

The Everlasting Father: “Trust Me”

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 December 2016

Preacher: Eric Scott

- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. My name is Eric. I'm one of the guys here on staff at Watermark. How many of you have seen the new Star Wars? Less than I expected.
- If you're a guy, we're having a guy's night to go see it Tuesday night. Talk to me about details afterwards. But when I was a kid, I loved Star Wars. My friends loved Star Wars. And there's this one scene where I think it's Han Solo tells someone to shut the professor off in reference to C-3PO.
- C-3PO is just spouting out all these facts and numbers. And Han Solo gets annoyed and he says, shut the professor off. And some of my friends really loved that line because they thought that I was a little bit too much like C-3PO.
- So whenever I would start sharing fun facts with them that they didn't think were so fun, they'd just say, somebody shut the professor off. And they would try and get me to stop sharing fun facts.
- But I enjoy sharing fun facts and weird things like history. And I want to give you a little bit of historical background this morning of the passage that we're looking at so that as we look at the passage, it can make a little bit more sense to you.
- [1 : 0 9] So I have a map to help me do that. Now this is a map of the ancient Near Eastern world where I'd say probably 95% of the Bible happens within this map.
- You're looking at modern day Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, a little bit of Turkey. And this is what we're looking at in the passage today.
- This darker area was the extent of the Assyrian Empire at their greatest expanse, but they weren't quite this big at this time. And over on the right-hand side of the screen, that red circle right there, is sort of the heart of the Assyrian Empire.
- And over on the left-hand side, that blue circle is Egypt. And as with big world empires, they wanted to trade with people who were a little bit far away from them.
- The people in Assyria wanted goods that were made in Egypt. And so they wanted to go from the red circle to the blue circle. And it would seem the easiest way to do that is a straight line, right?
- [2 : 1 0] The shortest distance between two places is a straight line. There's a problem with taking a straight line. And that yellow circle is a desert. And so if you try to take the straight line through there, you're going to burn up and get dehydrated and die.
- So what you need to do to get from Assyria over to Egypt, or anywhere in the ancient Near East to Egypt, is you need to take a path that follows the rivers. They've got the Tigris there, the Euphrates there, and then over in Israel, you've got the Jordan.
- And so you follow the rivers so that you have constant supply of fresh water along the way so that you don't die during your journey. And what that means is that this little stretch of land in Israel, where Israel exists, is a very, very valuable and strategic piece of land for many reasons.

One, all of the trade routes between Egypt and the rest of the known world go through this little stretch of land in Israel. If you own this stretch of land, you can tax all the traders and make loads of money.

Also, from a military perspective, any troop movement between Europe and Asia on land that's trying to get to Africa, or from Africa trying to get out, needs to go through you.

[3 : 30] And so if you own this little stretch of land, you have amazing power economically, militarily. It's kind of like the South China Sea of our day. And Assyria is like the China of that South China Sea.

And so what you have leading up to this passage is Assyria over here on the right. They're like the China. We can do what we want because we control this area.

And then you've got the green countries are Israel and Syria, not to be confused with Assyria. And the yellow one is Judah, which is the southern couple tribes of Israel that broke off from the rest of the nation.

And Assyria said, we want to control this strip of land because it will give us power, it will give us control, it will let us collect taxes instead of paying taxes.

It will give us amazing versatility when it comes to military movements. This is an important place. And they're setting their sights on this strip of land. And these little guys over here say, uh-oh, we're in trouble.

[4 : 33] We need to band together so that we can have a fighting chance of standing up to these guys. So what happens is these green countries, Israel and Syria, get together and form an alliance.

Say, we're going to fight together against Assyria. We're going to try and hold them off the best we can. Judah, come join us. Help us out. And the king of Judah, a guy named Ahaz, says, I don't want to help you out.

I don't know if it was because he just saw, like, this is a losing effort, there's no chance that we're going to survive this, or if he was just like, I don't like these guys, I don't want to be on their side.

Either way, he's not interested. And so what Israel and Syria say is, if you don't join our alliance, we're going to come in and destroy your country, A, to encourage you to join us, and B, because we don't want you coming and attacking us from behind as we're trying to fight off this big enemy from the other side.

And since Judah doesn't join their alliance, Israel and Syria sweep in and start wiping out the nation of Judah. They're killing tens of thousands of people.

[5 : 44] They capture hundreds of thousands of people. Cities are being wiped out, and Ahaz, the king of Judah, does not know what to do. And in this moment, God sends a messenger to him, a guy named Isaiah the prophet.

And Isaiah has a very important, very simple message for King Ahaz from God. Don't worry. I've got this.

