

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Perseverance As An Aspect of Meekness

Taught by Tom Hansz

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Heavenly Father we thank you that Jesus has done it all, that because of your ever-loving heart for us, your unbelievable amount of grace that you show upon us, you've washed us, made us clean, as white as snow. We just thank you so much that we have this privilege to be a part of your family and that we are joint heirs with Christ in the Kingdom to come. We ask you this morning, Lord, to be with us. Use my mouth and words to instruct us, help us to understand what we need to know of your Word and perseverance, and be with all of us as we put our minds and hearts together, that we might be stronger and come closer to you because of what your Word is doing with us through your Holy Spirit, and in the name of Christ. Amen. Good morning, men!

Audience Members: Good morning.

Bruce, a couple of weeks ago, asked me to talk on perseverance as it relates to meekness. I think next week he plans to start Matthew 5:5, or might go another week, depending on where he is in his outline. I thought perseverance, meekness...slam dunk! That'd be great. Well my Bible has just one entry of perseverance in it. So we started to dig. A lot of what we look at, you'll see depends on the translation you have, whether it's called endurance or a couple, we'll say perseverance.

What I want to do, and the way that I have this little graphic for you at the top of outline is I came to think that perseverance is really a part of faith. What is faith? Depend upon, adhere to, trust in and rely on. I always get them wrong. DART, the acronym for faith, perseverance goes through the whole thing. That's what this little graphic is intended to do. It's hanging in there. It's more than endurance. So we'll take a look at some examples of endurance this morning. Then we'll also look at some things that I think go beyond just endurance, and that's what I would call perseverance.

Endurance is mainly what I think many of you are going through right now. You're going to endure this next half hour {LAUGHTER}, and then the will be over. Endurance doesn't seem to have a continuum thing, and that's why, again, this little graphic kind represents time. Perseverance is God with you constantly, throughout your life, and we'll take a look at that.

A couple of good examples of time is like when Jesus is walking on the water and Peter comes out and looks at him, and then starts to slip. So Jesus gets him back in the boat, and he says, "Oh you of little faith." I bring this up because a lot of times we think, "Well, Peter started falling in the water and he started to drown because he took his eyes of Jesus." No, that's not what Jesus said. Jesus said, "You of little faith." I think wait a minute, we just fed five thousand people. You just saw fishes and loaves of bread come from nothing, and everyone left satisfied. Now you can't walk on the water. Short duration of faith. Not size of faith. Because Jesus said, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could move this mountain." So he's not talking about size. He's talking about continuation; the perseverance of your faith.

Some other examples of endurance is when Jacob is wrestling with the angel, which many people think is the Lord, and they're wrestling all through the night. And Jacob just hung in there until the angel touched his thigh and he endured, is what the Bible said. So there's an event that is happening, but it's just he endured through that event. We'll see some other places where it goes beyond that in his life.

Or when the woman up in Sidon comes to Jesus and asks him to heal her daughter. He says, "I'm here

for the Jews. I'm here for God's children, not the dogs." She said, "Even the dogs get to eat the scraps from the table." She hung in there. She persevered. Well, I shouldn't say persevered; she endured is a better way to say it. Then he met her need. She did not give up.

When I think of perseverance, it tends to be more in terms of a function of grace, and it's more than endurance, which then the Greek word, hypomonē, is a focus on something, to stay in there, to hang on to. It's the characteristic of a man who's not swerved from his deliberate purposes and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings.

We're going to look at some of these people who have gone through trials and who have had sufferings. Let's look at Luke 8:15.

Audience Member: *"But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who having heard the Word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience."*

Other translations will say that with perseverance. Continuous. That part of how the word goes out as received by some people that they hang in there with it, and you have to be, what we would say today, keep on. I think perseverance more as keep on keeping on. Keep going that extra mile. Someone else read Romans 5:3-5.

Audience Member: *"³Not only so, but we rejoice in our sufferings, but we know that suffering produces perseverance, ⁴and perseverance character, and character hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts that is the Holy Spirit who he has given us."*

Here again is that word hypomonē, which is endurance. It is by God to produce in us, to help us grow, to help us to get to maturity. In James 1:3-4, we another example of endurance.

Audience Member: *"²My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (KJV)*

What version is that?

