is that good news or what? Stop living in guilt and shame and receive the forgiveness of Christ. And then there's this other part too. I know when I go through times of adversity where the enemy lies in my ears and says, "You're, you're a pastor. You shouldn't be going through this. I mean, you've given your whole life for this

and how come it's you?" And I start feeling like I'm not winning this battle. God tells me he's already won the battle. He says in Romans chapter eight verses 37 and following, "But in all things we overwhelmingly conquer through him who loved us. For I'm convinced that neither death in their life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers nor height nor depth nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nothing can separate you from the love of God. You know what that means? Yeah, pastor Jeff, but I've wandered. I used to know the truth, but I've wandered. Let me tell you something on authority of God's word, nothing can separate you from his love. Come home to him today. He loves you. He loved you so much. He came and died on a cross for all your sins, was buried and got out of the grave so that you could hear the words today that you are loved by God. Amen. Amen. God wants to have a personal relationship with you. And isn't it true, sometimes we go through adversity, that's how the relationship grows. All of your closest friends that you have in life, you've been through adversity with all of them. You think about who your closest friends are. They've been there for you. You've been there for them.

You've done this. You've rubbed on each other, you've helped each other. You've lifted each other up. You've carried each other's burdens. God says, "Let me be that with you. I love you with an unconditional love." So during times of adversity, when it escalates, when it rises, trust in God's promises and the reality that he's personal. Second is this, when adversity rises and escalates, trust in God's purposes for all your

circumstances, trust in God's purposes for all your circumstances. Do you know that God has a purpose for everything that you're going through? That nothing that you're going through right now is happenstance. Notice what happened to Israel as they're in the nation of Egypt. It says, "Now a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph." There's been a change in government. This king, the first king knew Joseph put him as number two in command.

This new king doesn't know Joseph. In other words, it's also saying, I don't care about who Joseph is. I don't care about who Israel is. I don't care. I'm a patriot for Egypt. So who gives a rip about Israel? That's his thought. And he said to the people, "Behold the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them or else they will multiply. And in the event of war, they will also join themselves to those who hate us and fight against us and depart from us. So they appointed task masters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities and Pithom and Rameses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel.

"The Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously. And when they had made their lives bitter with hard labor and mortar and bricks and all kinds of labor in the field and all the labors which they had rigorously imposed on them." So here's the deal. Israel follows God's leading to get into Egypt. Everything's going well. There was a famine in the land and because of their brother Joseph, they were able to eat and survive. But guess what? All the patriarchs died out. All their families died out. New

King arises and says, "I don't really know this Joseph Guy and I don't care about Israel. All I know is that they're big and that they're mighty. And I'm a little bit paranoid because they don't have Egyptian nationalism. And if we don't do something to get rid of them and to make it hard for them, if somebody ever turned on us, they joined forces against us. We can't do this. So here's the plan. Let's make it extremely difficult for them."

And so they forced them to work. Not like any kind of work, slave work, 24/7/365, no days off, no vacation time, no PTO, all day long what are you doing? You're working in the field. You're gleaning straw to make bricks or you're making bricks or you're building buildings all for the sake of making Egypt grow. Seemingly nobody cares for you and the nation of Israel. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever felt that you're following the Lord and as you're following the Lord because you're following the Lord, it gets harder for you. You're following the Lord and now in the workplace, because you're outspoken about your relationship with Christ and who you are, things have become more difficult for you. Or in school they're more difficult for you or in your family, it's more difficult for you and you feel as if you're all alone.

And because of your relationship with Christ, there's a heavy weight placed on you. That's exactly what was going on here. I mean, Israel was doing the things that God wanted them to do and instead of getting easier, it got harder. Friends, let me just tell you this, some people preach a gospel that says if you trust in Jesus, everything in your life will get better and it will get better immediately. And it will never ever be worse. It's just not biblical. It sounds really good. I mean the reality is when you trust

Christ, you will go through hardships. Jesus said in John 16:33, "In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I've overcome the world." Sometimes it's because of what we're doing that we're a target of the enemy. Sometimes it's because we're walking with the Lord that things become more difficult. And during those times you need to trust in God's purposes for all your circumstances.

