

Endurance and Faith

The book of Hebrews is our text, and it is a prophecy. No one knows for sure who wrote it, but the brother obviously was both apostolic and prophetic. He is speaking a prophetic word from the Lord, and a prophetic word always comes from the Lord before something is about to happen. This prophetic word was to encourage the saints to endure. We have looked at endurance which comes when we see our Lord in heaven. Many times in the Bible, even as we remember the apostle Paul at times when he was in prison, the Lord came to him at night, and he was encouraged by that as he went through the difficult time.

We have not had time to share about these saints that are being written to. We know they were Jewish believers, but one thing we know, they were truly going through very difficult times. I doubt that any one of us has gone through such times as they went through. Those saints had been standing with the Lord even though they had been through a lot. We know from reading that in the beginning when they were first enlightened, they had a certain amount of endurance because they had endured a lot of persecution. But endurance needs to be stretched, especially as they waited for the Lord to fulfill His deeper purposes. And so this is an encouragement to us. As the brothers considered the conference this year, they felt like this was a word for all of us which means the Lord is about to do something, and we need to be those who have an enduring faith.

After the grave warning that was given to those who had tasted of the things of God and had fallen back, he says in Hebrews 6:10-12: *"For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end. So that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and endurance inherit the promises."*

The theme verse for our message is that phrase: "Those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Faith needs endurance.

Hebrews 10:36-39: "For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. (This is a promise.) But my righteous one shall live by faith; (You have the promise He will come and will not delay. What do we do about it?) But my righteous one shall live by faith; (as we are waiting in this little while.) And if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving [possessing] of the soul." Can you keep your soul by faith through difficult times, keep it steady and preserve your soul?

Hebrews 12:18-24: "For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no

further word be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I am full of fear and trembling.' But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel."

Let's have a word of prayer:

Lord, we come to this last time of ministry together, and we know there is so much more that could be said in this whole matter. We pray that You will help us to gain in our understanding Your deep desire for us to continue on with endurance in faith, hope and love. We thank You for these graces given to us and for their power in the church of Jesus Christ. We have been encouraged by the love of the saints, by that blessed hope that we share together, and now we pray for that enduring faith that can encourage one another as we run the race and wait for Your return. Help us now as we share the word together, and by the Holy Spirit entrust and teach us we pray. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.

Faith Connects Us with the Living God

Faith is a gift of God, and it is a mystery. Lance always used to say, and when I first heard him say it in 1974, it stuck with me: "Faith is that which connects us with the living God." I can say amen to that because back in April 1, 1964, I walked into my father-in-law's office. I was going to college at the time and working part time in his business. After hearing testimonies and people witnessing to me for a long time, I said to him: "You know, if I were interested in getting saved and being a Christian, what should I do?" My father-in-law, a godly man who loved the Lord, wrote down in his own hand Romans 10:9-10: "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

He gave me those two Scripture verses on a piece of paper with his terrible handwriting, but I could still read it. On that very night April 1, 1964 I got on my knees and prayed and confessed with my mouth with tears in my eyes that Jesus Christ is Lord, and I made a connection. Who can explain that? Suddenly I was connected to God in a nanosecond. God received me and saved me.

And as they did every year in that little Baptist Church, they were having a revival meeting. It had gone on all week long with no results. Friday night, this poor old preacher was all burned out and could hardly talk. He gave the final invitation, and I waddled down to the front and talked to the preacher, took his hand and said, "I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior." And the whole place went crazy. Now one of the things that you do not know as an unbeliever is that everybody in the place had been praying for me all year long. That was ten months of travail they had been praying for me. Of course when I got

saved, they just erupted and considered it the most glorious evangelistic meeting they ever had. One sorry guy got saved.