Audience Member: *King James.*

The ESV would say that's patience, again, and perseverance. Patience, perseverance, hanging in there, not giving up. But I think it's more than just holding on to the end. It's entrusting yourself to the hands of God Almighty, who is the embodiment of love. I think sometimes we can endure things and it's almost like an act of will.

I want to look today at three of our, what I call our members of the cloud of witnesses—David, Moses and Joseph. In their life, it's more than just enduring. That's where I get the idea of perseverance goes for such a long time with one idea.

We endure, we have these experiences which strengthen our faith, which gets our focus back on God, and these are parts of our life that would come in and come out as we go through. But if we look at our whole life, I can sense a better feeling of what perseverance is like. That's what I want to get across for you this morning.

There's another word that's used—it's in Ephesians 6:16-19. It's in addition to all this, "^{16b}take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet

of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.” (ESV)

It’s this last one, “keep on praying for all the saints,” that this first time, the only time that this...and I can’t pronounce it...

Audience Member: *Proskartereō.*

There you go. Did everyone get that? It’s, again, the steadfastness of hanging on, keeping in there. In Romans 12:12, we also have it written. Does someone have that?

Audience Member: *“Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.”*

Again, the ESV would say patience, perseverance. But again, what we want to do is realize that God sets before us these things in our lives and expects us to go through them, but then he also gives us the idea of, “Think about my church. Pray for these people,” not just like this morning, we’ll pick up a few names and we’ll pray. But pray continually. Keep going. It’s a way of life with us. It’s the prayers for the battle.

Audience Member: *One thing I always appreciate about this group is the application that always comes forth. Whenever I first started down with faith, I’d hear stuff like this, and I’d get so frustrated because I wouldn’t have that endurance, I wouldn’t have that ability, and I’d look at myself as being just this horrible Christian and not living up to the faith. What I found was, by the time you hear repeatedly and through some other studies, if we really focus on the sovereignty of God, it allows us to endure. Because if we truly understand God’s sovereignty and that he has foreordained all of these things to pass, we can bear up under that weight and realize, wait a second, my purpose, one of the things that you had first, my purpose is to glorify God, so in this, through this, how might I glorify God. It allows, at least from my personal application, hopefully someone else could take this, is it allows me to bear up under it and I’m not focusing on the suffering now; I’m focusing on how might I glorify God through this. It just makes it a lot easier.*

Your focus is back on him.

Audience Member: *Exactly.*

Audience Member: *It’s like a word picture that someone shared at choir practice on Wednesday. Sunday was the Pittsburgh Marathon, and the Urban Impact Choir was standing on the stairs of ACAC Church singing. They did that last year as well. Probably 60-70 children singing as the runners come down the street, and there were thousands of people lining the street, so we have these enduring runners that are running 25-26 miles and we have these people along the sides that are cheering, and we have this choir. So if we think of a picture of heaven, we have heaven where the choir is singing, and the saints along the side are cheering, and those entering heaven are running, they’re enduring this race, and the saints are cheering and the choir is singing. What a wonderful picture of what heaven would be and the diversity of mankind and that...it was just a wonderful picture. The sound of that choir singing and the encouragement and the runners as I understand it, as they were coming, they could hear that because there was a lot of magnification and there was an encouragement to them as well, so what a picture.*

It was. It’s a great picture. Thank you. What would Paul say? Run with all that you...

Audience Member: *Finish the race.*

Yeah, do the best you can. Go for that crown.

Audience Member: *Picking up on the Marathon theme. Thirty pounds ago, I used to run marathons. {LAUGHTER} To me, it's such a vivid image of the Christian life. I think when you're early in the faith, you worry about, like a runner who's inexperienced, how they feel at a certain part of the race. If the race is 26 miles, you might be out there at the fifth mile and say, "I just feel terrible." That's an indication of what the reality is for me, and it's not, because it's a matter of hanging in the race mile after mile after mile and coming to the men's group and things like that. It's part of that. It's a [UNCLEAR] race. It's long race. The only time you don't win is when you drop out of the race.*

What is the race? It's the time God has given each one of us. It's our lives. Run it as best you can. You don't know when that finish line is coming up. But by the grace of God, you'll be in good form as you go across it.

