

Preparing for Heaven

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[0 : 01] Today's passage comes from Numbers 27, 12-18, and Numbers 33, 50-56. Numbers 27 can be found on page 127 if you're following along on the church Bible.

Here then God's word to us today. Failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes. These are the waters of Meribah and Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.

So the Lord said to Moses, Take Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. Numbers 33, 50-56 can be found on page 133.

And the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places.

[2 : 02] And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it. You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance, wherever the lot falls for anyone that shall be his.

According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit. But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell.

And I will do to you as I thought to do to them. Let us believe and respond to God's true and living word. Great. Thanks, Zoe.

Let me pray for us and then let's dive into this passage. Father God, as we come to your word this morning, we want to hear you speak to us. We want to help. We want you, God, by your wisdom, by your spirit, by your word, to help us live the lives that you've called us to.

Help us to be faithful to the end. So God, speak to us today. We pray in your wonderful and gracious name. Amen. Friends, my job this morning is to help you die well.

[3 : 19] To help you make it to the end. Maybe another way of saying that is my aim this morning is to help us live as well as we can, knowing that one day soon, all of us in this room are going to pass away.

Friends, despite wonderful advances in technology and medical science, the mortality rate for the human race is still 100%. 100% of us are going to pass away.

And all of us in this room will die one day. It may be next week or it may be 50 years from now. But every one of us are one day going to pass away. If you are in youth or a teenager, I know that feels like a million years away.

And you think that I have no idea what I'm talking about. But you too will one day be 42 years old.

And you'll realize that your day of departure is sooner than you realize.

Friends, all of us, if we are to not waste our lives, the one and only life that God has given us to live, if we're not to waste our lives, we must learn to live here and now in light of that day that is coming as sure as the sun will rise tomorrow morning.

[4 : 28] We're going through the book of Numbers. And we're in the final section. And Zoe read just two portions of two chapters for us. But today we're going to look at the final nine chapters in the book of Numbers.

And it's kind of the end of the story. It's how the people of God, their story ends. If you're new to Watermark this morning, the book of Numbers is this amazing book that tells the story of the people

of God and their journey of faith.

They're rescued out of Egypt, rescued from slavery, and they brought into the promised land, the land of Canaan. But between Egypt and Canaan, the promised land, is this journey of faith with all the ups and downs and the trials and the difficulties that they go on.

And we've been saying over the last seven weeks that in many ways, this is an apt analogy or picture for the Christian life, for the Christian faith. Christians know that we too have been saved from a slavery from which we could not save ourselves.

Not slavery to Pharaoh, but slavery to death and sin and Satan and hell. And God is bringing us to a new creation. But between those two, there's this journey of faith.

[5 : 37] A journey through the wilderness with all its ups and downs. And so today we come to the final chapters, the final stage of this journey of faith for the people of God. The final nine chapters.

And I want to look at it under just two headings. Faithful promises and faith-fueled perseverance. Faithful promises, faith-fueled perseverance.

Okay, so let's dive in and look at it. God's faithful promises. I don't know if you've ever seen a diagram, this picture. I used to have it in my office. There we go.

It looks like this, right? So the top picture says, Your plan. It's got a nice, neat, straight path from beginning to end, right? And then it says, Your reality and the pathway goes through the worst of hell, right?

Shark-infested waters and razor wire and war zones and overhanging cliffs. And you kind of somehow get out somewhere near the end line. I love this picture because I think it describes life so very well.

[6 : 35] How many of us have ever had a plan for our lives or plan for our family or plan for our businesses? You want to start a new business and you develop a business plan. Maybe you want to go on a family vacation or you want to do home renovations.

Or maybe you want to further your studies or you want to start a new NGO. What could possibly go wrong? How hard could it be? In many ways, the book of Numbers is a bit like this, right?

That God's people has been delivered out of Egypt miraculously by the sovereign God. And He's given them everything they need for the journey of faith. And He's promised that He will bring them through.

What could possibly go wrong? How hard could this be? And yet, as we've seen, a lot does go wrong. Disappointments, frustrations, open defiance, leadership crises, plagues, death.

One bad thing after another. And yet, the story of Numbers is not that these guys just stumbled across hardships. Like they walked into a desert storm or some geopolitical conflict.

