

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Good King, Bad King, The King

PART

6

TITLE

A Reliant King

SCRIPTURE

2 Chronicles 14:1-12, 15:8-17, 16:1-14



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If you're a guest with us, we're glad that you're here. If you have a Bible, if you want to turn with me the 2 Chronicles, we're going to be in chapter 14, 15, and 16 this morning. If you're brand new with that, well, it's nearer to the beginning than the end, okay, but if you are a guest here, this pathway is really for you, and it's to help you to learn, how do I connect? How do I grow and serve and go? When we say "go," what we're talking about there is we take the gospel that we have received, this message of forgiveness, and we share it with others.

I want to add one other thing, though, here at the beginning, and that is just a word of gratitude. This is the path that God has put us on, to connect with Him and each other, to grow in Him and truth and love, to serve people with our gifts, and to take the gospel to others who have never heard, to share it with them, so that they can connect and they can grow, and serve and go, and yet, one of the things that we don't talk about a whole lot is that takes resource, and when it does take resource...

I just want to say thank you. This week, I've received several emails from partners that we have in Europe who are now housing and protecting, providing, feeding refugees from Ukraine. There's no way for us to be able to provide for so many needs around the world when there are so many needs, unless there's just vast generosity, and so I just want to say thank you. Your kindness to engage, to grow, and to give, it's changing people's life. It's helping people. It's serving them meals today, it's providing blankets today, and so we thank God for that.

Let me pray. Father, I ask again, we as a church come before You again, recognizing that not everybody wakes up and has a coat this morning and not everybody is warm and not everybody has shelter and not everybody is safe and we know that the people in Ukraine and around the world that are being oppressed Lord, that they have dreams, just like we do. They want to be safe, just like we do. They have kids, just like we do. They want a future for those kids, just like we do. They need hope, just like we do. We have the gospel and many there do not and so I ask that You would be gracious and that you would bring peace. We ask, God, that You would stand in-between the mighty and the weak and that You would bring justice for the week that you would protect and provide and help.

We pray for our churches and the camps, our partners around Europe, Ukraine, that are seeking to care for people and help people. We ask, God, that You would help them to share the gospel and to care for people with endurance and strength and help us to continue to pray and love and provide how we can. We thank You, God, for Your word. As we open it up, now, we know that what we're reading in Chronicles and what we are dealing with where we live and how we engage and think about people in the world, that they're all connected, and so would You help us to have eyes to see the truthfulness of Your word for Your glory and our good? We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

We're in a series on the kings of the Old Testament. There was 43 of them. Not only now, not only today in recent days, but really, throughout my life, I've heard people so speak with a measure of disinterest about these

historical portions of the Old Testament. I want you to know that I'm simply not going to apologize for leading us here because the Bible tells us that everything that was written in the past was written to teach us so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope.

Though these diamonds often remain undisturbed in the bottom of the vault, and we typically open the Bible and we prefer passages and books of the Bible that tend to be more immediate, applicable, more easy to understand how we respond to it and believe it and treasure it and practice it, the Bible also says that all Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching and reproof and correction and training in righteousness so that you and I might be equipped for every good work, and that includes the kings, the chronicles about the kings, and so I pray that as we see our reflection in the life of the king named Asa, who began as a God-reliant king, and he ended as a self-reliant king, that the prophet and the benefit would be ours.

Sometimes you see a person I know you've probably seen, maybe you are that person, you see a person who's holding sort of the chains of their generational sin that has plagued their family. We all know that there tends to be these patterns that begin from one generation and they pass to the next generation and they're more apt to be seen in the next generation, and in every chain, every new generation is a little bit more prone to behave in similar ways, to think in ways to be afflicted in similar ways.

There comes a time when one particular link in that chain recognizes the plague, the shame, how many people have been affected. They recognize that that chain is beginning to wrap around their own feet and they eventually say, "This has to stop." Some of you are at that place, "This has to stop." Asa was a pretty interesting man. He grew up in the palace, watching his ungodly dad, Abijah, follow the ungodliness of his dad, Rehoboam, who followed the ungodliness and idolatry of his dad, named Solomon, and so when Asa became king, at some point early in his life, or in his reign, he said, "It all has to stop."

