



Courageous Endurance – Part 6

Fueled by God's Gracious Resources

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With my youngest getting her own apartment this last week in another state, I know that's a big deal. I found myself repeating that slang term for all the realizations that she's having. It's the term *adulthood*. Have you heard of that? *Adulthood*. *Adulthood* for her is realizing that the refrigerator doesn't fill itself every week and it's not like a meal plan in college, right? You have to actually get in your car and go to the store and pay for each individual thing. And if you're going to go to the store you better have some gas in the car and the gas is going to cost. And of course, if you're driving your car, you got to have car insurance and that's going to cost. And as long as we're talking about insurance, you're in an apartment now, you need this thing called renters insurance. And it would be smart if you had health insurance and it would be great if you had dental insurance and the list goes on. There are lots of insurance to have. But when you get back to your house, if you do that successfully, you've got to keep all that stuff cold. And you know that little line that you plug into the wall for that refrigerator, you got to pay for all that electricity to keep all that food cold. And speaking of that, you turn on the faucet, that water comes out. I know you think that's free at college and at home, but you got pay for that every month. And if you want the water ever to be hot you've got to pay for maybe some natural gas to heat that big thing in the closet that keeps your water warm, if you want it, that's going to cost you every month.

And if you want to get on the Internet, it's not like the campus, it's not like the house, you got to pay for the Internet access every single month. You got to pay for that. And I know you just moved in this week but there are startup costs. You got to pay for the modem. And then if you want to be wi-fi, you need a router. And there are just all kinds of things you're going to have to pay for. And if something breaks, guess what? You know, you can't just say, "Hey, dad," you're going have to, I mean, you can call me for advice, but I'm going to point you to YouTube anyway so you can just cut me out of the equation. I can just get your right to YouTube to fix your problem. But you're going to have to have a few tools and you're going to need some, you know, nails and screws and you need a screwdriver. Just a lot of stuff you're going to need think about if you're going to be *adulthood*. And the great thing about all these conversations you have when they get out and on their own is you have a little bit of satisfaction, lots of concern but a little bit of satisfaction that they're starting to realize how much you've done for them all these years. We've done a lot for you. Like in my generation when I was getting up and out it was, you know, was what Dad and Mom said the value of the dollar, which is plummeting, but at least there's something about, you know, learning that all this cost and you got to do it yourself and it's *adulthood*. And that's not a bad term.

I just wonder how your spiritual *adulthood* is going because I know one thing that would bring great satisfaction to your Father who is in heaven is that you would just learn to appreciate all he's been doing for you, because he's done a lot. He's done a lot, a lot more than you probably think about. There are a lot of things you just think you do this and this happens, but you don't understand that God has said that he is doing so much for you that, as James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every," good and just right gift, "perfect gift comes from God." His



hand is delivering these things to you. And I don't know if we make that connection the way we should, but the more we make that connection and appreciate that everything that is done it traces its way back to God and his good hand of provision. And when you really understand yourself and you say, "Well, I'm a sinner before God," then you realize it's a gracious and merciful provision, you can start to really have a sense of what it is for God to be caring for you all these years. And, you know, there's great satisfaction that your Father has when you start realizing and this has cost him a lot. This is a lot. You give me a lot.

I think our passage today in the last chapter of the book of Acts can help. Verses 11 through 16. We look at what's going on here after a very tumultuous journey to have Paul finally get into the city of Rome. We look at how it's described by Dr. Luke and by God's Spirit, ultimately, I think we can learn a little bit of what we must do to stand back and say, God, you've done a lot more for me than I might have ever imagined and I think this passage will help. So let me read it for you. See if we can't find some help in growing up spiritually a little bit and becoming more appreciative of all that God has done.

Verses 11 through 16. I'll read from the English Standard Version. It says, "After three months we set sail in a ship." Now, remember where they were, they were on the island of Malta. We had rain, we had storms, their ship was broken up, but we had 276 people who probably didn't all get on at this particular point on to this new granary ship. But there was a new ship that was coming from the same place the other one came from back in the story, from Alexandria, Egypt, there in the delta of North Africa. And this one was a ship of Alexandria it says. And then here Luke, Dr. Luke, throws in this little tidbit, "with the twin gods as a figurehead." Do you know what a figurehead on a ship is? You've seen these old pictures of ships where at the bow at the very front there's like, you know, some image that's carved in that's kind of sailing off in front of this whole ship. Well, this one had what's called here the twin gods. More on that in a minute and why I think it was added or certainly something we can draw from it being added. Well, we made our way as the map will trace out for you if you found your worksheet there in the bottom right-hand corner there's a map or if you downloaded it from the website, which I recommend you do every week, it's up every Friday by dinnertime, you can see that they're making progress up north. They're some 58 miles or so or whatever it was south of Sicily. But they're going to make their way up to "Syracuse and they stayed there for three days. And then from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium," and you can see that on the map.

"And then after one day there a south wind sprang up," which is good because they're going north so we need a south wind. "And on the second day we came to Puteli. There we found brothers," verse 14 says, "and were invited to stay with them for seven days." So they find some fellow Christians there and they're allowed to hang out with these Christians. That was great. You remember Paul had favor here with the centurion and the soldiers, so he's being allowed a lot of latitude. Bottom of verse 14, unceremonious, although I would expect something like, "Yay, hooray, we finally made it." But Luke says, "And so we came to Rome." Well, this is a lot of trouble to get to Rome in the last two chapters and we've been in peril and in danger and shipwrecked and all the rest. But guess what? Just exactly what God promised he safely got them to Rome. So this is huge. Aristarchus, Luke and Paul the apostle all made



it along, probably with some others that were in their band, but those were the three that are named and we know that. And then of course, we had soldiers who were taking prisoners and then we had a lot of merchant marines and sailors on the old ship. No telling how they got around and got to Rome or if maybe they were trying to hitch a ride back to Alexandria or wherever they were going to go, maybe in Asia somewhere. But they came to Rome, which was exactly what God promised would happen to the Apostle Paul.