Don: *One thing that Ted said a number of months ago that is really true, unbelievers, for example, the commands in Romans 12—be patient in tribulation, devoted to prayer, on and on—[UNCLEAR] but what Ted says, [UNCLEAR], by the work of the Holy Spirit, its compulsory, it's just something that we long to do. Maybe not, we have, our flesh gets in the way at times, but it's something that by the grace of God, persevering is something we long to do. It's what we want to do.*

Because...God has put that desire in our hearts.

Don: *Exactly. Yes.*

Praise to him, that he's given us that want, that need to push through. Some people can do it on their own, but I don't think they can last. They also, it's imitation. It's a counterfeit.

Audience Member: *That's the story of the rabbit and the tortoise.*

Yes. The tortoise and the hare.

Audience Member: *Grace [UNCLEAR] to the swift.*

Bill: *I think I understand the sovereignty of God, that we're called to suffer. So in Romans 5:3 [UNCLEAR]... In Romans 5:3, it says, "and not only this, but we also exalt in our tribulation." That's really easy to say {LAUGHTER}, unless you're going through that tribulation. How do we exalt in our tribulation?*

I think one is you all of a sudden wake up one day and realize there's something that has come upon you. It's not something that we say, "Oh, I've got to suffer." No, we don't have to suffer. God will choose for something to come into our lives to cause us to suffer. How you respond...when you think of exalting, [UNCLEAR] say that...I'm trying to think of the exact verse, but when you are mourning, dress up. Don't put...Jesus is telling the Pharisees, "You put a sad makeup on your face on you put ashes and rent your clothes so everyone knows you're in mourning," and he says, "No. Put on your best suit, shine your shoes, put a smile on your face and go through it so people don't know you're mourning, but God does." It's just between you and God. That, I would think, would be a form of exalting. It's you and God—nobody else.

Audience Member: *I think a lot of us come to the Lord and we think our troubles are going to be all*

over. It's a deadly mistake in the Christian walk. We need to understand that we're always going to be tempted. We're going to walk through problem. If we can't...when we recognize we can't resolve them ourselves, we depend on the Lord more. The more you suffer, the more you're tempted, the more you have that battle going on, the more you have to understand what God's grace is about and exalt in that.

Sure. What does the devil do in combating that?

Audience Member: *Yeah, he never quits.*

He never quits, and he gets these guys out there to preach the Gospel of prosperity. If you believe in Christ, you'll prosper.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR]...*

Yeah. I'm not a real Christian cause I don't have the nice car and the big house.

Audience Member: *Yeah, I'm thinking along the line [UNCLEAR] questioning of...the one thing I think we can keep in mind is what Paul said, knowing whom you believe in. He knows in whom he believes and he knows that he is able to keep that which he committed against that day. It's just having that total trust in who Christ is and what he has done and what he's doing, and that he will...*

Audience Member: *Is God good?*

All the time.

Audience Member: *Okay, so God is good. It's easy for us to say God is good when life is good. But is God good when life is hard? [UNCLEAR] To me, that's the perseverance to...Satan wants us to question and doubt God's goodness, and so in our tribulation, when we exalt the Lord and say, "God is good. I don't understand this. I don't like this. This isn't the way I would do it. God, you didn't consult me on this. What are you doing? {LAUGHTER} You are good and I trust you for that."*

Very good.

Audience Member: *I see tribulation as a Red Sea experience, and I put that on [UNCLEAR] Ephesians. Who brought the Hebrew children to the most impossible place in the Sinai desert? God did. Who protected them? Who opened the Red Sea and who closed it? And showed them evidence of Pharaoh's men washing up on the far side, which I have a DVD which shows that they found [UNCLEAR]. But who dealt with it all? God did. He's always in front of us. Dick and I were just talking earlier about a rain storm. I'm a former driver, and I would run into these nasty rain storms out West. But I knew that there was sunshine on the other side because God said so. This perception came to me some time ago, and I tell people, "Your tribulation is a Red Sea. Go read about it. They walked through. They walked through on dry land. Just remember that. God's out there; just focus on him."*

How many of you in this room went through the two years I think it was of the 28 attributes of God? Wasn't that one of the best things you've ever done? You've ever experienced? What was the outcome? After looking at all those 28 attributes, you really got a better understanding of who God is, something that you can then continue to build on. It changed my whole way of thinking. What a blessing. Paul says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Get into the Word. Know who God is, and then experience him as you go through your life, knowing his Word defines him, and his actions are there in front of you taking you through whatever—bad tribulations, for good tribulations. Prosperity or poverty.