Faith Convicts Us of Things not Seen

Who can explain that faith connection? Hebrews 11 gives us this. It is not really a definition, but it tells us something about faith. “Now faith is the substance hoped for.” There are some things that arise in us and we hope, but suddenly it goes beyond hope and we see that hope is substantiated. We see it almost materialize, although faith does not see. We walk by faith and not by sight. But somehow that which we hope for seems so real to us that we can hang our hat on it. Somehow Abraham believed when God said, “You are going to have a child,” and he hung on to that thing for several decades before it came about. It is the conviction of things not seen which makes us look like such fools until it turns out that it was what we thought. It is a conviction of things unseen.

Hebrews 11 is the great faith chapter. It says, “By it men of old gained their testimony.” Isn’t that wonderful? As Jeremy would put it, that was their legacy; they believed and it turned out to be true. It goes on to say, “You cannot please God except by faith.” If anyone would please God you must believe that He is and He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Faith is so important in our lives, and we all know this even though it is a great mystery. Faith connects us to the living God—suddenly.

A Faith that Endures

Once there is that connection of faith, the writer of Hebrews is now burdened that we find a faith that endures—not a faith that gives up. How many of you have the faith that lasts two seconds like the man who says, “I believe, help my unbelief”? The Lord wants to stretch that faith.

So it is no surprise that in James 1:3 it says, “Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.” I believe; now it gets tested with time. And if I keep on believing and then it comes to pass, my faith is no longer a nanosecond connection, but it is a connection that endures through a period of time until it is answered. We need that kind of enduring faith. One old famous preacher here in the United States always used to say, “Faith grows between the time you think God should answer your prayer and the time He does.” It is never quite your timing. You want the quick answer, and sometimes God stretches that out and tests your faith.

In Hebrews 6:12 it says, “Those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” We are not going to go through the list in Hebrews 11 because you have all been through it before, but this is the list of those who have the legacy of faith. Faith is mentioned thirty-one times; so the emphasis of this prophetic and apostolic writer is that we need enduring faith, and he names twelve people. Then he names a few more later on at the end. Then he names some faithful actions of ones without giving names. There are probably twenty people in this chapter that he talks about faith. Each one had a different experience in their encounter with God, but there are three things in common with this enduring faith.

The Source of Enduring Faith is a Connection with Heaven

The first thing is that their source of enduring faith was often that connection with heaven. We see Abraham walking under the sun in Ur of the Chaldeans and suddenly he sees the glory of God. In that moment, his life was changed forever. That vision of the God of glory set him out on a sojourn that took him up to Haran, down into Canaan, down to Egypt, and all around. All during that time something about that touch of heaven kept him going even though every time Sarah asked: "Where are we going now?" He would say, "I do not know where we are going, but I know Who I am going with." And He would go from place to place. He learned a lot of lessons, he made a lot of mistakes, and God blessed him, and the promises that God made with him came to pass. He became rich, but the funny thing is that the richer he got, the less he cared for riches because the testimony of his life at the end was this: "When I was in the Ur of the Chaldeans I saw the God of glory, and He has blessed me with a child and so much more. You ask me what I am looking for now? I am looking for a city whose Architect and Builder is God. I am looking for a heavenly city." Isn't that something! He got touched by heaven and it never left him, and it enabled him to endure. When we see these guys, we see their faith that saw something in heaven and it caused endurance in their lives.

Enduring Faith Has to be Tested

The second thing having to do with that enduring faith is that most of the twelve witnesses mentioned in Hebrews 11, all with different stories, had their faith tested. Do we want our faith to grow to gain endurance? It comes through testing. Abraham and Sarah come to the forefront, and they are waiting for a child. They were tested, but of course, Abraham's main test was after he had his child, and the Lord said, "Give him up to me as an offering." Abraham believed God and went ahead in obedience, and that is why God said, "Abraham, you are My friend. Your faith endured the test. Ask Me anything; I will give you anything you want because you are My friend." He was tested. Moses also had a destiny in his heart to be a deliverer of the Hebrew children, but he had to wait forty years for that to take place. He waited, and he waited, and he kept waiting, and his faith grew. So we see that God tests our faith sometimes. He tells us something, and we pray and say, "Lord, I claim this promise which You have given me, and then nothing immediately happens." And this was the case in many of the lives we find in Hebrews 11.

