

God's Fire: Refining Gold Week 4

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[0 : 01] sending us your Holy Spirit to help teach us and guide us. I thank you for just working already in this room, God. We can feel your guilt today, and I thank you for that. I thank you for moving.

I pray that you would continue to be with us as we worship you through the hearing of your word, that you would speak to each and every one of us, help us to leave changed, and I pray that as we go throughout our week, on the forefront of our minds, we'll be sharing the gospel, building disciples, and loving those around us.

Father, loving our neighbors, loving our community, help us to see people as you see them. Help us to accept them just as you accepted us, Father. Amen. Help us to love as only we can love through your power.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. You may sit down. There is power in the name of Jesus. I'm going to let you speak to me this morning. What are some ways that you've seen in your life the power of Jesus?

What's an instance where you have seen, couldn't have been anything else but the power of Jesus? Yes, Mike. Okay.

[1 : 07] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. That's what King David did. Remember when you read the Psalms and he's down in the dumps and he's, oh, woe is me. He says, God, I remember when. So remember the mountaintop. Amen.

Who else? It's only Jesus. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Exactly.

And if that's what we age tonight, I've been talking about, Oh, my God.

[2 : 08] Yes. And if we shut up with them, just say, oh, let's go home for the hearing back and say talk about, oh, let's say we can go home for the hearing. Oh, and that's what we need. This is your thing. Oh, yeah. Oh, my.

Wow. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Sometimes it's that still, small voice.

Amen. He wasn't in the thunder. He wasn't in the lightning, but he was in that still, small voice. All right. Who else? Yes.

Cindy. Okay. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. I noticed you punched him when you said that. Amen.

[3 : 46] Amen. Amen. We're glad to see you. We're so happy. Who else? Who else? We don't want to leave you out. Sure.

Sure. A.F.R., right?

Sure. Sure.

Right. Well, I'm sure there's going to be something for just about everybody to be able to do. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, this past Thursday, a few of us had the opportunity to enjoy our time at Senior Citizen Day at Camp Pearl.

There were plenty of donuts and coffee, and we ate a Thanksgiving meal. We also got to hear from Pastor Chuck Lusk, who is a church planter and a retired Afghanistan veteran.

[5 : 40] You know, he experienced multiple tours in Afghanistan, multiple tours in other countries, was twice injured in combat, lost buddies within feet of him, and he had daily life and death struggles as they were there in combat.

And he shared during his time that he was speaking, during his message, he shared about his most terrifying, life-altering encounter that he had ever had in his life with an Afghani family on Christmas Eve.

But the one thing that stuck with me was after he had finished, and it was during question and answer time, Don Barrett asked him, knowing all that he had been through, all the things that he had seen, it was all in honor of Veterans Day.

He asked Pastor Lusk, would you do it over again? Knowing all that you know, having been injured and having seen all of the death and destruction, and by the way, he was a sniper, so you know he delivered destruction as well.

He said, would you do it over again? Without a heartbeat's hesitation, he said, absolutely.

[7 : 10] And he said, let me ask you again, would you enlist knowing all that you had to experience? He said, absolutely.

And then Don asked the rest of the veterans in the room, had them stand. He asked the same question. And they all, to a single person, said, yes, they would enlist again.

Then he went on to say, and I'm saying this for this reason, he went on to say that we are the net result of all of our life's experiences.

Everything that you and I have experienced and our response to them is what makes us who we are today. You know, people who have drifted through life, never went below the surface, just drifted along in life and had the proverbial silver spoon in their mouth and never really experienced anything, don't really have much depth to their life.

But it's those that have been in the depths, it's those who have suffered, it's those who have had some of those life-altering experiences and who have come out the other end better, and who have come out the other end knowing that God has been in control.

[8 : 38] We are the net result of our life experiences. But see, you and I, as followers of Jesus Christ, have hope. We've got God pulling the strings.

