

# God is faithful

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good to see all you lovely people. And just in case you're worried, I'm going to try to get a haircut this week.

I keep forgetting. Let's pray. Father, it's your word that gives life.

And your anointing that breaks every yoke. And we ask for your anointing that I would speak those words that are from your heart, not my own. And that you would anoint every heart here to receive that specific and life-giving word that you have for them.

That will bless them. That will help equip them and make them more fruitful in serving you. And in everything we give you thanks. In that wonderful name of your son, Jesus.

Amen. When I returned to Scotland to work full-time with Youth of Submission in the end of 1979, I spent a few days in rugby to visit some friends.

[ 1 : 07 ] And I think we went, I think it was a Coventry. Is Coventry near rugby? Okay. I think it was Coventry train station that we went to for some reason. I don't even know why we were there.

But while we were there, there was this tremendous roar in the station. I thought, what in the world is that?

I thought maybe there was a riot on or something. And my friend said it was football supporters getting off the trains. Now, I had never heard that before in my life.

And here they were getting off the train, the way to some league match. And it literally shook the station. It was so loud. They were in unison, acknowledging their loyalty to their team, warning off supporters from the rival team, and stirring themselves to faith.

In a sense, this is what the Lord is asking us through Isaiah 54. And I want to read the first seven verses of Isaiah 54. If you want to turn there, I'll give you a couple of minutes while I'm taking a drink.

[ 2 : 20 ] Isaiah 54, the first seven verses. Isaiah 54, the first seven verses.

Isaiah 54, the first essentially says, house. Build an addition. Spread out your home and spare no expense, for you will soon be bursting at the seams. Your descendants will occupy other nations and resettle the ruined cities.

Fear not. You will no longer live in shame. Don't be afraid. There is no more disgrace for you. You will no longer remember the shame of your youth and the sorrows of widowhood, for your creator will be your husband. The Lord of heaven's army is his name. He is your redeemer, the holy one of Israel, the God of all the earth. For the Lord has called you back from your grief, as though you were a young wife abandoned by her husband, says your God. For a brief moment, I abandoned you. With great compassion, I will take you back. In a burst of anger, I turned my face away for a little while. With everlasting love, I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your redeemer. You know, the Israelites were suffering the consequences of their own sin and rebellion against God. And he had warned them time and time again through different prophets. Yet there in the midst of their shame and the barrenness, God offered them hope and abundant life.

He was calling them to respond in faith, even though the circumstances looked hopeless. Those football supporters in Coventry were declaring their hope and faith in their team, no matter how the season had gone so far. And even before their particular game had started, their team, like the exiled Israelites, might have even been at the bottom of the league.

[ 4 : 36 ] Still, those supporters were shouting with joy, believing for victory, maybe even a miracle. I think we've seen that. Was it Lester that came out from nowhere and did what they did?

God asked the Israelites for an extravagant demonstration of faith. He knew they were discouraged, broken, barren, and felt hopeless. He wanted them to take him at his word. He had never failed them and wasn't about to start this time. He had a future and a hope for them. The hope expressed

in Isaiah 54 has been a powerful blessing to me at different times of my life, especially when I was going through some painful wilderness experiences and youth with a mission and elsewhere, disappointments and other things that have gone on. Sometimes it seemed like there was no release and no fruitfulness, wilderness, just never-ending trials and disappointments. And I'm sure every one of us have faced it at times, haven't we? We've all had wilderness experiences. It's challenging. As I read God's word and prayed and shouted out my hope in God, I trusted that he would bring me through the trials into a place of freedom and fruitfulness.

Sometimes the delays were hard to swallow. But the Lord always came through. He wanted me to respond in faith to his promises, not be paralyzed by the circumstances. And this is something that we all have trials, don't we? We all have things that come before us and we have to work through, we have to face.

And God wants to know how are we going to face it. I know there are different times that the situation looked miserable. And so when nobody else was in the house, I would walk through the house and sometimes get my mission praise book or if I could. So I know a lot of songs, but the words disappear when I, so I have to get a book to remember them, the verses. But when nobody else is there, I just walk through the house and every room back and forth, no matter what I felt like, just praising God and stirring my heart to faith, shouting out his victory to stir myself up to faith because God is faithful.

