

The Journey of Discovery

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[0 : 00] Remember last week now, or last time we met together, we saw that Esther had finally come to the point where she could be obedient without question to the instruction of Mordecai. Remember Mordecai had said, you're going to have to go in and speak to the king about this decree that will do away with all the Jews.

And so remember the instruction she wrote back to Mordecai. She said, tell all the people of Shushan to fast for three days and three nights, and be praying for me, and I will go in unto the king unannounced with the penalty of death, and I will speak to the king. If I perish, I perish. What a statement that was. I'm going to go in.

The picture is here, she has died to herself there. She's come to that place of death to herself, and so she's going to go in and talk to the king.

So she does so. As we close out last week, she walks in to the room where the throne is. The king's there. She goes in unannounced, not knowing what's going to happen here.

And we said more than likely inside her mind was that little voice that said, if I perish, I perish. But she's leaving the consequences to God. I love that. She's following the leadership of Mordecai, which is the Spirit of God, and trusting God with whatever the consequences are to that obedience.

[1 : 59] And that's the place we have to come to in ourselves. So now, she goes in, and you remember what happens. Here's Lyon's translation. King looks at her and says, Hi, sweetheart. What can I do for you?

You know, he holds out the scepter to her. And she goes, and she touches the top of that scepter. His holding the scepter out to her means that he welcomes her into his presence.

And so that sentence of automatic death is not there, because that's the only remedy from that sentence there was, is if the king would hold out that golden scepter or that scepter to her and show his approval of her presence.

Didn't happen very often if anybody came into the king unannounced, but it did in this case. What a picture of our death to ourselves, crucified with Christ, buried, risen with him, because in reality, God has resurrected her from that point.

So, that brings us to the gallows in the garden. I love these titles. Amen? The gallows in the garden. Of course, remember, this is all based on the book, *If I Perish, I Perish*, by Major W. Ian Thomas.

[3 : 24] The gallows in the garden. Now, realize something. Dead man can't die. Right? Amen? Unless you're Jack Sparrow and those guys get shot three or four, five, six times.

Anyway, dead man cannot die, nor can they be frightened. In fact, there's not a whole lot of responsibility that a dead person has, is there? Think about that just a moment. That's true. Not a whole lot of responsibility that a dead person has. So, there's nothing quite so relaxing as being dead. Amen?

Yeah. Nothing quite so relaxing as being dead. And of course, we qualify to quantify that here.

Dead to our own accomplishment or ability to accomplish anything apart from the Lord Jesus.

Now, before we go any farther, I forgot to mention. Because Doyleene brought up the great question. And you're just anticipating whether or not I've answered, I found an answer. I was going to ask you that.

[4 : 30] Okay. You didn't bring it up. She wanted to know what the significance was of touching the, her touching the end of the scepter or the top of the scepter. I did check when I got home.

And the resources that I have simply says this. Touching the top of the scepter presents herself to him as a humble petitioner. And that's kind of the idea that everybody gives here.

One said it was the usual way of acknowledging the royal condensation. And at the same time expressing reverence and submission to the august majesty or august majesty of the king.

So, that's the idea. One says she probably even kissed the top of it. Showing the respect. Yeah. And submission. Showing her inferior to him. So, that seems not only logical but feasible to us there.

So, I wanted to be sure that you got remedy from that question, Doyle. I can sleep. Well, maybe not sleep as well as being dead. Yeah. All sleep. All right.

[5 : 32] Of course, now, again, there's nothing quite as relaxing than being dead. That's dead to our own ability to accomplish anything outside of the Lord Jesus. That's the only way that we can rest in that.

We can afford to die once we have become utterly convinced that death to ourselves is to trade what we are for what Christ is. Now, catch that.

Being dead to ourself is simply trading what we are in ourself. And that includes the old Adam. All right. To trade that for what Christ is.

What kind of trade-off is that? Huh? Huh? You think about that. That's a tremendous trade-off, isn't it? To trade. Because realize not just what we are in ourselves, but what that creates for us and what that causes.