Audience Member: *That's what I need to comment on, Tom. When you read that passage in James, without someone to explain it to me, I would sense that James 1:4, "perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything, and if I lack any, ask God who gives generously without finding fault." I guess I read that and I think well, I'm lacking a lot of things and I must have it, and if I don't have it, I won't be complete, and I start to read into it and I think, well, is that a prerequisite for my salvation or...I don't what he's referring to. But now I hear you talk about getting through things, it's a little clearer, but there's still that sense of you're lacking something, you're going to need to do it, tell me how do I get it God. Where do I find this? Ask God, he'll give it to you generously. There's still that sense of I've gotta do this. I've got to figure this out. That's just a question that perplexes me because we read a lot in the New Testament, and it's like this is what you have to do. You have to persevere. You have to do all these things right so your reward will be great, and 'm thinking, I thought Christ is my reward, what else...I mean, you know what I mean? [UNCLEAR] attention.*

Well he is your reward. Part of the thing that we struggle with in this world is we are confined to time. You think, "I've got to persevere. Okay. I've got to, well, I've got to start persevering now." Well you don't know how many years you have. You don't know what's going to come up. I remember this one woman who was a good Christian, but moderate. She was not an evangelist kind of person, but she lead a good life and she did believe in the Lord. But her last week of life was when she really soared. Here, she's dying, she is going out and giving peace to everybody and it wasn't about her; it was all about comforting the people around her, and you think how God deals with us, everybody, on an individual basis, sometimes it happens right at the end. Sometimes it's a whole string of things in your life.

Audience Member: *I think in answer to what Sig's talking about, now comes the will of God in your what am I persevering for. Why am I...he's molding us. I think it was Michael Angelo or DaVinci, one of the two, saw this hunk of granite and that it set in a warehouse, it was rejected for two yes. It's now in the Louvre called the awesome statue of David. He saw the finished product. So why am I persevering? God, what do you want to do with me? Because I am yours. But when we get away from that, well I think I have to do this...*

That's why I went back to DART, because you have to trust. Ask him. He might not give you that answer. Just keep trusting.

Audience Member: *Tom, just a slight twist on this. I see that perseverance is more where we're at today in this world. There's constant change going on. People around us are caving in. We're moving away from the truth. I think all of us, as men of faith, have to persevere when we see those opportunities and we see those situations. We have to be aggressive responders and make sure that we're staying with the truth and that we're not caving in, because all around us, people are caving in to change, and it's not for the better, as I see it.*

I think that's right.

Audience Member: *I just wanted to comment on the word "patience." To me, patience means that you are allowing enough time for the Lord to produce results. Now, in verse 4 here, getting back to what Sig was talking about, it says, "the testing of your faith produces patience, but let patience have its perfect work." So if you're waiting upon the Lord, patience is allowing him time to put everything together in the right timing to produce the results that he wants. It says "its perfect work." If you're allowing God to finish it, it's perfect...*

Because it's his work.

Audience Member: ...and then the next verse says, “that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” If he’s perfect, and we’re allowing him to finish, if he’s perfect, then you’re made perfect by his results, by being patient. You’re part of it.

I want to come back to this point of waiting on the Lord. What does that really mean? Let’s look at David, for instance, in Psalm 57:2.

Audience Member: *“I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.”*

God fulfills his purpose for me, and that’s a whole beautiful Psalm talking about how great God is. The amazing thing is that when he’s writing this, most scholars believe he’s in the cave of Abdullah, and he’s got these 400 guys with him. Well, look at what’s happened in David’s life. Talk about patience. This is why I think waiting on the Lord kind of has a different tone.