Know this about your circumstances, think about the ones you're in now or you've been in or you're going into and you think to yourself, this is so bad, this isn't helping me, this isn't helping the kingdom. This is hard. How come my life's not flourishing? Let me tell you this. God is sovereign and intentional with all your circumstances, especially your difficult ones. God is using what you're doing now, not only to be a blessing to you and bring you out, but to be a blessing to others in the process. Especially when you feel alone, when you feel mistreated, when you feel that nobody cares. When you feel that you're between that infamous rock and a hard place and you love the Lord and you're doing things for the Lord. And guess what? It's hard.

It's difficult. I'm doing what you asked me to do, but my circumstances aren't happening the way I saw them unfolding. Here was the plan I thought you were taking me to, now you're taking me here. What's up with that? This is not fun. I don't enjoy this anymore. I thought serving you, God was going to be bliss. And it's really, really, really difficult. When that happens keep this in mind, God has a purpose for why it's really, really difficult. There's things he wants to teach you and there's character that he wants to grow not only to bless you, but for you to be a blessing to other people.

Anybody that's been used mightily in the kingdom of God has gone through significant pain and hardship. I've heard other pastors say, "If God wants to use you, he's got to bruise you."

I mean it's true. God uses sometimes intentional pain in your life to bring about the good he wants to bring about. And God's always faithful to his promise. I mean, we read Genesis and he told Abraham, "You're going to be a father of a great nation." And you might say, "Well, what's going on with all this slavery?" God prophesied it as he was confirming the covenant with Abram in Genesis 15, verse 13, God said to Abram as he was making the covenant with him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years." So what did God tell Abraham when he was making the covenant? He said, "You're going to be a great nation, but before that happens, your people are going to be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years."

If God said they were going to be slaves in a foreign land for 400 years, what do you think was going to happen? They were going to be slaves in a land for 400 years. But he says, "I will also judge the nation whom they will serve and afterward they will come out with many possessions."

God is saying that won't be the end of their story. Whatever you're going through now, that's not the end of your story. I believe I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Sometimes what we would prefer is I just prefer a rewind switch. Take me back to that fork in the road and I'll go that way. And God's like, "No, no, no, I got you right here whether you wanted to go that way, didn't want to go that way."

And I got you hemmed in right now and this is my design for your life. Will you look to me right now? And if you do, I'm going to build character in you and I'm going to use your life or I'm going to use this group of people to bless others."

That's exactly what he did with Israel. The reason we read about the story of Exodus is because they didn't die in slavery. God's faithful to his promise and when he delivers them and will see him deliver them, he does it miraculously. And we love that part of the story. But this is the hard part of the story. In order to be delivered miraculously, you have to be desperate. And sometimes we don't like to be desperate. Sometimes we want deliverance and we want deliverance now. Lord, I've been in a bad marriage for two weeks, fix it. God, I've been praying for kids for two years, fix it. God I've been... And we say, "Well that's been long enough."

And God's like, "Oh, it's going to be a little longer. I got something else I'm trying to teach you." And just when you think you've had more than enough God's like, "No, you haven't had enough yet." But God always does what he does because of his love for you and because he's building something special and you're part of a bigger whole that God is using. Amen. Now here's a scripture that we like to quote for other people but we don't like when people quote it to us. It's found in the book of Romans chapter eight, Romans chapter eight and verse 28. We often quote it at funerals. We often quote it when people lose a loved one, we often quote it when there's heartache in someone's life. And we hear this and it's true, Romans 8:28 says, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and who are called according to his purpose."

If you love God and you're following his calling, he's going to use all things to work together for his purpose. That's true. When you're in pain and people quote that to you, we think well that's easy for you to say, you're not in pain. But it's a reality that when we're going through times of desperation, we can be certain it's temporary and God is using these things to build us. Think about Romans chapter five verses three through five. "And not only this, but we also exalt..." That means we rejoice, "In our tribulations knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance and perseverance proven character and proven character hope and hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts, through the Holy Spirit whom he has given to us." When God takes you through things and you're rejoicing in your adversity and you're not necessarily celebrating the circumstances, but you're celebrating God in the middle of those circumstances, God's growing your character and he's growing your perseverance and he's growing your hope.