Is there anybody here? How can I ask this question? Is there anybody here that if you find yourself really not sensing you've been completely in the will of God today, do you find it easy to rest at night?

[6 : 47] Do you? Do you? There's a restlessness there, isn't there? There's a restlessness that's always created in lieu of the fact of what we are within ourselves.

And so that's what he's saying here. It's, you know, we can afford to die once we come to that point where we're utterly convinced that to die to ourself is to trade what we are for what Christ is.

And that's a pretty good trade-off. It is right at this point then, realize, it's right there at that point where unbelief raises its head.

But, you know, is, I don't think we ever want to say, is this really true? Because we know it is. The scripture speaks of that so clearly, so we don't want to refute what God's word says.

But I think it comes more down to ourselves personally. You know, can that really work in my life? Can that be so?

[7 : 52] Why do you suppose we question that? What do you think the number one reason for our questioning that would be?

Why? Because we have not experienced stepping out like that. Thank you. You get a gold star, Mike.

Yeah. If you've never experienced that, if you've never tasted that, you don't know what it is. So it's hard.

Sometimes that creates that question within us. Can that really work for us? So if we have that doubt, and that doubt comes because we've never actually really been there to that degree, what must we do then?

What must we do? Answer, Mike, or I'm going to take your gold star away from you. Go into the school of hard knocks and go on and say, Lord, whatever you will.

[8 : 56] Okay. Yeah. Do the same thing Esther did. Right? If I perish, I perish. Yeah. Come to that point. Okay. This is what God's saying. This is what God's word shows me.

So I've got to trust it. Not in a lawful way, but because it's God's word. This is what God said. So I know I can trust it.

And if I can trust what he says, I can trust him to take care of the consequences. Right? So we just go and do it.

All right. Now, if we're not wholly convinced that Jesus is willing and able to take over, then we'll hang on like grim death to what we are. I mean, there's no middle ground.

There's no vacuum there in between. It's either fully surrendered to God or hanging on to what we are in ourselves. Now, we can be absolutely certain that we'll never know that deep-seated peace that comes from allowing the Lord Jesus to assume the responsibility and get into the business he's in.

[10 : 02] All right? Yeah. That's the only way to get the true peace of God. And that is to realize it's his responsibility to make it happen.

He wants to do that through us. So we just surrender to whatever it is that he wants to accomplish and wants to do through ourselves.

Now, there's a state of mind in some that's strongly opposed to this idea of total repudiation of our self-effort. And that sometimes results in hostility.

But that hostility comes from self-justification. The hardest thing for even believers to work through, I should say, I guess, is the will that says you can do it.

You can do it. Isn't it funny how we and ourselves say in our own strength we can do it, but when God says something we can't do it. Amen? I can't do that like Moses.

[11:17] I can't go speak to Pharaoh. Now, they're often very dedicated in their desire to serve God, but the whole concept of a Christian life in which there's nothing more or less than Jesus himself in action, that simply baffles them.

They cannot understand that. And henceforth, they are missing out on the peace that God has to give. Now, the principle for all that is illustrated by the Lord Jesus himself.

Recognize with me. For 33 years, he allowed the Father to be in him through the Spirit of God, what he himself now wants to be to us through the Spirit.

But realize with me, when Jesus was here in his earthly ministry, in that body of flesh, everything he did in that body of flesh, he did under the leadership and power of the Spirit of God.

Remember Paul when he writes to the Philippians and tells us to let this mind be in you, that's also in Christ Jesus. He talked about the fact that he did not hold the fact that he had an outward expression of deity.

[12:42] He did not hold that to be something to be grasped or grasped a hold of at all cost. So, what did he do? He stripped himself, not of deity, but he stripped himself of that outward expression of deity.

Came in the body of flesh, became a man, put on the form of a servant, so that everything he did in humanity, he did under the leadership and the power of the Spirit of God.

So, that's what we're alluding to here, is the fact that when he was here in his earthly ministry, through the Spirit of God, he allowed the Father to be everything to him in him, that he now wants to be in us through his Spirit.