[7 : 40] Actually, this is the consequences of their own doing. This is their unbelief in God working itself out. And so, Numbers has this contrast. These two generations.

The first generation that doesn't believe God or His Word or His promises. And they die in the wilderness. And the second generation that takes God's Word and promises seriously.

And they make it through. And the whole book of Numbers has had this contrast. Which are we going to be? And now, the first generation has passed away. And we're in the second generation. And they've made it through. And where are they now?

They're right at the border. They're on the brink about to step into the promised land. They've just got to cross the river. And they are right home where God has promised them.

Where 500 years before, God said to Abraham, I will bring you and your descendants into the promised land. They are right there. 430 years slaves in Egypt.

[8 : 37] 40 years walking through the wilderness. A couple of other years in between. 500 years later, here they are about to get into the promised land. God has been faithful to His Word.

I don't know if you traveled during COVID. Most of us didn't. And we didn't for most of it. But right at the end, we went back to South Africa at the end of COVID.

And Claire's dad had passed away. And we went to go and see the family. And it was one thing getting into South Africa. But getting out was another story. This is right as that Omicron variation was blowing up.

And if you remember, there were all these reports saying Omicron started in South Africa. So nobody wanted to be flying out of South Africa. And so we went and we were with family. And then to come back, remember you had to do all these PCR tests 48 hours before your final flight.

And then there was that thing. I don't know if you remember where any airline coming into Hong Kong, if they had more than four cases, the airline was banned for like three days. So you had to time your flight perfectly because you knew, okay, these three flights are going to be banned.

[9 : 42] So we've got to get on the first one before it's banned again. And so you time your flight perfectly. We did that. Then you get to the airport. You're there eight hours while they're doing PCR tests for the whole plane.

And then you get on the quarantine bus and then you go into quarantine for three weeks. Friends, that day when we got out of quarantine into that taxi and drove home, and as we pulled up to our apartment block, it felt like freedom.

It felt like we never thought this day would arrive. But here we are. We're home. We're home. We've made it. And that's what it's been like for the people of God in the book of Numbers.

Here they are after 500 years of slavery in Egypt and Pharaoh and getting through the wilderness and then dying and death and all these things, despite everything going wrong, despite all the setbacks, God has brought his faithful ones home, just as he said he would.

And the point is as unlikely and as impossible as it seemed, at times it seemed a distant pipe dream, God has done what everyone thought would never happen.

[10 : 53] He's brought his people home. And friends, the Bible's point is that if you will trust the Lord Jesus and hold on to him and not be people of doubt and faith, the same sovereign God that rescued Israel out of Egypt will rescue you and I, not from Pharaoh, but he will bring us not into Canaan, but into our forever home, into the promised land of the new creation.

What is the promised land for Christians? It's not Canaan in Israel, obviously. It's not a successful career or business opportunity. That God never promises.

Friends, it's not financial wealth or stability or retirement at 45. God never promises that. It's not that you're going to find the perfect spouse and have the perfect kids and have the perfect house and the perfect setting.

God never promises that. What God does promise is that if you hold on to Jesus, he will bring you to the new creation, the new heavens and earth, the place where God and man will live as one.

So listen to how Revelation describes it. In Revelation 21, John writes, Verse 3, I heard a loud voice from the throne of God saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

[12 : 13] He will dwell with them and they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more.

Neither shall there be mourning or crying or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new.

Friends, where are we now if you're a personal faith? We're in the desert. We're in the wilderness. But oh friend, we're almost home. Despite the many things that are going wrong and the many setbacks, God will bring his faithful ones home, just as he said he would.

And so often in life, we never get to see how the story ends. We're busy living our story, but it's hard to see how does the story end. You pray prayers, but it's hard to know.

What happens to those prayers? You never see the fruit of them. Or maybe you witness and you're sowing lots of gospel seeds. Or maybe you're trusting God. And you may or you may not see the fruit of those things in this lifetime.

[13 : 18] You may die and be buried before you see the fruit of those. But one of the great things about Numbers is it shows us how the narrative arc ends, how the story ends. And what we see here is that God is faithful to his covenant promises.

