

Rely on God's Spirit, Rehearse God's Sovereignty

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[0 : 0 0] You can be seated, and we'll dismiss our kids to children's ministry. If you'll open your Bibles to the book of 2 Timothy, chapter 1, we'll be reading in verses 6 through 14 this morning, 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verses 6 through 14.

For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

[1 : 5 2] In January of 2022, the Canadian government enacted Bill C-4, effectively criminalizing Christian preaching, teaching, and counsel that upholds morality for biblical sexuality.

It upholds a biblical view of sexuality. The Canadian government, two years ago, 2022, in January, made it illegal for any Christian to preach, teach, or counsel a biblical standard of sexual morality. The very next day, many pastors gathered together and determined to preach on that next Sunday these basic principles.

And so, they started what they now call Human Sexuality Sunday, or Biblical Sexuality Sunday, rather, where they, every year, in defiance of this bill, preach these precise truths.

And this movement has spread, not only from Canada, but to the United States of America and throughout the world. This Sunday is Sanctity of Human Life Sunday.

[3 : 0 8] And there are many terrible, deeply depressing truths to consider within the entire concept of abortion.

But I want to celebrate, as I do these Canadian pastors, the courage that we do know about. Do you know how many women have found themselves in unexpected or unwanted pregnancies, and yet looked their fear in the eye and made it serve the Lord?

There are probably plenty of us in this room this morning who would not be here if our mothers had not managed their own fear.

Well, this is precisely the kind of thing that the book of 2 Timothy is talking about. We saw last week that Paul is encouraging Timothy to fan his teaching gift into a flame, even though that increased effort and increased zeal would probably lead to Timothy facing more trials and more hardships as a consequence.

And really, that's the theme of this book. The theme of this book is managing fear and making it obey the Lord Jesus. So this little letter, which is written for one man, in Paul's perspective, for the encouragement of one man to find courage in his call to serve the Lord, well, we have this letter.

[4 : 4 5] And we get to go along for the ride. And we get to learn courage alongside of Timothy. Now, there are some of you that might benefit from this series more than others because already, as you sit here this morning, you already have a specific action in mind that, if taken, will lead to hardship, at least in the short term.

You already know what it is that God would call you to fan into flame and how that choice would lead to difficulty.

And others of you are in the middle of something difficult right now, and maybe you have been for a really long time. You know, whenever the Christian is going through some kind of circumstantial difficulty, the flesh is always pointing to the easy button on the other side of the room.

It's this big red button, this big red easy button. And if you push it, that just means I'm going to not do this God's way. I'm going to do this my way. And there's this sense, probably not entirely wrong, that if you were to just hit that button and do things your way, your immediate comfort would improve.

So some of you have some step in mind that you know will lead to difficulty, and others of you are already in that difficulty, fighting to be faithful to what the Lord has explicitly called you to do.

[6 : 08] All of this is just different versions of bravery. All of this is just different versions of courage, of managing your fear, and making it submit to the Lord Jesus.

Some of us are just needing encouragement to do hard things we're already doing, and to keep doing them, to give generously, to not give up on someone that is really difficult to love, to press into community, because the Bible says to do that, even when it feels awkward for us to do that.

And so, as I said, we're along for the ride with Timothy, as we learn how to look fear in the face and make it obey the Lord Jesus.

Now, Paul gives today, we'll see, two ways that work interconnectedly that is going to help Timothy to overcome fear and focus on the Lord Jesus.

And the first one is the Spirit of God. Look at verse 6. For this reason, Paul writes, for this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

[7 : 14] For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. So first idea, God gave us a spirit.

God gave us his Holy Spirit. We have become, as it says in Peter, partakers of the divine nature. We have the Holy Spirit of God living inside of us.

If we have committed ourselves to Jesus, given ourselves to Jesus, trusting in Jesus as our righteousness, Jesus is pleased to, in our salvation, seal us with his Holy Spirit.

And you really need the Holy Spirit to overcome fear. It really is not doable without the Holy Spirit.

And Paul lists three things that the Holy Spirit is going to do for us to help us overcome fear.

And the first one is, he's going to give us power. He's going to give us power. You need power because in the flesh you are no match for the hardships that you will face in this life.