David is a young shepherd boy. He gets anointed by Samuel. He’s told, “You’re going to be the King of Israel. Saul is out.” So what does David do? Does what his father tells him to do. He goes back and starts taking care of the sheep. Then Saul needs someone to sooth him because the evil spirit has come upon him, so they find David, because he can play the lyre, so David comes over, soothes Saul, plays the harp, goes back, tends sheep. Takes care of Saul; tends sheep. This is the King of Israel. What’s David doing? Doing what he’s supposed to be doing, patiently, because God has not told him what’s going on.

Then he has Saul come back, who’s very jealous of him, trying to kill him. So he has to hide for his life. Then he gets to this cave. What’s remarkable, I just love this because he’s got a crew of 400 people, and in 1 Samuel 22:2, all those who were in distress or in debt or discontented gathered around him and he became their leader. About 400 men were with him.

Audience Member: *Sounds like the democratic party.*

1 Samuel 22:2, I mean, “Wait a minute. I’m the King of Israel, and I have these has beens, these jerks, I’ve got a crew of nobodies. What’s going on?” And God has not spoken to him yet. We have no written point, up to this point, where God is saying, “David do this,” or “David, I’m with you.” It’s something that I think God imbued him with his grace early on, and that’s why he was being prepared all this time. He could slay the lions and the bears, so he wasn’t afraid of Goliath.

Audience Member: *To go to Sig’s comment earlier, I feel like I have to do this or I’m not complete yet, to tie into what you just said there with David, if we look at Colossians 2:10, it says I’m complete. Or 2 Peter 1:5, I think.*

Colossians?

Audience Member: *No. If you go to 2 Peter 1:3, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” So one thing that I really took away is we’re all [UNCLEAR] incomplete. We have all that which we need. Maybe we just don’t...we haven’t grown it yet.*

It hasn’t time...it hasn’t matured.

Audience Member: *So Sig, you’re there. You just need to grow into it. That’s one of the most profound things. If we know, hey, I can’t screw this up, I can’t lose this, in the most powerful promise we have in John 10, that Christ has me in his hand, God has me over him, no one is stronger than my father, you’re in. If you’re [UNCLEAR] or you’re chosen, you’re beloved. You’re in.*

Audience Member: So it really is a matter of understanding more than single passages [UNCLEAR] trouble with you read something that it sticks out and like, "Oh my gosh," but then if you understand, like us said, these other references...thank you for pointing those out, because that clarifies a lot of things when you understand the whole picture.

Audience Member: I think it's important also to recognize that while God certainly does work through us in perseverance, that he's also working through others. I think of Paul who certainly had to endure and persevere in prison and is proclaiming the Gospel. What did he do? That endurance. He ministered, preached the Gospel to the prisoners, the very guards who were beating him, and brought them to Christ. So sometimes God has us in a situation of perseverance, not only for our personal gain and working us through, but to be a blessing to others.

What we think is the right way to do it, has nothing to do with what God wants to be done, which is perfect. Which is good.

Audience Member: I think that the more the Lord sanctifies us, as he puts us through that testing and that purification process, and he removes that dross from us, the more we're aliens in this world.

Yes.

Audience Member: As that process takes place, you really don't want to be here. You don't want this life because you see that there's evil in it and there's...and as he continues to remove that dross from you, the more you see that this is not what I was made for. I was made for something else.

Thank you.

Don: I just wanted to...now that you mention it, I think it's a good time to bring it up, again, about what Bernie said, I believe it was. If we believe that we're not citizens of this world, maybe, and I'm going to say this very, very carefully, what the president said the other day, maybe, it's certainly an opportunity, or maybe a blessing in disguise, an opportunity for us as Christians to say, "Hey," I mean, are we going to persevere. Are we going to stand up for what is right, or are we going to cave in to the culture and just soften on these issues? Maybe persecution may come to us as a result of that, and may God give us the grace to persevere in that.

Yes. I think this whole idea of grace, again, we can see in Moses' life. When you look at Hebrews 11, and you see we have this great cloud of witnesses, this hall of faith as we call it, but when it starts off talking about Moses in verse 24, it says, "By faith, Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time." Where did that come from? He was weaned by his mother and then taken into the household of Pharaoh and raised by his daughter. The thing that I find amazing is Egyptians never liked Hebrews. The Semites were just a rejected people. He didn't fit in. He was an odd stepchild in reality. But he has this, somehow, maybe as he was growing up and his mother had him...I don't know how old it was when he actually entered Pharaoh's household, but he had an idea, he had a knowledge of God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob, and he wasn't going to abandon that. He chose rather to be with his people than to keep with the comforts of life. I think how does that happen? That's why I'm thinking it's got to be a work of grace.

