

Special Messages from 2015

In Times of Great Need God Will Sustain Us

Unedited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Patrick Morley: Good morning, men. Please turn in your bibles to Psalm 37. As you're turning, let's go ahead and do a shout out. Today we have a group of men called TESSAIGA. I hope I said that right. It's an acronym. **True Ephesian Soldiers Steadily Advancing In God's Army**. Were in the world did you guys come up with that name, because when I saw TESSAIGA, all I could think of was the Battle of Ticonderoga, for some reason. These are men at the Worthington Christian Church, at Worthington, Ohio. Christopher Daniel is the leader. Five guys that have been meeting for 3 years in the leader's home on Thursdays at 9:00 p.m. So this is a serious group of guys. We're looking for a field rep in Worthington, Ohio. By the way, we usually put we're looking for a field rep in the community because we have about a hundred field staff out there, and it is our intention to put a field staff in every community in the United States. So you can check that out at mimfieldstaff.org if you're interested.

Well, this morning the topic is, "**In Times of Great Need, God Will Sustain Us.**" I remember one time going through one of hundreds of agonizing business problems, but this one was pretty big. I remember walking through the door frame back into my office after coming from a very difficult meeting. I remember saying, "That's it. I just can't take anymore. I quit. I quit. That's it. I quit." I took two more steps and I realized, "Oh, I can't quit. I hate quitters." So I went on.

But some of you know that I went through one of my business crises, lasted for seven years. I woke up every day for seven years not knowing if I was going to be able to save my financial life, or if I would be forced into bankruptcy. The end of it is, I was able to work through all that, and God spared me, and that was great. At the four year mark in this seven year journey, I did quit. I did give up. I lost faith in God. I stopped believing that God could work it out. Now, when I say I lost faith in God, I lost faith in God the way that all of us lose faith in God. It's not that we stopped believing in our salvation and all that, but we just ... He's nowhere to be found. We've been at these agonizing times of great need for so long that we just get worn down, and we give up, and we quit.

Now, I'm going to tell you the rest of the story at the end of this message, about how God did intervene in my circumstances, because I think it'll be helpful for you just thinking about your own circumstances. But we all have given up at various times. So the title of this message, "**In Times of Great Need, God Will Sustain Us.**" I want to show you from the scriptures how he does that.

First of all, let's just talk about times of great need. Psalm 37 is a passage from King David. In the latter part of the text he says, "I was young and now I'm old." This Psalm is a composition of reflections of a man who has been through it, a man who's further down the road. Just to rethink about King David himself, for example, this is a guy who at 17 ... This is a man's man. At 17 he's killing a bear and lion with his own hands. He's a tough, warrior type of guy. He's actually anointed to be the king at 17, but does

not actually become the king until he's 30 years of age. He spends the next 13 years dodging spears from King Saul and running around and hiding all over Palestine and other regions.

When he does become king, it turns out that it's a divided kingdom. Half the people walk away. So there's another seven and a half years until ... Then he has problems with his generals. He cannot control his generals. He's a warrior. He's a warrior king. But Joab and all these guys, and Abner, and all these men, they're strong men and he can't control them. His son, Adonijah, plots to overthrow him. Adonijah rapes his sister, one of David's sisters. Absalom conspired to overthrow.

This is the man, everybody thinks about Bathsheba. But it's really Uriah that is even more egregious. He has a man murdered. Did you know, though, it wasn't just Uriah that was murdered. Because when he told Joab to put Uriah close to the wall where the archers could ... and then withdraw the other troops, the scripture says that several men were killed. David was a mass murderer, you see. So he was a man of war. He was a man who had a lot of blood on his hands. He had a lot of things ... But yet he was the man after God's own heart. He had a lot of reflections at the end of this life about how God works in times of great need, because he had a lot of times of great need. So that's the situation that has called this text into existence.

What is the problem that God is trying to solve for you? What is the reason that the Holy Spirit has preserved this text, Psalm 37, and some others we'll look at, for us. It's to encourage us. It's to give us hope. To encourage us in times of great need. Well, what's obvious? What's obvious is that it is assumed that if you are a Christian you are going to have times of great need. It is assumed that you are going to suffer. In the scriptures it is assumed. It is through many hardships that we must enter the kingdom of God. So that's a given. We have this urgent problem screaming, really, for an immediate solution, and that's it. Yeah, okay. Yes, I believe in God. By the way, when somebody says, "I don't believe in God," you realize that's an oxymoron, right? "I don't believe in God." How can you not believe in a God you don't believe in. It's like saying, "Have you stopped beating your wife yet?" I mean, it's crazy. It makes no sense. "I don't believe in God." Yes, there has to be a God you believe in first in order for you not to be able to believe in him. Do you see that?