The Reward of Enduring Faith

The third aspect we find of faith is that there always seemed to be a reward. What was the reward? Do we serve God so we can get rewards? "Lord, tell me what to do; I need some more rewards. The ones You have given me are not enough; I need some more." The reward, as it says in Hebrews many times, is that He will do what He has promised He will do. That is our reward. Abraham's was, "In blessing, I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply; that is My promise." Do you believe it? It is the promises that the Lord gives us that are our reward. You remember what it says of Moses in Hebrews 11:26: "He considered the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures

of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.” What was Moses’ reward? I suppose that the Lord would be with him as he delivered these children out of Egypt. Many of these people endured looking to the promise. This was their reward; they looked to the promise. And it says in Hebrews 11 that some of them died in faith without receiving the promises, but having seen them they welcomed them from a distance. It is possible that the Lord will give you a promise, and it will not be fulfilled in your lifetime, but it will be fulfilled, and the Lord will give us, by His grace and mercy, perhaps a vision of that promise. We see it from afar. And many of these in the Old Testament saw the promises but they could not lay hold of them. In fact the Lord was waiting for another time to fulfill these things.

So these are our lessons of faith. And these Hebrew Christians were really going through it, and they needed a faith that endured.

I want to pose this question: Why is the prophet speaking to these Hebrew Christians with such urgency, encouraging them to an enduring faith? Why is he doing this? We saw the first picture of the house of God going through the wilderness and how he encouraged them: “Put your complete trust in Jesus in your heavenly calling. Put your boast and your confidence in Jesus your Apostle and High Priest. He is the one who is going to get the house of God into the Promised Land.”

Last night, we had a second picture given to us, and it was that of discipline. The picture is of ones running the race with endurance. We all know that a race takes some discipline. If you are going to run the race it is going to take some discipline in order to fulfill the race, so here is what you need to do. Fix your eyes on the goal which is Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. Fix your eyes on Him when you are running the race and going through discipline. And as you are going on, know that the Father will discipline you, and through circumstances He will bring you into sonship.

So Paul could say, “No matter where you start from, the Lord will show that He is true to Romans 8:28.” He will make everything in your life, all your circumstances work together for good to conform you into the image of His beloved Son. When we talk about the Father being the One who disciplines us, we are talking about Somebody who has the use of history, circumstances, earthquakes, a blessed year of good crops. Our God can use all these things to discipline our lives. So we are talking about a Father who really knows just what we need. How do we know that? Because the writer calls Him the Father of spirits. He is talking about fathers disciplining their children. It says your fathers discipline you as seems best to them. They look at your body; they see what you can endure; they look at your soul and say, “You need to do that. We need to correct that.” The Father of spirits knows everything about you, the real you. He knows exactly how to discipline us and bring us into sonship. So as we are running the race there are entanglements we have to get rid of; we have to be stripped of them. We have to find victory over besetting sins, and the Father disciplines us as we are in this race.

The Shaking that was Coming to the Jewish Christians

Now the urgency of the prophet in his encouragement has to do with something bigger. When we talk about discipline, when we talk about faith, when we talk about endurance, of course we realize that this is on a personal basis. Even when we talk about overcoming, we do not have an overcoming group. You have to overcome as an individual; you must be faithful to the Lord, and you must stand in the victory of the blood of Jesus Christ. Nobody else can do it for you. So this matter of endurance is an individual matter, but there is something larger going on here. The prophet knows, he has a sense in his spirit that something is about to happen.

Therefore he gives this prophesy in Hebrews 12:25-28: "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.' This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show grace, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe."