And then this verse I pointed out in Numbers 12:3, hit me because as Bruce talks about meekness coming up in the next week or so, it says, "Moses was the most meek person on earth." There was no one that had that attribute more than Moses. Right after that is when his sister, Miriam, and Aaron revolt

and say, “Wait a minute. You just chose these 70 guys to be the heads of various departments now in our nation, and we’re here, too. We’re important, and we can prophesy.” What does Moses do? There’s a real attack on his authority. He doesn’t do anything. He’s quiet and he lets God take care of it. And God does. He takes them into the temple, the tabernacle, and stands in the door, lets Moses go in, but keeps Aaron and Miriam out, and then she ends up with leprosy for a week. Where does that grace come from?

***Audience Member:** That’s how they should treat all feminists. That was just me. {LAUGHTER}*

Well, we’re going to strike that one. So anyway, he doesn’t do what a human normally would do, an unsaved person, and get back at them, “I want retribution.” He just lets God handle it. I think, again, all that he’s gone through and then he has this attack, and he just perseveres. He says it’s God’s track that I’m on, not my own.

***Audience Member:** This may be a little premature. I think one of the greatest examples of persevering is Jesus himself. He came here to fulfill his purpose, “I came here to die on the cross for your sins.” Talk about persevering, what he went through in that process. Amazing.*

We can’t imagine what it was in those last three hours when he became sin for us. We can’t imagine. Pain. Yeah, we can imagine some of these things, but what he did...

***Audience Member:** Just to add to that, Hebrews 12:1, “Therefore, since we have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us and run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before him, endured a cross and despised the shame and sat down at the right hand of God’s throne.*

Yes. Praise God. We just can’t thank him enough for what he has done, and is doing, and will do, and we get to be a part of it.

***Audience Member:** 1 John 2:19 says, “They went out from us, but they were not really of us, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us, but they went out, so that it would be shown that they are not of us.” So it’s not how well you start; it’s how you finish.*

That’s right.

***Audience Member:** And even as far as the four soils that we started off with. There were three soils that did not produce fruit. The good soil is the soil that hangs in there till the very end and produces fruit.*

By the grace of God.

***Audience Member:** By the grace of God.*

***Audience Member:** Story of perseverance. My daughter, two years ago, she doesn’t do this now anymore, but she used to run in a triathlon in the state of Indiana—bicycling, swimming and running. She did reasonably well in it. She didn’t win, but she did reasonably well. The top people were doing it at very relatively short time. But there was always a few that lagged behind everyone. There was one fellow there, year after year he would participate in it. He was about 77 or 78 years old, and he would do it. It’s amazing, not only his endurance, but the endurance of a lot of the people who would wait around until he finished the whole race. He would be the last one coming in and people would cheer him.*

That's wonderful.

Audience Member: It was really touching to see that. It was a very interesting experience to see that.

Never give up.

Audience Member: Never gave up.

Let's finish with taking a look at Joseph. Again, I think, again, we think of him as the person who saved his family and the 70 people that were among his brothers and in-laws. I just am impressed by how God has worked grace through his life. Here he is at 17 years of age, and his brothers are just as jealous of him as can be, so they get rid of him.

He goes down to Egypt. He is sold as a slave. But again, he is a Semite; he's a Hebrew. He also probably still has an odor of sheep on him. Again, if you find out about the Egyptians, they didn't like shepherds. You won't find any sheep in the hieroglyphics of Egypt, but you will see cattle and oxen and other animals. You won't see sheep.

So here he is a detestable person, but by the grace of God, he works his way up to being head of Potiphar's household. Then temptation comes along and Mrs. Potiphar says, "Let's have a little twist here," and he does the only thing a Christian can do—he flees. He gets out of there. Then while he is persevering all this time, he has to endure prison and he hangs in there for several years. Finally ends up in front of Pharaoh, interprets the dream saying, "It's not me, but all interpretation is of God. You tell me the dream and I'll tell you what God says."