I'm going to take care of this. I'm going to get rid of Israel and Syria from your land. All you have to do is trust me. And to prove to you that I'm going to do this, you can ask for any sign, anything that you want.

It can be as high as heaven or as deep as the grave. I will give it to you to prove to you that I'm going to keep my word. And King Ahaz says, I will not put the Lord to the test, which sounds really noble, right?

That's what Jesus says when Satan tempts him in the desert. But actually it's not. Because what Ahaz is saying is, I don't trust God. I don't want to do what God is telling me to do.

[6 : 55] I've got this. I can handle this. Leave me alone, God. And he goes to the temple where the Israelites would worship God and he strips down all the gold and all the valuable metals.

He melts them down and he sends them with messengers as a gift to the king of Assyria, the big bad guys. And he says, hey, do me a favor.

Here's a little gift. Go attack Israel and Syria and just take them out. So the king of Assyria says, okay. And he marches down and he takes out Israel.

He takes out Syria. And then he's like, while I'm here, I may as well go take out Judah too. And he starts marching in to take out Judah because Ahaz, the king of Judah, did not trust God and wait for God to rescue him.

And now ultimately, they didn't succeed in capturing the capital of Judah at that time. So the nation survived. But the nation is a mess. Their cities are one by one being taken away and conquered and destroyed.

[7 : 59] And the land is miserable. And it's a situation that the end of Isaiah chapter eight in that last verse, verse 22 describes as, behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and they will be thrust into deep or thick darkness.

It's a miserable, terrible, heart-wrenching time in the nation of Judah. And it's at this moment that Isaiah steps in with Isaiah chapter nine.

And when we see the start, especially of Isaiah chapter nine, in the light of this context, it helps us to understand Isaiah is saying something huge right here.

Isaiah steps in and he says, there will be no gloom for her who is in anguish. In the previous verse, we have the gloom of anguish and now we have no gloom for her who is in anguish.

If you jump down to verse two, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Instead of this deep darkness, a light is shining on the people. As we go throughout the passage, we see in verse five, the boots of the trampling warrior and the garments that are rolled in blood because it's what they were wearing when they were fighting, it will be burned.

[9 : 15] Why do you burn your battle equipment? Because you're done fighting. Isaiah says, there is a time coming when you're going to have peace, when you're going to have hope, when you're going to have light in your land.

It's not here yet, but it's coming. And it's not dependent on your king doing the right thing right now. No, it's dependent on, verse six, a child who's going to be born.

A child who's going to come and it says, the government will be upon his shoulders. He's going to rule this nation and he's going to rule with justice and he's going to bring peace and his rule is going to expand and expand, but that's going to be a good thing because as he rules, he is good.

And it gives us four descriptions of what this ruler will be like. It calls him the wonderful counselor, the mighty God, everlasting father, prince of peace.

If you were here two weeks ago, Alfie looked at what it means for Jesus to be our wonderful counselor and why we need a wonderful counselor. Last week, if you were here for the charity walk, Chris talked about, a little bit about what it means for Jesus to be the mighty God in our lives.

[10 : 32] And today we're going to look at what it means for Jesus to be our everlasting father. And what we're going to see is that although we often choose to live like spiritual orphans, Jesus is our everlasting father.

And having a perfect, everlasting father gives us freedom to live as the children of God. We're going to take three steps to getting there. First, we're going to talk about becoming an orphan.

Second, we're going to talk about living as an orphan. And third, we're going to talk about life with a father. First up, becoming an orphan. So Ahaz, as the king of Judah, was basically supposed to be like a father to the nation.

A king was supposed to be a protective caregiver, which is a huge role of a father. But Ahaz was a terrible father, both to the nation and to his own kids.

And how do we know that he was a terrible father to his own kids? Because he killed them. The Bible is very clear that God does not want his people worshiping idols.

[11 : 44] And a big part of that, besides the fact that they're false gods, is that the worship of idols, especially in the Old Testament times, involved doing many terrible things.

And one of them was child sacrifice. And so it says that in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, when it's talking about Ahaz, it says that he caused his sons to pass through the fire.

Basically, they would have this fire burning, you send in your son, and then your son burns up, and it's supposed to be a pleasing sacrifice to God. This guy did that with his kids. Now, if he's that terrible of a father to his family, how do you expect him to lead the nation?

You don't. And so when you look at the way that he rules the nation, this man who's supposed to be the protective caregiver to the nation, who's supposed to be this father figure to the nation, when his nation is under distress, he strips down the temple from everything valuable, he sends it away to the king of Assyria, and the message that he sends to the king of Assyria is, I am your son.