The prophet senses something large that is about to happen. The whole basis and foundation of these Jewish Christians' lives is about to be stripped away. We believe that this letter was written just before the great destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and the shakings were already visible. Things were about to be stripped away, and so a warning is given to them from heaven to take the grace and be faithful as you go through the difficult times. The Jews are no different from any other people. We love to settle down where we are, and we do not like being thrown up in the air and moved somewhere else and have to start all over again. How many of you like to start all over again?

We know from the story, even when the Jews left Egypt, some of them wanted to go back because they were comfortable being slaves; they were used to Egypt, and they liked what they ate there. Then they got into the Promised Land, and they had struggles there being what they were supposed to be in the Promised Land. But when they went away into captivity, they had trouble there. And when they were called to go back to the Promised Land, they were now comfortable in captivity. That is the way we are.

But our Father was about to move and end an epoch of these Jewish believers. They were going to go through something that would tear everything away that previously was their foundation, until they were left only with Jesus Christ. They were in some sense living between two worlds. They were not only Jews, they were also Christians, and they knew that Jesus was the Messiah, and they had been saved and enlightened. But maybe they were still meeting in the synagogue, or if they were still in Jerusalem, they were going to the temple and maybe offering sacrifices. Wait a minute, Jesus is your sacrifice. But for the sake of community they continued to join in the feasts and the fast days, so they were

sort of in between two worlds. This was to their liking; this is what they tried to do despite the fact that they believed Jesus is the Messiah, and they were persecuted intensely. Nevertheless, they tried to balance between the world and their faith, and our God would have no part of it. He was going to tear those props away after warning them that Jesus superseded anything in the Jewish religious scene. The writer realized that this was about to happen, that these things were going to be stripped away, and they were going to be left without anything except Jesus Christ.

The Lord Strips Everything to Restore to His Original Purpose

That sounds like a terrible thing, except to you and me, until we go through it and are stripped down to Jesus Christ as our total sufficiency because we have nothing else. This is the kind of trauma they were about to go through. My question would be this: Why would the Lord God destroy Jerusalem, the holy city? Why would He allow it to be destroyed by the Romans of all people? Why would He strip all of those things out of Judaism? There would be no more sacrifices, no more altars, no more priesthods, no more feasts that you had to go to Jerusalem for, and no more Jerusalem. God is about to pull the rug out from underneath the whole thing. Why would He do this to His chosen people? That is the hardest thing to understand. These were Christians and they were Jews; they were His chosen people. Why would He do something so catastrophic as to allow Jerusalem, the whole center of their culture, beliefs, and customs, be torn apart? Why would God do it?

God does this to bring that whole epoch to an end. It is to bring things back to their original purpose. God will tear down any foundation that has gotten in the way of reality—until all that is left is reality again. Therefore, sometimes in an epoch-changing moment, all the foundation of those things that we have been comfortable with as believers gets pulled out from under us so that we have to start with Jesus Christ and Him alone as our all-sufficiency. That sounds like a traumatic experience, but that is exactly where we need to be; the Lord wants to recover His original purpose.

So here is what the prophet reveals. He gives them one more scene from the heavenly point of view. First there was the walk through the wilderness, then running the race, now he brings them to one last scene so that they can get the point. He puts them between two mountains. It was sort of like looking at Sodom being destroyed; for the Jews would have to turn and watch Jerusalem being destroyed. He talks about the mountain called Mount Sinai. It is the mountain that the Jews depended upon. It is where their covenant came from. It is where the tabernacle came from. It is what they were trusting in all of this time. Yet even with this covenant that they were under and had gotten accustomed to, the writer says, “When you look back and see what was really involved in it, there was a sound of darkness, of clouds, of lightening, of thunder, of trumpets, and a voice that shook from heaven in such a way that people said, “Please, tell God to stop speaking.” Even Moses himself was terrified when he heard what was going on. Now look; that is your life that is being destroyed and taken to the ground. Jerusalem is no more. Now turn

and look the other way; you are at Mount Zion. Wait a minute, Mount Zion is Jerusalem. No, Jerusalem is destroyed to restore Mount Zion.