He does bring his people home. We're in the wilderness, but God will get us to the promised land. God is faithful just as he said he would. And the Hebrew word for this in the Bible is the word *chesed*.

It means God's covenant faithfulness or his steadfast love. And throughout the Old Testament, whenever God says, Remember me, remember me, don't forget about me. He always says, remember my covenant faithfulness, my steadfast love.

Remember how I'm faithful to my word. The Psalms talk about this all the time. One of my favorite Psalms is Psalm 107. It's a Psalm about how God rescues people who are in deep trouble.

They cry out to God and he rescues them. And then four times it says, Let them give thanks for his steadfast love and faithfulness. And then the final verse, the very last verse of Psalm 107 says this.

[14 : 24] Whoever is wise. That's a great phrase, isn't it? You want to be a wise person? Whoever is wise, let him attend to these things. Let him consider the steadfast love of the Lord.

Friends, do you want to be a wise person? Do you want to get through the wilderness? The wise person is the person who knows how to think about life and live their lives and make decisions based on the steadfast faithfulness of the rock-solid God.

Friends, the absolutely critical thing about life, the one thing that makes all the difference, how we live and how we will die, the one thing that will determine your destiny, both in this life but even more so in the life to come, is what you make of God and his promises of faithfulness.

Is he trustworthy or is he not? Is he faithful or is he not? Will you trust him or will you not? What you do with that determines absolutely everything about your life.

Because soon, very soon, maybe not next week, but in light of eternity, very soon, Jesus Christ is going to come back. And he's going to bring about a new creation, a brand new world in which there will be no more darkness, no more doubt, no more suffering, no more evil, no more pain, no more unbelief, no more abandonment, no more broken families, no more crying, no more addiction, no more curses.

[15 : 54] Very soon, heaven and earth are going to be joined together and those who know him will be one with him in the new creation. And so friends, that leads us to ask a very important question.

And the question is, will you be there with him? Will you be there in the new creation? One of the main points of the book of Numbers is that God is faithful to his word.

He will bring his people through the wilderness. But which people? It's not all people. It's those that have faith. It's those that have trusted in him. It's those that have put their hope in him.

And as we said, there's many things about life from which we don't know how the story ends. But there's one thing the Bible wants us to be absolutely rock solid certain in. That Jesus Christ will come again.

And he will come and judge the living and the dead and bring about a new creation. And those who have believed and trusted in him will rise to perpetually live the life that never ends with him forever.

[16 : 55] And those that have rejected him will rise to die the perpetual death that never ends apart from him forever. And so friends, we don't want to be a Bible-thumping church that threatens and scares people into salvation.

But we also want to be honest. Will you be with him? Will you know him? Will you love him in that day? Will you be with him?

Will you be with him?

Will do this. And then God does it and says, well, you know, maybe, maybe. Actually, God's people are to be faithful with their words that they speak. They're meant to honor their vows.

But why put that in numbers? What's so important about that? But can't you see? God has been faithful to his vows. And if God is faithful to his word, his people are the people that will be faithful to their words.

[18 : 44] God's faithfulness leads to our faithfulness. God's faithfulness to his promises fuels our faith to be faithful to God in response.

God's people are to be those who live like God himself. And so God's faithfulness then fuels our perseverance. And so the question then is, how then should we live?

Friends, if eternity is coming very soon and your day of death is coming very soon, how should you live now in light of that impending day?

How should we live in this life now? How should we think? How should we prepare for the fact that one day soon we will leave this world? Well, notice the big theme in these passages.

In these passages here, God is wanting to prepare his people to prepare and anticipate for living in the promised land. If God is going to be faithful to his word and bring them in, they are to be people who prepare for that and anticipate that and live now in light of how they're going to live then.

[19 : 50] And if you think about it, we do this all the time in our own lives as well. Maybe you're in high school. Let me say this. I remember when one of our kids was in grade five, I think it was at school.

Okay, so in grade five, and I remember going to the parent-teacher day at the start of the year, and the teacher said this, said, you know, grade five is a tough year because we've got to really prepare them for grade six.

Grade six is a big step up, and so they're going to work hard. They're going to get a lot of homework because we need to prepare them for grade six to be ready for grade six. I thought, okay, that makes sense. They're going to work hard this year. And then we got to grade six, and the teacher said, you know, next year they go to high school in grade seven.