That's what we find. 2 Chronicles 14, starting in verse two, it says, "Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord, his God. He took away the foreign altars and the high places and broke down the pillars and cut down the ashram, commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, and to keep the law and the commandment. He also took out of all the cities of Judah, the high places, and the incense altars. The kingdom had rest under him and he built fortified cities in Judah, for the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the Lord gave him peace, and he said to Judah, 'Let us build these cities and surround them with walls and towers, gates, and bars. The land is still ours because we have sought the Lord, our God, we have sought Him, and He has given us peace on every side.'"

As we think about reliance, reliance upon the Lord, we all have to rely on something. We all lean on something. Our life is like a ladder that leans against a wall and we're constantly looking for which wall that should lean against, and sometimes, tragically, we believe that it should lean against ourselves, our own will, our own determination, our own wisdom, and so he teaches us, this man named Asa, he keeps talking throughout his

story, they use this word, “rely,” to trust or lean upon. But what we find in this part of the story is that relying on the Lord ignites a courage to reform. “Reform” simply means to take something that is formed. It has a shape, it has structure, dynamics, and we reform, we change it.

Now, I want you just imagine this man named Asa. When he became king, he was roughly around 20. 20 years old. Just imagine the courage that it must have taken for him to destroy and reform what three generations of his own flesh and blood had built. That’s what he did. He broke down the altars. He broke down the pillars. He cut down the ashram. We looked at the word “ashram.” It was an idol, goddess of fertility. The way that you worship the goddess of fertility was that you up with the goddess’ priest or priests. It was pagan, it was an utter abomination, and it lived among the people of Israel. He commanded Judah, not only to seek the Lord, but to keep the Lord’s law. Just imagine all that he had to overcome. There came a point in time when he said, this is what I’m going to do. I’m going to order those officials, those people in my cabinet in order to go and send out people to break down these things and to cut down these things and to remove this idolatry from the land.

Just imagine what went through his mind, perhaps the week or even the night before. It served as obstacles for this kind of reform. There had to be personal fear, “What’s it going to mean to me and my legacy?” There had to be some measure of doubt, just like you and I, “Is it going to work? I’m not about to do something that’s going to transform something. Is it going to take? Is it going to stick? Is it going to work? Will they listen to me?” He certainly knew that human nature had a tendency to resist change and he also knew there were a lot of people who worshiped these idols and had affection for this kind of worship, which meant that evil people were going to be criticizing him and filling his inbox and doing all kinds of things in order to make life harder because of what he was doing.

He also probably factored in the economic cost, the energy to communicate, and perhaps he even had the wisdom, I’m sure he did, to consider the economic impact that when you remove something that has roots within the culture for years and decades, I mean, there’s an entire economy that was established on the basis of this idolatry. To remove it was to unsettle his own culture. I wonder how many visions of good and godliness have died in these thoughts? “That’s going to be too expensive. It may not work, anyway.”

What was it in Asa’s life that tipped to scale where he said, “No, it must be done?” Well, verse seven, he tells us. He says, “We have sought the Lord. We have sought Him.” In other words, what he says is, “Look, I’ve been reading my Bible.” In Deuteronomy 12, he actually tells us specifically to break down any foreign altars in the land and to burn down the Asherah poles. Since God has spoken his mind on such things, and my great-grandfather, when he was walking with the Lord, he wrote to us in Proverbs 28, “Whoever trust in his own mind is a fool.” Well, we’re not going to trust in our mind, we’re going to trust in His mind. I wonder, what would you reform if you knew it would work? A better question is, what would you attempt to reform, even if you knew it wouldn’t work because God told you to do it? That’s a really important thing. He didn’t know success was at hand, but he had sought the Lord.

Let me encourage you to do something. That is to seek the Lord and reform what he reveals. You see, whenever we open up the Bible, two things always happen. The Bible always exposes what is, meaning what's in our heart, what's in our marriage, what's in our mouth, what's in our heart, but it also casts a vision of what could be. We see things within the Scriptures, and suddenly, there's this reflection to where we see that what our mouth actually says, but we also see the pleasantness and the encouragement and the accuracy and the truthfulness and the upbuilding that our mouth could bring if it was reformed. The Bible shows us a picture, a reflection of what our marriage is. We see where there's a lack of trust. We see where there's a lack of faithfulness. We see where there's a lack of whatever there is, and all of a sudden, we look within the Scriptures of what a relationship could be and what a home could be. It shows us what is and what could be, a vision of what could be.

