



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Exodus 1:1-22

Exodus

"Blessing in Prosperity"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For those of you who are visiting, welcome, and we started a series in the book of Exodus last week. And we are in Exodus chapter 1 and we will begin again this week with verse 1 and go through the chapter. So turn in your Bibles to Exodus 1 and follow along as I read verses 1-22.

"Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. And all the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was already in Egypt. And Joseph died, and all his brothers and all that generation. But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them."

"Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, 'Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them or else they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land.' So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; and

they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

"Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was name Shiphrah and the other was named Puah; and he said, 'When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see them upon the birthstool if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.' But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live. So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this thing, and let the boys live?' And the midwives said to Pharaoh, 'because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and they give birth before the midwife can get to them.' So God was good to the midwives, and the people multiplied, and became very mighty. It came about because the midwives feared God that He established households for them. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, 'Every son who was born you are to cast into the Nile, um, and every daughter you are to keep alive.'"

Let's bow together in a word of prayer and ask the Lord to bless this reading of His word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You that we can come together again this Sunday morning and we can open the scriptures together and as your people, a people who have been redeemed from the foundation of the world, objects of Your unmerited sovereign grace. We can study together and we can learn together and we can learn about ourselves and learn about You, and in so doing give praise so Your grace and Your mercy, which has been extended to an unworthy people. And that we are, Father, and we recognize that we have an abundance because You have been good to us, not because we've earned it, not because we've deserved it. And so we thank You for that and we pray that You would continue to extend grace to us this morning, that we might

perceive more deeply into these things, and we might understand the scriptures and we might be shaped by them and go out from this place a people who are encouraged by the work that You are doing within us and will continue to do within us until You finish Your work.

So bless us, Father, to that end. And we pray for those who are not with us this morning. We pray for those who are sick and we pray that You'd give healing to them, extend mercy to them, and encouragement. We pray for those who are traveling. We pray that You'd give them a safe return. And bless each of us that we would look to Christ and we would be encouraged by Him, and bless us to that end.

Bless our government. I pray in light of the recent elections that You give wisdom to those people whom You have placed in authority over us. Bless our president, we pray, in these difficult days. We pray that wisdom would prevail and that You would bless those men and bless us.

And bless us now as we look into the scriptures, that Christ would be glorified and each of us would be edified. We pray this in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] I think it would be true to say – in fact, it almost goes without saying – that all of us desire blessings. But I can also imagine that most people equate blessings with prosperity and comfort and good times and would never consider poverty or sickness and affliction as anything but a curse.

Consider Spurgeon's thoughts on this. He said, "I venture to say that the greatest earthly blessing that God can give to any of us is health, with the exception of sickness. Sickness has frequently been of more use to the saints of God than health has – a sick wife, a newly made grave, poverty, slander, sinking of spirit, might teach us lessons nowhere else to be learned so well. Trials drive us to the realities of religion."

Now no rightminded person invites hardships, but some of the greatest blessings come through hardships. It's in times of oppression

and affliction that our loyalty to the Lord is tested and our faith is refined. It's then that we are reminded that this world is not our home, that its rulers are not our masters, that its principles are not our standards. It's then that the world's hold on our affections, on our interests, on our allegiances, is broken, and our desire for the world to come is increased.

Israel's experiences in chapter 1, which happened for our instruction, as Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, "Bear these things out." In fact, as we read through this passage, I think we will see that the blessings of God are extended not only in the good times, but also in the bad times.

We noted last week the clear connection between the book of Genesis and the book of Exodus. Exodus is a continuation of Genesis. Genesis focuses on one family in particular, while Exodus on the development of that family into a nation. In Genesis makes promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In Exodus He begins to fulfill those promises.

Exodus picks up where Genesis leaves off, with the family of Jacob in Egypt. Canaan had suffered severe famine, but Egypt had an abundance of grain due to the wise planning of its prime minister. And so the sons of Jacob went to Egypt in search of food, not knowing that Egypt's prime minister was their younger brother Joseph whom they had sold into slavery earlier. But after a series of tests, the brothers were reconciled, and at Pharaoh's invitation, Joseph invited or asked his family, Jacob and his brothers and their families, to immigrate to Egypt and make it their home.