Grade seven is a big year, so we need to prepare them for next year. So they're going to work hard this year in anticipation for high school next year. And then you get to grade seven, and what do you think the teacher said? Grade seven is a big year because next year and then grade eight, it's a big year.

It's a big jump up, and so we need to prepare them for next year, right? And eventually I'm like, hang on, I'm getting on to you. You just want to work the kids hard, right? But we all do this. Or maybe you're in high school, and in your final year of high school, you're going to go off to college next year.

[20 : 59] What do your parents say? Your parents say, listen, next year I'm not going to be here to look after you, to take care of you. You're going to have to grow up, and so you need to start taking care of yourself. You're going to go off to college next year.

Or I remember when I was a teenager, and Claire is forever grateful for this. My dad once said to me, my bedroom was a bombshell. It was like a war zone.

And my dad once said, son, one day you're going to get married, and you better not make your wife live in a bedroom like this. You better learn how to take care of yourself and get neat. We know that we need to live life now in light of and in preparation, anticipate what life's going to be then, right?

That's what Moses is doing here. God gives these people all sorts of instructions saying, in light of eternity, in light of heaven, in light of the world to come, how should we live now?

And so look at these chapters. I want to just highlight three things for us to think about. Firstly, how should we live now in light of the fact that Christ is going to return, and those of us that are people of faith are going to be with Him forever?

[22 : 06] Firstly, be wary of seduction. In chapter 32, if you've got a Bible, you are welcome to look there. We won't read it necessarily. Firstly, in chapter 32, there are two tribes, the tribes of the Gadites and the tribe of the Reubenites.

And what happens is they come to the edge of the promised land. They're right on the other side of the river. All they've got to do is just cross the river, and they will be in the promised land. And they've wandered through the wilderness 40 years.

They're right here on the brink. And two tribes say to Moses, they look around them. They say, you know what? This land here is actually pretty good. We think we'll just stay on this side of the river and not cross over into the promised land.

Now, the reason they do that is they look around them. They see that the land is fruitful and abundant and good for their flocks. And Neil showed me this week the overture here of Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve look at the fruit, and it looks appealing to them.

And they're seduced by it. And so Moses hears this, and he freaks out. He says, you band of sinners. Look what he says, verse 14. Behold, you've risen in your father's place, you brood of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel.

[23 : 18] He says, you are acting just like your fathers. You're being just like the first generation. How dare you doubt God's promises? And the people, the Gadites and the Reubenites say, no, no, we will go into promised land.

We will fight the battle. We will defeat their enemies. We will make sure that the rest of the Israelites come over. And once it's all settled, we will come back and dwell here. And Moses is a bit unsure, but he compromises.

And he says, okay, okay, verse 23. But if you will not do so, if you don't come back, if you don't go and fight with your brothers, you have sinned against the Lord. And be sure your sin will find you out.

And so here are two tribes. They're still part of the people of God, but they never go into the promised land and inherit the promised land. The land that God swore to Moses, to Abraham 500 years before, they never partake of it.

And it's kind of like they're half-half. They're part of the people of God, but they're also outside of it. There's one foot in and there's one foot out. Because they've seen what's around them and they want to live there.

[24 : 22] And friends, these people, they compromise and they never quite inherit the promised land. Forever and ever they are outside of the land that God promised. And many hundreds of years later, when the Assyrians come and attack Israel and take them off into exile in judgment, these two tribes are the first to be attacked and taken into exile as a sign of God's judgment.

And what's the point here? Friends, the point is, if you're a follower of Jesus, you and I face the same temptation. The seductive power of the things of this world, we can easily look around us and say, Yes, heaven's good, but I want a bit of earth now as well.

And we can be half-half, one foot in and one foot out. And Paul writes in the New Testament to the Colossians and he says this, Since you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things that are above, not on the things of this earth, for you have died to the things of this world. Your life is now hidden with Christ and God. And when Christ appears, you also will appear with Him in glory.

Friends, don't settle for the things of this world. Don't set your heart and mind now at the expense of what God wants to give you. Friends, don't live one foot in, one foot out, and find out that actually maybe you never make it to heaven.

