

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

February 3, 2019

SPEAKER

Brian Frost

SERIES

Overwhelmed

PART

2

TITLE

Help, I'm Unsettled

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 32:22-32



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It's great to see you Providence family. I hope that you have had a great week and that you've seen some really practical, tangible ways that God has been kind, that's He has been merciful, that He has held you up. I know some of you right now are wrestling; this sermon you're gonna feel very closely, because I know that there's many within our church family that are wrestling right now with the Lord over something. But, it is so good to see you. If you're new here, welcome. We are thrilled that you have joined us. I pray this time will be really encouraging to you.

In your Bibles if you want to head with me to the very first book of the Bible, it's called Genesis, and look at the 32nd chapter. In a moment we're gonna read from there. Last week we launched into a six-week series that really touches every single one of us in some ways. You see, the Bible is very, very clear, as well as our life experience, and that is that we all carry these burdens in our life. Sometimes those burdens they get so heavy, and we hold them so long, and we have no possibility in the future of seeing any relief. What happens is that these burdens can feel like they're gonna bury us. There's a word in our language that actually means to bury or drown beneath a mass of something. In the English language that word is overwhelmed.

That's what this series is called. It's Overwhelmed. We all know what we mean when we say, "I just feel overwhelmed right now in my life." It feels like that there's a weight over us that's pressing us down. The fact is that every single one of us in some way feel weighted down. Yet, there are certain particular weights that even inside the church where it's okay not to be okay, for whatever reason we feel like we simply cannot hold up a flag and say, "I need help." Typically that's those problems that plague our heart and our mind instead of our body.

If you have cancer you normally have no problem saying, "You know what, I need you to pray because I have cancer." But if you're struggling with being depressed, or addicted, or ashamed, it's really hard to say, "Help." So, what this series is really built to do is to say help for us, and to recognize that we all struggle with things, and it's okay that you struggle with things. Where we've been last week is this idea of just, "Help, I'm exhausted." This Sunday it's being unsettled. Some of you just walked in this room and you just feel anxious. You don't even know why. You're not nervous about anything really, but you just feel like, "I'm just anxious; I'm nervous; I'm unsettled in my life."

Over the next four weeks we're gonna look at some other topics that you see on the screen. Being depressed and addicted. Someone that's hurting. You may deal with chronic pain and you say, "I don't know what to do with that. What is Christ? What is the gospel? Help. How does it help? What does the Bible say to me about these things?" Then, we're gonna end with something that is a weight for most of us in the room, and that is some level of shame over something that we've done or said in our past. The good news of the Bible is that there's hope for every single one of us.

So, the hope that I have in the series is really three-fold. One is just to expose our common brokenness. You're not alone in this. I want you to know that you're not alone in this, and that we love you; we're for you, and God can heal your life. The second thing is to expose Christ's power and how He can heal, in particular, and this is really important, in particular if he does not immediately eradicate whatever the problem is in your life. Christ is not faithful only if He eradicates it tomorrow. One day He will. That day may not be on the Earth. If He so chooses that whatever you're struggling with you're gonna struggle with until you see Him face-to-face. He will still be faithful because that day He will eradicate it. The good news is that He has resources that He's made available to us right now to help us wrestle here on the Earth.

So, we want to look at Christ's power. The last thing is we want to expose places of help, and we want you to know something. This is really important. Some people may teach you otherwise. You may need more than growing faith in Jesus Christ to deal with what you're going through, but I promise you you will not need less. You need Jesus Christ. You may need a friend; you may need counseling; you may need medicine. You may need something for some of the things that ail you, but I want you to know that you need faith in Jesus Christ, because He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and He has power over all evil, all darkness, all sickness, everything. He has the power.

What we do want to do, though, is expose some places of help. Even today, when we get done, if you just say, "You know what, I don't even know why I'm still unsettled, but I want somebody to pray with me." You can go back to Next Steps and there's people this morning ready to pray with people. You don't have to tell them your story; you can just walk up and say, "I'm just weighted down, would you pray with me," and there's people there who can do that.

So, let me pray for you now. Father I pray that you would give us grace. As we open up your Word, would you, Lord, cause your Word to be like fresh air. Would you give our hearts hope. Would you help us to see that there really is hope for today and for tomorrow? I pray that you would speak through weakness, and you would glorify Jesus Christ by showing us your power and how you can make a difference in our life, and even in our burdens. I pray this morning for those that walked in this room carrying a heart that is deeply unsettled. I pray, Father, that you would help them to see the pathway to peace, and I pray this in Jesus name. Amen.