James, the half brother of Jesus says it this way in James 1:2, "consider it all joy my brothers. When you encounter various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its perfect results so you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." God takes us through circumstances in our lives that we would never have chosen for ourselves on purpose so that we can learn to worship him when it's difficult. So we can be in relationship with him when it's difficult because it's in the times of difficulty when we continue to worship him and honor him and serve him, that he's building something special in us so that when we come out on the other

side we're stronger and so that when we do, we're a blessing to others. That's the Bible. That's what God teaches throughout the entirety of scripture.

So when adversity escalates, when it mounts up, when it's overwhelming, trusting God's purposes for all your circumstances, you might pray something like this, Lord, I don't see how in the world this is ever going to be helpful to me or anybody else, but because you're sovereign and intentional, I'm going to believe that it is. And I rejoice in you this day because this is the day you have made. I'll rejoice and be glad in it and I love you, but I'm feeling desperate and this is really, really hard and I don't see an end to any of this stuff in sight. But I'm going to place my trust in you and I'll continue to worship you. And isn't it true when we read stories in the Bible that God uses these challenges to build our character and that when we see them played out in the lives of other people, we're like, that was so important in that person's story.

I mean how about Noah? Noah preached the generation for 120 years and the only people that got saved were his family. Eight people got saved, Nobody he preached to got saved. But what did God do? God had him build an ark in that generation. God had him do all those different things because it was through that that God was building the character of Noah for the call in his life. Or how about David? If there was no Goliath, you wouldn't even know about David. If there was no king Saul, you wouldn't even know about David. David had to stand up to a giant. David had to submit to King Saul even though King Saul was a wicked king, but he was still God's anointed. So David for about 14 years was on the run writing some of the best psalms that we have in our Bible about worship during difficult times.

It's that that made David the leader God wanted him to be. It's the difficult times in your life, the seasons you look back on and the older you get, there's more of those seasons and you look back and say, "Wouldn't want to relive that, Wouldn't want to do that again. Keep me away from that." But if you study that, those are sometimes and oftentimes the circumstances that God has used in your life the most effectively to grow your maturity and love for him. And it's interesting to me because when I read this story, I mean Israel at the time probably had about 2 million people or so that we're going to see. Egypt may have been bigger, but the perception from Egypt is they're bigger and they're mightier than us. And isn't that the way the devil fears the work of the Lord? The devil always wants you to feel like you're alone.

The devil always wants you to feel like you're a minority. But I got news for you today. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. If you're a believer, you're on the winning side with more people than if you're on the losing team. You remember the story in Second King's chapter six, where Elisha went out when he was surrounded by all the armies and his servant was terrified and said, "What are we going to do?" And Elisha said, "Well those that are with us are greater than those that are with them." And the servant starts looking around like what are you talking about? And Elisha prayed, said, "Lord open his eyes so he can see."

And boom, spiritually his eyes were open and there were chariots and chariots of fire and horses surrounding the whole area. And then the servant was like, "Okay, feel pretty good." Here's what you can know, you're never alone. Some of you today feel like you're alone. Nobody understands you, nobody's with you. Nobody's going to see

you. God sees you. God knows what you're going through. God loves you and there are more with you than are against you. And if God is for you, friends who could ever be against you? Amen.

So when you're going through these circumstances, the ones that we go through, that when we enter into that season and when we're going through the season, we're like, this is awful. Praise him because he's building something in you that's greater than could have ever been built if you weren't going through it. And God's sovereign, he's not haphazard, it's not accidental. He's using it for his glory. And if you'll endure under it, he will bear fruit from it. Amen. Then he gives us this third one, when adversity escalates, when adversity escalates, trust in God's protection when you are uncompromising in your loyalty to him. When you're uncompromising in your loyalty to him, trust God's protection. So notice what Egypt does. Egypt decides we're going to work them to death, we're going to kill him off. We're going to use them for slave labor to build us storage houses and cities and all these things.

But if they die, they die and that's okay. We're just going to work them to death. They won't even have time to come against us. But what happened was it says in verse 12, "But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel." The more the enemy opposes Jesus Christ and his church, the more the church spreads. Just know that. I'm not saying you pray for persecution, don't pray for persecution, just pray to be faithful. Persecution will come but the more faithful you are under persecution, there's never

been in the history of the church or in the kingdom of God, even in the Old Testament where the church or the kingdom of God has been persecuted when faithful people stand up where the kingdom hasn't expanded, it always expands under persecution.