The circumstances look horrible at times, but God is faithful. A proverb declares that if you keep looking at the clouds, you won't plant the fields. It's not looking at the circumstances, but at God who is in control of them, the God who is absolutely faithful. How many of you have, I know it's been, I don't know how long ago it came out, but how many have seen Braveheart? Okay. It's probably not something people with a nervous disposition, you probably don't want to watch it for all the blood and guts, but, and for those of you like accurate history, well, there's a lot of fiction that came in with it, you know, like some characters that weren't even alive during William Wallace's time. But in the midst of all the head bashing and legend making, there's a story of a real historic figure who loves Scotland. He was fed up with the oppression of his nation by those seeking power over others. Even stripping away the myths,

[ 8 : 04 ] William Wallace was a remarkable man who inspired the Scots to stand against their enemies. Facing their enemy with a ragged band, greatly outnumbered, and I don't know all the things, but I know that it was a miracle just that they were able to defeat the English that day at Bannockburn. And one of the things, I don't know if he really did it, but in the film, he did something that probably looked stupid as this massive English army was on one side, and here were these Scots that were scared out of their wits on another side, outnumbered probably 10 to 1, the English having all these massive weapons, and he started shouting. And not the shout asking for help, but the shouting of stirring up himself and his people to faith. Now, I don't know if he really did that in life, but it really, it's inspirational, but it goes along with what I believe God's trying to tell us in Isaiah 54. It doesn't matter what the circumstances look like.

It doesn't matter how hard the people in this community look like. It doesn't matter how difficult the trial or situation that you're facing, whatever it might be. What matters is that God is bigger. God is greater. And he wants us to believe him for who he is and to stir ourselves to faith. What are William Wallace and God trying to tell us through Isaiah 54? And I see three points there. First thing is, whatever happened in the past, victory or failure, barrenness or fruitfulness, joy or sorrow, what matters is what's happening right now. As Isaiah declares in Isaiah 43, 18 and 19, do not remember the former things nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing. Now it will spring forth. Shall you not be aware of it? We can't face a future if we're still struggling with the past. For dragging disappointment and failure and sin with us, we cannot face the future in faith.

[ 10 : 32 ] The second thing is that you are not a victim. How many victims out there? You may feel you're a victim, but there are no victims in this congregation.

We're more than conquerors through Christ who strengthens us. You and I have choices. We're not trapped or powerless. Maybe you felt helpless to people or circumstances before.

You may not be able to change certain situations, but you do have a choice over your attitude and your response. We're not victims.

Not everything that's for you will come your way. God has given us promises, and we have to go for it.

He says, not by might nor by power, but by my spirit. So it has to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. But there's things that God has for us that we will never come into unless we go for them in faith.

[12:03] One of the things when our church congregation moved to Oxfords, which I didn't really want to go there, but dragging and screaming, God led me there.

So I thought, okay, we're supposed to be there. And I knew that they weren't going to just pop into the church because we were there. So we started a community cafe as a way to meet people. I knew people would want coffee and tea and visit with friends, and they started coming in. And there we had an opportunity. They weren't just going to come in, so we had to do something about it.

We had to pray, but then we created an atmosphere where we could be able to communicate with people. God has so much for us, but we need to go after it in faith.

Defeat and bondage weren't on William Wallace's lips. Victory and freedom were. He acted accordingly. His faith and courage stirred the Scots to faith and action.

[13:02] That brought them the victory they longed for, at least for that little bit. This is what God is telling us through Isaiah 54. Had God given up on his people in Israel?

No, he knew they just had to be at the right place in order that he could restore them to fruitfulness. Shout for joy, O barren one.

Isaiah cries out to God's people. Sure, you've had it tough. There's been defeat, disappointment, failure, heartache, brokenness, misunderstanding. But you have a future and a hope.

You're going to make it. Quit dwelling on the past. Quit acting like a victim and move out in faith.

God is in control. You know, it's easy to say all that when things are going well, isn't it?

But here God is asking the barren, defeated, hopeless, forgotten, neglected, and weak to do something they didn't feel like doing. He's talking to you and me as well.

[14:05] Now, I don't know who this message is for. Your whole church or for one person here. But God has for us far more than we can ever imagine.

We're not victims. The enemy is defeated. He was openly humiliated to cross by what Jesus accomplished there. God wants us to go after what he's promised for us.