[8 : 18] You cannot possibly, please hear me, you cannot possibly obey God during hardships without the Holy Spirit. And Paul emphasizes the power of God again in verse 8, where he says this, Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

By the power of God. Paul isn't calling Timothy to enter into hardship and then lean on his own resources. He says, share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

Okay, it's like to say it this way. God may ask you, and probably will ask you, to suffer for his sake, but he will never ask you to suffer with your strength.

He may ask you, he will ask you to suffer for his sake, he will never ask you to suffer in your strength. If you obey your way into hardship, you can expect his help.

You can expect his power, supplied by the Holy Spirit, to help you endure and obey. And not only to endure, but to endure with the very same joy we see in Paul as he's writing this letter.

[9 : 35] A man awaiting execution, not simply getting by, but infused with genuine joy, genuine faith, genuine love as he presses on.

Speaking of love, that's the second thing we see the Spirit giving. Not only does the Spirit give us power, but the Spirit gives us love. Love is really, in many respects, the seed of courage.

G.K. Chesterton famously said, The true soldier fights, not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him.

The true soldier fights, not because he hates what is in front of him, but because he loves what is behind him. And Paul expresses this very same thing in chapter 2.

He says in chapter 2, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, as they also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

[10 : 32] So what can we count on from the Spirit of God? As we look at the possibility of hardship, where we are walking in hardship, we can expect power. God won't ask us to suffer in our own strength.

He'll give us new strength. So in suffering, we find a new strength, and not only that, but we find a new love. You look at Paul's interaction with the world, and how much he did suffer.

And he explains that one of the reasons why he's willing to suffer is that God has filled him, I think he says this in Colossians, with the very affections of Christ for these people.

You want more power in your life? More of God's power in your life? You want more of God's love in your life? Go ahead and step forward in faith into hardship, and the Holy Spirit will provide the power and the love.

And I would add that Chesterton's quote is a bit incomplete. It's a good quote, but it's a bit incomplete. He says the good soldier doesn't fight for what he hates in front of him, but what he loves behind him.

[11 : 32] But honestly, the good soldier, the good Christian soldier, fights for the love he has for what's above him. When we obey, and when we do hard things for the Lord, we will find not only power, we will find renewed love for our neighbor and those that need our courage, need us to hold the line, need us to be faithful, and we'll also find renewed love for the Lord.

And finally, we see not only do we get power and love, but we also get self-control. The Spirit has given us power, love, and self-control. Here's the thing.

If we are to be courageous, we must get a hold of ourselves. You ever hear that saying, get a hold of yourself? If we're going to be courageous, we have to get a hold of ourselves.

We will not allow the fear. We must not allow the fear that it's just a natural part of being a human being to take the lead. We've got to take the lead instead.

We must lead our hearts. The ancient world, even the unbelieving ancient world, was very well studied on the concept of courage for good reason. It was an extraordinarily difficult and violent time.

[12 : 47] There was a lot of thinking about what prompts courage. And over and over again, when you read the ancient thinkers, they all have something to say about self-control. The ability, not so much to not feel fear, but to make fear obey a higher calling.

Not so much to not feel fear, but to make fear obey a higher calling. As I was preparing this sermon earlier in the week, I thought for a second, what would my life be like if I was totally unafraid of suffering?

And this felt very encouraging and motivating for a second. And then I realized, if I was totally unafraid of suffering, I would do so many dumb things.

I already do a lot of dumb things, and I am afraid of suffering. But if I had no fear of suffering, I'm not sure I would be alive by the end of next week.

The truth is, is that fear is actually God's gift to us. It keeps us, in many respects, from obeying the short-term impulsiveness of the flesh. And when fear is used the right way, fear of suffering, fear of consequences, fear of hardship, when fear is used the right way, it's extraordinarily beneficial.

[14 : 00] When it keeps us from obeying the flesh, it's a really great gift. But what about when it keeps us from obeying God? See, this is why self-control is so important.

There's no way, and there's no, it's not a good idea to attempt to eliminate the sense of fear, the fear of hardships, the sense of suffering. That's not the issue at hand. Here's what we see as a constant pattern in the Christian life, and in the way God created the world.

