

Walking With God in a Pandemic

Satisfying That Ache for More Faith

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Luke 18:8. We're continuing in the series Walking with God in a Pandemic. You can live a supernatural life by faith. I know we all have doubts, having doubts is part of the human experience, but when those doubts relate to our faith, they can stunt our growth. They can keep us from leading a supernatural life. And so the title of today's talk is ***Satisfying That Ache for More Faith***. If you would, take your outline. If you haven't downloaded that yet, you can go ahead and pause and download that. And in the first circle, write the words That Ache for Faith, Or More Faith.

THE ACHE FOR FAITH, OR MORE FAITH

So in Luke 18:8, Jesus has just finished telling a parable about prayer and he says this, "However, when the son of man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Jesus put so much emphasis on faith. It's foundational to his message. And he reinforces the importance of it continually. A couple of really great illustrations about this. As you know, he had disciples who could not heal a young man who was having these violent convulsions, and in Mark chapter nine, it often threw him into the fire, the water and throw them on the ground. And then the man said, "But," to Jesus, the man said, "The father, but if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." And Jesus said, "If you can," Jesus said, "Everything is possible for the one who believes." And immediately the boy's father exclaimed, that famous sentence. "I do believe. Help me with my unbelief." Don't you just feel the ache of his heart to have more faith.

And then there's the story in Matthew chapter nine where Jesus heals two blind men, and they call out to him, "Have mercy on us, son of David." They came to him and he said, "Do you believe that I am able to do this? Do you believe that I am able to do this?" And they said, "Yes, Lord." And then he touched their eyes, and Jesus, "According to your faith, let it be done to you." Don't you just feel an ache to have that kind of faith or more faith like that?

That was the case for John Wesley. John Wesley is one of my favorite characters. John Wesley founded, of course the Methodist Church here in the United States. I have this picture of him that I keep on my wall. I just love this man so much. He is some of the great quotes that I rely on. One is, "I set myself on fire and then people come to watch me burn." I just love that kind of talk.

So John Wesley started his career at Oxford university, ended up becoming along with his brother, Charles and George Whitfield, the great evangelist, members of the Holy Club. And he was the guy who ran it. And then after graduation in his, I guess, mid-20s. In his early 30s, he ended up going to the colonies. He ended up in Georgia. He came to Georgia to start an orphanage and to reach Native Americans. And then somebody said to him said, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" And he said, "Well, I know that Jesus Christ came to save the world." And that same person said, "Well, yes, but do you know that he came to save you?" He said, "No. I don't know that he came to save me."

His mission and the colonies in Georgia failed. And he, dejected, went back to England. On the ship on the way back, he wrote in his journal. He said, "I went to America to convert the Indians, but who will convert me?"

And then this weekend is Alders Gate Day on May 24th when we celebrate the famous experience that John Wesley had at Alders Gate. He woke up that morning on May 24th. And it was a what 7:38 and started reading the scriptures at 5:00 AM and really felt God beginning to stir in his soul. He had this ache that we all have from time to time for more faith, but he had now been ordained for a decade or so. And he still was struggling to have this confidence that he could lead this supernatural life by faith.

That night with some reservation, he went with a group of Moravians and one of them was reading Luther's Preface to the epistle of Romans. And at about 8:45 PM John Wesley wrote in his journal these words. "While he was still describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ. Christ alone for salvation. And an assurance was given to me that he had taken away my sins, even mine and saved me from the law of sin and death."

What happened? Well, that was a real turning point for John Wesley. Was he converted before? Was he not converted before? I don't know. But I do know this from that moment on that ache for faith, more faith that he had was satisfied and he led a supernatural life for the rest of his life. It's estimated that he rode over 250,000 miles on horseback, delivered over 40,000 sermons, and had about 120,000 followers at the time of his death, and had trained more than 500 itinerant preachers. And of course we know that or maybe you don't, but Methodism is the largest church outside of the Catholic denomination in the United States, even today with something like 38,000 churches. So tremendous legacy.