You see, anytime God comes to us, whatever it is in our life, it needs to be reformed, it starts as like a block of clay, and that block of clay is, well, it's just that, it's a block of clay. It has a shape. It has a form. It's in a square, a block, and in that state, it's not useful, at least it's not as useful as it could be. It could be a paperweight, but it could be more than a paperweight. Your marriage is what it is, but it could be more your mouth, your heart, your culture, your home, your influence in your neighborhood, or here within the church, or in the city, it could be something else, and so what God does is he gives us a picture of what is, but he also gives us a picture of what could be. My question is this, is as you have sought the Lord in your life, and maybe you're doing so right now, what has He revealed to you that needs to be reformed? Let me encourage you to rely upon Him. Take a step of faith. I know sometimes that it's fearful to do so.

I promise you, just a little hint, little foretaste, tomorrow, I'm going to record a video that's going to go out to you eventually to give a picture of what we believe God's calling us to do in planning another church in Raleigh. It all seems really heavy to me. I sit there and I have doubt, and I have fear, and I know the resistance to change, and I know how it's going to be disturbing, and how it's going to be unsettling, and yet God says something. What would you do? What should you do that God has put upon your heart to do, to reform? Well, it's interesting, even the God can get punched in the mouth. You remember the quote by Mike Tyson? It says, "Oh, everybody has a plan when they get in the ring until I hit him in the face," right?

Chapter 14:9, "Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and 300 chariots and came as far as Mareshah and Asa went out to meet him as, and they drew up their lines of battle in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah and Asa cried to the Lord, his God, 'O Lord, there is none like you to help between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord, our God, for we rely on You, and in Your name, we have come against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God. Let not man prevail against You,' so the Lord defeated the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah and the Ethiopians fled."

Chapter 15:1, "The Spirit of God came over Azariah, the son of Oded, and he went out to meet Asa and said to him, 'Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you will seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.'"

Verse eight. “As soon as Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah, the son of Oded, he took courage and put away the detestable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the cities that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim, and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was in front of the vestibule at the house of the Lord and he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon, who were residing with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel,” that’s the Northern Kingdom, “when they saw that the Lord, his God, was with him in the Southern Kingdom. They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month, the 15th year, the reign of Asa. They sacrificed the Lord that day from the spoil that they had brought, 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep, and they entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all of their soul.”

Then as a demonstration of the depth of reform that this motivated, verse 16, “Even Maacah, his mother, King Asa removed from being queen mother because she had made a detestable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the brook Kidron.

Second thing I want you to see is that relying on the Lord provides an anchor during the storm. Storms expose. If you really want to know what’s happening in your heart, then go through a struggle and see what you say. See what you do. It’s really amazing that after a decade of peace, God allows Asa to go through a storm, to be attacked by a million-man army. It’s since interesting what he does or what he doesn’t do. We don’t find him whining, complaining, contemplating, calculating. He’s not saying, “Okay, our army is 580,000. They got a million. If we each take two, we’ll be good.” There’s none of that. Instead, he moves his army out, he looks at the storm, he gets on his knees, and he prays. He says, “O Lord, there is none like You to help between the mighty and the weak. Help us, O Lord, our God, for we rely on You, and in Your name, we have come against this multitude. O Lord, You are our God. Let man not prevail against You.”

I wonder, is that what came out of your mouth during your last storm? It wasn’t what came out of mine. Not nearly as noble and helpful as what came out of my mouth. What’s interesting is that God tends to answer prayers like this and so He brings a great victory and then He sends a prophet with a message. The message was pretty simple. He simply says, look, “The Lord is with you when you’re with Him. You seek Him, He’s going to be found by you. He’s going to be near you. He’s going to help you. You forsake Him, He’s going to forsake you.” What this did is this ignited an even deeper passion for a deeper level of reform. He took courage. He put away the detestable idols. He repaired the altar of the Lord. He gathered all of Judah. He entered into a covenant and then he deposed his mom, his mom. “You don’t get to live here anymore, Mom.” It’s amazing. That’s a storm, right? I imagine that he thought, “I wonder how that’s going to go. I’ll probably have some doubts about that one.” I would have.