"And the brothers there," it says in verse 15, "And the brothers there, when they heard about us," right? They knew that Paul the apostle was a big wheel in the early Church, they "came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns, you can see that on the map, "to meet us." So the suburbs here, not far from Rome, they make their way up when they realize the Apostle Paul's here. "On seeing them, Paul thanked God." Why? Because God is the one doing all of this, "and he took courage." There's the goal, by the way, just to show my hand in this sermon. That's the goal of this sermon for you. I'd love for you to be more thankful and to take more courage and to be encouraged by all that God has provided. "And when we came into Rome," here's another gift from God, "Paul was allowed to stay by himself." If you're going to be a prisoner that'd be good. Just ask for your own personal accommodations, right? That'll be a nice thing. Most of you won't be granted that when you make your way to jail. But Paul got that because he is coming into jail, not in shackles, he's not going to be put in the bottom of a Philippian jail like we saw in stocks. He's going to get some freedom here and this grace that God has given him, just like Joseph got grace while he was in prison back in the book of Genesis, God is giving him favor and he was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier who guarded him. Of course, he was under the watchful eye of the Roman soldiers. This is a great text about a lot of great things that God did in verses 12 through 16.

But in verse 11, we set the scene with a simple statement about a ship that they got on. And here I'm thinking that Luke is writing this, of course all driven by the Holy Spirit, but writing this with a bit of a smirk on his face. They had just come through the most tumultuous and terrible ride, I mean, ultimately from Caesarea on the shores of Israel, and worse yet start them way back in your mind to Jerusalem where people are trying to kill them. They took a vow not to eat anything until Paul was dead. They have made it all the way safely across the Mediterranean to get to Italy. And now they've walked into Rome and they're going to get to the next place to go from south of Sicily on the tiny 18-mile-wide island of Malta to make it all the way up to Rome. And as they're getting on the ship, the ship they're getting on now that decided a winter there, which would have been smart for them to winter earlier when they were in the port. But instead, this ship had wintered there, so it's in one piece. And on the front of this ship that they're getting on now Luke says you know there are the twin gods that are carved into the front of this ship.

Now, that didn't mean anything to you. And if you're a Greek reader, you happen to have your Greek New Testament up on your device or your phone or whatever, your tablet, or you actually have a printed one in your lap, this is a word that might surprise you that is translated as two words, actually three words, Pollux and Castor or Castor and Pollux in some translations. I think all the way back to the King James version it's translated into those three words, but it's really just one compound Greek word, which is the word "Dioskouroi" or that's



the word for "Zeus" in Greek. Zeus. And it has the word "sons," the sons of Zeus, and the sons of Zeus who are spoken of here that everyone would understand if it's carved into the front of the ship are Castor and Pollux, and that's a set of gods in Roman mythology that were said to be believed to bring good luck to sailors. It's like maybe you took a cab back in the day or maybe your parents were staunch Catholics and had a little, you know, St. Christopher statue on the dashboard. Raise your left eyebrow if that ever happened to you. You've seen that before, right? And they're hoping that, you know, the old saint will intercede for them and bring them good luck so they don't get in traffic accidents. Well, that's what's carved onto the front of this ship. Like the patron gods of the Roman, you know, Pantheon, these two gods are supposed to keep you safe on the seas, right?

Well, God had promised that they would be safe in the worst possible maritime conditions because he promised he would take care of them, all 276 of them, and that's exactly what happened. God had kept them safe. That's an amazing thing, of course, because we know that God had a special reason for Paul to be in Rome and that his will was to get him safely to Rome. And God just happened to, by his grace, say I'm going to keep the whole team safe. Just keep them with you and we'll get them all safe. None of them will die. It wasn't because there was a figurehead of two Roman gods carved into the front of the ship. As a matter of fact, a lot of people are petting a rabbit's foot of whatever kind to hope that things work out for them and a lot of people trust in those false gods. And you say, well, I'm glad we don't live in that kind of day. Well, just go to the gym. Just go to the gym. And the gym is pretty smart because they have the store, a lot of them put the store in the front of the gym where you can get all the powders and all the vitamins and all the supplements or whatever they call them. And I'll tell you what, the people are there sweating all week long and taking their bad-tasting powders or whatever they do there, I've never tried it, obviously looking at me, I've never tried it. But they're doing all that. Why? Because they're hoping that they will stay healthy. They're hoping they'll get ripped or buff or whatever they want to do. They're trusting in that if they're reasonable, they're in trusting that so they'll stay healthy because that would be a good thing to be healthy. And a lot of Christians want to stay healthy. I would recommend it. It would be good if you stay healthy.

But you just need to understand the place that you set your trust to give you what you desire is the thing you are trusting in. And if you've got a Saint Christopher statue, or if you've got a rabbit's foot, or if you're looking at the horoscopes, or whether you are carving some gods from the Pantheon into the front of your ship, all of that is a futile hope because the Bible's very clear, if it's good it comes from God. Now, I'm not suggesting if you want to stay healthy you avoid the gym. I'm not saying that or don't take a vitamin. Okay. Do whatever you think you should do. But just as the Bible says, we may get the chariot ready and "The horse ready for battle, but the victory belongs to..." good military strategy, right? Is that what it says? No, "to the Lord." Victory belongs to the Lord. I mean, this is just a very simple biblical principle and you better understand it in a way that leads you to, like the Apostle Paul, thank God for every good thing that comes your way and to take courage that God is giving those good things. Number one, let's put it this way. Whatever the false gods of our culture might be, I don't want you to be like them. I want you, number one, to "Trust in the Real Source of Provision." And the Bible says the real source of provision, as has already been taught in the



book of Acts, Acts Chapter 17 he made it very clear, "In him we live and move and have our being." We only stay alive because God gives us breath.

And speaking of James 1 which says, "Every good gift ... comes from God." Think of the last part of the book. We quote it often in Chapter 5, where it talks about the merchants who are going off to do business. Remember that passage of the Bible? And all that you're going to make plans, you're going to go... Whoa, whoa, be careful. You can make all the business plans you want and that'll be good for you to make plans because it's good to make plans. The book of Proverbs says make plans, but you cannot trust in those plans. You better say with all the plans made, "If the Lord wills, we will live." I like he starts at the base, right? "We will live and do this or that." And if you don't say that, he says, you're boasting, you're boasting that you have it within your means to put your agency in place and you'll trust in the agency. If I just get a good degree from a good school then I'll get a good job. Right? There's the agency, right? If I have a good exercise plan I can stay healthy for a long time. I can live healthy into my old age. There's your plan. There's the agency. And if you trust in the agency we've got a problem. And here's the deal. This is why this is such a good sermon for all of you. I don't care if you've been a Christian for 45 years. This is a good sermon for you because we often forget it.