Coming to Mount Zion

As you turn from that mountain, you are come to Mount Zion right now. If the Lord can strip away all those things that we have set up until we are dependent on Jesus Christ alone, we lose all that stuff, and we gain Mount Zion. You are come to Mount Zion which is a heavenly vision. The physical place of Jerusalem is destroyed, but you have discovered Mount Zion.

What is Mount Zion? Well, physically it was the focal, central point of the kingdom of Israel, of David's kingdom. The first place he took as king was Mount Zion. He took it for his city, and when he took that mount, that outcropping of rock, he said, "I am taking this for God. Let's go and get the ark and bring it in. As soon as he brought God's ark, which is God's throne, into Mount Zion, immediately David began to win all his wars because God's throne was in Zion and David was sitting on the throne of God. He was not sitting in the tabernacle on the ark, but he was sitting on the throne, and God was blessing him. David's throne became the center for all that was done in the kingdom. Eventually they brought worship in. David brought in all the singers before they even built the temple and had worship in Zion. How the people loved Zion! It was beautiful and it was full of God. Whenever you touched Zion, you touched life, authority, government, righteousness, worship and holiness. Every time they went to Mount Zion they were blessed. When you look in the book of Psalms, it is full of psalms that bless the fact that we can go up to Zion. How wonderful it is for brethren to dwell together in Zion, the center of God's government, the center of God's kingdom.

Recovering the Spiritual Reality

They turned from what they had lost and they discovered what they had gained. The Lord always wants to recover the spiritual reality. I know that the Jews had a lot of love for the temple, for the singers, for the choirs, for the sacrifices, for the feasts, and I am not going to say that God hates those things. However, if they cannot be done in reality, God has no use for them. He wants a people who live in the spiritual reality of Mount Zion.

As Christians we are looking at something larger than just the individual because Mount Zion is talking about a corporate testimony that testifies to the fullness of Jesus Christ. Mount Zion is Jesus Christ in fullness. It is Him as Priest in the holy place; it is Him as Lord and King. And this is the reality that the Lord wants to recover and is willing to bring Jerusalem to the ground if that is what it takes to gain it. It is a corporate thing.

Hebrews 12:22 says, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God." Think about this: "the city of the living God." I know that everyone assembles in some place. How about a place where the living God is present? They testify in the psalms that when you walk into Zion, you sense the very presence of God because the Shekinah glory is there. It was the city of the living God. And as great as Hebron was or Bethlehem

or any other city in Judah, there was no city like Zion because God's presence was there. It was the city of the living God. God will shake any church, any assembly, any denomination, any work in such a way that He can get reality there, His living presence. That is Zion.

These Hebrew Christians lost everything. Those who were living in Jerusalem had to flee; many of them went to Pella. When they had to flee, they lost everything, but as they turned, they gained everything. Their loss was their gain because they came to the city of the living God, and that city was different from the one they were used to. If they were good Jewish Christians, they probably did not fellowship with the Gentiles too much; but Mount Zion, the city of the living God, involves all of God's children—Gentiles and Jews. Therefore, they were going to have to learn a new way of life; no longer did the synagogues exist and no longer would they just be hanging out with the Jews. The city of the living God is too precious for that. He throws us all in there together, Jews and Gentiles, and says, "Now I can be alive here." What a wonderful reality they came to as soon as they were stripped away from those other things.

The Church in Reality

What else is involved here? It says, "They came to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Now wait a minute. They were not at the heavenly Jerusalem yet. The Jerusalem in heaven had yet to come down to earth. But this Zion they were experiencing I am going to call 'the church in reality' because they had a correspondence with the new Jerusalem. There was an open heaven between this living city and the eternal city. Things that were being done were being built into that eternal city. Of course, that is something that comes by faith. They were living in it now as they lived in that heavenly Jerusalem.