Jacob was hesitant to do that. He remembered his grandfather Abraham's failure in Egypt. He also remembered that when famine had come in his father's day, the Lord spoke to Isaac and told him not to leave the land of Canaan and go to Egypt. And now he's invited to come down there, so he's hesitant. But God calmed his fears when in Genesis 46 He spoke to him in a vision of the night and He said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for

I will make you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt and I will also surely bring you up again. And Joseph will close your eyes."

So with that encouragement, that confirmation, the family moved to Egypt and they settled in the land of Goshen, a very fertile area in the Nile Delta. An ancient Egyptian poem extolls the bounty of that region, describing its granaries as so full of barley that they come near to the sky. Onions and leeks are for food, and lettuce of the garden, pomegranates, apples, and olives, sweet wine, surpassing honey, and it goes on to speak of all of the bounty of that region and how ships, merchant ships, leave that land laden with all kinds of food.

So Pharaoh gave them a rich region of Egypt to inhabit, which is amazing, since Egyptians hated shepherds, which Jacob and his family were; and they hated Semites, which Jacob and his family were. But it was clearly the unusual work of God's providence.

The whole series of events, from the hateful sale of Joseph into slavery to his emergence as prime minister and the invitation of the family to come to Egypt was providential. As Joseph told his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result to preserve many people alive."

And why did God bring them down into Egypt? Why was it that He preserved them there rather than in Canaan? It wasn't because there was a famine in Canaan, because He had kept Isaac in Canaan while there was a famine, and He could have certainly preserved them in the midst of famine in Canaan.

Now the reason why God moved this family down to Egypt is clear from the later chapters of Genesis. And as one reads that, one sees how Jacob's family was increasingly becoming like the Canaanites. Now they were intermarrying with them. They were acting like them. Their very existence was being threatened by the influence of the Canaanites. They were being drawn into that society. They were under the threat at least of being assimilated into that society.

And so the Lord took them out of Canaan and He brought them to Egypt, where He segregated them. The Egyptians wanted to have nothing to do with them. They hated shepherds. But they segregated them in a very fertile area so that they prospered and they grew into a nation, as Moses writes in Exodus 1:7. "But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them."

These were the good times, in which they enjoyed peace. They enjoyed prosperity, the blessing of God, so that they could be strengthened and developed into a nation. That's one thing peace and prosperity does for the people of God – at least that it should do for the people of God, and that's give them increase and give them the ease and the comfort, whereby they can study and they can grow and they can prosper. And in this case, in this physical sense of blessing, they were given physical material increase.

And their development in Egypt was God's miraculous work. The language of verse 7 underlines that, because it's the same language that one finds in Genesis chapter 1, where God created the living creatures and He caused the sea and the land and the sea to team with them. Well, now in Egypt He's causing the land to team with the sons of Israel. And so in doing that He was fulfilling the promises that He had made to Abraham and to Jacob, that He would make a great nation of them in Egypt.

Well, all of this happened during an age that has been designated by historians as the middle kingdom of Egypt's history. It was an age long after the pyramids and the Sphinx had been built, an age dating approximately from the 19th to the 18th century B.C. It was the age of the patriarchs. But it was an age that came to an end and was followed by an intermediate period, a time of distress when the monarchy broke down, when Egypt was invaded by an Asiatic people called the Hyksos, people who introduced to Egypt chariot warfare. They conquered the Egyptians. Their domination of them lasted about 150 years. But the Egyptians learned chariot warfare from

the Hyksos and learned it well so that they were able to use it later to drive them out of Egypt. They also used their chariots later to pursue the Israelites as they left in their disastrous experience at the Red Sea.

But the defeat of the Hyksos marked the beginning of the new kingdom age, with new dynasties in Egypt. It was the period of Egypt's imperial glory, and the period when, according to verse 8, a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph.

Those are ominous words, because they mark a change in Egyptian policy toward the Israelites. They had enjoyed years of relative peace in which they had prospered. And now all of that was to be taken away from them. And yet it was never intended to be permanent.

Before Joseph's death, he had told them in the very end of Genesis that Egypt was not their home. At least, that's the effect of his words. They would eventually leave, and he tells them that when they do so they are to carry his bones up from there. So that's a reminder to them that this is temporary. Egypt is not their home. They were just sojourners there.