God gives us gifts. We worship those gifts. We let them take the lead of our lives, rather than the giver of those gifts, the Lord God. Well, fear is a gift from God.

And we have the problem with fear that we have with sex, and money, and praise, and esteem, and family, and security. We have the same problem. These are gifts from God. He has lavished so many gifts on us.

And the answer isn't to strip those gifts out of our lives. The answer is to make those gifts obey the Lord. And so there's no problem being, having fear.

[15 : 04] Fear is a gift, but we need to make our fear obey God. We need to listen to God and not our fear. We need to make our fear serve God and not be God.

God. So love, or power, love, and self-control, all this comes from the Holy Spirit. But I want to take a moment to clear up a couple of misconceptions about the Holy Spirit, and in doing so, kind of shift to the second point.

The Holy Spirit, you should not count on the Holy Spirit to just give you power, love, and self-control, as the theologians would say, ex nihilo, out of nothing.

The Holy Spirit does not work that way. In the believer's life, the Holy Spirit does one thing mainly. Think about what this might be.

In the believer's life, the Holy Spirit does one thing mainly, and that is he illuminates the scriptures. He makes the Bible real to us. That's what Jesus says in John 14.

[16:10] He says, But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. The Holy Spirit, friends, is like a warrior inside of you that is reaching for arrows, and those arrows are the promises of God.

If you have fewer arrows, you'll have a different experience with the Holy Spirit than someone who has more arrows. Have you ever noticed if all believers have the Holy Spirit, which is what we believe the Bible teaches, then why does he seem to have so much more influence in some people, in some Christians' lives, than in others?

Well, one key reason for this phenomenon is because not all Christians have the Holy Spirit, but not all Christians really have the Holy Scriptures. This is the key difference between one believer and another believer.

It's not the presence or absence of the Spirit. This is the charismatic error that is just unbiblical. The presence or absence of the Holy Spirit isn't the explanation of differing levels of victory in the Christian life.

It's the presence or absence of the Holy Scriptures. The arrows that the warrior spirit grabs are limited in some of your lives. You simply do not have enough Bible under your belt.

[17:31] And so the Holy Spirit's ministry to you as teacher, as illuminator, is limited by your lack of Bible. Friends, let's be honest.

There are many churches that either explicitly or implicitly elevate the Holy Spirit up here and the Holy Scriptures down here. And friends, what will happen in those contexts is a shrinking of the Christian life because you can't have victory that way.

You will not have Christian victory that way. You will run into, you ever pick up a log and just see critters crawling everywhere? There are churches like that where the Holy Spirit is elevated up here, but the Scriptures are down here and you lift up the log and you see critters crawling everywhere.

Why? What's going on? There's no victory. They don't know how to raise their kids. They don't know how to control their flesh. They don't know how to actually love.

There's no victory. There's Holy Spirit, Holy Scriptures. And so I want to make sure we understand as we pivot into this second point, the Holy Spirit is a tremendous force in our lives who uses the Scriptures, as Jesus says, who brings to mind all that I have taught you.

[18:49] Let me give an example of this that I think is key that maybe would also dispel a particular kind of error. People have long noted how much boldness was increased in the disciples' lives, you know, in Acts, versus what they were in the Gospels.

There's an obvious uptick in, say, Peter's courage in Pentecost, after Pentecost, when compared to Peter's courage and the disciples' courage in general when they uniformly abandoned Jesus.

And the explanation for this increased courage is the presence of the Holy Spirit. I'm sure you've heard this before, and I would not disagree with that at all.

Here's the wrinkle, the nuance that turns out to be critical. If you're struggling to have victory in your life, let me tell you that, yes, the Holy Spirit is key, but there's something else going on here.

The Holy Spirit was a new thing for them in the indwelling sense, yes. But you know what else was new for them? They had really just finished a masterclass on the sovereignty of God.

[20:08] They had really just finished a masterclass on the sovereignty of God. And so, yes, the Spirit was new, but also what was new was a sense, a clarity, a conviction, a firsthand understanding of God's sovereign authority and power and purposes.

They gained that information in part through like these Emmaus Road-type experiences. You remember that story? Jesus is walking along with some disciples.