And that's what's going on here. And when it does, a reminder is when you're in that trial, when you experience that adversity and it's mounting up, trust in God's protection in your uncompromising loyalty to him, don't ever take a shortcut because notice what they begin to offer. It says, "Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiprah and the other one was named Puah." Now it highlights these two women. Certainly they weren't the two midwives for the 2 million people, possibly they were the leaders of the midwives for all the Hebrew women. But these two are named here.

And you're going to see why they were named because God wants us to draw attention to their character and what they did. And the king comes to them and in verse 16 he said, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birth stool, if it's a son, then you shall put him to death. But if it's a daughter, then she shall live." So here's the command the government says kill all your baby boys when they're born. Girls live, boys died. That's the edict of the king. So what are they going to do? I mean, if they don't do what the king says, they're facing some massive consequences. But notice this Shiprah and Puah and how they respond, "But the midwives feared God." That's your answer right there.

Always fear God more than you fear man, let me say it again. Always fear God more than you fear man. The fear man can prove to be a snare. In every situation,

especially as adversity mounts and the pressure's on it's easier to fear other people because we start trying to finagle our circumstances to get through it. And we're like, okay, well I can help that person. Maybe this person will scratch my back. Never ever, never ever compromise on God's standards, ever. If God says you shall not kill, then don't kill. So these women feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live, praise God. That was their choice. Now check it out. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, "Why have you done this thing and let the boys live?" Now their answer's pretty interesting. Listen to what they say, the midwife said to Pharaoh, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women for they're vigorous and they give birth before the midwife can get to them."

I mean, here's their answer. Are Hebrew gals not like your Egyptian gals? I mean one labor pain, two pushes, there's the baby, we can't make it in time. I mean our women are strong women. I mean, that's their answer. It doesn't sound like the truth to me, the truth sounds something like we're not going to kill baby boys and we're going to let people know, don't call us or call us if it's really needed, but hide the boys, keep them alive. Here's been the edict, we're not paying attention. So don't call on us. Have the baby before we get there and hide it so we can tell the king. I mean there's some sort of plan going on behind the scenes. Clearly this is not what exactly happened. They just feared God and they believed that the life of a human being was more important than a king's edict. Amen.

Let me just say this about children. According to the Bible, children are a blessing

and not a burden. Did you know that? Because I find sometimes even in church, if you have more than like two kids, people will joke with you. Do you realize how that happened, brother? You should have all the kids you want to have. Do you know why? Because you know what the first command in the Bible is? Be fruitful and multiply because God knows when a family is together and a husband and wife can raise a kid in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord, God's kingdom expands. Why do you think in every single generation before God's going to do something great like raise up a deliverer in Moses to deliver the people or raise up Jesus Christ who's coming that some king somewhere issues an edict to kill all the infants? Why is infanticide always on the rise before God does something big? Because Satan knows that children are a blessing. They're a blessing.

Now, as we were praying as a staff this week I felt compelled to do this, it's a little different than what we would normally do, but I believe God is the one who opens wombs. That doesn't mean don't go see a doctor. That doesn't mean learn about different treatments and that's great, do that. But God is the one who ultimately opens wombs. And I know there are some in our church who are saying, "We are dying to get pregnant. We cannot get pregnant." There's others of you who are pregnant with your child and you're praying, hey, let Mom be healthy. Let the baby be healthy. Can we just offer prayers for that this morning? If that's you, if you're pregnant this morning as a family or you're trying to get pregnant as a family, would you just stand so we can pray over you? Because I believe God wants to do something here this morning that's special. Don't be embarrassed. We're for your kids, amen. We're for that.

Now, God may have a way that's different than what we pray, but let's trust it to the Lord. So Lord God, we ask you Lord, to bless families that are praying for babies that they can raise in a godly way and use to grow up in your kingdom, to advance your kingdom in all righteousness. And Father, we to believe that you're the one that opens up wombs. So we pray that you would do something miraculous this morning for those who are standing on both of our campuses and watching online. Lord, we just ask for you to move mightily and to do what only you can do. And Lord, when that happens, pray that these people will give you praise, Lord. We'll praise you as a church for bringing in more and more babies that we can raise in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ to serve you and to advance your kingdom in this world. We pray all these things in Jesus' name and amen. Give God some praise for them.