Please come rescue me. That's in 2 Kings 16. He says, I am your son. This man who's supposed to be like a father to the nation just abdicates that responsibility and says, you, this foreign nation that God told me not to interact with, you're our father now.

[13 : 10] Ahaz was not a good king. And why does he, why does he fail so miserably as a father both in his family and in the nation? Because he's living as a spiritual orphan.

And here's what I mean when I talk about spiritual orphans. A spiritual orphan is someone who functionally on a day-to-day level does not believe that they have a perfect heavenly father who loves them and provides for them.

So with Ahaz, he is not trusting God to provide for him or his country. He's taking matters into his own hands and he is failing his people miserably. And I know as we talk about God as a father and what it means for God to be a father, there are probably a lot of us in here who when we think about the idea of a father, it's a painful thought because our fathers fail us.

And I think in Hong Kong that's probably like accelerated the rate at which fathers fail their children. And I think when we, we each have a tendency to project our earthly father's failures onto God.

God. And so when we hear that God's our father and we know that our fathers failed us so miserably, we think, well, if God's a much bigger father, then he's gonna fail us so much more miserably, right?

[14 : 35] And I think there are three, probably we can group the ways that our fathers fail us into three big categories. The first one, this is huge in Asia, we'll call the always could be better father.

If you come home with a 99 on your exam, why didn't you get 100? If you got accepted to Harvard, why didn't they give you a full ride? No matter how much you accomplish, no matter how much you do, it is never good enough.

The always could be better father pushes his children beyond what they are capable of, always expects more, and their children always live in fear of disappointing their father.

Second up, the angry father. Anything can make him go wild. His kids live in fear of doing something to set him off.

Violence or yelling can come out of this. I went to university with a guy who had an angry father. He shared with us about how when he was a kid, his dad would beat his mom, and he was too small or powerless to do anything to stop it, so all he would do is sit there and watch.

[15 : 51] And the thing that makes this story even more sad is that this kid's parents were missionaries. So his idea growing up of what it means to be a man who loves and serves God is that you beat your wife.

When you take that idea of a father and project it onto God, how do you think that impacts the way that you see God as a father? So we have the always could be better father, we have the angry father, and then third, we have the absent father.

And this is another one that's huge in Hong Kong. Some fathers are absent because they simply abandon their families. Some are absent in Hong Kong because they have a second family across the border and they're just spending their time with the second family instead of with their own family.

Some, this is a huge way that fathers are absent in Hong Kong, is workaholism. They spend all their time at the office, at their job, traveling for work, and never actually have time to be with their kids.

And then some fathers in Hong Kong spend lots of time with their families, spend lots of time with their kids, but they're so tired and stressed from the time they've been at work that during that time they turn to things like alcohol or television to cope.

[17 : 14] And even though they're physically present, they're mentally and emotionally absent. Our fathers fail us in many ways and we have a tendency to project those failures onto God.

You know, for me, I had great parents growing up. They're still great parents. If they listen to the podcast, hi mom and dad, you're fantastic. But they weren't perfect. My parents, when I was in school, always told me, whatever grades you get, we're happy as long as you do your best.

And for me, my best was straight A's. And I got straight A's. But, even though they were happy with my grades, I was always living a little bit nervous, a little bit in fear.

Because first off, if I got a 95 on a project and I knew that I could have gotten a 97 by working just a tiny bit harder, I knew that 95 wasn't my best.

I think I grew up on the wrong continent. And I would live in fear that they would find out that 95 was not truly my best and be disappointed with me for my 95.

[18 : 24] 95. I lived in constant fear that I would get an assignment back and that rather than an A, it would be a C or a B. Because I knew that they knew that I was capable of an A and I was always afraid that I would fall short, that I wouldn't live up to what they knew that I was capable of.

And I lived, these fears were reality to me. And as I grew up, I took these fears and projected them onto my relationship with God.

Because I knew that for God, my standard is not do your best, the standard is perfection. And so even though I was one of the best behaved kids in my school, one of the best behaved kids in my church, I knew on the inside that I fall short of that standard.

I knew on the inside that I have not done enough to live up to God's standard. And rather than understanding the gospel and seeing that that's the whole point, that I can't live up to it, but he loves me and accepts me anyways, I had this feeling of shame that just followed me everywhere because I hadn't lived up to the standard that I needed to.

And I would put in effort, trying so hard to do better so that God could love me and accept me. And rather than enjoying being God's son and getting to enjoy that relationship with him, I ended up living my life as a show, terrified on the inside that God is out to get me, but smiling on the outside because I didn't want anyone else to know that that's how I really felt.

[20 : 05] and it was because I had taken this false understanding of my relationship with my earthly parents and projected it onto God as my father.

