

Encouragements for and examples of venturing faith (Quality: Very good)

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: 29 June 2007

Preacher: Warboys, Ralph (1927-2008)

- [0 : 00] Independence upon them all, I ask your prayerful attention to the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 43 and especially verse 2.
- Isaiah 43 verse 2. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee.
- When thou walkest through the flow, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.
- That verse in our last hymn has been much upon my mind today, especially concerning our afflicted friend in hospital.
- When through the deep waters I call thee to go, the rivers of woe shall not thee overflow, for I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless, and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.
- [1 : 25] And that hymn is based much upon this second verse. Though the heading of the hymn is concerning the exceeding great and precious promises, which of course we have in this second verse.
- But we cannot see a promise in the scriptures and tie a label on it with our name and claim it as ours.
- Thou shalt not steal. Someone we know may have been given a promise. We cannot borrow it from them. But we are allowed to beg.
- Though we must not steal or borrow, we can beg, Lord, do give me such exceeding great and precious promise.
- But when we consider the scripture, we should know to whom the words are addressed. In the previous chapter we read of many solemn things pronounced especially upon the tribes of Judah because of their sins and backslidings.
- [2 : 52] But this chapter 43 commences, The name Jacob means a deceiver, a supplant.
- And so often in the scripture, when the Lord's people are described as Jacob, It either sets forth their condition in their own regeneracy or their old unbelieving nature.
- They are all, as it were, created as Jacob. But just in passing, where Paul writes in the epistle to the Romans concerning election and the Lord's words to Rebekah so many years before, he did not say, Israel have I loved, Esau have I hated.
- He didn't say, Israel have I loved, he said, Jacob have I loved. Yes, the Lord's people were loved. Yes, the Lord's people were loved in their unregeneracy according to the purposes of election from eternity past.
- When they had no love to him at all, he loved them. He was created as Jacob, but now formed to Israel.
- [4 : 47] And was that name of Jacob not changed when he was in the depths of trouble? In a path of obedience, mark you.

We can well expect chastening and trials if we walk in a path of disobedience. Like Jonah of Aaron.

I have often been concerned when even some of the Lord's people have said, I know I'm doing the right thing because everything is going smoothly for me. Well, it may be so, but that's no mark.

No mark. The Lord said to the disciples, let us go over onto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

The four of them at least were fishermen and might have seen the sign of an approaching storm, but they obeyed. But they didn't know back when. Jacob was told, return unto thy father's house and I will be with thee.

[5 : 56] But one trouble after another, Laban pursuing after him and would have brought him back had not God prevented him. Esau coming to meet him with 400 men.

Trouble with the men of Shechem, though that was his fault for not pursuing his journey and building a house there. Dinah, of course, going down to see the women of the world.

But all in a path of obedience. Form thee, O Israel. Fear not.

Why not fear? For I have redeemed thee. I have paid the debt that thou hast incurred through thy sins.

I have called thee by thy name. Thy name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel. For as a prince thou hast power with God and hast prevailed.

[7 : 11] We sometimes sing wrestling prayer can wonders do. Bring relief in deepest right prayer can force a passage through.

Iron bars and brazen gates. Last week on a week evening I was speaking concerning the need to pray with faith believing.

Oh, how often one feels guilty, surprised when our prayers are answered instead of expecting them to be answered. But not in our way or in our time.

And so this is the person to whom these promises are given. Do you and I see if only slightly some resemblance here?

We certainly are all, as it were, as Jacob in our unregeneracy. But what a mercy if we are formed into Israel and are amongst the redeemed of the Lord.

[8 : 25] Does not the psalmist speak of those in the 107th psalm? Let me just turn to it one's memory often fails these days and I cannot bear scripture misquoting.

Give thanks unto the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever. When the word endure is written it means continuing despite opposition.

Endureth forever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. Gathered them out of the lands and so on.

Wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way, unlike the princes who wander where there is no way. Hungry and thirsty, only a living soul hungers and thirst for righteousness.

Then they cried unto the Lord, in their travel. Well, let us look then as the Lord enables at the first of these promises. When thou passes, not if, not if, the certainty of tribulation.

[9 : 47] we read of it in that gospel recorded in John. Remembering the Lord there when he's speaking to the eleven, not to the twelve, Judas had already gone out.

In the world ye shall have tribulation. that peace through the blood of the cross.

And in the scriptures, waters so often set forth trials and tribulations, provisions, providentially and spiritually.

And spiritually. In the prophecy of Ezekiel, you read of waters of various depths.

And you read, he measured a thousand and brought me through. The waters are measured.