We have these times of great need. You believe in God. You're a spiritual man. But there comes a point when these problems, they're just ... They become immediate. They become urgent. They become practical. I don't have enough money. I really do need more money. It's not a spiritual problem only. I actually have to make payroll today. Or, my mortgage payment is due today. Or the IRS settlement that I negotiated, if I don't pay \$700 today ... Or maybe it's a son, or a daughter, a child. I absolutely, I just ... I need, I need to be able to get through to them, to help them understand that the behavior choices that they are making are going to destroy them. They're going to destroy our family. It's not just a spiritual need. It's practical. It has to happen. It has to happen now.

Or, this can't go on any longer. We're not connecting, my wife and I. We are just not connecting, and my heart is growing cold. I don't want it to. But my heart is growing cold toward my wife. And that's not all. She's cooling towards me as well. Yes, it's a spiritual problem, but God, it's a practical problem, too. I need help. I am in a time of great need.

In my book "Pastoring Men," I was looking at the ... Did I even bring it? I guess I didn't bring it in. But there are times when we are extremely vulnerable. Had 24 things listed in there, these things, but other things, too - like a health crisis. Look, God, I know I need to trust you in times of great need. But Father, my heart is going to stop beating if I don't get some medical help, the proper medical help. This cancer is

going to kill my wife. This back pain ... God, I know I can trust you. Intellectually I know that. But God, this back pain, it is just ... It's broken me. It's broken me.

So that's what's obvious, is that we all have times of great need. We learn something from this text that's very important. We learn something from this text. I'm always asking the question, what one thing ... what one thing if fully understood and truly believed could change everything? From this text, what one thing, if fully understood and truly believed, could change everything? Look at it with me.

In verse 23, "The Lord delights in the way of the man whose steps he has made firm. Though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand." This has been my go-to verse. This next verse has been my go-to verse for over 30 years in times of great need. "I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken, or their children begging for bread. They are always generous and lend freely. Their children will be blessed." This is a huge promise. We'll come back to this.

Now the two goals are to fully understand and truly believe. Okay, so you understand this. I mean, this is not rocket science. I mean, this is not some intricate scientific physics kind of formula. It's pretty simple what it says. We all understand what this says. The problem is believing it. The problem is believing it because it's been so long. I'm just so weary. It just ... I understand it. I want to believe it, but it's just been so long.

God's word says, Romans 8:28, I love it in the newer, the ESV version, "And we know for those who love God that all things work together for good." By the way, the verse also says, "For those who are called according to his purpose." But that's not two different things, you see. That's just two different ways of saying the same thing. So you don't have two conditions there, being called according to his purpose, and loving God. His purpose that you're called to is to love God, so it's two ways of saying the same thing, not two separate things. You get that? I hear people talking about that verse like there are two conditions for all things to work together for good. You've got to love him and you've got to be called according to his purpose. Well, loving him is being called according to his purpose, the great commandment. All right?

You see this all the time in Hebrew parallelism in the Psalms, and in the Proverbs, where you'll see stating two things different ways repetitively. That's kind of what's going on here in Romans 8:28, a little bit. It's not Hebrew parallelism, because it's Greek, but you get the idea. "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for the good." There's no problem fully understanding what that says. The problem is truly believing it. But this one thing, if not only fully understood but truly believed, can change everything. Everything!

Second Timothy, chapter 2, verse 13 says this, "If we are faithless, God will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself." If you are faithless, God will remain faithful, because he cannot disown himself. We know that God works for the good of those who love him. We know from the scriptures here, David saw it. "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or the children begging for bread." The big idea today is this. This is what the scriptures say. **Even if I give up on God, God will never give up on me.** That's what the scriptures say. From beginning to end, even if I give up, and I have. I did give up. You've given up on God. You have. Raise your hand if you haven't given up on God at some point in your life. Yeah, I want to see which kind of liars around here. Now I'm sure there's somebody. I'm sure there's somebody. There's always an exception, right? But the norm is, is that we do.

But the scriptures are so clear. If we are faithless, he remains faithful. All things work together for good, for those who love God. God is sovereignly orchestrating every human event, even the seemingly random circumstances, to bring us into a right relationship with him, and a right relationship with each other. That's the main thing that's going on. You've heard me say that a thousand times.

So what can we do? Well, in Psalm 37 there's some great advice, beginning in verse 1. Now, there are eight things here. I have ... I use digital bibles, right? But from time to time I really love looking at the Bible that I've been dropping tears into for 30 years. In Psalm 37 I have yellow highlights around eight items in these first eight verses. Just let me first read you the highlights. Just listen to them. What can we do in these times of great need? Here's what David says. Do not fret, trust, dwell, delight, commit, be still, wait patiently, and refrain from anger. Let's take a look at a couple of these. We don't have time to do a deep dive into all of them, but I'll take a deep dive into one, maybe two.