And I think each of us does that to some extent and because of that, each of us has a tendency to live at least somewhat as a spiritual orphan.

So what does it look like to live as an orphan? I have these friends. They're adopting a little kid. He's like two.

And they had the chance to go and meet this kid. They took him out for dinner and they're so excited because like, this is going to be our son. And this is our first chance to get to know our son.

And they're at this restaurant getting ready for dinner and they've ordered their food and they're sitting there waiting and as a two-year-old he sort of gets up and starts wandering around the restaurant because that's what two-year-olds do.

[21 : 03] But as he wanders around the restaurant he walks up to different tables and just starts staring and smiling at the people there, waving a little bit, only he's like this tall so he's looking up and waving at them.

And everyone, of course, it's a two-year-old, they're smiling and waving back and he's sort of looking between them and the food and them and the food and at a couple tables they like grabbed a little piece of food and gave it to him as a snack.

And my friends, they're watching their son-to-be and they're like, this is so cute, he's so outgoing and friendly. They realize at a couple tables he would walk up and if the people didn't offer him food he would just reach up and grab it.

But again, he's two, no one's mad about that. And they thought, this is so fantastic, our kid is so outgoing. And then as they got home and started doing more research about adoption they realized, actually, this behavior is an orphan tendency.

Because I, as a two-year-old, would never have done that. Because I, as a two-year-old, knew that if I stayed at my parents' table I had a meal coming. But for a two-year-old orphan, they don't know that their parents are going to give them a meal because they don't have parents.

[22 : 12] And so they feel the need to walk around and grab scraps off the tables of strangers because they can't rely on their parents to provide. And when we live as spiritual orphans, what we do is we look at God, our Father, and we don't trust Him to provide.

And we feel the need to provide for ourselves by going around and grabbing scraps off the table of strangers in the world. We choose to live as an orphan when we sacrifice the feast that our Father wants to give to us and trade it in for scraps and leftovers.

Like I said before, the main question of a spiritual orphan is do I really believe that I have a heavenly dad who loves me and cares for me? And the reality is as long as we answer yes to that question, we're going to be incredibly loving, incredibly patient, incredibly generous people.

But the moment we start to believe that the answer to that question is no or maybe, we start feeling the need to fend for ourselves, to defend ourselves, to reach out and grasp for anything that we can get because we are the only ones who are going to care for ourselves.

So living as a spiritual orphan means being controlling and manipulative at work because God might not provide for my family so I need to maneuver for promotions and for tearing other people down.

[23 : 40] If I make a mistake, I need to make sure that it can get pinned on someone else so that my job is not in danger. spiritual orphans live incredibly stressed and anxious lives.

A parent who's living as a spiritual orphan is going to lose sleep about whether their kid can get into that top university because I've done all I can and I don't know that God's going to take care of them.

Actually, when we looked earlier at the different ways that our fathers fail us, that absent father, the angry father, and the always could be better father, each of them responds in those ways as a father because of their orphan tendencies themselves.

The always could be better father feels the need to constantly push his children to excel beyond their capacity because he believes their future will be ruined if he doesn't because he doesn't believe that he has a perfect father who's going to provide for them.

The angry father feels the need to try and grasp for control of his world through anger because he doesn't believe that he has a perfect heavenly father who's in control and who's good with that control.

[24 : 55] The absent father feels the need to escape from the realities of life because he doesn't believe that he has a perfect father who's going to bring him through these realities to something better.

every time we choose to react in anger anxiety stress fear grasping for control defensiveness the list could go on what we're doing is we're showing symptoms of the fact that we believe we are spiritual orphans who need to look after ourselves and grab scraps from the table of life rather than enjoy the feast that our father wants to provide for us.

So what does it look like to start living as children of God to start seeing Jesus as our everlasting father? We will only ever begin to live as children of God when we begin to see living as children of God as more beautiful than what the world can offer us.

You know today's passage talks about Jesus as an everlasting father and if you've been in church for any amount of time that might be confusing to you because in church we talk about the Trinity there's one God with three persons the Father, Son, the Holy Spirit and in the Trinity Jesus is the Son and if you ever study the Trinity one of the big things you learn the Father is not the Son the Son is not the Father get that drilled into your head and here it's referring to Jesus the Son and it's calling him a Father what is going on?