[10 : 53] We sometimes sing our sorrows in the scales he weighs and measures out our pains.

The wildest storm his word obeys his voice its rage restrains. I remind you of what we read concerning the church in Smyrna.

Again, a fear not. Fear thou none of the things which thou shalt suffer. To gain the certainty. Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison.

And ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee the crown of life.

Ten in scripture so often sets forth a full number of witnesses. Boaz took ten men of the city as witnesses that he'd purchased all that was eliminated.

[11 : 59] There were ten commandments. Ten plagues of Egypt. Ten virgins and so on might go on. But ten days.

And the devil can't make it ten and a half. And neither can you or I make it nine and a half. It will continue and at the depth that he sees fit for your soul's good and for his glory.

what could we want more than that? When thou passest through the waters.

One's mind goes to that time when the children of Israel left Egypt and Pharaoh pursued after them.

He said the wilderness that shut them in I'll divide them I'll slay them and so on and so forth. And the Red Sea lay before them.

[13 : 12] But God gave Moses a command to stretch out his rod over the waters.

That night there was that strong east wind and the waters were divided. And so the children of Israel passed through which the Egyptians are saying to do were drowned.

They drowned. the Lord made that path through those waters. And so he will with his people still and he goes before them.

For this promise is so sweet when thou passest through the waters I will be with thee as it were in the passing of the waters.

Not just after you've been through the waters but with you in the waters. Would you rather be in a smooth and easy path without the Lord's presence or in the depth of trouble and have his presence?

[14 : 36] I'm sure some of you like myself would say we'd rather be in the depth of trouble and have his felt presence. I read from Psalm 23 in that connection.

it is very sweet to me if one may mention one's personal experience it is almost 11 years since I was seriously ill with cancer.

A complete blockage in my stomach vomiting blood that night. and as I was being wheeled down to the operating theatre a day or so later not knowing what the outcome would be my father in law had the same problem and he died.

I did not know whether I would as well but especially that verse yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil no trouble why for thou art with me and one felt the comfort of the Lord's presence for thou art with me thy rod and thy staff they comfort me does not Job speak of the shadow of death he prays for comfort before I go whence I shall not return even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death the land of darkness is darkness itself and of the shadow of death without any order and where the light the natural light is as darkness

I will be with thee we read of that occasion when the Lord said to his disciples come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while so it has often been with the Lord's dear people in hospital or other places when they cannot gather around his word with his people but the important thing is the Lord went with them in the desert place he didn't send them into the desert place while he remained in the cultivated land he went with them I will be with thee was it not said to Peter in the judgment hall did not

[17 : 49] I see thee in the garden with him have you and I spiritually been in the garden of Gethsemane with the Lord Jesus Christ seeing him sweat those great drops of blood falling down to the ground or were we asleep like Peter James and John what could ye not watch watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation there was that occasion too when he took them up the mount of transfiguration the same three favoured disciples and we read they feared as they entered into the cloud a cloud like a more familiar fog upon the earth hides what lies before us on our journey and fear of the unknown is something we seem born with you see it with a small child afraid of the dark fear of the unknown they feared as they entered the cloud and so often when we enter into trouble not knowing what the outcome will be we fear but

Jesus came and touched them and said be not afraid and when they lifted up their eyes not before pour not on thyself too long lest it sink thee lower when they lifted up their eyes they saw Jesus only only I will be with thee and through the rivers there is a distinction between waters and rivers rivers invariably are boundaries rivers river thames a boundary between assics and can surrey and meddlesex river waveney a boundary between norfolk and suffolk and so one might go on and often in our path providentially and spiritually there are rivers that lie before us that we know we've got to cross you dear younger friends you have rivers the time comes when you had to leave home and commence school leave a junior school go to a senior school leave senior school and go to college or commence work these are all rivers that you have to pass over you cannot go back to the junior school once you've started at the senior many rivers in our providential paths who we marry where we live and so on nothing is too small to pray about and nothing is too great but before us each unless we are spared to the

Lord's second coming lies the river of death lives and river of death if thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee then how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan and Jordan was of course the boundary between the wilderness and the promised land and the children of Israel approached it from the east bank Moses had died and been buried and the Lord spoke to Joshua how he must have felt his insufficiency and his need of God's help he had served under

Moses and now the responsibility had passed on to him and the Lord said to him I know this is spiritually we cannot enter into this text in that aspect as the Lord's people are no longer under the law but Moses my servant is dead now therefore arise go over this Jordan and the Lord went on to say as I was with Moses so I will be with thee I will not fail thee nor forsake me be strong and of a good courage for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I swear unto their fathers to give and then we read after the spies had returned we have that wonderful example of venturing faith the children of