We've got God working behind the scenes. See, the Apostle Paul knew that. He had a genuine faith in God's providence.

He knew that God was working behind the scenes in his life, whether things were easy, whether things were hard. He said in Philippians 4, verse 11, Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever state I am.

After having been beaten, what did the disciples do? They thanked God that they were counted worthy to suffer in a similar fashion that Jesus did. And then they said, and they prayed for more boldness to go out and do it all over again.

And the patriarch Joseph acquired similar confidence when he spoke to his brothers, when they came to him, and he revealed to them who he was after a certain period of time.

[9 : 51] See, he summarizes so well to his brothers his faith in God's providence, what he says in Genesis chapter 50. Joseph said to them, Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?

And as for you, goes back to the story, and he reminds his brothers, You guys put me in the pit. You guys meant it for evil.

He said, But God meant it for good, in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid.

I will provide for you and your little ones. So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. You will never know, I will never know all of the benefits of the power of suffering until we realize that God is a sovereign God, providentially ordering everything in our lives.

You see, we will never be able to appreciate the sufferings that you and I go through. Remember, I've said over these past four weeks, don't waste your sufferings.

[11 : 05] We'll never truly be able to appreciate all the horrible, all of the difficult, all of the, even just the disappointing, and the trivial things that you and I go through.

We'll never truly be able to appreciate it until we realize that we have a sovereign God providentially ordering everything that is around us for your good and for his glory.

Everything God does is for your good and my good and for his glory. Once we come to accept that God is in control of all things, you'll be much better prepared to be able to deal with the things, the hardships, the sufferings that you and I go through and that he may choose to send our way.

Romans 8, 28. We know that what? God uses all things. God causes all things to work together for good to those that love God and who are the called according to his purpose.

We've referenced Romans 8, 28 every single week. Why? Because everything we go through, God will use it. Good. God will use it for his honor, his glory. Bad.

[12 : 12] God will use it for his honor, his glory. See, last week we talked about our roots in Christ. So my question is, where are you? How deep are your roots in Jesus Christ?

Just like that oak tree that told the wind, I didn't realize how strong I was until you beat against me and tried to uproot me.

But he says, for many, many years, I've been sending my roots down deep. So how deep are your roots? Do you have roots at all? How much of God's word are you feeding on every day?

You know, this morning as we wind down this series, God's fire, refining gold, I have three things that I would like to share with us very quickly and hopefully so that we can come out of the other end of our trials and just like Joe, be able to say, I shall come forth as gold.

The first thing is that we need to know that trials are for our benefit. You see, it's a whole lot easier when you go to the doctor and they give you a horrible tasting medicine or just like I remember when Megan, I remember when, who else broke their arm?

[13 : 39] Carrie. You know, when as parents, you have a very, very, very young child and the doctor says, I'm going to have to set this, I'm going to have to reduce this, and he's going to cause them pain.

And he explains, I have to do this in order for it to heal properly. You see, when we realize that trials, pain, suffering, frustrations are for our benefit, it's a whole lot easier to go through it knowing that we can come out the other side better than when we went in.

And there are ten great reasons for this. I'm going to go through these fairly quickly. I won't spend too much time on these, but these are ten great reasons for trials in our life.

Note these and understand these because they are going to be able to help you when the next trial comes. Now, we're all either preparing for a trial, in the middle of a trial, or just coming out of one.

We're all preparing for the next illness, or the next problem, or we're in the middle of one, or we've just come out of one. And you see, that's the cycle of life.

[15 : 00] So the first thing is, trials are part of God's work. The problems in our lives are part of God working in our lives. You see, God never says, oops.

What is one thing you never want your surgeon to say while you're on the operating table? Oops. I don't think you'll need that.

You know, because God never is caught by surprise. See, the surgeon is not in complete control, but God is. So nothing catches God by surprise.

He's in control of all of our problems, all of our trials. God is not on the throne, wringing His hands, and waiting, wondering how the outcome, or what the outcome is going to be.