So, there's the living principle that it was through his life. All right? 1 Peter 2, verses 22 through 24 say, Speaking of Jesus, Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, reviled not again.

When he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judges righteously. So, see, he committed himself in his earthly sojourn to the Father, who his own self bear our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes we are healed.

[14:18] Now, the Lord Jesus reckoned with the Father, and acted at all times on the assumption that his Father was handling the situation, always only taking care to obey instructions.

He recognized that Jesus started his day in communion with the Father. I have to believe that as he started that day communing with the Father, he not only was getting instructions from the Father for the day, but he was submitting himself in his humanity to whatever the will of the Father is.

Remember, he said at another time, my will, my meat, you know, when the disciples came back and he was talking to the Samaritan woman, he said, my meat is to do the will of him that sent me. The thing that gives me nourishment, the thing that gives me strength, is to do the will of the Father. So, he let the Father, assumed the Father was going to take care of the situation, and always, only taking care to be obedient to what the Father had to say.

Now, he learned obedience. How did he learn obedience? What does the Scripture say? In the book of Hebrews. He learned obedience by the things that he suffered.

[15:55] Yeah. Wow. Now, that's, you've got to really digest some of that to understand what he's saying there. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. The things that he suffered taught him obedience. I mean, after all, well, I'm not going to get into that. We don't have time to get into all that. He was God in the flesh, so, you know, there wasn't a thing about disobedience, too.

But in his humanity, he needed to learn that obedience, and he did that through suffering. So, that tells us something about suffering in our own lives. And that, by the way, was obedience unto death.

Now, as God, he doesn't ask you or me to do anything or any less, to be any weaker or any more foolish than he himself was prepared to be.

The cross was both the weakness of God and the foolishness of God, according to men's view. 2 Corinthians 13, 4 says, For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God.

[16:59] For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God towards you. Then 1 Corinthians 1, verses 25 through 27, Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For you see, your calling, brethren, hath not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Aren't you glad of that? Amen? I feel in tall cotton when I read that. Yeah. He chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

Now, that's the thing that baffled the disciples. We spoke about that at the beginning of all of this, maybe on that Sunday morning.

You realize, Jesus, you know, He calls the twelve, and they begin to, they abandon everything and follow Him, and they watch Him, and they listen to Him, they hear what He says, they see the things that He does, but also there are times when after He has done some tremendous things, He backs off and kind of hides.

[18:24] He didn't want to publicly, you know, didn't want it to be published publicly that He was the Christ, per se. He did not outwardly lay claim to that early on.

So it confused them. Remember, we even saw, I think it was in the Gospel of John, where they even really begin to doubt their own mind about whether this really is the Christ, because He just did not match up to what they thought He ought to be.

I mean, after all, He dealt with a rich, young ruler. Why not use that to His advantage? Amen? Rich, young ruler could provide some money to build a big ministry.

Yeah. Yeah. You know, He would heal the blind, even raise Lazarus from the dead core. That was kind of a public thing there.

But, you know, He took no acclaim from that. And they, in their humanity, could not quite understand that. But He could afford to do that, couldn't He?

[19:32] He could afford to do that. What was one of the reasons He did not do that? Why do you suppose? Well, He didn't take the plaudits of the people.

Yeah. Well, for one thing, He wasn't a circus worker. Well, true. Yeah. True. He wasn't a circus performer. Yeah. But also, the Father's timing lies in all of this, too.

as to when the Father actually wants it to be revealed that He is the Christ. Now, He could afford to be foolish in the eyes of silly and sinful men because He knew the one by whom He had been sent and the one into whose hands He had committed His spirit, not only in death, but in 33 years of life. He knew who it was. Amen? So, He could afford to just not worry about what people thought and what even the disciples thought because of, because He trusted in the Father.

He could afford to do as He was told and He could afford to die because He knew that someone else was taking care of all of the consequences that followed here.