Verse 1, "Do not fret because of evil men, or be envious of those who do wrong, for like the grass they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away. Trust in the Lord, and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

By the way, this particular verse is one of two verses that over the years have almost made me stop believing in God. Because I was exposed to this verse very early in my Christian faith. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. So as a young Christian, I was. I loved God. I was pursuing God with every ounce of my energy, the sum of my strength, the totality of my being. I was more than all in, like many of you are. I was delighting in God. I had desires in my heart, and they were not happening. I looked at this verse after a few years. I said, "This is a bunch of nonsense. This is garbage. This is hooey. This is a lie. It can't be true."

Then as I became more mature as a believer, and I started getting into studies of languages and stuff like that, of course, I just started with the simple Strong's concordance. But one day I happened to look up the word "delight," and it's the Hebrew word, "anag," a-n-a-g. The literal meaning of the word is to be soft, to be pliable. I said, "Oh, that's interesting." To delight means to be soft or to be pliable. It's like a couple of nights ago we're sitting on the couch, and I'm rubbing our little Bijon dog. That's a little poofy white froo-froo lap dog for middle-age women. I'm massaging the dog, and the dog goes soft. The dog goes pliable. I looked at my wife. Of course, this dog has narcissistic personality disorder. It's all about me. I'm rubbing the dog, and the dog is just soft and pliable, and just delighting in me rubbing. I looked at my wife and I said, "I have her right where she wants me, don't I?" That's a good way, metaphor to think about what it means to delight, to be soft, and to be pliable.

Then one day it hit me. To delight in the Lord means to allow him to mold me, to shape me, to be soft and to be pliable, to let him mold me and shape me into the man that he wants me to be. Then when that happens, when I do delight in him, then he gives me the desires of my heart. So the trick, it's a little bit of a hat trick. God changes the desires of my heart so that he can give me the desires of my heart. What kind of a God is this? This is amazing stuff.

"Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in him, and he will do this. He will make your righteousness shine like the noon, like the dawn, like the justice of your cause, like the noonday sun. Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him. Do not fret when evil men succeed in their ways. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath." Wow. So you want to know what you can do in times of great need? You've got a prescription right here. It's not a comprehensive prescription, but these are eight reflections that David is making at the end of his life.

The big idea today is this. **Even if I give up on God, God will never give up on me.** Now, we fully understand that now as the truth of what the scripture says. Before you decide to believe or not believe something, it's a pretty good idea to understand the facts. Okay. Here are the facts. Now, fully understanding what it says, how do we believe it? How do we come to believe it? Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "We live by faith, not by sight." When we look at the sight ... Faith means to believe in the reality of what we do not see, not the unreality of what we do see. There is a bigger reality taking place.

Now there are two kinds of faith. There's one kind of faith, let's call it "whistling through the graveyard faith." It's kind of like, "I believe. I believe. I believe. I'm going to say I believe so that I will believe. But I'm really afraid of what's going on over the graveyard, that it might not go my way." One kind of faith, this first kind of faith, is magic. It's the idea that faith means that something that I need or want will happen, because I have faith. That's magic. That's the prosperity gospel. It's the idea that I can obligate God just because I have faith, that I can create an obligation on the part of God to do the thing that I want because I believe that it's going to happen. That's nonsense.

There is a second kind of faith. It's the kind of faith that believes that God is working all things for good, but there are inscrutable things about the big picture that we do not and will not ever understand, and so we put our faith in him, and we believe him that even though, even in the short term things might not be looking so good, that God has a plan, and it's a good plan. This is the God, Ephesians 1:11, who's working out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will. When evil men do evil things, they're the ones that did them. But God even redeems that, in this life sometimes, but often in the next.

Then we have this promise to sustain us. You know, if you have a son or a daughter, and they are in some kind of excruciating emotional pain, they're in some big battle of their own, you know how you feel about them. You know that even though you can't make the situation better in the moment, you know that you are going to commit 100% of your being, 100% of your resources, 100% of your love to that child. So that when the time is right, you will be there for them to help work that out. If you in your frail human ability, made in the image of God, would do that, then you can go up, not one level, but up an infinite number of levels, to a God that has the power to regulate the lunar cycle and the rising and the setting of the sun, and hurl the cosmos into existence. A God with that much power, you're made in his image. So your desire for your child, that is a tiny, dim reflection of how God feels about you.