The Big Idea that I want to communicate to you today is based on something that happened to John Wesley, but I'm going to share that lesson to you from the scriptures. My job is to take the scripture and just assume that it's been covered up by blankets or brush or whatever, and then take those things off and then put the word of God out here clearly on the lamp stand so that you can see it for yourself.

HOW HAS GOD PROVIDED TO SATISFY THIS ACHE?

So in the second circle, would you go ahead and write, how has God provided to satisfy this ache, this ache that we have for more faith. We see the answer in Luke chapter 24. In Luke chapter 24, this is the great story where the two disciples after the resurrection of Jesus were on the road to Emmaus, walking to Emmaus and they were dejected. Jesus appeared and started walking along with them. He said, "What are you so downcast about?" They told him, and they said, "What are you the only person in this whole area who doesn't know what's happened in Jerusalem today?"

And then Jesus, beginning that says in verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. So they were aching for more faith. And what did Jesus do? Jesus began to explain scriptures to them. And so he stayed with them later that night but then revealed himself and disappeared. And they immediately got up. It says, "They immediately," in verse 33, "got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. They found the 11 and told those with them assembled together who were saying, 'It's true. The Lord has risen and appeared to Simon.'" And then in verse 35, "Then the two told what had happened on the way and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread."

And so there's this idea that the ache that they were having for more faith, the same kind of ache the John Wesley was having. It was satisfied for John Wesley by reading the scriptures and having these scriptures explained. And exactly the same thing happens to these men. And here's what they say in verse 32, they asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures for us?"

Romans 10:17 puts it this way. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ."

So the Big Idea for today and I encourage you to write this down. **We can live a supernatural life by faith and the word of God is where it starts.** You and I, we can live a super natural life by faith. And the word of God is where it starts. So we know that faith is a gift to Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you've

been saved through faith." So it's a gift, not as a result of work so that nobody can boast about it. And yet God has to have a way to mediate this space to us. And that way that he mediates faith to us is through his scripture quickened by the Holy Spirit to our hearts.

Can you imagine just for a second, how many Christians do you believe there would be in the world today if there was no Bible? Well, I don't know, and I don't think any of us can. But we do know that God has given us not only general revelation that we can see as general characteristics. In creation, he's given us special revelation to bring us to a point where we can understand enough about Jesus Christ in order to put our faith in him. So that said again, the Big Idea; **We can live a supernatural life by faith and the word of God is where it starts.**

HOW TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE WORD OF GOD

So the third circle, if you would write the words, how to immerse yourself in the word of God. How to immerse yourself in the word of God.

So on your questions today, I've got so many papers on my desk. I don't know if I could find all these things. But on your questions today, in question number three, encourage you to look at that in your outline, are several ideas to help you immerse yourself in the word of God. The first one is to ask God for the gift of faith to live a supernatural life.

I think that it's one thing to ache for more faith. It's another thing just to simply ask the giver of all good, "Yes, if you would give us that gift." And I want to caution, I think the reason some of us don't ask is we're not really sure that we believe that a supernatural life by faith is possible, that we can see things happen like the two blind men healed or whatever else it is that would be considered supernatural today.

So could I ask you, even if you're not fully sure, just by faith, just ask God for the gift of faith so that you can live a supernatural life.

Number two is to embrace the preaching and teaching of God's word. In Ephesians 4:11 and following, it says that he gave some to be apostles, teachers, preachers, and so forth, evangelists and so forth so that you and I might be built up to the unity of faith, that we might become mature, might not be any longer tossed back and forth by bad teaching. But that we would grow into this unity of faith. So your preachers, especially in this time of the pandemic, when they're coming to you online and your teachers like me. So embrace this preaching and this teaching because it's one of the ways that you can immerse yourself in the word of God, which is where the supernatural life of faith starts.

Number three, read the Bible for yourself at least five days a week. Can I just say sometimes you need to substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest. And I say, five days, not seven. Everybody needs to allow for waking up on the wrong side of the bed or an early morning meeting or something like that, but read the Bible for yourself. This is the great thing that Martin Luther introduced into the church during the Protestant Reformation is that he just wanted people to read the Bible for themselves so that God could tutor the word to their hearts by the Holy Spirit. So if you're not doing that, I encourage you to get started on that.