Here's a guy that served the Lord for many years and trusted in him many times. His name was King Asa of the Old Testament. Turn with me if you can find it real quickly here. Second Chronicles Chapter 16. Second Chronicles Chapter 16. Now while you are turning to Chronicle, I'll kill some time here with a little biblical information. When you go to the Chronicles and you see the name of a king, you just need to know that this is the king of the southern kingdom. Chronicles only tracks the southern kingdom. It starts, of course, with the unified kingdom, which starts with the first king of Israel, who was, Sunday school grads, who was the first king of Israel in the united monarchy? What's his name? Saul. Saul. He's the people's choice. He got the People's Choice Award and God brought him forward and said here's your choice. And then it was like you pick that one, he was a failure, let me give you my man, a man after my own heart. And that second king was named David. Right? And so, David, a man after God's own heart, imperfect though he was, he has a son who is going to build a temple and he's famous for that and his name was Solomon, Solomon's Temple we call it. Well, he had a son and his name was Jeroboam. See the audience response wasn't as loud. You were feeling really good like an "A" student until I said who is Solomon's son.

The next king of the south of Israel is Jeroboam. And Jeroboam makes a really dumb mistake which is all part of God's providential plan to split the nation in half. And Jeroboam, which is really a bummer that the two kings have names that rhyme, Rehoboam in the south, Jeroboam in the north and the kingdom splits. And from that point on we got kings in the north and we got kings in the south. If you want to read about the kings of the North and the kings of the South, you can go to the book of First and Second Kings, which is really just a two-volume book because it's so big of one work. And in Chronicles you got First and Second Chronicles that will cover the united monarchy of those three kings, Saul, David and Solomon, and then all the kings of just the South. Because the South is important, because Christ is



going to come through the lineage of the South because that's David's line. And in the North we got all kinds of dynasties. In the South we have one dynasty all the way through.

So did I kill enough time to get you to the passage? Did you find it? All right, good. Second Chronicles Chapter 16, Asa. Right? I think you'd say if you study Asa's life he was a godly king. He is. He's had a lot of things that he's done. Verse 11, "The Acts of Asia from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel." Well, we know what book that is. First and Second Kings is the Book of the Kings, right? It was initially one book, we call it First and Second Kings, but it covers both Judah and Israel and it intersperses them. So you got to keep your chart in your mind when you're reading First and Second Kings to make sure you know if we're talking about the king of the North or the king of the South. Verse 12, "In the thirty-ninth year of his reign," where he did a lot of stuff and trusted in God for a lot of things, he got sick. "Asa was diseased in his feet." Now, it doesn't tell us what the disease was but he does tell us it gets a lot worse, "and his disease became severe." And when you are really hurting like that with a bad disease you call out to... the doctors. Well, that's exactly what he did. And sadly, it says here, "Even in his disease he did not seek the Lord." There's a lot in that word "seek." God, I want your help. God, I trust you. God, I want you to fix this. Now, does that mean he doesn't go to the doctor? Go to the doctor. Matter of fact, we're reading a book written by a doctor. Paul's personal physician is traveling with him across the Mediterranean. And if you can afford to keep your doctor with you, keep him with you. That'd be a great thing. Nothing wrong with doctors. God's all for doctors. You doctors in the room, thank you for your service.

But you just need to know this. Just like educators. Education is something that God uses as an agency to get people to the goal that they desire and that God would desire to give them. Doctors are a tool that God uses to get to the end which he would like to grant. But if it's granted, well then this is a God thing. And we praise God for it. Let me make it as simple as we can make it. And you know this passage clearly. I can say here, I got more to read here, but you do remember that old passage? It says, "Unless the Lord builds the house." Right? I haven't seen a single house except the planet earth that God has made. Every house I've been in has an architect, it has builders, even in the jungles I've been to jungles where people have built the house. No, unless the Lord builds the house. Think about that. I don't know a single building that he built. And yet he's building houses. But who does he use? The agency of builders. "Unless the Lord builds the house," the builders, those guys actually swinging the hammers and nails, "they build in vain." Because if God doesn't want it built, if God's not going to grant it, if God's not going to want this thing to happen, then here's the deal. You're going to waste your time on it. Have you ever known people go to the doctor and it didn't work out? All the time. Do you know anybody with a good education degree in their hand and didn't get the job they wanted? Tons of them. Do you know a lot of people who went to the gym that are dead now? I bet you do.

Here's the thing. If you want the goal, which in the case of Psalm 127 is that you want a house, right? You better pray the Lord builds it through the builders, uses the agency. And the opposite is true too. Would you like to keep your house once you built it and you got a bunch of them in a city with a walled city? Right? You better put watchmen on the wall because



armies want to come up and destroy and pillage cities at night. So keep those watchmen. Keep them awake. Matter of fact, double the security team to watch. Well, unless the Lord guards the city, the next line of this verse says, "Unless Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stay awake in vain." You can have a lot of attorneys to protect your business. You can have a lot of policies in place. You can think about all the eventualities and say I've got everything considered. We're good to go. You are not good to go unless God is watching your business and your house. I suggest you put a lock on the door. But if you're trusting in the lock to keep your house from getting ripped off just talk to a cop. The lock doesn't always keep people from ripping off your house. You think, "Well, I'll put in an alarm system." You're right. No house has ever been broken into that has an alarm system. See? Do you understand what I'm saying? You can do everything you possibly can. Unless the Lord wants to protect your stuff, your life, your health, your relationships, your money in the bank, it is not going to be protected.

So you should trust in the source, not in the means. Utilize means, the book of Proverbs is all about that. Think of Jesus when he said to the apostles, are you going to follow me? I don't want you to take a backpack. I don't want to take a wallet. I don't want to take a stick. I don't want you to take a sword. Don't even take an extra pair of sandals. Just come with what you're wearing and follow me. And for three and a half years God supplied everything they needed. And at the end of the three and a half years, he said, did you lack anything? They said, no. I guess we ate three squares a day and if I needed new sandals, I got them, I picked them up somewhere. And a wallet, I didn't have a wallet but, you know, people were gracious and they provided for our needs and yeah, we didn't need anything. Great. Lesson learned. Check the box. Now let's get back to the book of Luke, Luke 22:36. He says if you don't have a cloak, you better get one, right? If you don't have a sack, you don't have a money sack], go get it. If you don't have a sword, you better sell one and get a sword because you're going to take that road to Jericho, you better make sure you have a defense mechanism. He says to take all of that. But you better remember the lesson you learned. And the lessons you learn is you don't trust in a sword and you don't trust in a cloak and you don't trust in a wallet. You trust in me.