Material prosperity has its good purposes. And it is a genuine blessing of the Lord. What a person enjoys in this life, the good things of this world, ultimately come from the hand of a good and a gracious God. But those blessings become a curse when the blessings become the chief end of life and they cease to become a means to the end of life, which is to glorify God, and they become a curse for those who are blessed when those who have the possessions lose sight of the future promises, lose sight of spiritual realities, and lose perspective and begin to settle into this world as though it's our home.

Israel may have gone through that change. They had enjoyed many years of prosperity, and it's not hard to imagine that they began to look at this world, specifically look at Egypt as their home, consider it as the Promised Land. They had prospered long in a land of prosperity. But if they were in danger of losing sight of Canaan as the Promised Land and were becoming too comfortable in Egypt, the

Egyptians reminded that they didn't belong there when this new king arose who did not know Joseph.

Now that doesn't mean that he was completely ignorant of him. It means that he had no appreciation of Joseph. He had no love for him, gave no consideration to his great services to Egypt. Many years had gone by. Many changes had occurred within Egypt. And so times had dimmed the memory of Joseph in the mind of the Egyptians. And so Pharaoh felt no sense of gratitude to Joseph, saw no reason to deal generously with his people. And so a king arose who did not know Joseph, did not appreciate him.

And at this time Egypt was under the influence of a strong spirit of nationalism. They had recently driven out the foreigners from their land. They had regained the ascendancy over Egypt. They were enjoying their newly won freedom. And this large population of Israelites – Semites like the Hyksos – were people that caused them great concern. They were large in number. They were a mighty people, and so Pharaoh said to his people in verses 9 and 10, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them."

Now, that word "wisely" is the word we have for wisdom in the Bible. It's the word that is attached to the proverbs. But here it doesn't mean godly wisdom. It's worldly wisdom. It's the wisdom of expediency, the kind of wisdom that sets as its guiding principle the bottom line. Winning is everything, that kind of mentality. It's the same word we find in regard to Biblical godly wisdom, but here it's not that. It's worldly wisdom, and so he says, "Let's deal wisely" – some have paraphrased it – "with them, lest they multiply and in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us and depart from the land."

Egypt was vulnerable from attack from the northern borders. And so Pharaoh was concerned that the Israelites might become a possible **fifth column** should an invading force of Asiatics Semitic peoples come in, such as the Hyksos, and they would join themselves

to that group and rise up against the Egyptians, and not only defeat them, but leave. They want to keep them there and they can use them for their services, as we'll see.

Well, the Israelites had done nothing to provoke fear or hostility. They had simply existed in the land at the invitation of an earlier pharaoh, and they prospered. But their prosperity caused envy. It caused jealousy and it caused an irrational fear. One writer calls this the first historical example of an anti-Jewish mentality comparable with modern anti-Semitism. But ultimately what lies behind their envy, their fear, is the hostility of the seed of the serpent toward the seed of the woman that set forth way back in Genesis chapter 3.

This is a spiritual issue. It's not ultimately an economical political issue. Had they truly dealt with this issue and this circumstance wisely, they could have simply invited them to leave and usher them out of the land. And there's something going on here than that. This is a spiritual thing. This is the hostility of Satan toward the people of God.

The identity of this pharaoh is not given. Different names have been suggested. He's probably one of the first three pharaohs of the 18th dynasty. And throughout the chapter there is a succession of pharaohs. One gets the impression by reading this chapter that there's only one pharaoh all the way through, but that's really not likely, because the events of this chapter span the period of about 90 to about 130 years, and so there's more than one pharaoh involved. But one gets the impression there's only one.

But the number of pharaohs and even the identity of the pharaoh is unimportant, because all are the same in their opposition to the people of God. It's as if there was only one, because they all share the same spirit of hostility. In fact, the word "pharaoh" is of course not the name of the king, and originally that was a word that meant "the great house" and it spoke of the palace in which the king lived. But by the time of our text, by the time of the 18th dynasty, it came to be

used of the person who occupied the palace. It came to be used of the king and it's used something like we use the word "The White House" or "City Hall." We refer to the man of the White House and those connected with him by that term, and that's what's being referred to here.

What's significant, I think, in the pharaoh and the fact that he's anonymous is that this is an institution. It doesn't matter how many come and go, it's an institution that was hostile toward God. It was united in its spirit against God, and so in a sense it's one pharaoh, because they're all of the same type. And these pharaohs, they feared the Israelites. They feared their numbers. And so they decided to try to control them by means of suppression. And the means that they chose was enslavement.