So here's what she says. And there's nothing in the Bible that says, hey, lying is good, when you're in trouble, lie. But sometimes you're caught between a rock and a hard place. What are they going to do? They're either going to kill babies or they going to do something to keep them alive. God honors loyalty to him. God honors life more than obeying a government that takes away life. You can't just say, well, so and so said it and they had authority over me. Every single time that you take a step and are uncompromising in your loyalty to Christ, your love for Jesus will grow and your steadfastness in him will get greater. I remember at the age of 24, I went into the ministry full time. Now prior to that I'd helped out with Fellowship of Christian Athletes and some other ministries and liked doing different things and that wasn't all that big of

a deal, but sitting down and telling my friends, "Yeah, I'm no longer going this way, I'm doing this. I'm going to go into the ministry."

And to have to talk to some of my friends and explain to them what Christ had done in my life and how he was changing me. Some of those conversations were difficult, some didn't really end friendships, it just changed the way in which we related because certain people didn't understand what I was doing and thought I was wasting my life. I remember being a youth pastor when we took our first missions trip and we were in London, England, we were doing dramas on the street and we were standing up to preach. And I remember the first time I stood up to preach and here I am outside as a street preacher, first time I'd ever done that. And it was hostile. How many know the F word in Britain means the same as it does in English?

You know what I mean? People saying these things. But there was something about it that as I was standing there telling those same people, no, no, you don't understand that God you're talking about died for you and he loves you. And I could feel this boldness coming in, way easier to preach here than in the streets, just so you know. Street preaching's awesome. I see those guys at the Broncos game. I'm always giving them high fives. I just wish they spoke louder instead of just holding a Jesus saves sign. Tell them. Going to seminary my boldness grew. I can tell you in 2020 when 14 days to slow the spread happened and churches shut down and we're all trying to figure out what does this COVID-19 thing mean and where do we stand? And now we're two years later and we're saying, what does this COVID-19 thing mean and where do we stand?

And I believe, I know we all have different opinions about all that stuff, but one question I continued to ask the Lord was, Lord, what do you want us to do? And what do you want me to do? And as a church, what do we say? Because our governing officials were saying, "You can't have more than 10 people in your building. You can't." Says who? Says me, I'm the governor. You can't do it. Well, as I began to pray and I began to see things in the scripture, I began to see that the church was the most important institution on the planet. And I also begin to see that Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth. And Jesus Christ told us to go make disciples. He told us to gather and not forsake that. He told us to teach the word and to baptize and to send people out. And I got to a place where I said before the Lord, "I can no longer keep our doors shut and be a Christian." So we opened our doors.

Now we didn't open our doors in defiance to government. We opened our doors in allegiance to Jesus Christ. Do you understand the difference? Weren't trying to make a political stand. We were just saying Jesus Christ's authority is greater than yours and he's telling us to meet and we'll do what he says and we still love you. I wrote a letter to our governor telling him I still love him, I'm praying for him, but this is what we've got to do. And I'm telling you something bold came over me because I remember that year in October talking to my wife before we'd leave and we were praying in the morning before I'd go to church, if I get arrested today, here's the protocols. Here's what our attorney has said. I told my kids, "If dad gets arrested, don't worry, I'm just going to a different mission field for a while. I'm going to tell the prisoners about Jesus, then I'm coming back."

And it was weird to be in the United States of America in 2020 and have to have that conversation. But I can tell you this, my heart changed and my boldness changed. And I remember having a conversation with our leadership saying either A, we change the name of our church or B, we're opening our doors forever because we can't call ourselves brave and be cowards at the same time. It doesn't work. So we opened. Every single time you take a step of faith for the Lord Jesus Christ and are uncompromising and unflinching in your loyalty to him, it will grow your faith. Singles when you make a stand that you're going to live sexually and morally pure in your relationships, something will grow on the inside. When you decide you're going to live morally pure in what you put into your body and not take drugs and not get drunk and do all this, you're going to grow in that relationship.

When you make a stand that you're going to be bold and tell others about Jesus Christ, something comes on. So they're not these big steps. They're all these little baby steps and opening our doors. That was just another little baby step for me. But the more baby steps I take and the more baby steps you take, the stronger we become. And here's what you need to know about the church of Jesus Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is unstoppable if the church would just stand up and be who the church is supposed to be. So he's growing that in you. And here's what you need to know. I mean there's a big difference between reputation and character. Reputation is what other people say about you. That's not a big deal. Your reputation really doesn't mean a whole lot. I mean, if reputation counts for something, then Jesus Christ had a horrible reputation because they hated him so much, they put him on a cross.