[25 : 40] No, set your heart, set your mind on the things of this world rather than being seduced. Sorry, the things of heaven rather than being seduced by the things of this world. Be wary of seduction.

Secondly, be warring against sin. Be warring against sin. What do I mean by warring? I mean pick up your sword or your shotgun and fight. Fight.

Get some fight in you. Get some, as Christians we're very gracious and we like to be kind and that's good, but sometimes you need a bit of fight in us. Be warring against sin. In chapter 31, there's a difficult chapter for us to read.

And the reason is because God commands the Israelites to go and make war and destroy a tribe of people called the Midianites just near them. And of course we read this in our modern culture and we say that is so wrong, that's so unjust.

How can I tolerate this? And we have a point, right? This is brutal. And the ancient world often was brutal. But the reason why God tells the Israelites to go and conquer the Midianites is not because of land expansion or racial genocide or colonialism or anything like that.

[26 : 47] The reason is because previously back in chapter 25, the Midianites had come into Israel and had seduced them, sexual perversions, maybe kind of sleeping with cult prostitutes, worshipping other gods, other idols.

And the Israelites stopped worshipping God and they stopped following the God of the Midianites and 25,000 of them are killed in a plague. And God says to the nation of Israel, He says, either you take them out or they're going to take you out.

If you tolerate them, they will destroy you. And so they take them out. And of course we struggle with this because many people die. And sorry to say, that's how it was in the ancient world.

It was ruthless. It was brutal. It was horrible. That's how it was. And yet, friends, don't you see, the seductive power of sin is no less dangerous for us in our lives.

Friends, it's no less powerful for us today. We face the consequences of the same dangers.

Friends, we tend to think, oh, we modern people, you know, we're as primitive as those people.

[27 : 55] We've got a handle on things in life. We can control things. No, no, no. Sin will destroy you. John Owen famously said, be killing sin or sin be killing you. And there's a battle.

There's a war. There's a ruthlessness that God wants us to take up against the things that seduce us and draw us away from God. And so God says to His people, you are my set-apart people. Live now like you're going to live then.

Live in this world like anticipating what the will to come. In preparation for there, live as my set-apart people. In the New Testament, the book of 1 John, John writes this.

He says, Beloved, sorry, I don't know if it's a bit small. Beloved, we are God's children now. And what we will be has not yet appeared. But we know that when He appears, when Christ comes, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is.

And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure. Friends, when Jesus comes, we will be made spotless. We will see Christ and sin will be horrible and disgusting.

[28 : 57] And we will want to be like Jesus. That day is coming. So why don't we live now in light of that day that's coming? Anyone who sees Him, who hopes in Him, purifies himself as He is pure.

And so imagine this. Imagine it's a few days before your wedding, right? You're about to get married. You've been planning for months and months and months. You've got the guest list. You've got the wedding banquet all signed up. Everybody's in place. It's just a few days before. And family have flown in from overseas, come all across the world to be at your wedding day. And you've just done the wedding rehearsal with the pastor. And it's all gone well. And everything is looking amazing. And your fiancé, the bride, needs to go and do a final last thing with her bridesmaids.

It's two days before the wedding. And you've got some free time. And so what are you going to do? And so you think to yourself, let me go to one chai and just hang out in the bars and see who I can pick up, right?

[29 : 54] Or maybe you think, I wonder if there's anyone on Tinder. It's the last few days, right? It's my last chance. Last hookup. Friends, isn't that ridiculous?

Isn't that disgusting? Isn't that the dumbest thing that you could do? Why jeopardize 50 years of beautiful relationship for a stupid thing like a one-night stand?

Why give up what is waiting for you just around the corner? You're on the brink of your wedding day. Why give up something like that for something so temporary, something so fleeting, something so shallow and superficial?

Friends, we've got all eternity to glory with God. Why give it up for something as silly and stupid as sin? And God says here to His people, you're on the brink of the promised land.

Be warring. Be ruthless. Don't tolerate that sin. Be killing sin before it kills you. Fight against it and live in light of what you're going to live then.

[30 : 54] Live in light of that now. So how do we defeat sin? Well, there's two ways to do it. The first way is to confess it, to bring it before God and say, God, this is who I am.