See, this is the lesson we have to learn. And here, Asa did not learn that because he was diseased in his feet. "Yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought the help of the physicians." How did that turn out? Verse 13, "And Asa slept with his fathers." That's a euphemism for he didn't have a nice night's sleep. He died "in the 41st year of his reign. They buried him in the tomb that he had cut for himself in the city of David." Well, the physicians were trusted in, but God was not trusted in. And I know a lot of people do not trust in God. They go to school, they get a degree, they get a great job. They go to the doctor, they ask for medicine, they get the medicine, they get the surgery and they get better. I understand that. But the difference being Christians and non-Christians is we make the correlation, we understand the correlation that every good gift comes from God and therefore we're the ones who thank him. We're supposed to be about the praises of God and the praises of God are filled with the fact that the correlation between giver and gift is made and therefore, when the good thing happens, we praise God for it. That's the whole point.

Trust in God as the source of all good things. Several passages on this. Let me take you to this one, John Chapter 3. And I know you can find that one quickly so I don't have to give the background on the gospel of John. But look at this verse. Let's start in verse, I don't know, well let's look at the paragraph beginning in verse 22. John 3:22. This is after the whole Nicodemus discussion. "After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean country." Guess what? That's John the Baptist territory. That's where John the Baptist is doing his ministry. "And he remained there with them and was baptizing." Wait a minute, that's what John does. Well, John the Baptist is the baptizer in these regions. In these parts we go to John if we need a baptism. What are you doing? You're out here plowing in another man's field. What do you think you're doing? You're encroaching on our property. Don't you know you should have a noncompete clause in your head? This is not how we do business. "John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized (for John had not yet been put in prison). Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification." They're talking about why are you doing this. I know there are washings of the Old Testament in hyssop and in blood and water. But you're baptizing people in water. What is this all about? Now Jesus is doing the same thing. People are repenting, you're baptizing, this discussion about all that.

Secondly, though, verse 26, "And they came to John." Who? John's disciples, the staff of John. John's the boss and they come in and they said, Hey, "Rabbi," boss, "he was with you across the Jordan," remember when you were across to Jordan, "to whom you bore witness," you know, you said he's "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Right? He's the Messiah and all that. "Look, he's baptizing, and they're all going over to him." Look at that. Right? Our business is declining. No one's even going to listen to your sermons anymore. Because there he is, he's doing the same thing in our own backyard. And John looked at him and he said we're going to hire a marketing guy. Let's get on Instagram. We can fix this. We're not going to go out of business. No way. No, John gave a great theological truth I'd like you and me to understand. I think we give it a nod in our theology but do we really live this week like we believe this? Here it comes. Here's what John said, "A person cannot receive even one thing," not one client, not one contract, not one customer, not one baptismal candidate, he can't receive one thing "unless it is given to him from heaven." In other words, we didn't have any success in this ministry calling people to repentance and having them show that to the masses by getting baptized, we didn't have one success unless God granted it. And now we're in recession. Right? And now we got less people coming to us because they're all going to him. You know what? Then I know this. Heaven's not giving us what heaven used to be giving us. So it's just a God thing. That's a man right there who understands the correlation between the gifts and the giver. That was his job. That's what he did.

And it's a lot like Job when he said at the end of that first chapter, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away." We read it in Ecclesiastes in our DBR for our Daily Bible Reading this week. Right? Whether it's the day of prosperity or the day of calamity, you ought to stop, take a wise gander at that and know they both come from the hand of the Lord. We think it comes from a bad business plan or I didn't get the right education or I didn't get that right certification or I must not have gone on the right websites to go get the right job because I'm on the wrong



job boards. You need to understand this. I'm all about the agency. We preach a lot about wisdom and doing what God calls you to do, and there is a responsible steward. But in this sermon I'm trying to say if any of that works out it should be because your heart has been trusting in God to utilize those means to accomplish what you're praying for. We pray. We trust. We rely on God. Look at that sentence again, it is so good. "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given to him from heaven." That is so good. Jot this next to it or on your worksheet or somewhere. First Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 7. Here's what Paul said, "For who sees anything different in you?" What does he mean? As compared to him. Who sees anything different in you? And in this case, he's talking to winners, to people with big portfolios. Hey, who sees anything different in you? You winner and opposed to him, mediocre and that loser over there, who sees any difference in you. Right? "What do you have," winners, "that you did not receive? And if you've received it," if it's been a gift from God, "why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" I got an answer for that because I worked hard at it. Hold that thought.

I'm supposed to not think like that and yet he's saying, why do you boast like it's your big deal? Well, because I planned it. Go back in your mind to James Chapter 4 verse 15. You got a business plan to go to this city, do such and such, conduct business there and come back, make a profit. It'll be awesome. No, you ought to be praying, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." You ought to start there with a full dependence on God. And you know when that's really, really hard. Just like this passage, it's really, really hard when you're winning, when you're doing well. And most of us are doing pretty well here compared to the rest of the world. And you may not be culturally doing well, you may not be in the top 1% of the people in our church. Right? 99% of you aren't. And I realize you might say, well, I could do better, I wish I were doing better, I'm praying to do better, but whatever, right? I don't want to be ambitious to get rich. That's not the point. But the point here is when you do do well you start to get lulled into a position of not seeing the correlation between the giver and the gift.

One passage on this and this should drive this home completely. Turn with me to the book of Deuteronomy. Go back to Deuteronomy Chapter 8, drop down to verse 11. Deuteronomy Chapter 8 verse 11. Remember in Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy means the second giving of the law. Moses is giving the law and reiterating the law and fleshing out the law in the last chapter of his life before they go in and take the land. They're going to take Canaan, flowing with milk and honey. Great pasture, good soil, good climate, it is perfect. Matter of fact, it has the same climate as here in Southern California. So we can sit back and say we know what good climate is about. That's exactly what was going on there in that part of the world. And it was lush and it was green and it was good and it was awesome. And here's what Moses said, "Take care lest you forget the Lord." Now, just remember why they were so dependent on the Lord because they came out of slavery because God did a miracle, not because they somehow crafted some strategic plan to leave slavery. They got out because God opened up a whole bunch of water for them to walk through and then slammed down on the Egyptian armies. God did this. And then they went into the wilderness and they said where's the food. And there wasn't any food. And God says you just hang out, sleep at night, tomorrow morning there'll be Frosted Flakes all over the lawn and you just go out there and scoop it up and eat it. And I could live on Frosted Flakes, frankly. And I think to myself, they got tired of it. And I



maybe would, too. But the point is, I'm providing for you. You didn't have to sow, you didn't have to reap, you didn't have to need anything. I mean, here it is. I'm giving you stuff to eat.