They don't see that it's him. They don't recognize that it's him. This is the post-resurrection Jesus.

And he's walking with the disciples, and he explains to them that all of the scriptures, thousands of years of biblical history was all written by God to talk about Jesus Christ.

All of these complex threads, all of these real historical events, all of these personalities and places and things, all of it was about Jesus.

And then, of course, they saw the same through the cross. As I said during the call to worship, which was well attended, by the way, good job. As I said during the call to worship, the believers understood, first of all, the disciples at the cross, all they saw was evil conspiracy.

[21 : 37] They saw the triumph of the conspiracy of evil over their beloved Jesus. But after the resurrection, they saw, wait a minute, two can play at this game, and God's playing this game too.

We've got an evil conspiracy over here, but we've got a divine conspiracy over here. And that God had made his enemies, Herod and Pilate and the chief priests and so on and so forth, he had made them in their own rebellion obey his ultimate purposes.

So were the disciples bold because they had the Holy Spirit? Yes. The Holy Spirit was doing something in particular, and it just drips off the pages, the early pages in Acts.

The Holy Spirit was telling them, this God you serve is sovereign. He really has it all taken care of. When we talk about God's sovereignty, I tend to think of, okay, we talk about his authority, God dwells in the heavens, he can do what he pleases.

His ability, he has perfect power and strength and wisdom and insight, so he can do, he has the authority to do what he wants, and he can do what he wants. His authority and his ability. And then the agenda shows up, and you begin to see, and God has got a very particular purpose that he's been about since day one, actually before day one, as we'll see in our text in a moment, and that is to lift up the name of Jesus and to bring glory to his son.

[23 : 05] So yes, the Holy Spirit is part of the recipe of boldness, but the second ingredient is the sovereignty of God. The second ingredient is the sovereignty of God.

And we could see Paul following this recipe as he seeks to literally encourage Timothy. He talks about the Holy Spirit in verses 7 and 8, or 6 and 7, and then he goes into verses 8 and 9, in which he starts just dropping sovereignty bombs on Timothy's head.

And once again, Timothy would have known all this. That's why I say rehearsing God's sovereignty. We rely on the Spirit as we rehearse the sovereignty of God. Look at verse 8.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me as prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. Verse 9 is really where we're going to lock in.

Who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

[24 : 13] So Paul is being a good friend and a good pastor. He's not simply saying, hey, you've got the Holy Spirit. Buck up. He's giving that Spirit arrows to penetrate Timothy's heart.

He's giving the teacher, the Holy Spirit is the teacher, he's giving the teacher the book. He's putting the book in Timothy's head. And he specifically reminds Timothy, not just about the sovereignty of God in general, but about God's sovereignty in salvation.

We see four things that Paul talks about related to the sovereignty of God in salvation, all occurring, namely in verse 9.

So let's spend a moment looking at verse 9 more carefully. The first thing we see about God's sovereignty, I think, would just be to talk about power. He who saved us.

He saved us. He saved us. Jonathan Edwards once said that converting a sinner is a greater act for God than creating a world.

[25 : 22] Because with creating a world, there is no debt to pay. Converting a sinner is a greater act from God than converting a world.

Here's the basic Christian math and why God saving you is such good news, not simply because you know you'll go to heaven when you die, but it speaks of God's power.

The basic Christian math related to the sovereignty of God in salvation is simply this. God has already done the hardest thing for you. God has already done the hardest thing for you.

Him raising you up from your death in sin and transgressions is the hardest thing he'll ever have to do for you. Whatever else comes, however else life unfolds, he has already done the impossible.

You know, if he can raise you from spiritual death, he's going to be able to help you whenever you need financial care, whenever you need friends to replace the ones who deserted you, whenever you need endurance, whenever you need the words to say.

[26 : 32] Friends, these are small potatoes compared to the glorious, powerful thing he's already done. And you know, he did that first thing when he wasn't even, he didn't even like you.

Your sins provoked his wrath. You were his enemy. And at the right time, while we were still enemies, God demonstrated his love for us. So if he would do the hardest thing when you are at

your worst, friends, we can look at God's care for us in our salvation and say, yeah, it's a pretty big deposit.