This is how I think. This is how I behave. Friends, I had to do that recently. There's an area of my life that probably wasn't an outright terribleness, but there's something that's got a hold of my heart. And I was fighting and struggling, and I couldn't defeat it. And a few weeks ago, in confession and worship, during worship, I said, God, I don't like this. I don't like what a hold it has in my heart. I need you to change me.

God, this thing that's got a grip in me, I don't want it to have a grip in my heart. I confess this. Jesus, I need you to break the power of this in my life. And you know what? I really feel like He has. I really feel like the last three weeks, I've been walking in a freedom and a joy.

So one way is to confess it. But the other way is to be worshipping Jesus. Because all sin is actually a form of worship. It's saying, this thing is beautiful to me. And so how do we defeat sin?

[31 : 53] We worship the Savior. And that's the third thing we see in this passage, in our chapters today. Worshipping the Savior. Friends, what should we do to live now in light of eternity? Be wary of the seduction of sin.

Be warring against sin. But finally, be worshipping the Savior. In chapters 28 and 29, there are all these chapters about worship. About worship.

And one of the things, if you look at it, look at what the worship is like here. They offer daily sacrifices and offerings. They offer weekly sacrifices and offerings. They offer monthly sacrifices and offerings.

And, yes, you guessed it, annual sacrifices and offerings. Four times a year, they gather together and they offer sacrifices and offerings. Some of them are for two weeks long.

These festivals. And the offerings that they offer are not sin offerings. It's not to atone for their guilt. God has already forgiven them. These are burnt offerings. It's a way where they bring the whole animal.

[32 : 49] The whole thing is consumed. And it's a way of saying, God, all that I am and all that I have, I give myself to you. These people are a community that worship extravagantly.

Radically. All of life is worship for them. Every day, every week, every month, every year. These people are worshipping God extravagantly.

To worship God does not mean to go around singing Christian songs all day at the office. It doesn't mean necessarily playing Christian music on Spotify all day long, though that may not be a bad thing.

It is to do everything you do with one eye on what I'm doing and one eye on heaven saying, God, does this please you? Do you delight in what I'm doing and my thoughts, my attitudes, my motive of my heart here?

Father, what I'm doing, the way I'm thinking, does this shine a spotlight on your grace or am I feasting on the things of this world? Friends, do you find it hard to worship?

[33 : 52] Do you find it a bore, a duty? Could it be that the loveliness of Jesus has become no longer lovely to us? Each Sunday, as Oscar reminded us, we say the New City Catechism.

The Catechism is this ancient tradition of reciting the truths of Scripture. And the New City Catechism is only about 20 years old. It's a very modern one. The most famous one is called the Westminster Catechism. It's about 400 years old, written 1647.

And listen to the very first question and answer of the Westminster Catechism. What is the chief and the highest end of mankind? Mankind's chief and highest end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Friends, your and my greatest purpose in life is not to make enough money so that we're comfortable and convenient. It's not to be able to retire early, to get married and have many children, or to travel and see the world.

As wonderful as all those things are. Friends, your greatest purpose, my greatest goal in life, is to give my life knowing, loving, delighting, enjoying, ravishing in, adoring, prioritizing the most magnificent being, satisfying, praiseworthy being in the whole of existence.

[35 : 12] The only sovereign and truly self-sufficient being. The one that we call God. And so what would it look like for you to live all of life radical worship?

Friends, what would it look like to raise your kids? Not simply to go to the best university, but that they know the Lord Jesus and they trust Him. And they love Him. And they are people of character and maturity and contribute to society.

What it would look like to make money and invest money in a way as an act of worship. Seeking to push back darkness and advance God's kingdom. To end poverty and injustice and injustice in this world.

Friends, what would it look like to be a teacher and teach in the classroom as an act of worship? Loving and caring and developing the children that are in front of you. Helping them to see that their identity is not in their grades, but in what the sovereign God says about them.

Friends, what would it look like to build apps or to develop technology? Or to develop AI programs that glorify God and contribute towards human agency rather than taking human agency? That create jobs rather than destroy jobs?

[36 : 17] Friends, what would it look like to worship God in your pain, in your suffering, in your agony? What would it look like to honor your parents?