Pharaoh put taskmasters over the Israelites and they forced them to build storage cities, the cities of Pithom and Raamses. From the Egyptian standpoint, this did seem to be a wise policy, because through slavery they control these people. They worked them for free and could hope to reduce their large numbers, since hard labor often ends in death. And so this is the policy that they adopted, but it was all in vain. The more they oppressed them, the more they multiplied and spread, so that, as verse 12 states, "The Egyptians were in dread of the sons of Israel."

But rather than conclude that something beyond the natural was happening here and that they should leave these people alone, they became more ruthless and made the Israelites' lives bitter, as Moses writes in verse 14. And they did that by increasing the demands with hard labor and mortar and bricks and all kinds of labor in the field.

The hard labor and mortar and bricks involve both taking clay from the Nile and making it into bricks that were then dried in the sun. And then with those bricks, constructing buildings. And large daily quotas of bricks were demanded of the Israelites. There are ancient text that speak of this, and they put enormous quotas upon the

slaves of Egypt, so much so that they could rarely meet the quotas each day. And it was a very oppressive kind of institution.

There's an inscription on a wall painting that dates back to this period and the painting depicts various scenes of buildings being constructed by Semites or Asiatics like the Israelites, and they are both making and laying bricks with the words coming from one of the taskmaster's mouth, "The rod is in my hand. Do not be idle." And so that was the way they would enforce the labor of these individuals. And the labor in the fields consisted especially of heavy labor in the irrigation system. Egyptian agriculture isn't sustained by rainfall. There's so little there that it can't sustain the growth of crops. It's sustained by the Nile River, which annually rises and floods the area, and with that water the land is made fertile. And also they used a system of canals and ditches to irrigate the fields.

And so the Israelites would probably have been employed in keeping those ditches, that irrigation system, clean of mud and silt. And they would have had to be involved in drawing the water up from the Nile into those ditches, which was done by means of an irrigation device. It's like a paddle wheel, in which it's driven by foot, which is very hard labor, very difficult to operate. This was what they were subjected to, and twice Moses describes this as rigorous labor, meaning labor in harshness, in severity. It was backbreaking work in the scorching heat, enforced by the whip and rod. But this scheme to reduce the population didn't work either. And so Pharaoh implemented another plan, one which they could have labeled the final solution of the Jewish problem, when he instructed the Hebrew midwives to kill every newborn male Hebrew child. Without males, there could be no reproduction of the race and there would be no warriors with which to contend. And the females could still be of service to the state, or taken as slave wives, and in that way assimilated into Egypt.

It's not clear why there are only two midwives mentioned when Pharaoh calls them in. Seems that that's hardly enough to deal with such a massive population as the Israelites had. But there were

probably two midwives who were something like the chief midwives, like the head nurses of a hospital, and so that they were in charge of a whole team of midwives. And it's not clear whether these midwives that Pharaoh speaks to are Hebrew women or Egyptian midwives of the Hebrew women.

It seems that Pharaoh would have been more inclined to trust Egyptian women with this nefarious scheme of his than he would be to trust Hebrew women to do it. At the same time, the names that are listed here in verse 15, Shiphrah and Puah, are thought to be Semitic names, not Egyptian names. So it's really not clear what nationality they were. And regardless of that, what takes place isn't determined by their nationality. It's determined by their heart, because these were women of faith. Moses writes in verse 17 that they feared God. And so they defied Pharaoh's decree, his decree of genocide, and they, the text says, let the boys live.

And the choice that they were given is essentially the choice that we face every day, to fear and obey the invisible God, or to fear and obey the visible powers of this world. Pharaoh was believed to be a visible god and they knew of his absolute authority and his power. They knew of his soldiers and his prisons. And yet they also knew of the power of God.

And perhaps that's due to their involvement with the Hebrew women in the giving of birth, because they would have become very conscious of the fact that these women give birth at an incredible rate. There's something unusual here. This is not normal. God is with these people, and if they were Egyptian women, came to believe in the God of the Hebrews because they saw the manifestation of His power and the giving of life.