So they remember the Lord every day because they had to go out and collect their food every day. And if you do that you won't keep "God's rules, his commandments, his statutes, which I command you today." That's what the book of Deuteronomy is about. "Lest, when you've eaten and you're full and you've built good houses," well, they don't have good houses in the wilderness, "and you live in" those good houses, "and when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and your gold multiplies and all that you have is multiplied," and you sit back in your life right now and think maybe that may be where you're at. I mean, you're not saying I'm praying every day for more provision because I got provision. I'm okay. Great. Here's the danger in that. "Then your heart will be lifted up, and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there's no water." They didn't live in walled cities. They didn't have people protecting them. They didn't have a standing army. They were vulnerable and yet God delivered them. And if you didn't have water, "he brought water out of the flinty rock." A miracle. "He fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers didn't know," and no one knew, "that he might humble you and test you," and ultimately make you fully dependent on me. Why? So that would be "good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart." Here's the real deal. Watch the pronouns. "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth." Right? That goes exactly opposite of a godly man named John the Baptist who said, I don't get anything unless God gives it. Heaven's got to authorize it for me to get a single contract, a single client. Nothing happens in my life without God giving it to me. I may work at it. I may have the means and agency to get it. I might lean in as a wise person, gleaning all the principles of Proverbs, but unless the Lord grants it, I can build all day long and it's never going to have success.

If you think that way and you'll be okay. The problem is it's hard to think that way when you have plenty in the pantry, right? When you got plenty of money in the bank. Where you stacked up months and months and months and months and months of money to where if you ended all your income today, you'd be fine for a long time. When you get to that place, unfortunately, you might think it was you who did all that. No, no, no. Verse 18, "You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the power to get wealth." You look at your own hands and you say I did this. And I think you're absolutely right. You did do that but you only did it because God granted you to do that. And if God didn't grant that then you don't get it. That's why you have to make the correlation. Clearly, the connection between the giver and the gift and the only one you should be trusting in is the God who says, I give you all these things.

Maybe one more passage before I leave this. First Timothy Chapter 4. I have no problem with you enjoying the good gifts that God gives. And maybe you can lean back in your chair for a hard day's work and say I worked hard at this. Great. You did. You were the agency and your strength and your education, your brain cells, all the agency that helped you get to a place where you are. I had a woman get on me this week that I was part of the Christian community that poo-pooed people with wealth. And I said it's not me. I mean, I know you think that that's



the way I might think, but I don't think there's any virtue in poverty. I'm not into poverty any more than I'm into sickness. Does God use sickness? Yes. Does God use poverty? Of course. Is my peace or my joy reliant on those things? It's not supposed to be. I know the secret of contentment or at least I'm supposed to. But I'd certainly rather you be healthy than sick. I'd rather you be rich than poor. Absolutely. I'm all about that. And if you actually took time to read two chapters later in First Timothy Chapter 6, he says these things are given you free to enjoy, enjoy them. That's fine, but you better not be trusting in them and you better be generous and ready to share.

But here's what you need to know. The way I know you trust in the source of your provision is whether or not you give thanks. Take a look at this text. There are people out there in the first century and these were doctrinal disputes, they were false teachers saying if you're really godly, you'll never get married, First Timothy 4 verse 3, and you shouldn't eat those foods. You shouldn't eat those foods if you're really godly. No, no, no. He says he's correcting that saying they're false teachers, "that God has created to be received with," stewardship, no, "thanksgiving." Of course, we need to be good stewards of all that God gives us, but we should be thankful. "Thanksgiving by those," I love this, "who believe and know the truth." You know what non-Christians will never do? They'll never give thanks for the gifts that God gives them. When God lets his sun rise on the evil and the good, only the good are going to give thanks. When he sends his rains on the crops of the just and the unjust, only the just will give thanks to God. Romans Chapter 1 says that the distinctive feature between Christians and non-Christians is that when you get a good gift you give thanks. And I love this because the good gifts that God gives are meant to be enjoyed and "received with thanksgiving to those who believe and know the truth." I have to think of that when you go to a nice restaurant, maybe it's a celebration, anniversary or birthday, whatever, someone invites you to someplace. You're sitting there and you're getting the best meal ever, you got the white tablecloth, you got the bread that fills you up even before you get your piece of steak that's six inches tall and it's sizzling on the plate and there's butter all around. You know what I'm talking about.

When you're having that experience, which I'll take over Taco Bell any day of the week. Right? Bring it on. And you're enjoying that, just look around the room and see if you can spot another Christian. And if you do, give him a wink and a nod and mouth these words, "This is all for us, for us because you believe and know the truth and I believe in that. All these other people, they don't even give thanks." God designed these good gifts for his own children to enjoy. And when you look around and everyone gets their steak and dives right in, no one even stops to ceremonially say let's give thanks for the meal. You do understand that God is giving you those things so that you'll make the connection. In a good gift that you get you're looking at God saying thank you. That shows that you're trusting in the source. I love this, some "who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods." No. "God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving." That's the first thing on the list and it proves where your trust is. And guess what? It's holy. I'm not going to bash this woman. She was talking about her car like it's ungodly, right? And I know some of you Christians think it's ungodly for me to have this nice car. I'm like, I don't think it's ungodly

if you have a nice car. I should have started quoting First Timothy 6, which says you need to be ready to share. I should have asked her to borrow it for the weekend, which I didn't.

But really what I want to ask is are you thankful for it? Do you know that God gives it to you? You're not boasting as though he didn't give it to you are you? Well, I worked for it. Yeah, I understand. He gives you power to earn wealth. Do you understand that? "It's made holy by," two things, "the Word of God and prayer." When you pray and you thank God, and you know that the Word of God has informed you that every good gift comes from him. From Deuteronomy to James the whole Bible is telling you if you've got a good gift, God gave it to you. You got to start there. That's really the point of this whole message. It's not the twin gods that sit on the front of the mast of the ship. It's not the gym. It's not the doctors. It's not the medicine. It's not the consultant. It's not anything else you do. Ultimately, at the end of the day unless the Lord is going to build it it's not going to be built. Unless the Lord's going to protect it, it's not going to be protected. If you understand that you need to just lean into that and say, God, I just need to see your hand, acknowledge your hand, thank you, worship you, rely on you, continue to be a worshipping, thankful person who appreciates every little thing you do for me.