Israel were encamped at Shittim some six miles from the river and Jordan was overflowing all its banks for it was the time of harvest when the snows of Lebanon and Mount Hermon melted the least suitable time to cross this river to human wisdom to human wisdom and he was commanded speak unto the people that they go forward and the ark of the covenant went before no rod was stretched over this river as it sets forth the people of God no longer under the law but under grace entering as it were the gospel land of liberty the priests went before them bearing the ark of the covenant but the waters were not divided when they left shedding but when the feet of the priests were dipped in the brim of the water the waters were divided cut off at that city

[25 : 16] Adam and then of course the others flowed down towards the dead sea and the way was made we have venturing faith with those dear women in the gospel recorded in Mark they bought sweet spices to anoint the body of the Lord love was in their actions and their religion and love cost them something if your religion costs you but little it's worth but little if it costs you nothing it's worth nothing they rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment and then they ventured forth though they said who shall roll us away the stone but when they looked the stone was already rolled away perhaps before one here there is that great river of making a public profession speaking of what the

Lord has done for their sons and especially for a man who has to engage in public prayer what a great river this is and you may feel you will be swept away to your destruction we read of several in recent days who have been swept away by those floods and drought and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee and so often with the Lord's dear people spiritually it's been a time of harvest when they pass through these rivers in keeping of his commandments there is great delight it may be concerning the ministry what a great river that is and you will be tempted you will bring a reproach upon your profession be a burden to the

Lord's people be left to error we know something of these trials they shall not overflow even the apostle Paul spoke of his concern lest having pleased you others he himself should be a cast away they shall not overflow when not if when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned neither shall the flame kindle upon I expect your thoughts like mine have gone to Shadrach Meshach and Abednego what faithful servants of God they were the king had commanded them to bow down to that golden image if ye shall bow down well but if not ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning folly furnace who is that

God that can deliver you out of my hands we are not careful to answer thee in this matter we are not going to say give us time to think about it give you a half hearted answer our God is able to deliver us out of thy heart but if not you see they knew God could but they did not know whether he would some of the Lord's people do die martyrs days even if it was not the Lord's will to deliver them we will not bow down nor worship the golden image which they were set up and so the furnace heated seven times more than normal the mighty men that threw them in bound were slain by the fire and they fell down bound into the midst of the burning fire he flows

Nebuchadnezzar astonished did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire true oh king I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hell and the form of the fourth is like the son of God he was with them in the fire and their hairs were not singed neither were their coats changed nor the smell of fire had passed on but they had to walk in the fire not stand still just a simple thing concerning walking years ago before I retired

[30 : 57] I would sometimes have my lunch in the staff restaurant and at that time I used to notice the girls in the kitchen wore a shoe which did not have a heel which seemed to be the fashion at that time and I noticed this while they were walking forward or standing still their shoes stayed on but if they took a backward step they hurt their feet their shoes came off they banged their toes a simple parable if you and I take backward steps we shall bang our toes and hurt our feet there are times when we have to stand still but especially we have to walk modern terminology walking is a number of discrete movements it is not an analogue movement you can stand on an escalator and you don't need to take another step you just rise smoothly up to the next floor how different from the pilgrimage path one step then perhaps several steps close together then a standing still but always a moving on but is the

Lord with us in our walk in our walk how can two walk together except they be agreed we read of the Lord walking to Emmaus with those two disciples their eyes were holden they did not know him he described them as fools slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken they believed the promised Messiah would come without doubt but they did not believe the 53rd of Isaiah he would be numbered with the transgressors but they were not offended did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us by the way and opened to us the scriptures what a mercy then I mentioned

Jacob earlier you see the Lord said to him return to thy father's house and I will be with thee in those various trials so it is our prayer that the Lord would be with us if we are his people walking in his paths though these paths may be through waters through rivers through the fire not what an infinite mercy to feel his presence is with us in thy presence I am happy in thy presence I am secure in thy presence all afflictions I can cheerfully endure but far from thee how sad it is that and just in conclusion the Lord emphasizes for

I am the Lord thy God is he your God can you say with the poet my God my father blissful name may I call thee mine may I with sweet assurance claim a portion so divine for I am the Lord thy God the Holy One of Israel thy Saviour I gave Egypt for thy ransom Ethiopia and Sheba for me since thou was precious in my sight thou hast been honourable and I have loved therefore I give men for thee and people for thy life fear not for I am with thee well may the Lord bless us with these precious promises and he which promises is able to perform

Lord increase our faith Amen