Not just out of filial piety, but out of worship of God, your heavenly Father. Friends, what would it look like to plan your wedding day? So that the spotlight doesn't just shine on the bride or couple. But on the God who made male and female in the first place and brings two and makes them one. Friends, what would it look like to walk into the office tomorrow morning thinking, not how can I get ahead of my colleagues this week?

But rather, how can I use my gifts, my talents, my skills to serve and to love and to build people up and to glorify God? Friends, what would it look like to live all of life, all of life marked by radical, Christ-centered, joy-filled, faith-fueled love for God?

You know, heaven is not going to be a sitting on clouds playing harps. Heaven is going to be a city, a new creation. It's going to be ingenuity. There's going to be interaction. There's going to be people. There's going to be community. There's going to be work.

[37 : 24] There's going to be life. And every aspect of it will be marked by glorious worship to the praise of His glorious grace. So how are we going to live now in light of that will to come?

Friends, be wary of the seduction of the things of this world. Be warring against sin. Be worshipping the Savior. As we come to a close, many years ago, a lady called Florence Chadwick was a legendary American swimmer.

You might know the story. She was the first lady to swim across the English Channel from England to France twice, both ways, and broke the record. And one day in 1952, she wanted to do a swim called the Catalina Channels between the island of Catalina and the mainland of California.

It's 26 miles across the way. It's about 45 kilometers. And she had been training for this. And so one day she decides she's the first woman to ever attempt to do it. And she decides to do this 26-mile swim.

And so she's got all the support boats. There are tens of boats around her. They've got guns to shoot the sharks in the water in case they come a bit close. Her mom is on one of the boats. And she enters into the water to swim the 26 miles across the channel.

[38 : 37] But it's a bitterly cold day. There's cloud. There's fog. The water is freezing cold. But she goes. And after 15 hours in the water, she feels like, this is too hard.

I can't keep going. And so she wants to tap out. But her mom, who's in the boat, says, come on. You can do it. You've done 15 hours. Don't give up now. And so she figures, okay, I'm almost there. And she keeps on going.

But she goes another hour. And after 16 hours in this water, a thick fog comes in. And she can't see anything. And she feels like, I'm done. If I do anymore, I'm going to drown. I cannot keep on going. So she taps out. They pull her into the boat. They put some towels around her, get her something to eat. And a few minutes later, the fog lifts. And what does she see?

The shoreline is right in front of them, half a mile away. Friends, for 16 hours, she'd been swimming 25 and a half miles. And at half a mile to go, and gave up just before the end.

[39 : 37] In the interview later on, she says this, I'm not excusing myself. But if I had just seen that land, I know I could have pushed on and made it. I could have persevered. And so two months later, she decides to swim again.

Same conditions. Icy cold. There's a fog. It's freezing. But this time, she makes it. She can't see the shoreline. But in her mind's eye, she's got a picture of where she needs to get.

This time, she smashed the record set by the fastest man by over two hours. And she made it to the other side. Friends, Christ is faithful to His Word. Faithful He has been.

Faithful He will be. What does that mean for us? Christ's faithfulness means we can live with faith-filled perseverance. Friends, Jesus Christ is the one who lived and died and rose again.

Gave everything for us. So that now we can give everything for Him. Friends, Jesus Christ radically gave all for us. He did it so that we can know Him and be with Him for all eternity.

[40 : 37] So that we can get through the wilderness and come into the promised land. Friends, Jesus died in our place. So that when you and I die, we will pass through death into life forever.

Jesus rose again. So that we too can be sure that we will rise with Him forever. So hold fast. In the ups and downs of the wilderness journey, don't give up.

He is faithful. Keep on persevering. Let His faithfulness fuel our faith and perseverance in Him. Let me pray for us as we come to close.

Lord Jesus, faithful you have been, faithful you will be. Lord, thank you so much for the book of Numbers that shows us how the story ends. That God, if we can simply trust you, simply hold on to you, you will bring us through.

God, help us to live lives of such faith and confidence that we hold on to you in the midst of the wilderness. Help us to get through, Lord, knowing that we are almost home.

[41 : 39] Lord, we pray. We need you. When the storms of life come, when difficulty come, help us to be worshippers. Help us to be wary of the seduction of this world. Help us to war against sin and to hold fast to you.

In your great name we pray. Amen. Amen.