Back to our passage. With this, we'll rip through this. Here it comes, verse 12. We'll do it fast is what I meant by that. Acts 28 verse 12, "Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed for three days," went down to Rhegium one day, south wind. That's nice. Second day came to Puteoli, that's fast, you're doing great, a 180 miles. From "There we found the brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome." Right? Again, I just think that's when, like, when you send one of those texts that says congratulations and it goes "BOOM," or "happy birthday" on your phone. That's what I expect here. It's like, "We came to Rome. BOOM." Look at that. Finally, you did it. You made it. After two chapters of torture, three or four chapters when you look back to the Jerusalem debacle. This is amazing. Praise God you made it. Look where you've come. Look at all you've gotten through to get here. Now, is this the end for the Apostle Paul? It's not. He's going to get released. He's going to do what some people call a fourth missionary journey. He's going to be re-imprisoned. So he's got more to come. But he's gotten to where he's gotten right here. Because of God's good hand of provision, you made it. Okay?

And so he needs to see God's good hand in this which he's going to prove that he does in this next passage, we'll get there, bottom of verse 15. But right now I just want you to see God's good hand in the first thing, which is he got where he was and God got him where he was by his good hand. Number two on your outline, you need to "See God's Hand in..." Put an ellipsis after that. Dot, dot, dot. See God's good hand in Letter "A," "...where he has brought you." Where has he brought you? Where has he brought you? Okay. I grew up in Southern California. Many may not know this, I was born in Alabama. Did you know that? Born in Alabama. Some little place. I don't even know. I was weeks old when they brought me in a Karmann Ghia across the country back to Long Beach where my dad's family had been for generations. So, yeah, I know y'all, I'm from Alabama. But God brought me in a Karmann Ghia without a car seat. We didn't even have a... what's the bag that blows up in your face called? Airbag. We didn't even have an airbag. Right? We had brown paper bags filled with



stuff. As I was laying on the back seat and in the death trap of an old Karmann Ghia and I made it all the way across to Long Beach, was raised in Long Beach, had a lot of challenges getting to where I was. I didn't think I was going to survive junior high. That's a really tough time of life for junior highers. I made it through junior high, I made it through high school amazingly, got shipped off to Chicago. I didn't want to go there but I made it through Chicago. And then I came to my first job which was in Arizona. That was my first full-time job.

In Arizona, that's where I started my married life. I was dating my wife in high school, but Carlyn and I made it to our first married stop in life in a one-bedroom apartment on Fifth Street in Tucson, Arizona. Where if you've not been to Tucson, Arizona, one thing you need to look for is the size of the cockroaches in Tucson, Arizona. They're gigantic. And they don't just crawl around on your floor. They fly. They fly and they like to fly right toward your face I found. Yes. I did not like tennis, but I had a tennis racket in the apartment because when the flying cockroach made its way under the door of our little one-bedroom apartment, I played tennis. Pieces of cockroach are probably still in that old apartment. But I'm grateful that God brought me through that to another apartment and then to another apartment and then to a tiny condo and then finally got to buy my first house a decade into my marriage. And God's brought me, I just think about where he's brought me. I live in a house about three miles from here and I praise God for it. It's worth an ungodly amount of money right now for some reason, it's just a regular track home. But you've seen the prices. Do you get those things in the mail that show you, your neighbor's house just sold for ten thousand million dollars? It's like, wow! We're going to Oklahoma, man. This is why all our friends, that's why our church constantly has a rotating door of people because they're all leaving the state to cash in, whatever. Stop thinking that way.

I'm grateful for my house. I never thought I'd have a house with a garage. I got a house with a garage. Praise God, I've filled it full of junk and I live in a house here in Southern California. I pastor this church. I mean, the first church I pastored, amazing, I can tell you stories about it. I'm glad I'm not pastoring there anymore. And then I had another stint of stuff and God's brought me here. For the last two decades, I've been preaching here in this building to you guys and this is where God's brought me. And I look back at the overused word in Christianity, the "journey," and I say, God, thank you for all those moves from some out-of-the-way place in Gadsden, Alabama. You've never even heard of Gadsden, Alabama have you? Gadsden, that's where I was born, to a place where I'm thinking, God, thank you for bringing me here. I could have died in junior high. I thought I was going to die several times a year but I'm here. I'm here. And it may not be the last stop for me. Who knows what the future holds? I don't know. But I'm grateful.

And look at where God's got you. You're sitting here. I'm talking to people in the room, plenty of people online, the radio, all the rest. But I'm looking at you guys. You guys are here. You're part of this church. Think about the church. He brought you to this church. He brought me to this church. It's a good place to be. And I think we should sit with God and say thank you. Thank you for bringing me here. Now, you may hate it by next month and leave mad at me, but I'm just telling you, let's just thank God for that quote unquote journey in getting us to where we are. Most of you go to work tomorrow morning, right? You got a job. May not be the



best job in the world. You wish you had a better job, but this is the job God's given you. He's brought you here. It's like Psalm 103, right? He looks back. The author of Psalm 103 is dead. But at that time he was very much alive and he was praising God. He says I'm "forgetting not a single one of his benefits." And he says, you "healed all my diseases." Guess what? That wasn't going to be true in the future because some disease was going to kill him in his old age. But guess what he'd say at that particular point in time, just like you should say today, God's got me to this place. You may be sick. You may have a chronic illness. You may be the next one we do a funeral for here at Compass Bible Church. I don't know. But he brought you here today. Look back and be thankful for how God has got you here.

And then this one shouldn't be hard for you. But we don't say thanks enough for this. Verse 14, "And there we found brothers and we were invited to stay with them for seven days." Verse 15, "So we came to Rome. And the brothers were there, when they heard about us, they came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us." They came and they came to be with us. "On seeing them, Paul thanked God and he took courage." I'm sure he thanked God and took courage in being in Rome. That's where God said he would be. Now he's looking at people and he's saying look at these people. The best and most precious asset you have in your life is not your house, it's not your job, it's not your car. It's the people who God puts in your life. And you better thank God for the people God puts in your life. Now, some of them you'd like to trade out. I understand that. But look at the ones who you think I am grateful that they're here.