Then it says, "... and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly." A lot of scholars say, "This is talking about thousands of angels in festal array." You remember how the Jews had to let go of those angels because Jesus is above them. They turned to Mount Zion, and there are angels who are worshipping Jesus in the center of the mountain. So you do not lose anything, but you gain the reality. The angels were ministering and not being worshipped. Jesus is in the center of Mount Zion. He is the One to be worshipped. They are still angels, but the reality is that it is all coordinated in Zion. The angels went out to minister according to the governing decision of Jesus from Mount Zion.

It goes on to say, "... and to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." This firstborn does not mean that they are born again. These are saints who have gained their inheritance. He is talking about the inheritance of the firstborn. In other words, these are saints who are dwelling in Zion, who are enrolled in heaven and their inheritance is there. Thus, they are saints who really love the kingdom, love the Lord and serve the Lord.

"And to God, the judge of all." Now we might say that has to be tough. Here is God the judge of all. It is not talking about going to Mount Zion and then He judges you. It

means that you have come to Zion where God sends His judgment out from Zion, and you are part of the throne, part of the governing of what is going on in Mount Zion. Is it possible even in this lifetime to be part of Mount Zion's government? Or is that just something for another world? Is there such a way that we can be united to the will of God and under the will of God so that we can hear and pray prayers according to the will of God and see God do His judging, do His works according to His will while we are here on this earth? Here in this wonderful place God is the judge of all.

"And to the spirits of the righteous made perfect." These are the witnesses who have gone on before. They are not in their bodies; they are waiting for the first resurrection. They are as spirits alive in Mount Zion as witnesses to encourage us on.

Jesus is the Mediator of the New Covenant

Now we come to the central theme. Mount Zion at the center has Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. Look at that old Mount Sinai and how terrified people were. They smelled smoke and fire and a loud voice. Now look at Mount Zion. You are living with Jesus the Mediator of the better covenant. God comes within you; He speaks His law within you; He forgives your sins and remembers them no more. You know the essential parts of this better covenant, but Jesus is there as the Mediator, mediating this new covenant in which you exist. Finally, you are under His precious blood, a blood that speaks of your covering, of your forgiveness, of your safety. You have come to Mount Zion.

The prophet felt that this time was going to come, and certainly the time of Jerusalem's destruction came; but this is something that can even be applied to us. We begin to discover Mount Zion as we are stripped away from things that we trusted in for so long. Right up to the end, the Lord wants to recover the original purpose of our being called out as the ecclesia, the church, the called-out ones. He is always working to recover His original intention, His original purpose for why we gather together. He wants the church to be recovered to be a living assembly where the living God is evident, where the Lord Jesus is mediating His covenant, where there is justice, judgment, life and people who have their inheritance. This is the purpose of all that stripping work that God may do in our lives. Whatever traumatic events happen in our lives, behind it there is a recovery back to the original purpose which means to stand in the Lord Jesus Christ, Mount Zion. It is the fullness of Christ in all of His offices, in all of His administration. It is to know Jesus as our full mountain, as it were. It is so wonderful to be drawn into His holy worship at Mount Zion where they worship.

When I got saved, I ended up playing the guitar and leading worship services of what I would call the charismatic style. I would play the guitar, we would sing, and everybody would throw their arms up in the air, and I was singing the songs. I was used to serving God in that way. Of course, there was some blessing. But I will never forget the day that I walked into a place that had spirit-led worship, not human worship, even good charismatic human-worship. I was only in there for a couple of weeks before I felt the Lord say to me: "Dana, why don't you put down your guitar and stop leading people all

the time and let My Spirit lead people.” Now that is quite a unique concept in most places. They totally reject that. “Are you crazy! That would cause chaos. If you just let anyone ask for any song or pray any prayer, it would just be chaotic. No, we have to lead from the front.” But when you touch spirit-led worship, it spoils you for anything less. Of course, sometimes when we let everybody sing and pray whatever they want, we do have chaos unfortunately. Sometimes people ask for their favorite songs, some people have specific axes to grind, so things can go wrong without the authority of the Holy Spirit. But if you taste Zion in worship, it spoils you. And sometimes I would go back to the charismatic worship and it was not quite as charismatic as I thought; a little bit more engine-driven by human designs.