And then about a year ago, Ed Kobel came as a guest speaker to the Friday morning Bible study. And he was telling us about becoming part of it group with Henry Blackaby and a few key people, the president of Walmart and the president of FedEx. And now I'm really confused. I've got that sheet of paper. I've lost it too. But here's the point Henry Blackaby gathered these five or so executives together and Ed Kobel, who's the CEO of the DeBartolo Development Corporation, the mall inventor, the inventor of the regional mall. And then also Ed's half-brother owns the San Francisco 49ers and the Pittsburgh Penguins and some other professional teams and has been inducted into the NFL Hall of Fame and so forth. And so Ed's in this meeting and Dr. Blackaby says to these men, and this is number four on this list of items here.

He said, "What would it look like in your life if you had your quiet time with your journal, with your Bible, talking to the father and you didn't get up until he dismissed you?" And the men rocked back. The president of Walmart said, "You don't understand. I run a global organization." And the president of FedEx said, "Well, I couldn't possibly do that." But Ed went home and then next day decided that he would get started. So he said, "I'm going to do 10 minutes today instead of five." And when he finally looked up, he'd been with the father for an hour and 15 minutes. And so if you want to lead a supernatural life, then one of the best ways to do it, of course, is to be with the father until he dismisses you to go and do the things that he prompts you to do.

The next item, discuss the Bible in a small group. This was the genius of John Wesley. John Wesley's Methodist groups usually had 10. There were those small communities of 10 to 15 people within the Anglican church in England. He didn't separate from the Anglican church. His followers did later, but he did this as a small group movement. Methodist meetings were basically small group meetings within the Anglican church. And so, especially during this pandemic, when you can do these things in a small group on Zoom, discuss the Bible with each other. One of the things it does is helps protect against error.

And then finally, like these disciples did in the text that we looked at here today, it said, "They got up at once and returned to Jerusalem." And then they told the others what had happened on the way and how Jesus was recognized by them. So like those disciples, when you read the scriptures, when you immerse yourself in the word of God, and God speaks to you, go at once and tell others what God is doing in your life.

So my go to text here on this word of God, this feeling strangely warmed or feeling our hearts burning inside us is Jeremiah 20:9. And he said, when he was being persecuted, he wrote in his journal. "But if I say, I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name, his word is in my heart like a burning fire. Shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in. Indeed I cannot." And that's what it means to go at once and tell others what's going on.

The Big Idea today, you and I, **we can each lead a supernatural life by faith. And the word of God is where it starts.**

So I want to encourage you if you want to satisfy that ache for more faith, remember that it's the word of God. Pray, ask God to give you a supernatural gift of faith. Embrace the teaching and preaching that you get, read the Bible for yourself, take the Blackaby challenge to not get up until the father dismisses. Discuss the Bible in a small group and then be sure to tell people what God is speaking to you. And you will see the supernatural life mushroom in your life. I know it's been happening for me for over three decades now, and I hope it's been happening for you.

If it has not, if you maybe have become lapsed as a Christian, or maybe like Julian Barnes. Julian Barnes, the atheist wrote a book. The first sentence in the book is, "I don't believe in God, but I miss him." So maybe you have not had any kind of faith. Maybe your faith has lapsed, or maybe it's become a cold, hard faith, whatever the case, or maybe you do feel your heart has been strangely warmed. Whatever the case, if you ache for more faith, then I encourage you to immerse yourself in this word of God because we can each lead a supernatural life by faith. And the word of God is where it starts.

Would you join me in prayer?

Our dearest father, Lord, I thank you for each of the men who are hearing or will hear this message. Lord, we all aim to have a faith or more faith. And it is through the word of God that you have provided to satisfy this need so that we each can lead a supernatural life. And Lord, I pray that you would help each of these men have a renewed passion to immerse themselves into the word of God and feel the life of the spirit indwell them and give them a sense of that supernatural faith. And I asked this in your name, Jesus, and for your glory alone. Amen.

Thanks, men. We'll see you next week. And hey, by the way, next week, I think we'll focus in on this word of God a little bit more and just see what the Lord has to say to us. Thanks. And take care. God bless you.