All through his life, he becomes, what was he, 110 when he died, he's ruler, number two guy in all of Egypt, one of the most powerful men on earth in a society that is not so pro-Jewish, is not looking for shepherds or so forth. So he's out of place. God never talks to him from what we can read. He doesn't have this one-on-one relationship that God says this and that. But he knows, as he was raised by Jacob, the God of Jacob, the God of Isaac, the God of Abraham is going to take care of him. He's our God. That seems to take him all the way through his life. I'm just amazed that it's not a matter of, "Wow! God just came down and spoke to me audibly; that's going to change everything." It's this great amount of faith that he's trusting in what was given to him by word and by how he was raised, and that takes him for the next 110 years.

Audience Member: That's what Bruce said, "Be who you are where you are."

That's his ministry.

Audience Member: That's exactly what he did.

Yes. We have 45 ministries here this morning. The thing that, again, I look at what Jacob says, the final blessings that he gives on each of his sons, and that's why I've brought out Genesis 49:22-25, "²²Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall." He's really blessed. He's just going to grow and prosper. "²³With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. ²⁴But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the Mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, ²⁵because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you."

What he's gone through, the envy and jealousy of his brothers, those are arrows coming at him. Those are attacks to really run him down, to destroy him. Also, like we mentioned, the temptation. And then

the slander that he has to live with because he's falsely accused. You think, that's as much the same pattern as David, the jealousy that Saul had for him. And then some of the things that Saul tried to do and spread these false rumors about him. He had to persevere through that. Even, I was amazed that when Saul decided that Michael, his daughter, should marry David, it was to trip David up. It wasn't a gift. It was so that he could find out more information on David and he could really undo him.

The perseverance that we see along with the remoteness of each of these men. David is out of his household. At this point, he's living in a cave for a while. He's living other places. He doesn't have his family. The same with Joseph. Joseph is spending 90 years away from his family. For you guys that travel, being away from family, that can be tough. It can be lonely. It can be tempting. It can be a lot of things. The security we have of how God has structured life for us, something, and yet knowing him and having his grace will take us through these things. It's not our arms that are strong, but it's the strength that God puts in our arms. It's the bow that God has, because if you notice in this prophecy of Jacob, Joseph doesn't fire back.

I always think, when you look at the full armor of God back in Ephesians, it says, "Stand firm." I always have this image of Jesus looking at us and saying, "Okay guys, you need to stand here. Hold your position. I'll come back, you hold here till I'm ready to come back," like it's a military effort. I can't think of anything that is more dreadful than having to hold a position against the advancing army, and you see some of the great battles, sometimes the whole group is lost. But they held on as long as they could, because he will come back. That's our job, to persevere by the faith of God, through his grace; not just through the instances in our life, but continually. That's why...you look at these people...especially take a look at Joseph and all he went through and he never once denied God. Every time he talks, he talks, "Well God did this. God did that." "You meant it for evil," he says to his brothers, "but God used it for good." We can thank God that he gives us perseverance. He gives us the ability to endure these things as we go through, but our life will be a story of grace and how wonderful he is and how he takes care of us.

Any last questions?

Audience Member: *Under your points of attacks while we stand firm—envy, temptation, slander—that example of remoteness. What do you mean by that?*

Remoteness—like being away from...like Joseph was away from his family and his brothers. It's a good opportunity for these others to happen. It's loneliness.

Audience Member: *He was in prison while he was away [UNCLEAR]...and Moses was away from both family, because when he went to the back side of Midian for four years and hung out with [UNCLEAR], God found him right where he [UNCLEAR].*

Yes. Being raised as an Egyptian. There couldn't be anything worse than having to attend sheep. Praise God he takes us through these things.

Thank you so much. Let's just end with a word prayer. Father, you are so wonderful and so gracious to us. We can't even begin to think of all those things that you do in our lives. But we thank you that we have your Holy Spirit that guides us, teaches us, leads us as we go through this world that our lives might be living testimonies to the graciousness of Jesus Christ and the price that he paid for all of us. Go with us today, be with us, help us to show forth Christ in our lives, and we give you all the thanks and praise. We also ask you to be with Bruce while he's away from us. Give him good travel mercies, and may he come back to us and teach us next week. We thank you in the name of Christ our Savior and Living Lord. Amen!