[20:55] Now, if you and I aren't really prepared to do as we're told, no matter how weak it may make us look, do we have a problem with that?

Knowing what God is saying but thinking to ourselves, man, that's going to make me look silly in front of the people that I know and the public. But if we're not ready to do that, then realize whatever we believe then about the resurrection is purely academic.

you know, we'll have Easter here in a few, you can believe that, I'm ready for spring already. Easter will come and we'll give praise to the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

But what does it really mean to us now? You know, if we're not willing to just do whatever the Father says to do, whatever the Spirit of God inclines us to do without worrying about what anybody else will think, then the resurrection that we believe is academic.

And we're not benefiting from the reality of that simply because of our unbelief. The life of Jesus Christ within you makes human circumstances irrelevant irrelevant when it comes to the point of obedience to His clear instructions.

[22:30] Well, there's a lot of things there which we could take just a month on and let it soak in. How much does outward circumstances gear our living?

How many left knees have we heard about today? Amen. I've got a right knee that gives me problems. You guys are on the left, I'm on the right, hey. But reality, the reality is circumstances have a way of just derailing us if we let that happen.

Alright? But the fact that Christ lives within us makes those outward circumstances irrelevant. Doesn't matter. Because He's within us.

Don't say anywhere in the scripture where it says He's going to come and dwell only in those that have good right knees, good left knees, and whole sound bodies. Amen? No.

No. So those things are irrelevant. To share His life now as He once shared His Father's life on earth then is to know as He did that someone else is taking care of all of the consequences.

[23 : 46] consequences. And we've got to really understand that. Now, in light of this, it doesn't mean now that what God purposes is always irrational in the light of our human circumstances.

Don't think that. Alright? Don't think we're saying here that God will only work in weird ways. Yeah, that's not true. But sometimes what He does and what He calls us to do seems irrational from our human thinking and human standpoint.

Nor is there any particular virtue in being foolhardy or acting out of the ordinary. Amen? Well, you better just do what God shows you to do and not what you think you want to do. It's just that you become delightfully detached from the pressures of circumstances and that it ceases to be the criterion in the decisions that we make.

How many times are we tempted when that alarm goes off on Sunday morning? Especially now that winter is getting ready to set in. Amen? When the snow is coming down, when the wind is blowing at 20 miles an hour and it's in the 20 degree range, how easy is it just to hit that, no, not even hit the snooze, just turn the alarm off, stay under the warm covers.

How easy is it for us knowing that in reality God is instructing us to do something, but yet we just don't feel good.

[25 : 35] we've got aches, we've got pains, maybe our circumstances of life have just been difficult and we emotionally and mentally are drained.

Yet, you know, I'm going to brag here just a moment if you don't mind, because a thought comes to mind about Darlin Michael in Bozeman, Montana.

They've been here before when they were still in Fort Worth? No, when they were living with us for six months, that was going to be three months.

But anyway, anyway, the difficulty, the health difficulties they both had, Darlin in particular, that not only caused physical anguish, but sometimes that physical anguish causes psychological anguish. But yet, in the midst of all of that, they kept faithful to the call of God in their life. Ministering to students at Harvard Law School Darlin even having to go outside to do it because she couldn't go in the buildings because they're so old, full of mold.

[27 : 13] Yeah. And so, you know, I think of them when I think about this. I think to myself, my, my, how easily we find it in our own lives to ignore what God is showing us because we don't feel good.

Amen? Or the circumstances of our life just don't seem to be conducive to what God is saying. the circumstances of our life have to stop being the motivational factor of our life.

They can't, they can't be if we're going to satisfy the will of God. Can't be the criteria in the decisions we make concerning the will of God. Now, we do as we're told whether God's instructions appear to be compatible with the immediate situation or not.

Because sometimes they don't. And leave God to vindicate himself and to justify the course of action upon which, as he commanded, you have embarked.

Amen? I think I may have told you at some point before, but God, as a pastor, God made me realize something one time that just was such a relief for me.