Character is who you are when nobody else is watching. Character is the decisions that you're making in times of adversity that nobody else sees. The ones you're not standing on a platform making decisions, you're before the Lord saying, "This is what I'm going to do because my allegiance is to Jesus Christ." It's Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego saying, "Oh king, you can do whatever you want, but we will not stop praying to our God." It's in Acts chapter five when Peter, James, and John and all the apostles are like, "Do whatever you want with us, but we can't stop talking about what we've seen and heard. And we will continue to preach and proclaim Jesus. You do what you want, but we're not stopping." All those decisions grow in your boldness. Be uncompromising in your workplace. Be uncompromising in your schools. Be uncompromising with your neighbors.

And by that I don't mean be rude. By that I don't mean you're this and you're going to hell and I'm... No, no, no. Be loving. But you can say, this is who I have to be before the Lord and this is who I am. And my God loves you too but because of my love for him, this is how I'm going to respond. That's what it means. Grow your character and God will protect you. God will protect you. God protected our church. God will continue to protect our church. You say, Well Pastor Jeff, there's some stories in the Bible where God didn't protect people. They've actually been martyred and people throughout church history have been martyred. Yes, that is true. And every single one of them that has is under the throne of God saying, "How long, oh Lord, until you right all the wrongs?" Do not fear the one who can kill the body, but fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Don't fear man, trust the Lord and his protection. And here not only his protection, but we read in Hebrews, he rewards those who diligently seek him. So not only did they tell this king, this Pharaoh, they couldn't do this. It says in verses 20 and 21, "So God was good to the midwives and the people multiplied and became very mighty because the midwives feared God, he established households for them." So because they were faithful, God gave them kids too. I mean, God rewards those who stand for him who are unflinching. And then finally, let me tell you this one, when adversity escalates, trust in God's plans, that though they're always opposed, will never be defeated. Trust in God's plans though always opposed, they'll never be defeated.

In every generation there's a group of people that will say, "You can't say Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. You can't say he's the only God. You can't say that if you don't believe in Jesus, there's no other way." Oh yes I can. His plan may seem narrow, but it is narrow. But Jesus Christ is still Lord of all. And however Jesus is leading you down that narrow path that you enter through the narrow gate, He's building something in you. So notice what Pharaoh does, Pharaoh's losing because God's people are doing what's right. So what's he do then? Notice verse 22, "Then Pharaoh command is all his people saying, "Every son who is born, you are to cast into the Nile and every daughter you are to keep alive."" So now he is not just going to the Hebrews, he's going to all his people in Egypt saying, "This is what needs to happen. I want everybody to join me in this."

Now it's interesting for me, because twice now in this text, he's telling us to kill all

the boys, but the girls can live. And before Jesus came into the world, Herod killed all the baby boys two years and younger, but the girls could live. What's up with killing all the baby boys? I mean, we know from scripture that both men and women are completely equal in the site of God. We know both have complete equal value before the Lord. We know that men aren't more important than women or women aren't more important than men. We believe that here. But why is it Satan always goes after the boys? You ever thought about that? It's because men, you're the spiritual authority in our culture. And when you have absent men that aren't living for the Lord, you have chaos everywhere. Satan even knows that. God created man first.

He created Eve out of the man's rib. What was Adam's job? To lead his wife. You say well, look at in Genesis three, God picked on the woman. He went after the woman. No, he went after the man. Because if the man would've been leading, he would've cut the head off of the serpent and we wouldn't even have Genesis four. We would've all lived happily ever after. Adam was called to lead and failed. When you look around men and see our world in chaos, know why it is. It's because spirit filled Christian men are not taking the place they ought to take. And if they did, we could put an end to all of it. Men are called to lead.

That's a little better golf clap than I even got in the first service. Do you know why we don't like hearing that? Because we're passive in our DNA. It doesn't mean we're called to be a boss. It does not mean we're called to be a bully. It doesn't mean we're called to tell everybody else what to do. That's not what it means. It means there are

wives here who are dying for their husband to be a living example of what Jesus Christ looks like as a husband and a dad. Amen. It means there are single women here who are dying to see what it looks like to be a man in the church who will help stand up for her and her kids during a difficult situation. It means that we're dying to see a world that's saying all this nonsense and garbage for somebody to stand up and say it's nonsense in garbage and we don't put up with that here.