You see, even if I can't see how, I'm going to get through it, I can be confident that God's working it out for His glory.

[15 : 59] And this helps me to stop worrying. This helps me to, that doesn't always work that way, because sometimes I need to be more pliable in God's hands. But we need to understand that our heart can be at peace when we remember that God promises to work everything in our life for His honor and for His glory.

Pain is not without a purpose. Look at Psalm 46, 10. Psalm 46, 10.

Be still and know that I am God. He says, I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

And then Romans 8, 28. We referenced that a little bit ago. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called, according to His purpose.

Trials are part of God's work. Number two, trials put God's power on display. The problems that you and I go through, the pain, the trouble, the difficulties, the frustrations.

[17 : 16] We don't realize it, but those things are the things that put God's power on display. When God allows us to step into a tribulation, to step into a trial, He may be getting ready to work for His honor and His glory.

Historically, this is how God prefers to work. Remember Gideon? And when the Midianites were coming, and they were going to just raise the entire area, steal all the crops, and take over.

So here was Gideon. He was afraid. He was threshing the grain, and he was doing it in such a way that they wouldn't see him.

So he was trying to hide. So he wasn't really the bravest of all. But God says, Gideon, I've chosen you. And he started off.

He started off with an army, one-fifth of the size of the Midianite army. But trials and difficulties and problems puts God's power on display.

[18 : 34] Remember what God did? Look at Judges 7 and verse number 2. Judges 7 and verse number 2.

And the Lord said to Gideon, the people who are with you, now remember he had one-fifth, an army, one-fifth the size of the Midianite army, one-fifth the size.

They were down for the count already. What does God say? The people you've got with you are what? Oh, wait a minute, God.

I don't know if you know, I don't know if you're using the new math or what. But God, it just doesn't seem right. What do you mean we've got too many?

The people who are with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands. Why did God say that? He said, Lest Israel do what?

[19 : 34] Claim glory for itself. So what did God want to do? God wanted to put his power on display. saying, my own hand has saved me.

And those of you who know the story of Gideon, what happened? Brought them all to the edge of the water, and he said, come on guys, drink. And some of them, you know, they just go there and they're just lapping up the water.

300 of them put water in their hand and sipped it out of their hand while they were looking around. He said, okay, I got it.

Midianite army was defeated with 300 soldiers. Why? So Israel couldn't say, man, look at us, man, we drilled and we drilled and we drilled and we are, we are it.

No. God wanted to show his power. He wanted to put his power on display so the Israelites couldn't say, we saved ourselves.

[20 : 44] So when you go through a problem and a trial or tribulation or a loss of health or whatever it is, and God works miraculously or God is able to give you peace and joy in the midst of it until he takes you home, everyone can say, wow, that must have been a God thing.

I couldn't have responded the way he did it. So God put this power on display. Number three, trials prepare me for service. Even little trials.

See, here's the bad news. When God wants to work in a big way, it often involves one of his servants facing a trial.

So we need to be ready for the big storms and the big trials in our life. So how can God prepare us for the big things? He sends us some little things.

And he sees how we do. He sends us some little tests. Well, if I want God to trust me with big tasks, God will see how I do by testing me in some of the little things.

[22 : 00] And so many people will say, well, that's not much. You know, I want to do this and I want to do big stuff. But you know, I'm not willing to volunteer to vacuum the carpet.

I'm not here to volunteer to work the nursery. You know, I want to do some big things. I want to do some. God says, if I can't trust you in the little things, if I can't trust you in the menial things, he said, what makes me think I can trust you in the big things?

So God will bring stuff into our lives. Every trial God sends our way, even in our daily frustrations, are meant to test us and grow us stronger. You know, if I want God to use me for some big things, I've got to pass the little test.

Much like our physical body grows stronger when we start off with those light weights and then we continue adding weights and add weights and add weights and our body gets stronger. And the stronger we get, we can lift heavier weights.