Is this what you see in your life? You see, one of the beautiful things about Asa and what he teaches us is this is, is that prayer should be our first response. It’s so often not. But just imagine if it was. That’s really the application here, right, is let’s run first to prayer. You see, when storms punch us in the mouth. It’s fascinating what happens. It’s the easiest time in that moment to behave. Like some people would call the word “practical

atheism.” We’re not an atheist. We believe there’s a God. We believe He’s true, we believe He’s near, we believe He’s spoken, and yet in that moment, all of His words, all of His presence, all of His nearness, all of His promises, they just evaporate, and what happens is this is when you get punched in the mouth is your heart begins to beat, blood begins to flow, and your mind begins to calculate, your mouth begins to erupt.

You remember when Jesus was in the boat asleep, His disciples, huge storm? Mark 4. They’re working, they’re totally undone, they finally go over, and they wake him up, and they say, “Don’t you care?” It’s amazing. He stops the storm. Then He looks at His disciples. It’s beautiful what he says. He says, “Now, where is your faith?” We know that’s what it means, but just think about it like this. It’s as though we all have this T-shirt that says “Faith” on it, right? We love to pull it out. It’s really easy to wear when it’s easy to wear, and because it is, we just leave it in the drawer. I mean, it’s really easy to say, “Man, I just absolutely believe,” when you just got the raise, but it’s in that storm when it really matters. This is what He’s saying. He goes, “This is the time to pull that out of your drawer. That faith that you have, this is when it’s for. This is the moment. This is when you lean upon that to pray.”

It’s interesting. This is the moment when we need to pause and to remember instead of calculating and we need to pray it. I mean, if you really imagine how you respond to threats in your day-to-day life, it’s really remarkable what’s available to us and how different our life actually is to reality. Our first instinct typically is make a plan. We see a problem, we make a plan. We feel criticism, we criticize back. All of these are storms. What he does, he simply says, “The first thing that must be done,” it wasn’t the only thing, he went to battle, but the first thing he did was he looked to God and he says, “We rely on you. We need you to help.”

He remembers in his prayer two things. One is God’s authority. It’s so important you remember God’s authority. He says, “Look, there is none like you to help between the mighty and the weak. You’re the one who at has wisdom. You’re the one who has the strength.” But not only that, he remembers God’s commitment to His own glory. This is what he leans on at the end, his prayer is “Let not man prevail against You.” He didn’t say, “Let him not prevail against us.” The reason is because he’s come to learn that God almighty is committed to His glory.

This is a really important principle and it’s one that can be confusing to people because when we find somebody who is committed to their glory on the Earth, it’s pretty unattractive. In fact, the Bible says that love is not self-seeking, so how is it possible for God to be committed to His glory? How is it different for Him to say, “Hey, come and worship me,” but you would be offended, rightly so, if I stood up here and said, “You know what? You should worship me.” What’s the difference? I think there’s two. One is worth. There’s one who’s worth the worship, who’s worth the adoration, who’s worth the praise and the thanksgiving, is worth the attention, and there’s one who’s not.

But there’s another reason. It’s love. It would be completely unloving for me to sit before you, a life mission to glorify me, and the reason is because that would not be good for you. I have so little to give you, I’m not a

treasure, but God Almighty, when He looks for the most loving thing to set our heart to say, “Now, go pursue this, the ultimate treasure,” what is it? It’s His glory. It’s His honor. Throughout the Old Testament, and New, you keep finding that people in the Bible when they come to a place where they need forgiveness or they need help is instead of saying, “Don’t you see how awesome we are? Do it for our sake,” they keep praying, “God, for Your sake. Your name is attached to us.”

This is how I pray so frequently for us, even as a church family. A long time ago, I saw this, and learned this, and I still remember before I even thought about this, I did this. I remember, many of you know my story, I grew up with a speech impediment, and God called me to go on a mission trip when I was in college. They said, “All the guys here are going to have to preach at least one time when we get there.” I thought, “Well, clearly, I can’t go,” because I could not. Just it was an impossibility.