[28 : 40] It was better than the plop plop fizz fizz. You know, pastors, especially when you get a group of pastors together in fellowship meeting of some kind, they talk about the successes and the downfalls of their ministry and this and that.

All of a sudden one day, God spoke to my heart and said, I've not called you to be successful.

Yeah. Not called you to be successful.

I've called you to be obedient. obedient. Yeah. When we're obedient to him and leave the circumstances to him and the consequences to him, letting him work through it, whatever it is he wants to work through it, we're successful.

Amen? That's success in the eyes of God. And so that's the point we've got to come to. And some of those times, they don't make sense.

But God, all right, you know, we'll do it. You're showing us to do that. We'll do it and we'll just leave all the things to you to vindicate us and yourself and that.

[29 : 52] Wow, I've got to quit getting too personal here. There are times, there are times when things happen you don't understand and are unjust.

But it's amazing how down the road God vindicates that. And he shows you that he does. And you just go home and you go, woo, on the way home.

Amen? Sorry about that. Now, it was upon that basis that Abraham could offer, afford to say to Lot. You remember when Lot and Abraham got together and finally after he was delivered and all of that and they stayed together for a while and it came to the point where their herdsmen and their cattle were getting too large to stay together.

And so they decided it's time for us to break up. What did Abraham do? He said to Lot, Lot, you choose which direction you want to go to.

Yeah, he didn't have to. He was the big man. Yeah, yeah. He said in verse 13 of Genesis, chapter 13 of Genesis 8 and 9, that there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, between thy herdmen and thy herdmen, my herdmen and thy herdmen, for we be brethren, is not the whole land before thee?

[31 : 17] Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou will take the left hand, then I will go to the right. If thou will depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. Now, before we go any further in the notes, of course, Lot chose the green plains of Sodom, all right?

Now, but why, why could Abraham say that? when he had the right to choose for himself?

Why? Ah, that's it. He was the man of the covenant of promise. He was in covenant relationship with God and he knew that.

All right? He had the agreement. He had it. Yeah, yeah. God's already given him the land, right? Canaan. Yeah, yeah. So, you know, he was restful and here was restful in difference to what others might reasonably have argued was legitimate self-interest.

Lot could take the left, he could take the right, or he could take all of it if he wanted to. All right? God's covenant was still with Abraham and he knew it.

[32 : 33] He knew that it was. So, he could safely leave everything there to God in his choosing.

And of course, you go down through the scriptures, Moses defied Pharaoh, Joshua defied Jericho. They knew that God would do what he wants to do in that.

They didn't have to worry about that. And so, you know, all of that is just the picture of God's people, God's men, knowing, by faith, trusting, and knowing their relationship to God, and knowing that God has a purpose and plan in it, no matter whether they understood what it was going to be or not, they just trusted it.

Amen? Just trusted him. It's been a good while back, one time when I was preaching, here on Sunday morning. I don't remember what it was. Think I gave to you my working definition of faith. Anybody remember what that is? What is faith? Alright. Get your pens and paper, write it down in the margin of your Bible.

[33 : 51] In reality, you study through the Scripture. Study through the book of Hebrews, the old Heroes of Faith, the roll call of the faithful. What do you find about faith?

You know, Scripture says, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and by it, and then they list all of these works of faith. By that, we can define faith as simply being a positive response to what God has said, or promised, or in who He is.

You see, it's not just a blind thing. You can have faith in anything. You know, I can have faith in that little speaker stand right there that one of these days it's going to walk over here.

but it's not going to do it. Why? I have nothing to base my faith on in that. That speaker stand has not said a word to me. But God has.

And so I can trust what He says, and respond in a positive way to what He says, believing and knowing that He will accomplish what He said He would accomplish.

[35 : 16] That's what you find in the Scriptures. of the people of faith. The people of the faithful. A life of faith. Alright? Seeing whereby we are accomplished by it with so great a cloud of witnesses.

Those that bear witness and what He's talking about is those roll call of the faithful bearing witness to us, not looking down upon us and watching us, but it's the idea their witness is a witness born to us that faith life works.