Outside the Camp

If we are going to meet at Mount Zion, some of these things have to be stripped away. One of the wonderful things that the book of Hebrews lets us know is this. Sometimes in order to really live before the Lord, He asks us to meet Him outside the camp. And when we meet Him outside the camp, we discover Mount Zion. This is taken from Hebrews 13:12-13: “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.”

Outside the camp. The Jews knew exactly where their camp was; but we have many camps today, and those camps obscure the reality of Mount Zion. Sometimes the Lord would have us go outside the camp. What happens to somebody if they have been used to the camp and suddenly they are led outside the camp and they discover Jesus? It is hard to explain.

John Wesley was a good Anglican minister and missionary. He faithfully served God to the best of his ability. But when he fell in among the Moravians, he touched Mount Zion outside the camp. Not only did he stay in that little church of Moravians in London, but after being saved He went immediately to Hernhut in Germany and spent a few months with them during the summer. In 1735, as a newly saved guy and being with those Moravians, he said, “This is heaven on earth; this is the church; this is the reality; this is what the church is like in the Bible.” He just could not believe it. He had spent all those years as an Anglican minister, but he touched something outside the camp of the reality.

We know the story in the nineteenth century of those dear brethren who began meeting in various places around the Lord Jesus, breaking bread on Sunday, studying the Bible. The Brethren had many of these groups who had a weeknight Bible reading. That is what they called it. Some of the saints who came alive as they met with the Brethren on Mount Zion were rich people with some nobility. In England there are some nobles, Lord So and so, Duke So and so. Some of these men and women of money and means and positions and titles had gotten saved, and they opened their fancy homes. But every Tuesday night at Lord So and so’s fancy home, they had a Bible reading. Now the Brethren, who were tinkers and cobblers and regular folks, would go there, and the lord and lady

would fix a nice afternoon tea. After the tea they would sit down, and a couple of men would lead the Bible study with some initial thoughts. There was an incident that happened in which one of the rectors, a reverend from the Anglican Church, went to one of the Bible readings. He went only once, but afterwards he left his position as clergy and the Anglican Church because he said, "This is real. This is the real thing. I met Jesus in that Bible study tonight." Mount Zion is outside of the camp, and if people get a taste of that, although there is a price to be paid in bearing His reproach, they are willing to pay that price.

Our dear brother Lance had so many stories such as this one. When he was a teenager, along with other teenagers in London, they were meeting together and having evangelistic meetings and prayer meetings. Eventually, the churches in the city did not like what they were doing, and they had to decide whether to go or stay in the church they were in. It is a very difficult thing if your parents are going to a church and the Lord is leading you out; there is a lot of misunderstanding. Lance was part of a very famous church in Richmond, Surry, and when he and his sister decided to leave, it caused a real commotion. Finally, they left, leaving everything behind. They started meeting, breaking bread and learning about the Lord together. It was twenty years later that I visited the place on Halford road in England where Lance and these brethren had been meeting. That was the place when I saw the reality of Jesus Christ among His people; I had found home. I left the denomination, my ministry and the whole thing because I saw reality outside the camp. It is such a precious thing.

The Lord is always looking for the original purpose that He has intended for His Zion, for Christ in fullness; therefore, these opportunities come. It should not surprise us how much the Lord is willing to shake things apart to find the reality of Mount Zion.