So they were convinced of the reality and the power of God and they made their choice to follow Him, to live according to His commands and His principles. And they made the choice that we must make, to walk by faith, to trust the invisible God, to trust His word, rather than the visible world and our senses. Because if we trust our

senses, as we look at the world, we'll follow them and we'll follow them to our own ruin. These women did not do that. They stood against the powers of that day and they walked by faith.

Well, Pharaoh detected that the male children were not being put to death, since the Hebrew population continued to increase. And so he called the midwives in and he asked them why they had let the boys live. And the midwives answer in verse 19, "Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and they give birth before the midwife can get to them."

Now, that was not true. At least, that was not completely true. It was what we call a white lie. It may have been true that the Hebrew women were vigorous. In fact, that seems very clear from the birth rate of the Hebrew women, which were unusually prolific. But it was clear that this was a ruse on the part of the midwives, designed to save them from the king's wrath. They do the right thing in sparing the lives of these Hebrew children, but then they lie about the reason for their lives continuing. And it evidently worked, because we read in verse 20, "So God was good to the midwives." Pharaoh believed them. It made sense to him as he thought about it. And God blessed them.

Now that raises a question in our minds, I think, because it causes us to wonder does that mean that God blesses lies if they are told with a good intention, with a good purpose? And the answer to that I think is no. God wasn't good to the midwives because they lied. He was good to the midwives because they feared Him and they protected His people. And if you'll remember, and I'm sure most of you do who have gone through the book of Genesis recently, in Genesis chapter 12 God gives that promise to Abraham. "I will bless those who bless you." And these women were blessed, because they blessed the people of God and they lived by faith.

And verse 21 states that that's the cause of the blessing. It says that He blessed them because they feared Him. Not because they lied, but because they feared Him. He doesn't bless the principles of expediency. He doesn't bless the principle of the bottom line, at least

not in the long term, and that's not why He was blessing them. He was blessing them for their fear of Him, and He blessed them by establishing households for them, or literally He made for them houses, which means He gave them families of their own, evidently large families, and He preserved their prosperity.

And so because they helped Israel be fruitful, God made them fruitful. And also recorded their names. Now that's interesting, because as we mentioned earlier, Pharaoh's name is not recorded. He's anonymous. But these women are not. We have their names. They're remembered. And that's a testimony to God's values. All that the Pharaoh was, all that he represented –earthly power, earthly glory, human achievement, worldly pleasure – is only temporary. It's illusory. It doesn't last. What is remembered, what endures, what God memorializes is that which is done by faith. And so these obscure women are recorded in the book of Exodus and remembered throughout the ages, whereas the Pharaoh, the greatest man of his day – and this was at the height of Egypt's power; it's power was never as great as it was at this time – these are men whose names are not mentioned.

And so God honors these two women for their preservation of life. But Pharaoh was still determined to eliminate the Israelites. He was still bent on this purpose of death, this policy of infanticide, and so he, in even greater rage, in even greater determination, brings all of his people into his plan, commanding that all newborn children were to be drowned in the Nile. This is not just the policy now of the midwives. This is to be the policy of everyone, every Egyptian citizen, every loyal patriotic citizen.

But this too would fail. And yet in this last decree, we have I think a hint of irony. As one writer, a Jewish commentator notes, "The very agency of destruction that he has chosen, water, is eventually to become the instrument of his own punishment, referring to the devastation of the army in the Red Sea.

Opposition to God is never ultimately successful. It may have initial success. People of God can be beaten down, but never conquered. And those who oppose Him can never ultimately finally triumph, and Pharaoh is an example of that. His end was judgment, while faith, fear of God, as seen in the midwives, results ultimately in blessing. God blesses those who are of faith, and yet God's people don't seem to be in a state of blessing. In fact, they were suffering greatly. And many Israelites might have wondered in all of this, this long period of suffering, where is God in the midst of this? What's He doing? Does He see us? Does He remember?

Well, He was there. He was working among them and He was working for their good. The fact that they increased the more they were afflicted was the evidence that His hand was upon them, that He was working within them. And His purpose in the affliction can be understood in light of the promise that He had made to them, made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the promise to give them the land of Canaan.

In fact, whenever affliction comes on the people of God, it has to be looked in light of the promises that God has made. So it's very important that we know the promises. And it was very important for these people to know and to remember those promises that God had given, because all of this was designed to work toward that end. And they were not to settle down in Egypt. And so He used the Egyptians to, as one writer puts it, stir up their nest, make Egypt distasteful to them and prepare them for the call to leave.