Alright? Comes about by so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us therefore lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily beset us and let us with what?

Patience. Constancy. Run with patience. The race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith.

It's that idea. It's the idea of knowing what God through His word or how the Spirit of God inclines our minds and our hearts, that we be obedient to that because we're trusting and know.

[36 : 36] Again, it's not that, well, no, never mind. All right. All right. So, he knew that his covenant was with, I wish I could get down to that real quick.

Where are we at here? That's all Abraham really needed to know. All right. Through this we can understand what Paul meant when he wrote, for we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measures, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.

And so, Paul was even a big part of that as well. So, we've got to ask ourselves, have we gone on as Paul did to know God as the one who was overwhelmingly adequate, no matter how hopeless the situation may seem to be?

2 Corinthians 1, 9-10 says, but we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.

Now, only pass the sentence of death upon yourself and you can afford to do as you're told, just like Esther did. Though no doubt she was somewhat mystified by the instructions that she received to this point.

[38 : 04] She knew then that she did not have to ask questions. So the question for us is, she didn't have to ask questions, but we're going to ask one here. Have you come to the place in your relationship with the Lord Jesus where you have stopped interrogating him about his intentions?

You ever ask God why? Okay, God, I hear what you're saying, but I don't know why. Why? Why do you want me to do that?

Why do we ask those questions? Yeah, what's that comfort zone?

Isn't there still a little inkling of the desire for self-control here? Yeah. Do we still cling to that self-control? Now, a thought came to mind with this as well, this evening.

Why not enjoy the journey of discovery? Now, you can write that down if you want to. The journey of discovery.

[39 : 16] You know, I thought that's cool. That sounds cool. I'll put that in there tonight. Why not enjoy the journey of discovery? And what I mean by that is when we relinquish self-control, we're letting God just do it.

Alright? Whatever he wants to do, we're on board with him. So, in such then, we discover more and more of how he works.

Yeah. Boy, there's nothing better to understand somewhat of how God's working and all that. That's what Moses wanted, remember? He said, God, I think in his heart and mind, he said, God, you've called me to lead a bunch of backslidden Jews through the wilderness, disobedient people.

He said, if I'm going to do that, I need to see you. In essence, he said, I need to see your glory. I need to see what you're all about. In essence, I need to see how you work. show me that. And the amazing thing is, God said, okay, here's what I'll do.

[40 : 33] There's a cleft in the rock up here. I'm going to take you up there. I'm going to put you in that cleft of the rock. And I'm going to hide you in the cleft of the rock.

And as I pass by, I'm going to put my hand over you. Because you can't see me in all my glory and still live. In your humanity. So, as I walk by, and just as I get past, I'll remove my hand so you can see my hinder parts, is what the scripture says.

I like to call those the non-consuming aspects of the glory of God. What was it that he revealed to him? His love, his mercy, his grace.

Yeah, yeah. And that's all Moses needed. Yeah. He comes down. Anyway, why not, why don't we enjoy that journey of discovery?

That's what our life in Christ ought to be. Yeah, it's being obedient to what he shows us and what he says. But in the process of that, it's watching and seeing how it is he works.

[41 : 51] And then as we see more of how he works, we see more of who he is. Amen? And that's when the jaw-dropping begins. Amen? It is, ah, wow, that's him.

That's who he is. Yeah. Let's enjoy the journey of discovery. Yeah. The journey of discovery begins when we come to the end of ourselves.

Alright? Relinquishing what we are and allow God to navigate the way for us. Yeah. Yeah.

Remember when God was going to take Israel across Jordan?

what did he tell him? So, rest for three days, sanctify yourselves, because tomorrow you're going to see things you've never seen before.

Put a space between me and you. Gave them the distance to separate them from them, themselves, and the ark of the covenant. and he said, follow the ark.

[43 : 11] Just follow the ark. Let it nap, because this is new ground here. You've never been here before. Yeah. Yeah. Let God navigate the way.

See what you learn. See what you discover. Thank you.