I just remember thinking, “God, well, I’ll just tell the guy I’m not going after the meeting,” and got through the course of events reading the Bible and Exodus where there’s another guy who has a speech impediment named Moses. God works through his life and he’s emboldened to say, “Man, I’m going to obey the Lord,” and so I got on an airplane. Land on a Saturday, knowing tomorrow is Sunday, someone’s going to have to preach. I’m literally hiding in the back like Saul. A missionary there, he says, “What’s your name?” “Brian.” “You’re going to preach in the morning.” “Got to be kidding me.” True story.

That night I did not sleep. I prayed all night and what I prayed was this, “God, these people, whether they forget me or not, they’re not going to see me again. But Your glory and Your name is attached to this moment. What happens in this moment, they’re going to conclude things about You, and so I’m asking, for Your own glory, for Your own honor, that You would do a miracle in my life.” The Lord is my witness. I pray that same prayer every Sunday morning when I drive here. “God, one more time. Would you open up my mouth? Because your glory is at stake.”

When I pray for us as a church family, I don’t say, “Because we’re so awesome.” No, I say, “God, would you help us to be welcoming so that people know how welcoming you are? Would you help us to be hospitable as a people so that people see how hospitable you are? Would you help our teachers from the babies to the senior adults all throughout the room because people are making associations and understandings about Your glory?” What happens is this is that God answers these kinds of prayers. Pray for His glory.

Well, this leads to a last section of his life, which is utterly tragic. Chapter 16:1. “In the 36th year of the reign of Asa, Baasha, king of Israel, went up against Judah and built Ramah that he might permit no one to go out or come in to Asa, king of Judah, and Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the Lord and the king’s house and sent them to Ben-hadad, king of Syria, who lived in Damascus, saying, “There is a covenant between me and you as there was between my father and your father. Behold, I am sending to you silver and gold. Go break your covenant with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me, and Ben-hadad listen to King Asa.”

Verse seven. “At that time, Hanani, the seer,” or the prophet, “came to Asa, king of Judah, and said to him, ‘Because you relied on the king of Syria and did not rely on the Lord, your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you. Were not the Ethiopians,’ that million-man army, “and the Libyans, a huge army with many chariots and horsemen, yet because you lied on the Lord, He gave them into your hand, for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him. You have done foolishly in this, for from now on, you will have wars.’ Then Asa was angry with the seer and put them in the stocks in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this, and Asa inflicted cruelties upon some of the people at the same time.”

The last picture I want you to see, verse 12. “In the 39th year of his reign, Asa was diseased in his feet and his disease became severe, yet even in his disease, he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians. Asa slept with his fathers, dying in the 41st year of his reign.”

The last thing I want you to see is that relying on the Lord, protect access from shame. It’s so tragic that Asa became untethered. In this season of peace he became untethered. You couldn’t tell. It’s sort of like a boat. Have you ever been to an area where there’s mooring balls and you see all these boats in a cove and they’re all connected? Just imagine that there’s one of those boats that’s really not connected to any mooring ball, they just have to be close to one, and so it appears as though they’re moored. This was Asa. Somehow in his life, he detached from the Lord his reliance upon the Lord and he began to rely upon himself, but without a great storm, his drift was not evident, and his sin was not explicit. But when Baasha, the king of Israel, escalated tensions at the border, his heart was exposed. Instead of praying like he did 25 years previously when attacked by that million-man army, Asa took money from the temple of God and paid off a foreign pagan king who also was worshiping idols. You know the scary part about the story? It worked.

I promise you, some of us need to care more about our successes than our failures. We all rightly assume that whatever we succeed in, God is helping us, and yet this became a curse. There’s probably a parade. I mean, it worked. Judah was freed, Baasha went home embarrassed. He came home to cheer and applaud and God was not pleased. He sends a prophet to him and he says, “You relied on the king of Syria and you did not rely upon the Lord.” His response is so tragic. He imprisons this prophet. He actually puts him in stocks in the prison. Then all of a sudden, he just starts being mean to people. It says he starts inflicting cruelties upon his own people simply because he could.

Then there’s one last picture and it’s really a fascinating thing. His feet were diseased, it says, in the 39th year of his reign. There’s a lot of people who wonder, “Well, is it because of his sin? Did God give him that? Is it a consequence for all this?” The fact is we don’t know. We don’t know because the Bible doesn’t say so. What the Bible does tell us, what it really shows is this is that whether it was a consequence to the sin or not is not the point that God wants us to have. The words in the text tell us the point and that is there’s an evaluation of the moment. He says, “In his disease, he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from his physicians.” Doctors, armies, money, they’re not the problem, but relying on mortals when there is an immortal, perfect, holy God

is absolutely foolish, and so let me encourage us to resist the drift towards self-reliance.