But the more our body gets stronger, you've got to use heavier weights in order to continue growing. Now, that won't sound like fun, but God will use bigger trials in order to prepare us for the bigger victories very often.

[23 : 16] So God uses those trials in our life. Look at Romans chapter 5. Romans chapter 5, verses 3 through 5. And not only that, Paul says, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, character, and character produces hope.

Now, hope does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. He says, we glory in the problems in our life, not because they're fun, not because they're enjoyable, but he says, because we know what they produce.

We know they produce patience. Faith and endurance produces hope, and hope has its work in our lives. Then number four, trials sanctify me.

Trials sanctify us. See, I don't always handle trials very well. I don't always handle difficulties very well. Maybe that's one reason God called me to the pastor to humble me.

Because it's just like one little thing after another. When things don't go as planned, you know, I'm stuck with busy work or traffic is endless, you know, ministry struggles, paperwork, all of these things, I realize just how impatient I really am.

[24 : 44] Just put me behind a slow driver, and I realize how impatient I am, even if I don't have anywhere to go. I mean, seriously.

I'm just going to get gas, and it's afternoon, and, you know, I don't have to be anywhere at any particular rush. And I, you know, I, I'm not one of those honk the horn drivers.

You know, I mean, not really, I mean, I'm not one of those guys, but, but God, please, did you just hear what I just said? Kind of thing. And, but God uses those things in our life to show how impatient I really am.

See, the trials don't cause me to sin. by being impatient, by being restless, they simply reveal what's inside.

And that's what the problems in our life will do. The problems will reveal what we're already, will already reveal our mindset. If we're, if we're a cynic, or if we are, if we're impatient, or if we're this, or if we're that, it's just going to show what's inside when, when things don't go the way we think they should.

[25 : 56] If you cap a volcano, what's going to happen? It'll blow out the side. If you, if you try to cap your anger by not getting upset at your kids, then you'll probably kick the dog.

You'll probably get impatient at the next driver that you have to follow. So the thing is, it'll only reveal what is going on in our lives. Trials reveal our weaknesses.

They reveal our inner sin. So only once I can see my sin, can I allow God to work inside of me.

See, the greatest battle is not going on around me. The greatest battles are going on inside of me. See, because of this, God's trials have been some of the greatest instruments that God has used in my very own life.

So trials sanctify me. Let's look at James chapter 1. The book of James has a lot of practical, practical truths for us as followers of Jesus.

[27 : 04] He says, verse 2, chapter 1, my brethren, count it all joy. Really? Yes, James. He says, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, all different kinds of trials.

Knowing, just like Paul, he says, I know what they produce in my life. Knowing that the testing of your faith, the same type of refining process. You know, it's not like a test to see how much you know.

It's a test to prove and to refine the metal. Testing your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work, its complete work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

Trials sanctify me. Trials make me depend on God. The worst things get. It should move me, push me to trust God and to depend on Him even more.

God uses trials to turn and to move my dependence totally on to Him. See, He wants me to cling to Him in times of peace and in times of peril.

[28 : 10] He wants us to cling to Him all the time. The greatest battle that is waged for the glory of God is not the one around me, it's the one inside of me.

That's tweetable. The greatest battle that's going on is not around me, it's the battle that's going on inside of me and God wants us to be moved to total dependence on Him.

See, my sinful heart doesn't want to relinquish control. Your sinful heart doesn't want to relinquish control of your life. We don't like being dependent. We like independence.

The thing is, the Christian life is not a life of independence. It's a life of dependence on Him totally, completely so that we trust in Him alone.

Trials, see, trials and weaknesses keep us from embezzling His glory. What happens when someone embezzles? They take and they steal something that's not theirs.

[29 : 13] when you and I feign independence and we say, look, I am my own person and everything I've got I've worked hard for and it's mine and what are we doing?