Think of Proverbs 17:17, "A friend loves at all times." Do you have anybody like that in your life? They're for you. You may make a mistake, right? It's better than an open rebuke. Is a loving thing better than concealed hatred, right? You got people in your life, as the next line says, "And a brother is born for adversity." You got people who you know, if things went south in your life tomorrow those people would stand with you. Are you thankful for those people? Do you take courage that God has brought those people into your life? God is moving those people into your life, sub-congregation, small group, whatever. The brothers in particular, that first ring of your life, which ought to be believers in Christ and maybe they're in your household, maybe they're in your small group, in your church, maybe you got a few Christians at work, they're close friends of yours. Those are people you ought to stop and be thankful for.

Take a look at this text in Second Corinthians Chapter 7, Second Corinthians Chapter 7. You can't read Second Corinthians Chapter 7 without remembering Chapter 1. But I didn't give you the point. Let's give you a Letter "B." ...You ought to "See God's hand in Whom He Has Around You." He has handpicked people for you to be at this particular season and chapter of your life. He's put those people around you. Now, there are people that you've had around you that aren't around you anymore, but these people are around you now and there maybe people around you in the future who you don't know yet. But the people he has around you now, those brothers and sisters in Christ, thank God for them, take courage and thank God. That's the whole point of this message because God utilizes them. Now, in Second Corinthians Chapter 1 Paul says this. Now, remember this line. You probably know it. God of all comfort, who "Comforts us in all of our afflictions." Now, when you read that, you might



think of a guy on a poster, right? The God of all comfort who comforts us in all of our afflictions. You might picture him there on a rack with his hands up watching a sunset over the ocean coast. And he's like, "Oh, Lord, give me comfort." That may be a great prayer but that's not how God answers it.

The Paul who said, "We see now through a glass dimly." But you know who he sees in sharp 3D focus? A guy named Titus. Look at how it's described here in Second Corinthians Chapter 7, drop down in this passage to verse 5, "For when we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, were afflicted at every turn." Which, by the way, even if you're not afflicted right now, I do think it's good for you to imagine if you had affliction who would be the people you'd lean on? Those are people you give thanks for. Those are your friends who love at all times, that love during adversity. And some of you if you're not going through affliction, it's a lot like wealth, you don't realize that those people are planted in your life as supports for you. But he had affliction and so it was very clear for Paul. I had fighting on the outside conflict on the outside, and I had fears on the inside, fears within. "But God, who comforts the downcast." That's a reprise of Chapter 1 verses 8 and following, the God of all comfort, the God who comforts the downcast, comforted us by sitting on a rock and staring up into the sky with my hands lifted up in the air. Is that what it says? No. "He comforted us by the coming of ... Titus," an old seminary chap from Hebrew school. Nope. Think about it. How amazing is it that God used someone you would never guess would be one of Paul's best friends? Titus. You know that's a very Roman name, right? Titus the Emperor in 1770 A.D.. Right? That is amazing. He's got Titus. God, you brought a guy into my life who ended up being a great gift. I didn't even know it when I first met him. But here he is, a gift from you. You comforted me by this guy.

"And not only when he came to me but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you." He's writing to the Corinthians. Titus got good news from you. He was comforted. He brought that message to us and "he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me," I realized you were on my side, you didn't abandon your trust in me, "so I rejoice still more." It's people in your life, even people close by, those are the most important and you should be praising God but you got people far away. And even today, even they could write letters on papyrus and send them with mail carriers. Today we can do it with just a device in your pocket. And you ought to thank God for those people. When something great happens who do you contact, when there's trouble who do you ask to pray for you? Thank God for those people because God put those people there. You say thanks, God is the provider. God is doing things through them. See God's hand in those people.

One more, verse 16, verse 16, "And when we came to Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself." Now, who allowed Paul to stay by himself? Just have one Roman soldier guarding him. Who decided that? Was it the centurion? Probably. But who really allowed him to have a place by himself? Rented quarters by himself. God did, of course. Do you think Paul knew that? Yes. Do you think Luke did? Of course they knew that. The allowed was he was allowed to. How was he allowed to? God gave him that gift. How good was that gift? Look down to verse 23. We're talking about Paul here. "And when they appointed a day for Paul, they came to Paul at his lodging in great numbers. From morning until evening, he expounded to them,



testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets." All day long you now have an office. And your office is, yeah, you got a Roman soldier standing by the door, but the office you're letting people come in. You're not talking through plexiglass picking up a phone in a prison. You're sitting there at a table, you're pulling out the scrolls that they brought. You're talking about Scripture. You got Bible studies going all day long. And guess what? Rome's picking up the tab. This is great. This is great. Who gave you this? I put it this way, Letter "C," You should see "...God's Hand in the Opportunities Right Before You." Whatever opportunities you have. Maybe some good things going on in your life, whatever it might be, here's an opportunity for good. Here's an opportunity for advancement. Here's an opportunity for God's glory. Here's an opportunity for ministry. If those opportunities lie before you they're God's gifts. And did he make the most of it? Man, he made the most.

Look at the last verse of the book. Dropped down to verse 30. "He lived there," in his rented quarters for a whole, "two years at his own expense." Note the footnote. This means that it was a rented quarters. I don't think he was paying the tab on this. Right? He was not a tent maker at this point in his ministry. He's welcoming people day and night. "And he welcomed all who came to him proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness," and I love these last words of God's hand in this book, "without hindrance." That's a gift from God. What gifts has God put before you? Do you thank him for those opportunities? Maybe you have a forum. Maybe you have a platform. Maybe you have the ear of a few people. Maybe you have opportunities with children to disciple. And what are the opportunities that lie before you? Do you say, thank you, God, that I have this opportunity? I know a lot of people don't have this opportunity. I have an opportunity. I'm going to thank God for that. People who make that correlation that God is the giver not only of getting you to where you are but bringing the people alongside you that you have alongside you, and also giving you the opportunities, the forum, the place for you to do life, whatever that is. You better be thanking God for that every single day. It's those humble people who become the most fruitful servants of the Lord who really know what I have that I have not received. When John the Baptist in John Chapter 3 learned that his ministry was declining, he goes I know I don't get anything unless God gives it to me. What a godly perspective. What a humble perspective.