But what's going on here is that it's not talking about how Jesus relates to God within the Trinity it's talking about how Jesus relates to us because to us he's a provider he's a protector he's doing the things that a father is supposed to do and so even though in the Trinity he's the Son it still tells us that we can look at him as the everlasting Father and at Christmas season we celebrate his birth which if you ever think about it is incredible that the God who made the world and the stars and the entire universe by speaking would step down and wrap himself in human flesh and live life as one of us that's mind-boggling just sit down and spend five minutes trying to comprehend it and you will have a headache because Christmas is so incredible if you look at what God did there but Christmas isn't the full story

[27 : 32] Christmas actually has very little power for us if it's separated from Good Friday and Easter because what we see in Good Friday and Easter is that Jesus is the perfect everlasting Father that we all long for and need in Good Friday Jesus our Father protector steps up and fights the battle for us against our two greatest enemies sin and death that we could never fight on our own and he conquers them how do we know that he conquers them because on Easter he rises from the dead death cannot hold him sin cannot overcome him and as he overcomes them he sets us free he is our Father who has stepped down who has left the comfort of his comfy lazy boy lounge chair in heaven and come down to enter into the mess of our world and deal with every single last one of our problems at the greatest possible cost to himself his life through Jesus life death and resurrection he sets himself apart from our earthly fathers and all the ways that they fail us see I think we have a tendency to project our earthly fathers flaws onto God but the reality is that our earthly fathers are flawed imitations of the true perfect father that we have in Jesus and how do we know this because of the cross the cross tells us that Jesus is not the always could be better father he's the accepting father who sees every single last one of our flaws and rather than judging us and despising us for it steps down and pays the price for our failures at the cost of his own life so that we can be accepted and not have to live in fear of letting our father down rather than the angry father he is the abounding in love father who although he has every right to be furious at us steps down in love and bears the consequences for our sin on himself rather than the absent father he is the always present father who came to earth as one of us living as one of us so that we can see him and know him and then when he went back to heaven sent his spirit to live inside of us so that the bible tells us that if we are

Christians he is living inside of us right now empowering us for our day to day life following him see in contrast to our flawed fathers he is the awesome father he is trustworthy he is reliable he is everlasting he will never fail us and if you are here today and you don't know God as a father this talk of having God as a father seems confusing or foreign to you I encourage you to talk to me or to Chris or one of the other people here at Watermark and ask us about what that means and how you can have this type of relationship with God because it is life changing what does it look like when our lives have been so transformed by our understanding of God seeing him as a father that we can live as his children

I want to share a little story with you that I think illustrates this really well I used to work at a summer camp for first through sixth graders parents would drop off their kids on Sunday afternoon and we would have them until Saturday afternoon so you got to see a lot of crazy stuff at this summer camp one week there was this kid he was probably seven or eight years old at the time he was staying in the cabin next to mine his dad was a WWE wrestler so you know they like pick up the chairs and smash each other over the head and climb up on the rails and jump off and slam each other that was this kid's dad's job and this kid one day got into an argument with another kid in his cabin don't know what the argument was about don't know how it started but I know that it escalated to the point where this kid told the other kid oh yeah well my dad can beat your dad up and the counselor from his cabin was watching this unfold and he said normally

I would step in and stop this argument around this point but I love that picture not because I think we should be cocky and arrogant having God as our father but think about the confidence that kid had in his father he knew that my father is strong he knew that my father cares about me my father cares about me so much that he is willing to fight my battles for me I don't need to worry about being the strongest I don't and so this kid was able to live with incredible confidence knowing that he was loved by his father who was so strong and if we have God as our father who's way stronger than this kid's dad's father who's everlasting as our father how much more confident should we be in him in a father who has proven over and over again that he loves his children with an unstoppable love that cannot be stopped even if it costs his life how much should that drive us to love others to be patient when things aren't going our way to be willing to take the hit even for someone else's mistakes because we know that it's not about me grasping for everything that I can get off the table of strangers but it's about my father loving me providing for me and I know that if I wait at his table if I trust in him if I follow him there is a feast being prepared for me we don't need to fear we don't need to grasp we don't need to live as spiritual orphans because we we don't need to love him because we have a perfect father who loves us and cares for us in the way that no earthly father could and that's one of the things that we celebrate at

Christmas that Jesus came to reveal that father to us to be a father to us who protects us who guards us who rescues us let's pray Jesus we thank you that you are a perfect father to us that you love us that you rescue us at the cost of your own life and that because of your love because of you rescuing us we don't need to live in fear we don't need to to strive and worry and be anxious and lose sleep about the future because you have got us because you're the perfect father who loves us who cares for us who never lets us go never lets us down Jesus we pray that this week that we would see the beauty of Christmas that we would see the beauty of you that we would fall more in love with you and that we would learn to trust you rather than living as orphans God I confess that I fail to believe this so often

[35 : 34] I pray that you would transform my heart and give me an understanding of what it means to be your son to live in joy because of that to live in peace because of that in Jesus name amen amen