We're embezzling God's glory. We're saying that I can point to myself and I've got it because I did it. No. It's all to the glory of God.

See, our trials make it clear that God alone deserves recognition and honor. So, trials make me depend on Him. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 1. 1 Corinthians chapter number 1 verses 28 and 29 and the base things the common things of this world and the things which are despised God has chosen and the things which are not to bring to nothing the things that are.

Why does God use some of the most unsuspecting people to make the greatest impact for His kingdom? That no flesh should glory in His presence.

So that no flesh should glory in His presence. 1 Corinthians 1.31 that it is written He who glorifies if you want to boast boast in the Lord.

[30 : 47] Let Him glory if you want to glory let Him glory in the Lord. So trials make me depend on God. Number 6 trials show others that God is dependable.

Trials show others that God is dependable. As you and I go through trials other people are watching. As you and I suffer other people are watching.

As you and I speak other people are listening. Are we speaking Jesus? Are we speaking oh woe is me.

This is terrible. This is horrible. I don't deserve this. What's going on? Why? Why? Why? See they're watching to see if you and I respond in faith. Because they know or they ought to anyway that you're a follower of Jesus.

And that you claim to be a follower of Jesus. And that you claim to be different. And that God is all that you need. So they're watching to see if you respond in faith.

[31 : 48] Having peace in the midst of comfort is what? Is normal. I mean when you're comfortable you're at peace. That's normal.

That's where most people want to be. But having peace in the midst of pain is not. Having peace in the midst of a problem is not normal.

You see God wants us not to be normal. God wants us to be revolutionary. And I would even go as far as to say God wants us to be revolutionaries.

not that we're toppling governments. But that we are revolutionary in the sense that we are salt, we are light, and we're making a difference around us.

Because of who we are and because of the message that we have for the world around us. See trials give me, trials give you an opportunity to speak hope into the lives of others.

[32 : 56] You see if I complain or have a bad attitude when I'm going through a trial, I forfeit my opportunity to speak of the greatness of God. You know, when you're lying in a hospital bed, when you're going through something difficult, maybe a financial trial or relationship trial, and we complain and have a bad attitude about it, we are missing the greatest opportunity for God to shine and for God to receive the glory.

So we're forfeiting our opportunity to speak to the greatness of God. So God entrusts us with trials so that we can be a light. Let's not waste our opportunities.

Look at 1 Peter. 1 Peter 3. We're going to go through quite a bit of scripture this morning. You may have already figured that out. 1 Peter 3, verses 14 and 15.

1 Peter 3.

our trials to show others that He is dependable. Number 7. Trial show us and others that God is infinitely valuable.

[34 : 39] See, as you and I go through trials, trouble, problems, with peace and joy, again, other people are watching. They're watching to see if we respond in joy.

When we have joy in the midst of loss, it shows the world that Jesus is better. Have you ever lost something? Have you ever lost someone?

What's our attitude when we lose something? Oh, this is horrible. I'll never replace it. This is terrible. But when we lose something and say, to God be the glory because He is all I need.

What we're telling the world is that Jesus is better than what we lost. Isn't that true? We're telling the world that, yes, this was dear to me.

But Jesus is better. I'm willing to give up anything because Jesus is always better. You know, unfortunately, joy in the midst of loss is not my default setting, and it may not be yours either.

[35 : 45] Self-pity, seeking sympathy, that's usually my default setting. So before I respond in joy, God's got to teach me that Jesus is better than anything this world can afford.

Just like the song says. Jesus is better than anything this world can afford. He teaches you and He teaches me through trials that trials and loss and He alone is all that we need.

That He alone is my treasure and my great reward. Now, this doesn't mean we laugh at all because pain hurts. Going through difficulty trials is not fun. Even if we lose everything, lose your health, lose your money, lose your family, lose your dignity, lose your reputation, God is still enough.

Through tears, we could even say with Job, the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Psalms 73, 25-26. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside you, the psalmist said.