I think I can count on him to carry me through. So Paul brings to mind by just even these three words, he saved us. He brings to mind God's sovereignty in salvation.

But we see that again. And not only do we see the power of God, but we see the independence of God. Look back at verse nine. He saved us, called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, not because of our works.

Here's the other thing that's pretty cool. Not only did he save us when we were at our worst, but he did not save us because we partnered with him. He did not save us because he got in there and started working and we got in there and started working alongside of him.

[27 : 51] And as a result of us both doing our parts, we're saved. Voila. When it came to raising sinners out of their spiritual death, God did not have or need any assistance.

Blake Duncan, back in 2018, said it this way, God saves sinners. God saves sinners. Each of these words is important for understanding what the Bible teaches about salvation.

Number one, God saves sinners. God, not man, saves. We do not save ourselves. Only God can save. Number two, God saves sinners.

He does, God saves sinners. He does not make us potentially savable. He does not enable us to save ourselves. He saves. Number three, God saves sinners.

He saves a multitude that no man could number out of a world of human beings who are dead in sin and in utter opposition to his kind and sovereign rule.

[28 : 54] He saves people who once hated him, ignored him, and resisted him. In salvation, God does not help those who help themselves because no sinner can help himself.

We are not basically good and in a position to get by with a little help from God. No, we are without hope except for or save his sovereign mercy.

So we see the power of God. He raised us from spiritual death, which by the way is way worse than physical death. Spiritual death is just the candy you can't get out of, guys.

It's far more impressive to save us from spiritual death. And we see his power there but we also see his independence because he didn't have our help. And friends, one of the things that we fear about entering into hardship is we look at our own resources and we think, oh gosh, I do not have what it takes to take this next step.

It's like, well, good news. You serve a God who doesn't need your partnership. He didn't need your partnership in saving you. He doesn't need your partnership in carrying you through.

[30 : 01] There will be days as Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 4, there will be days when you'll be undone, perplexed, despairing of life itself, have zero answers, zero hope and God will just keep doing his work in you.

So we see his power and his independence. We also see his purpose. Look back at verse 9. Who saved us and called us to a holy calling not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace.

This is one of the more controversial ideas and I'm going to talk about this in the next podcast and it kind of gets back to that idea we talked about a few weeks ago, the narcegesis. But I want to tell you this is the absolute biblical truth.

This is exactly the case. It may not feel good at first but let me just tell you the truth. Yes, it is good news that God loves us but I would argue that it's even better news why he loves us and here's why because he's decided to.

Friends, do you know how much better news that is for you than all of the other alternatives? Do you know how much better it is that God loves you simply because he has decided to rather than loving you the way that most people love you because something they see in you, something you have to offer?

[31 : 22] You can think of your most, your dearest, most dear human relationship you have, the person you know loves you the most and friends, there is a line. There is a line. There are things you can do to undo that love.

But friends, isn't it beautiful to realize that God doesn't love us because he looked down and saw something worth loving. He loves us simply because he has decided to love us.

There's a great verse for this. Isaiah 43, 25 where God says, I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my name's sake.

Not because you've earned it, not because you deserve it, not because you're precious little something. You don't. You don't, you can't. God does not love you because you are lovable. God loves you because he has decided to. And God's love for his own word keeping, his own reputation, his own glory, is what's driving him to save and reconcile the world to himself.

[32 : 32] Not something you or I have conjured out at him because we're so gosh darn lovable. Catherine the Great, I think one of the last queens of Prussia, is credited as saying, I shall be an autocrat, that's my trade, and the good Lord will forgive me because that's his.

There's this entitlement that often finds its way mostly in the elite. We might be more elite than we think we are, by the way, that assumes that it is God's job to forgive us.

No, it's not God's job. God doesn't owe us anything. God has simply decided for his own namesake to pour out grace after grace after grace and bring his sheep finally at home to pasture simply to demonstrate the worthiness of his own shepherding hand.

So that's the purposes. And the last one I want to draw your attention to, we're going to continue this next week, but the last one I draw your attention to is his providence. He who saved us, we're back at verse 9, and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace, here's where we want to focus in on, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.