We never drift towards health. Every one of us are on an escalator that's moving backwards. You simply sit still and you move in the wrong direction. Grace always drifts the law, passion to apathy, humble prayers to prideful ingenuity, and so you have to pray. We have to pray, even as a church. Next Sunday, we're going to have a prayer and worship night. It's not just a time filler. It's a declaration. It's a flag that we put into the ground as a church family that says, "We rely on You." I urge you to consider, are you drifting today? Or are you making a vigilant attempt to pursue godliness and reliance upon Him?

As we close here in just a few moments. We're going to actually sing two songs. There's going to be people in the front who are here. If you have a burden, if you're in a storm, if there's something going on in your life, and you need somebody to pray with, we want to be here for you, but before we do that, it's really important, really important you understand. You see, you leave here with just some life lessons on navigating tensions and storms and reforming things and relying on the Lord, that's all good, but it's not the point. That's not why the kings are there. You see, Asa was a really good king, but we didn't need a really good king. We needed a perfect king, a perfect king who had no sin who could take away our sin.

You see, and God promised this king. He promised a son that would be born who would one day be a king who would one day be the savior of the world and all 43 of the kings of the Old Testament, if they could, they would all line up next to each other, and they would say, "I'm not the one. He's coming," and it was Jesus Christ. His name is Jesus. As the true and better king, Jesus brought reform. Oh, he brought reform. He taught heaven's values. He exposed hypocrisy within spiritual leaders. He overturned corruption within places of worship. He liberated the Sabbath and a thousand other of God's gifts from the tyranny of legalism. But unlike every other king that's ever lived, He did not need to be reformed Himself, for He was without sin.

As the true and better king, Jesus lived not a single moment of his life in self-reliance. The Bible says that when He would wake up each day, He relied on the Father and He prayed. When He was tempted in the wilderness, He relied on His father and He resisted. When He was arrested in the garden, He relied upon His Father and He yielded. When He was accused on trial, falsely accused, He submitted and yielded, relied upon His Father, and kept His mouth closed. When He was being nailed to the cross, He relied upon His Father, and said, "Forgive these people, for they don't know what they're doing." When He gave up His own Spirit and He died, He relied upon His Father, committing His own Spirit into His hands.

"Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow. That includes yours and mine. In heaven and on Earth and under the Earth and every tongue confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father." Have you bowed your knee? See, one day you will. We all will. But to wait to that moment and not do it while you're here on the Earth is simply too late, which is why it says that people are bowing their knees and saying He is Lord, not only in heaven and on Earth, but under the Earth.

Let me urge you this morning to put your faith and trust in Christ, to believe in Him. A life walking with Jesus is a blessed one, but it's also a hard one. But all the sorrows that come from following Christ, they do not equal the bitterness of a single day without Him, and so I urge you, do not rely upon your good works. Do not rely upon religion. Do not rely upon a church. Do not rely upon your ability to obey. Do not rely upon your account. Rely upon Christ and He will forgive you of your sin. You do that simply by confessing to Him, by praying to Him.

Everyone in this room is facing a storm, I know it. That's why God tells us to carry each other's burdens. One of the ways we do that is we pray for one another. What I want to ask you to do right now is to go ahead and stand, go ahead and stand, and I'm going to pray. We're going to sing two songs, and during those two songs, I want to ask you to pray, to rely upon the Lord. Also, when you're ready to sing, but if in that moment you would say, "I just would love for somebody to pray with me," there's going to be people right up here in the front as we sing these two songs and as we pray who would love the privilege to be able to help you carry those burdens, and so we welcome you to come if you wish.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, I pray for those who are considering trusting Christ this morning, that You would incline their hearts to believe and to call upon Your name. I pray for those of us who already have that You would incline our hearts to pray and to continue to rely upon You as we endure the difficulties of our day. As we sing to You now, and as we pray, we lift our hearts to You. Help us to respond in humility towards what we have heard. I pray, God, that You would do a work of healing and restoration, that You would give hope, that You would give endurance to people to each of us during this time. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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