So why should we? In Isaiah 54, verses 1 and 2, for the more that God has for us. We would go after it for the more that God has for us.

There it says the children of the barren will be more than the children of the wife. For the more. God has more for us than we can ever imagine.

And sometimes, you know, I kind of, I got to a place where the church was going well and it was, things were going well. And God had then convict me. I said, are you just going to stop there?

[15:09] You know, sometimes our tendency, if things are comfortable, is to park there. You know, bring up our RV and park it there and everything's fine.

And God says, no, I want you to move on. I have more for you. For the more. In verse 4, it's to be free from fear and shame.

To have no more shame, no more humiliation. God has freedom and liberty for us and fruitfulness. In verse 5, it talks about him being our husband.

The greater intimacy with Father God. God wants us just to not know about him. But he wants us to come closer and closer into a beautiful intimacy with God. That we'll know him more.

In verses 6 and 8, to experience God's compassion and kindness in increasing measure. You know, there's a lot of broken people in the body of Christ. That they've never let God touch their brokenness with his compassion.

[16:18] They just don't get too close, God. But God wants to come up and hug us and love us and fill us with his compassion and kindness.

And when we're walking in God's compassion and kindness, when we know the intimacy of God, then that is going to touch everybody that we relate to. There's more that God has for us.

God was stirring faith. He wanted them to get excited about what he was going to do. He was calling them to shake off the failure of the past, to look to him instead of the circumstances, and move into his plans and purposes.

He wanted them to get ready for his promises. We could bemoan our trying circumstances and wallow defeat, or we could shout for joy, knowing that God has already made us victorious.

We can create an atmosphere of faith and praise where the Lord can work in our circumstances and bring about his promises. We can reach out with joy, excitement, and anticipation for the victory

Jesus has already won.

[ 17 : 41 ] You know, we can create faith where God can work. You know, and I forget where it is. Jesus had gone, I think, to his hometown, Capernaum or something like that.

I forget which place he had gone to. And he said he was unable to do any miracles because of their unbelief.

They had created an atmosphere of unbelief. And what we can do as believers, by believing God for his word, in spite of what the circumstances look like, we can create an atmosphere of faith because we believe God.

And by creating an atmosphere of faith, God can then come in and work and move in a way that he desires. We may have been barren, but now we're going to be overrun with sons and daughters. We may have been struggling, but now we're going to move in victory. We may have been oppressed, but now our enemies are going to start falling like flies around us as God defeats him by his infinite power.

[ 18 : 51 ] God wants us to forget about the past and start moving into his future for us. He wants us to quit acting like victims and realize that we are more than conquerors through Christ.

He wants us to start acting in faith by praising and worshiping him in real abandonment and stretching out, enlarging, lengthening, strengthening. In other words, stretching out that we might be ready to receive what he wants to do.

You know, for some of you, God may have already planted something in your heart that looks impossible. And you think, well, I don't have the resources to do it.

Well, God has them. Maybe God's already planted some seeds in you as a fellowship or as individuals that you think, I really have this burning desire to do something.

Well, don't sit on it. Look to God. It doesn't matter what age you are. It doesn't matter how much money you have. It doesn't matter if you have a theological degree or not. What matters is, has God planted something in you?

[ 20 : 00 ] And he wants you to stretch out for it. God isn't going to drag us into what he desires for us.

He wants you and me to take him at his word and begin rejoicing in it. Like William Wallace, those football supporters and Isaiah, start shouting the victory songs before the battle even begins. You know God has already won. We're victorious in him. And I have a few practical hints here so that we can walk in it.

And I know you already do this, but this is by way of reminder. One is submit yourself daily to the Lord. You know, daily, before, you know, as soon as you wake up, say, God, I belong to you. Here's a day. I hand it over to you. Lord, lead me. Submit our lives to the Lord. And the second one is know what the promises are. We need to be in the word of God.

[ 21 : 05 ] We don't know how long, even though this nation right now has freedom and liberty to a great degree. We don't know how long, because the way the world is turning, that we will have the word of God.

We need to be in God's word. And if we're going to shout for something that he wants to do, we need to know what he wants to do. We need to know what he's promised so that we can then stand on those promises.