There's a humble man who has made a big difference in my life. He died just a couple of weeks ago. He made a big impact on my life even though I've only had one conversation with him. He was the president of my Bible school when I was shipped off to Chicago. And I knew just from listening to him he was a godly man. Even before he was the president of this Christian institution, he was the senior preaching pastor at Moody Memorial Church on the north side of downtown Chicago. And I remember listening to his sermons. I remember watching him lead and listening to the policies and dealing with issues and crises in the culture. And I found this out by experiencing it in the moment but I really have felt the weight of what I'm about to say having lived my life to this point. And that is that I realized that he was the target of a lot of criticism, a lot of criticism, as a pastor and as a president of this Christian school. And sadly, I must confess that I contributed to that. I remember as a student, as a freshman, sitting around in the dorm. We had a lounge in the middle of the dorm, our tiny



little rooms would come out and sit in the lounge and we would, you know, pontificate and we were so smart as 18-year-olds. I was brilliant. And when this man, the president, his name was Dr. Sweeting, when Dr. Sweeting made decisions or reacted to issues in the culture or preached a sermon about a passage or said whatever he said, it was easy for us to sit around with our feet up on the coffee table in the lounge and pontificate about how dumb, we'd call him George, that was his first name, how dumb George is to say that. I'm ashamed to say that that's what I did. But, you know, as a punky, you know, pencil-necked freshman at school, that's what I did.

We got used to coming into the lounge if we didn't like something at school we thought he should change that policy. George should do this. George should do that. George was dumb in doing that. We had a conversation all the time. He was the man of the ninth-floor office, you know, he was just this guy. We didn't think about all that God had done through him and none of us really knew his heart very well. Although I started to see that. By the time I was a junior there I started to recognize he's a special guy. But old habits are hard to break. I'm going to the dining hall one day, walking in the middle of the winter through the tunnels because that kept us out of the snow. And I'm coming around a blind corner, cinder blocks on both sides, as I'm about to turn the corner just as I get around the blind spot of the corner who's approaching me and his entourage but Dr. Sweeting. There he is, he always dressed dapper. He's always, you know, prim and proper he had his black suit on and his black tie. He's walking around. He's got his entourage around him. He's got his assistants and his admins and he's got his dean and they're walking down this... And, as I see him I look up kind of startled when I see him and I blurted out on my mouth, "Hey, George." (audience laughing)

Now, I was not raised like that, but frankly I was raised well enough to know, "Oh, that was so dumb." I talked a lot more about him than ever to him, this is the only conversation I ever had with him. And it wasn't much of a conversation but he did stop and his entourage kind of stopped with him. He said, "Son," he called me over to him. I was trying to get by him as fast as I could. Yikes! I just called him George. When in that day you did not do that. He said, "Son, come here." And I squared up to this very tall president of the school and I looked at him. I had my tail between my legs. He said, "Son, you will address me as Dr. Sweeting." I said, "Yes, sir." And then I scurried away into the dining hall. You know you hear that story and you might think that seems very prideful, right? No, he wasn't prideful. He cared about propriety. He learned a lot of principles about respect for leadership from the Bible. He just wanted it to be done the way it's supposed to be done. And some Junior does not refer to him as George. Now I don't know if any of his colleagues ever referred him as George. He died a couple of weeks ago and he was just days away from his hundredth birthday. Almost 100.

And when I heard news that he had died, of course, I looked up to see, you know, kind of what the news, how did it happen? I knew he was in his home. I got to tell you this, before I even tell you this last part, he wrote one of his last books, I think it was the last book he wrote was an autobiography. And I sat last year, I think it came out a year and a half ago, two years ago. I sat in my office every morning and I just read a little bit more of that one, read the whole autobiography. And as I'm reading it, I mean, I was almost led to tears to learn stuff about him I didn't know, especially now as a pastor and trying to lead a school and our little



school here. And it's like I just identified with so many parts of this. And of course, now I know how hard it is. I know what kind of, you know, target of criticism you are every single day. I know the letters you get, the emails in my case and I thought, wow, this guy's been through it. I felt such a kindred heart with this man. And I knew he was elderly. I knew he was in his 90s at that point writing this book. I remember just feeling the emotions of that. I think that this guy, man, he's been through it. I learned parts of his life I never knew, his encounter with Winston Churchill and his background overseas and how he became a pastor and how it went and his ups and downs and the trials and all the stuff he went through. And I so identified, my respect for him went through the roof. And I just said, oh man. And then I heard news just the other day that he had died.

And really reading his autobiography, reflecting on every encounter I ever had with him in the pulpit and now just one stupid encounter that I had with him in person, I read what they said was his last entry in his prayer journal. Three lines. It was the last thing he wrote before he died. It says in his journal, three lines, he said, "I yield." Right? You're 99 years old, about to have your hundredth birthday. "I yield my best and my all to be used by the Lord Jesus Christ. May I obey you clearly dear Lord in every area of my life." I'm thinking what areas of your life do you have? You're 99 years old, man? And he's sitting there thinking, "I want the totality of the Lordship of Christ to reign in my life. Help me to serve you fully, I," I love this, "here and now declare I am a full follower of Jesus Christ." I thought to myself, I am honored to be rebuked by a man like that. Right? Here is a man who I think lived his life in full and deep gratitude for the gracious provisions and opportunities and people and places that God took him. Man, he wrote that with such a tender heart of look at what God has done. This was not about him. And I thought to myself there's a man, I want to be like that. So good because he lived with the generosity of God clearly in the forefront of his mind. I hope you live that way.

Let's pray. God, may we be more like Dr. Sweeting, a man I will never call George. A man, God, I just respect him. I can't wait to maybe have my first good conversation with him in the next life. But I pray, God, that you would make more of us like him. A man who lives with a great sense of indebtedness to your grace, doing all that he did with a sense of can I be fully devoted to the Lord? Can I serve him well, he's given me his all. His Son has died on a cross for me. And then every gift that I have from every friend, every person in my family, every opportunity, every job has been a gift from you. Nothing. Nothing is experienced in our life that has not been granted to us from heaven. Make us more grateful and may it lead to a fueling of our productivity, fueling our gratitude, our worship. Do good things through us, God, as we're more and more daily grateful for what you've done for us and what you continue to do.

In Jesus name. Amen.