[37 : 09] My flesh and my heart fail. But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. And then we read in Habakkuk chapter 3.

This was a terrible time for Israel. And this was part of Habakkuk's prayer. He says, What he's saying is, if we're in the midst of famine, if I don't have a crop, if I lose all my money, if I lose everything, if the olive tree doesn't yield, if the flocks are cut off and I've got nothing left, he goes on to pray.

Verse 18, he prays to God, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. If I lose everything, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation.

You know, we don't often read that prayer of Habakkuk that way. Though the fig tree doesn't blossom. No figs this year. No fruit of the vine.

No grapes this year. Though the labor of the olive may fail. No olive oil this year. That's one of their favorite things they use.

[38 : 43] The fields. No crops this year. Oops. No animals. So no meat. Not good.

No herd in the stalls. Yet. I will rejoice in the Lord. I will hope in the God of my salvation.

The Lord God is my strength. He will make my feet like deer's feet. And he will make me walk on my high heels. Number eight. All right.

Taking a lot of time. I'm going to go through it a little more quickly. Trials are an opportunity for reward. God entrusts trials to us as a gift. And we are storing up rewards in heaven.

One day we're going to take those rewards and whatever we're going to do. We're going to cast them at the feet of Jesus. First Peter one. Six and seven. And this you greatly rejoice. Though now for a little while if need be you have been grieved by various trials.

[39 : 43] That the genuineness of your faith be much more precious than gold that perishes though it be tested by fire may be found to praise honor and glory. The revelation of Jesus Christ. Number nine. Trials may be spiritual warfare.

The more ground you and I gain for God. Satan is not going to be happy. Psalm 27 14. Wait on the Lord.

Be of good cheer and he shall strengthen your heart. Wait. I say on the Lord. First John 4 4. You are of God little children and have overcome them because he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

You may be going through spiritual warfare. God is on your side. Number ten. Trials may be for discipline. The problems you go through might be of your own making.

Think about that. Start with the heart. Even though this is last in the list. That's really where we need to always start examining our heart.

[40 : 45] God often uses trials. God may use difficulties. God may use problems in our life to get our attention and reveal sin in our life. You know as a loving father he wants to restore us to fellowship with him.

Hebrews chapter 12 verses 5 and 6. And have you forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons? My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by him for whom the Lord loves.

He chastens and scourges every son whom he receives. Then Psalm 139. We talked about this in restoration series.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, know my anxieties, and see if there is any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

You see, every minute of ordeal that you and I go through strengthens us for his service. We'll be cast to the feet of Jesus one day. Then, secondly, the second thing is, first of all, know that trials are for our benefit.

[41 : 54] Secondly, rejoice in the suffering. First Peter 1, 6 through 9. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials. You see, gold, silver, when it's melted down, it's melted down to remove the impurities and to purify it.

You and I are made gold through our trials, through our problems, through our difficulties. And then lastly, endure it for the glory of God.

All things are done. God does all things for his honor and his glory. God does all things in our life for our good and for his glory. Remember that.

No matter how hard it is, stay faithful. It means that you are a child of God. I want to close with this. 2 Corinthians 4, 16 through 18.

Therefore, we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

[43 : 08] While we do not look at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. So what's the whole message point?

Remember that every moment and event in your life is meaningful, even if it seems insignificant. God is working in your life to make you, shape you, mold you, sand off some rough edges, clean out the impurities of sin in your life, wrong attitudes, impatience, all of these things God is getting rid of in our life so that we will be stronger, we will be more dependent on Him, and we will shine brighter for His glory.

But know this, God is in complete control. Remember when I said at the beginning, when Pastor Lusso said that he had a life-altering, the most fearful encounter of his entire life with this Afghani family?

He was a sniper, as he said, and as they were out on patrol, he was told by his sergeant at the time, he said, this building, this house, we need you to get into this house, get on the roof, and you will be overwatched.