He was creating in them a longing for the promise, a longing for the unseen, a trust in the unseen. He was giving them, through all of the affliction that they were going through, spiritual perspective. And to have that perspective and to live near to God as a result of the affliction that one experiences is a far greater blessing than comfort and ease in Egypt.

We tend not to think that way. We tend to think that the real blessings of life come with ease and comfort and a bountiful life. And

as we said at the beginning of this lesson, that's true, that it is a blessing of God. But it is a far greater blessing to be near to Him, to walk close with Him, than it is to have many things.

Well, it goes without saying that no one likes hard times. But we can take great comfort in the fact that God uses the difficult times for our good. As Spurgeon said, "Sickness has frequently been of more use to the saints of God than health has."

But affliction is also used to draw the unbeliever to salvation. How many people in the world have hesitated to come to the gospel because they want what the world offers and what they fear they'll lose with Christ.

The other night a young lady came to our door and she was selling magazine subscriptions. She was from the Caribbean and in the course of our conversation she asked what magazines I received. And so the first one I mentioned was *Christianity Today*. And when I said that, she says, "Oh, so you're a Christian. I've met many Christians in this neighborhood." And so I asked her, "Well, are you a Christian?" And she said, "Well, I'm a Christian, but I'm not a born again Christian." And so I asked her what she meant by that and she explained, well, she believed in God, but she wasn't living the life. She wasn't living the kind of life that she thought a Christian should live, therefore she didn't think she was a Christian.

So I explained to her that one does not become a Christian by living the life. That comes as a result of faith, but one becomes a Christian through faith in Christ and then lives a life of obedience as the evidence of one's faith. And so to make my point, I quoted Ephesians 2:8, 9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith."

But before I was even halfway through the verse, she finished it for me. And she knew scripture, and so I said, "Well, evidently you were raised in a Bible-believing home, a Christian home, and she acknowledged that she had and that she had gone to many revivals as a young girl. And she said she had often wanted to go to the front to receive Christ, but there was this little voice in her that kept saying

don't do it, because if you do that, you won't be able to enjoy all that the world has to offer. I said, "Well, what does the world offer?"

"Well, all the parties."

And we discussed this for a little while, discussed her resistance to the gospel. And before she left, I quoted John 6:44. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him." And I told her, "Pray to God and You tell Him, 'I can't come to You. I don't want to come to You. But I will come to You if You draw me,' and then ask Him to do that." She didn't say she would do that, but she thanked me and she walked off to the next house. But she was a good example, I think, of a person who has chosen the world over Christ. And sometimes in God's grace He turns a person's world upside down and He takes away the parties and the fun and the good times in order to draw them to Himself, in order to prepare them for the call of the gospel.

But whether He does that or not, whether He removes all of the things of this world from a person, the things of this world are transient. The best that the world has to offer is illusory. It doesn't last. And it's only that which is done by faith, only that which comes from the fear of God, that really lasts. I think we see this in this lesson. It has an appeal, it has a message, for the Christian, that affliction is designed to draw us to the Lord, but it also has a message for those who are not Christians, that the things of the world do not last and we are to come to Him. That's where eternal life is found. And so if you're here this morning and you don't know Christ, the first act of faith, the faith that God blesses, this faith in Christ as Savior, if you don't know Him as Savior, then I invite you to believe in Jesus Christ, to believe in Him. It doesn't come as a matter of works. We don't work our way to salvation and the blessing of God. We can't do that. We simply receive the work that He has already accomplished on our behalf and enter it and enjoy eternal life. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank You that in all of life and every experience that we have, You are working with Your people. The things that we would describe as the good times are blessings of Yours. You give them to us. But You work equally as effectively. You bless us as much or more through the difficult times. That's very hard for us to understand and we can continue to grumble and complain when things don't go our way.

And yet we know from the scriptures, we know from the experiences of the saints, that You bless in the midst of sickness and the midst of grief. And so we pray that if there are those in our midst who are going through that, that You would use that to their good, to draw them to You, to strengthen them, to bless them.

We pray that if there are any in here this morning that don't Christ as Savior they would not lean upon the things of this world, not seek the fullness of life in these things, but turn to Christ who is life indeed. We pray this in His name. Amen.