Now, here's the text. "The Lord delights in the way of the man whose steps he's made firm. Though you stumble, you will not fall, for the Lord will uphold you with his hand." I can say this to myself now, because I'm getting close to as old as David was when he wrote this. I was young, and now I am old. And yet, I can testify that I too have never seen the righteous forsaken. Now you're thinking, "Yeah, but I'm not righteous." Yes, you are. If you are in Christ, you are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. All your sins, past, present, and future, have been forgiven. Doesn't mean you don't sin. But you are righteous in Christ. Righteous of your own? Of course not. I have never seen the righteous forsaken, or their children begging for bread.

I mentioned I'd finish off the story that I started at the beginning. So I quit. I called up my lawyer, Tommy Burroughs. Some of you probably know him. I'm four years into this business crisis, and it's been a slot. I said ... I had this one group that they, we were in a recession, and they wanted really me to take full responsibility for the international recession. They actually, they wanted me dead. I mean, literally. That's really what they wanted. They wanted to kill me. They were so angry at me.

I said, "Tommy." I said, "I give up. I can't take it anymore. I'm so beat down. Give them whatever they want. I'm ready. I'll sign whatever they want. I'll belong to them for the rest of my life. Whatever. I can't go on." You know what he said to me? He said, "Well, Pat, I think I understand what you're saying." He said, "I'll tell you what. Why don't you just let me take over the lead on this for a while, and let's see what happens."

So how does this promise come to fruition? Two ways. Through his word, the word of God. Some of you have felt it this morning. You've felt as we've been going through these scriptures the spirit speaking to your heart, encouraging your heart. The second way is through a friend. God puts us in communities. He puts us in families. He puts us in small groups. That's how this promise comes to pass, you see, this promise that ... It's the big idea today. This promise that even if I give up on God, God will never, ever, ever give up on me. Let's pray.

Our dearest Father, we treasure the encouragement of your word, the encouragement we get from each other, and never more than when we are in times of great need. So Father, I pray for all of the men who are in or about to enter, or maybe just coming out of a time of great need that you would use this word that we've spoken about this morning to give them not only the understanding of your word, but the belief that even when we're faithless you remain faithful. Even if we give up on you, you'd never give up on us. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Now, I'm going to ask ... We're going to do something extra this morning. In the center of the tables are some envelopes. I told you a few weeks ago that I wanted to give you, I wanted to ask you to become part of the donor team at Man in the Mirror. What I want to do is ask each of you if you'd open this up. I'm going to read this letter to you. I would like to say that I could say this. But I spent a lot of time on this letter, and I just want to read it out loud to you, okay?

Subject line, "We need your help, 100% participation requested."

"Dear Friend," and that would be you. "Thank you for being part of the Friday morning Bible study. I pray the combination of building relationships with other men and the study of God's word is making a difference in your life." Much like we talked about today. "It's a privilege to be on this journey together. As you know, America is in the grip of a devastating men problem, with staggering collateral damage in marriage and families. For reasons only known to him, God has given Man in the Mirror unusual success in reaching many men for Jesus Christ, and helping them become disciples, and disciple makers. I genuinely, and I mean that, I genuinely want you to be a partner in this great cause.

"None of what we do, leadership training, resources, Bible study events, mentoring, etc., would be possible without our faithful team of financial partners. You could give \$15, \$50, or some other monthly amount. You could make a one-time gift. Any amount that works for you, works for me. If you have a dollar, that works for me. I just want you to be in the deal with me. We've been here for 30 years. I just want you to be in the deal with me." Now, many of you already are, and thank you for that.

"Partners who give \$180 or more in a year receive our devotional magazine, Equipping the Man in the Mirror, Bible study messages on CD." You don't need that. You're here. "Regular updates on how God is working in men's lives, and special partner discounts on resources." Sounds commercial, doesn't it. "Will you join me in this battle for men's souls?"

What I'm going to ask you to do is to fill out this form. There's an envelope here. You can turn it in today. Or if you prefer, you can go online and do it, and there's the website. You can do it there. Then we're going to do this this week, next week, and the following week. We'll just give you three opportunities to do that. A big part of the reason that we're doing this is that we have a building under contract, finally. A 10,000 square foot building to be a nerve center for our part in the men's discipleship movement. It's accelerating. Men's discipleship is on the heart of God, obviously. It's accelerating all over the country.

Everybody that makes a donation, whether it's a dollar, or \$100,000, or whatever amount it is, we're going to put your name on a plaque on the building. We have 1,200 monthly donors, and about 150 major and mega donors. We're shooting for 100% participation for all of our friends and donors past and present, like I say, even if it's a dollar, because I want everybody, I want everybody to be able 10 years from now, to be able to look back and say, "I was there. I was part of that when God chose to accelerate Man in the Mirror's role in a global men's spiritual revival and awakening." I want you to be part of that.

I'm asking, I'm just asking for 100% participation. Would you do that for me? Would you consider it prayerfully? No. I've already prayed for you. Do it. Just do it. Just do it.