I just want you to think for a moment about the complexities involved in kind of the smallest human actions, butterfly effects and so on and so forth. I just want you to understand that before God even created the world, he had every individual he would ever create in mind, and he had chosen some to be his forever in his kind grace, and he has skillfully and masterfully guided this world according to his perfect purposes to accomplish this outcome.

[34 : 26] Ephesians 1.4, Paul talks about before the ages a lot, just when he wants to worship the Lord's superior skill. He talks about Ephesians 1.4, that we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world.

Titus 1.2, in hope of eternal life we were saved, which God never lies, promised before the ages began. So when Paul starts talking about before the ages began, he's really talking about God's skillful working through countless means to accomplish his purposes.

Spurgeon once said, I believe that every particle of dust that dances in the sunbeam does not move an atom more or less than God wishes, that every particle of spray that dashes against the steamboat has its orbit, as well as the sun in the heavens, that the chaff from the hand of the winnowers steered as the stars in their courses, the creeping of an aphid over a rosebud is as much fixed as the march of the devastating pestilence, the fall of leaves from a poplar is as fully ordained as the tumbling of an avalanche.

And it is this God who you call Father. This God who skillfully and masterfully and without any help from you, deemed to save you, not because of your worthiness, but because of his worth.

And maybe you can begin to see now how when we take the Holy Spirit and we lean and we rely on the Holy Spirit, and then he illuminates the realities of the sovereignty of God, we see the recipe for courage, don't we?

[36 : 15] We see how men and women throughout the last 2,000 years have stood up to tremendous pressure, tremendous suffering.

How did they do it? The sovereignty sovereignty of God, illuminated by the Holy Spirit of God, makes a man and makes a woman brave.

Josh read from the Heidelberg Catechism this morning. Question 27. What does thou mean by the providence of God? Answer. The almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby it is as if he were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures, so that the herbs slash herbs and grass, rain, and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, and all things come, not by chance, but by his fatherly hand.

And I asked Josh explicitly, don't read question 28. I need that for my sermon. First question 27 is, what is the providence of God?

And the question 28 is, what advantage is it to us to know that God has created and by his providence does still uphold all things?

[37 : 38] Answer. That we may be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and that in all things which may hereafter befall us, we place our firm trust in our faithful God and father, that nothing shall separate us from his love.

since all creatures are so in his hand that without his will they cannot so much as move. I find myself in a weird position because I'm about as tradition honoring as a guy can get. Of course, it's not the word of God, but I find myself in the rare position of feeling like I might have had something to add to a historic document and wish I was in the room. Because I think that that answer is a wonderful answer, but I think we see not only from the text in 2 Timothy, but in Acts 4 and other places, that you know, understanding the providence of God doesn't just make us patient in adversity, it makes us willing to walk into it.

It makes us willing to walk in to real hardship, real pain, real difficulty, because when the Spirit illuminates this precious doctrine, as I said before, it makes men and women brave. Now we have this table set before us, and it is really representing what I think is one of the most important Bible verses in Scripture, and John Piper agrees, and I quote it all the time before communion, and that is, if he did not spare his own son, if he did not spare his own son, how will he not also freely give us all things?

[39 : 27] And then Paul continues, what shall separate us from the love of Christ? He's already demonstrated his power and his purposes and his providence in our salvation. He's already done the hardest thing.

Therefore, with the Holy Spirit's help, I can fan this next thing into a flame, knowing that flame might cause me a little trouble, because that trouble will be met with the power and the love and the self-control of the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray. Well, Father, I look upon these precious people, and I think as some who are enduring hardship now, would you, through your spirit today, help them to throw away that easy button, to choose obedience over disobedience, even when obedience is hard.

And, Father, there are many who are continuing faithfully in difficult things, inflicting, as it were, more difficulty on themselves than they need to if they would simply walk in the flesh.

Lord, would you encourage them and remind them through your Holy Spirit that you are a God worthy of our trust and worthy of our obedience, and that you are not so unjust as to overlook our obedience to you.

[40 : 42] Lord, there are some here who are on the precipice of stepping out and obeying you in a new way. Lord, would your spirit illuminate God's sovereignty in their hearts and help them to see that you can be trusted with this next step.

We love you, Lord. May your name be praised forever. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.