And he said he was the breach person. He said he took his weapon, slung it over his shoulder, and it was Christmas Eve. He said it was near midnight.

[44 : 46] Am I correct? I think it was what he said. It was around midnight. So here he is. He is on his knees, on his knee, and he said he's got his tool that he's going to pick this lock.

He said it was weighted on the end, and he said, get his weapon slung over his shoulder, midnight in Mosul, and he's picking the lock.

It's a metal door. And he said, his lockpick slipped from his hands, hit the concrete, came back up and bounced against the metal door.

He said at that moment, he thought his life was over. A light came on inside the house. He said, he said, I was not in a position where I could defend myself.

He said, the door opened, and he said, when that door began to open, he said, I knew that I was going to be face-to-face with the muzzle of a rifle. I thought my life was over. He prefaced that by saying, just that week, did he say five?

[45 : 54] Five of his buddies were killed. Eight? Eight. Eight of his buddies were killed. That week, he said, I was not in a good place mentally.

He said, I wanted revenge. He said, I know God called me to preach when I was 17 years old. He said, here I was, a sniper, in Afghanistan, in a war.

And he said, I wanted to get back at these people who caused this pain. And he said, I was not in a good place.

So here he is, I'm on my knees, door opens. He said, I know that I was going to be facing the muzzle of a rifle. He said, the door opens. Afghani man, there at the door.

Long hallway, single light at the end of the hallway. He said, do you know what I see? I see a picture of Jesus at the end of the hallway.

[47 : 12] He said, this Afghani man, of course, he said, he said, in my broken Arabic, and he said, and this man is speaking in his broken English.

He says, come in. He says, there was a wife and two teenage daughters at the end of the hallway. He proceeded to go up the stairs, get to the roof.

The other two, I think, gentlemen who were with him were going to watch the family. He said, they noticed that they were grabbing all the food in the house, going into the kitchen.

It's Christmas Eve. He says, he said, one of my buddies came up the stairs, came up to the roof and said, they're cooking dinner. It's midnight.

He said, they're cooking dinner. They proceeded to cook these soldiers a Christmas dinner with all the food they had in the house. He said, before they left, he said, this Afghani gentleman asked if he could pray for them.

[48 : 26] He said, I don't know what he said, but he said, I just felt the love of Jesus all over him. And he said, as we were getting ready to leave, one of the teenage girls came and unzipped his bag and began stuffing it with food.

He zipped his bag back. He said, that changed my life. He said, I wouldn't be here today.

I wouldn't be preaching today if it weren't for that one experience that God showed me grace. God showed me that he was in complete control.

Of all the houses that could have been chosen for him in all of that city was the house where Jesus ruled.

Brother Don asked him, he said, he said, he said, brother, you said, you've been in multiple countries. He retired from the military. He was in, I think he said, did at least two, maybe three tours in Afghanistan, Africa, and other countries.

[49 : 36] He said, have you ever met another believer in all of your tours of duty? He said, not one. God is in control no matter what you're going through.

He was facing the most serious ordeal, the most fearful ordeal. He thought his life was over. Know this, God had his hand on the situation. He changed his life because he allowed himself to be in God's hands.

So, are we able to go through anything? With God, we can. Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you for your hand being on our lives.

Father, I thank you that just like Pastor Lust, no matter what we're going through, nothing takes you by surprise.

You're not bringing your hands up in heaven wondering how things will turn out because you've already got them prepared. You've already got them planned for our good and for your glory.

[50 : 44] Father, we realize that things don't always end with a miracle of safety. But Lord, sometimes you bring us home through the ordeal.

And what better place to be than in your presence? So, Father, we pray that you would be with us, encourage us, help us not to waste the problems and the troubles that come into our life so that we can hear your promise.

To him who overcomes, I will grant to sit with me on my throne as I also overcame and sat down with my Father. Thank you, Father.

We pray in Jesus' precious and holy name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.