The third one is be filled with the Holy Spirit. He's the one that Jesus sent in order to empower us to be his witnesses and to lead us into all truth.

So we need him. We need him every day to lead us and guide us, empower us. The fourth one is never speak negatives over your life or your situation.

You know, we have, maybe I shared this here sometime. You know, when you preach a number of times and pretty soon you don't know what you shared anymore. So if this is repeat, forgive me.

[ 22 : 07 ] But back at university, I was going through a difficult time. And it was a real emotional struggle. And what I used to say over myself, oh, I'm just dazed and confused.

And I kept saying that as a joke. And pretty soon I became what I was speaking over my life. And God just spoke to me and he said, Steve, you're doing it.

You're doing it to yourself. So I stopped and I confessed. Before I heard any teaching on, you know, positive and negative confession, I stopped and began speaking over myself.

I am not dazed and confused. And it lifted. And sometimes we wonder why our life is negative or things are happening because we speak death over us.

We speak negatives. Oh, I'll never make it. I'll never amount to much because our parents told us we'll never amount to much. You know, that's a lot of garbage, isn't it? It's a lie from the pit of hell. [ 23 : 11 ] Well, we need to speak life. We need to speak the truth in our life. We're more than conquerors through Christ who strengthens us.

You may feel defeated, but you're more than conqueror. Jesus already won the victory. He will supply all of our needs according to his riches and glory by Christ Jesus. He may not give you a Mercedes Benz or a brand new mansion, but he will provide for his needs because he said that. And we can claim that. Our needs. If anyone lack wisdom, let him ask of God. And God will give liberally, but we have to ask in faith. There's all these promises.

And God wants us to speak life and truth and not negatives over ourselves. Some people will go into a community in a church and they'll say, Oh, the people are too hard.

They're not too hard. It's just maybe they haven't prayed enough for the people that are desperate for Jesus. So instead of speaking negatives, God wants us to speak faith.

[ 24 : 13 ] There's no one too hard out there for the gospel. We just need to bind the forces of darkness that are keeping them bound and sharing the good news so the seed planted in their hearts will become life.

So never speak negatives over yourself or anybody else or of your circumstances. Five, start speaking God and his promises into your life and situations.

Speak God into it. Speak his faith into it. This isn't name it and claim it, okay? It's just speaking the truth into your circumstances.

And six is praise God. Don't wait for him to answer your prayer. Start praising him and worshiping him even before anything happens, before anything changes.

When you look at 2 Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat and the people of Israel were surrounded by three nasty armies that wanted to wipe them out. Jehoshaphat did the right thing.

[ 25 : 20 ] He was scared out of his wits, but he went to the church. He handed this over to God and said, God, look at these guys. We can't do this in ourself. God says, I'll take care of it.

You go out and watch. So what did he do? The next morning, he gets a praise team together.

Susan on the portable piano and the others have their guitars and instruments and they begin to sing praises.

Give thanks to God for his mercies are endureth forever or something like that. Begin to sing. And as scripture says, the moment they begin to praise, God set their enemies at one another.

Sometimes we say, okay, Lord, once you do it, I will thank you. And God says, no, you praise me and I will work. You may not see the victory yet, but God is preparing it.

Father God has for us as individuals and for this fellowship more than you can ever imagine. He wants us to believe him and his promises.

[ 26 : 38 ] We can shout in faith and stretch out for growth or cringe in fear and remain barren. As for me, I think I'll shout for joy.

Let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this people. And I thank you for the many lives that have been touched because of their faith in you. I thank you for the fruitfulness that has already been in this fellowship for many, many years.

And the fruitfulness even for those, through those missionaries that they support overseas. For the many lives they've already touched. And every week, through the Munchkins, the Over 55s group and other things, the children's ministries and other things.

But Lord, I know you have much more for them. And I know that there's individuals here that feel defeated, that feel they don't have anything to offer.

But Lord, they're still breathing and they believe in you. And you have great fruitfulness for them still. So Father, we commit each individual here.

[ 27 : 48 ] We commit Pastor Dan and Susan and all the elders that you'll give them fresh vision and anointing to come into the fullness that you desire for them.

And that this congregation will stretch out in faith for the greater fruitfulness you have for them. And for this, we give you thanks in that precious name of your son, Jesus.

Amen. Okay, we'll sing the final.