Where are the men is the question. So go the men, so goes to church, so goes to church, so goes the world. Men, it is not your wife's job to do family devotions. Men, it is not your wife's job to drag your kids to church. Men, it is not your wife's job to sing during songs. Men, it's not your wife's job to learn the Bible. It is your responsibility. And when you appear before God in heaven, you will answer as a man for what you did in your generation to the glory of God. Men, it's time to stand up and to lead. Amen.

What it doesn't mean is we lead perfect. There's only one perfect man in the whole world and that's Jesus Christ. Only one who ever lived as perfect. We just want to grow increasingly in that. Say, well how do I do it? It means we get around each other and we support each other and we encourage each other and we pray for one another and we bless each other and we share our failures and we say, I'm trying to do this, but I'm not really good at it yet. And help me become better because I want to be a man. Because to be a godly man means you elevate women. And to be a godly man, it means you bless your kids. And to be a godly man, it means you empower others. And to be a godly man you're thinking less of yourself and helping others more.

That's what it means. And that's what Jesus is trying to grow us into. Amen.

Because interesting for me that not only do we see this in the scriptures where there's always infanticide before God's going to do something big, which is why our culture sees it right now. Because God's ready to do something big. But God always calls men. I mean, you read the Bible and who is God of? He's the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That's what we read, he's not the God of Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel. Why? Because men are called to be the leaders of the nation. Amen. And that's what he's calling us to be. And when you live this way, here's what you'll know. God's plans, they'll always be opposed but we're never defeated. As a matter of fact, when Jesus has died in the cross and rose from the dead, we already have the victory.

We're not praying for victory. We're praying from a position of victory. It's like watching a game that you've already seen the outcome to. I'm not praying that Jesus will come back. I'm praying for him to come back soon. He's coming back. He will rule and reign. He will right every single wrong. He will reign for a thousand years on this planet. He will do all that. I'm not praying in hopes that it happens. I'm praying because it's going to happen. I'm not praying that I hope my marriage gets better. I hope my kids get better. I hope... I'm praying because it is going to happen, that's how we're called to pray. And even when you see God's plans and you're looking at them in the moment right here and you're like, it is not going well. You keep praising him and you keep honoring him and you keep worshiping him and you keep believing that good things are going to come about because you are trusting the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Amen. Deliverance comes, God does heal. God does deliver. But oftentimes he lets things get intense and he lets things escalate so that when you are delivered you will know it's because of him. I'm worshiping him. He gets all the glory. Amen. See friends, some of you here today need to give your lives to Jesus Christ. You need to have a personal relationship with him. Not be religious anymore, but to say, hey Jesus, I need to have a relationship with you. I believe you died. I believe you rose. I've believed that for a long time but I've never invited you in my life, to be the Lord of my life. I want to have a relationship. And for some of you here today, there's some word the Holy Spirit spoke to you where you can put a big smile on your face and say, there's nothing wrong with me.

I'm going through this trial because God's entrusting me with something awfully special he couldn't entrust with somebody else because this is a weight and a burden he can only entrust to me. And he loves you that much and he cares for you that much. And I just want to pray for you today, whether it's your time to trust Christ or whether it's your time just to thank God for who he is in the middle of this difficult time, that God is the one who is for you. God is the one who's walking with you, and God is the one who wants to do amazing things in and through you. Amen. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we give you the glory and honor this morning. And Father, we just ask you to move, for those who are here today who have never trusted Jesus Christ personally and relationally who want a relationship with God, here's how you can pray.

Lord Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for my sins. I believe you rose from the dead in victory. I confess my sin to you right now. I know I'm a sinner. I want to

turn from that, come into my life and be the Lord of my life. Take over my life. I want a relationship with you. And for those who have trusted Christ who are here today, perhaps you're going through that adversity. Perhaps it's getting more and more intense. Perhaps it's escalating. Father, I just pray for the words that your Holy Spirit spoke deeply to the heart. That there would be great praise and trust in what you're doing because you're building something oh so special in and through all who are here. And God, we give you all the glory, all the honor and all the praise for all you're doing. In Jesus' name. Amen and amen. Can we give God praise this morning?