Many years ago in Richmond, VA, God shook up a lot of brothers and sisters who left their churches, some left their Christian ministries to join together in an assembly outside the camp. Out of this little group and the burden that developed came this Christian Family Conference. I remember the first one I went to. I had been a Baptist minister and had spoken at conventions of maybe a couple thousand people in Montreat, NC where the Baptist Convention held their annual meetings. I will never forget the first time I came to this conference which was in Ashland at Randolph Macon College. When I walked into that place, they were being led by the Spirit in worship. Our brother Stephen and brother Lance spoke, and I thought I was in heaven because there was no axe to grind. Every time I used to have to speak as a Baptist minister there was always something about money in there somewhere. It is just the way it is. "While they have a tear in their eye, let's take up a collection." There was always something.

In a larger way in that first Christian Family Conference I touched Mount Zion. I could not sleep at night as the message went on and on in my head. It was so full of the presence of God; it was absolutely precious. How could I go back into the camp? So I left the camp, and I tore up my 'reverend paper.' I had been Reverend Dana Congdon, but no more! So

I started the wonderful ministry of driving the school bus. I joined a fellowship and learned what it means to live in Mount Zion. There was stripping that had to go on in my life. You can take the Baptist minister out of the Baptist Church but to take the Baptist out of a guy is a whole other story. I will not go into my story, but sometimes it takes that stripping and that final moment when you stop playing between two worlds, and you leave the camp and discover Mount Zion. God's purpose is not just for our endurance by faith on an individual basis; He is up to something larger. One day that Mount Zion will meet in Revelation 14 on Mount Zion in heaven. We heard that story today. Mount Zion in heaven is where the overcomers will be, but dwelling here in Mount Zion takes endurance of faith. We have to be willing to sacrifice and allow the Holy Spirit to work endurance into us.

The Epoch Changing Event that is Coming

The fact that the burden this week has been to endure and the messages we have heard from our brother Stephen during the mornings to me is an indication that something is about to happen. So I want to say do not hold on to stuff that is shakeable because it will be shaken. I do not know what is going to happen. It may be the rapture; it could be tribulation; it could be a national disaster. I do not know what is going to happen, but when the Lord speaks in this kind of way I get this feeling that something is about to happen and we should be prepared to have grace to serve God as we are going through this epoch changing episode. So we need to have faith. The Lord will do what He wants to do. Even now He is beginning to shake things and warning us. So I just want to appeal to you. If you want to have this endurance, faith, discipleship and this life, do you realize you have come to Mount Zion? Is Mount Zion real to you? There is so much we could say theoretically about it, but I do not really want to go there. You will know if you have touched Mount Zion.

We walk by faith and not by sight, and even on Mount Zion, as you and I fellowship together, it does not mean that every moment is a heavenly experience. We walk by faith and not by sight. But we will know by the shaking and the stripping and the need for repentance, and the work of discipline in our lives that the Lord is doing something. On Mount Zion He is doing and governing there. It is better to be governed by the Lord even under discipline than to be somewhere where there is no discipline at all. It may be nice and easy over there on the east side of the Jordan, but the Lord does not have Mount Zion. The Lord will shake in order to recover His original intention for us. May we find ourselves before the Lord, worshipping Him, gathered with saints who are pursuing their inheritance, all of us looking to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. You are come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God. May that be our experience as a result of coming here.

Let's pray:

Lord, You say that You will once again shake not only the earth but the heavens and that everything that is shakeable, unnecessary will be stripped away in order that Jesus

may be our all-sufficiency and all-supply and that He will be Head and Lord and King and Priest and everything. The fullness of Christ is what You desire. Lord, we know if it is the final shaking, where the ground will shake and the rapture will take place, we want to be ready for that. But if there is any other shaking going on in our lives, we want to hold on to Jesus. We want to learn how to walk through the wilderness looking to Jesus. We want to learn how to be disciplined by running the race looking to Jesus. We want to know how to go through the shaking holding to Jesus on Mount Zion. Teach us these lessons in these days. We thank You for warning us and preparing us. Help us to be faithful. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.