As I just prayed, there are many of you that are feeling absolutely unsettled. Maybe you feel restless in your heart, and your heart just simply demands more. Maybe you're sitting here and you don't even know why but you say, "I just need more power; I need more fame; I need more thrill; I need more stuff. I need more sensuality in my life. I need more significance in my life. The crazy thing about that demand within us, even though it's insatiable, this is where it gets so risky is that that demand threatens what is good in our life. It may threaten your integrity to have more of something that you know that you don't want to be known for wanting. But, not only does it threaten what is good in our life; it also exposes us to what is harmful over our life. It may cause shame; it may cause further addiction; it may cause exhaustion and burnout in your life.

Yet, when the heart is unsettled it creates within us such an insatiable demand for more that we willingly expose ourself, the good things to threat and our own life to harm.

That's where we get to a man named Jacob. Now, some of you say, "Well, I don't even care about Jacob, because Jacob's dead." He is. He lived a long time ago and he is dead. But this is why you should care about Genesis 32. The reason you should care about it is because the Old Testament, in particular, has actually been designed to be the feeder where you go watch your spiritual movie. You see, you read the Old Testament and all of a sudden you're reading this person's life and you're like, "I can't believe God even loves this person. I can't believe He would make this kind of decision. Why in the world, it's just crazy." All of a sudden you look in the mirror and you're like, "Wait a minute, that's me. I'm living that out in my own life."

What we find here in Genesis 32 is a pivot point in the life of Jacob where for so long he's been wrestling with himself and now here in this passage He wrestles with God, and He can do so because God wrestled for Him. That's where I want to show you, and I want to show you how God gave Him peace, because in doing so I want to show you how He can give you peace. So, this is what He says.

Starting in verse 22. It says. "The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford. He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had, and Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. Jacob called the name of that place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

Now, I want to show you really three things that Christ is doing and has done in every one of our lives, because it is the pathway to peace. The first may startle you and it is this, is that Christ allows us to wrestle with our restless heart. He gives you the freedom to make really bad decisions and suffer the consequences for them. He gives you the freedom to walk outside of a relationship with Him for all of your life, or some of your life, or even a day of your life and feel threatened, feel unsettled in your heart. He allows us to wrestle. In the wrestling match that we just read of between Jacob and God is simply, it's a reflection of the wrestling that Jacob has done his entire life.

I want to show you that, and the only way for you to understand that, and really feel that, is to see the context of what's happened in his life before this. Some of us ... You get tired of me doing this, because I say this, "Oh he's gonna go back to Genesis 1:1. I've seen this before. He's gonna do it again."

I am gonna do it again, but let me tell you why I'm gonna do it again, okay? I want you to look at this picture right here. Most of us don't look at this picture and then conclude, "Oh, wow, two people got all dressed up to eat cake," do we? We know that there's context behind this. We know that this is attached to a wedding, which is attached to an engagement, which is attached to one time they began a relationship; one time there was some pursuit; one time they met for the first time.

This is simply one snapshot in the life of these two individuals that actually began before these two individuals were even alive. These two had parents who one time met, and fell in love, and pursued, and got married, and then they had them as babies and they started praying, "Hey, God, would you bring a spouse into their life." They're celebrating, and maybe in a table over in the back there's some grandparents, and they had a story that led to their parents' story, that led to their story. See, context always matters.

We open up the Bible to Genesis 32 and you have no idea what's happened unless you've read it before. Why is this man wrestling with God? Let me tell you why he's wrestling with God, because Genesis chapter 1, verse 1 says, "In the beginning God." Now, that's so important for this reason. Your life is only going to make sense inside of a relationship with God, and it will never make sense outside of one. The bible says that God created us in His image to have a relationship with Him. He gave us clear instructions and perfect peace. There was plenty. There was benefit. There was joy, there was delight in the garden and then mankind we looked at what God had withheld from us, and He said, "Just don't eat this," and we concluded that God was a scrouge. We concluded that He was withholding His best, and so we rebelled against Him. We sinned against God and broke fellowship with Him, and there came a tidal wave of what the bible calls brokenness that swept over the Earth, over human relationships, over the body, our body, over our mind.

Romans chapter 8 seeks to describe this flood of brokenness this way. He says, "Not only creation but we ourselves groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for the redemption of our bodies." What does that mean? It means that every single one of us has been affected by the fall of man. There is not necessarily a direct link between something you have done in your past and what you were experiencing; however, what we have all done in our past and all of humanity has contributed to a universal fallenness; it has contributed to a wave that has swept over all of humanity, and that wave in some people it touches them with cancer and some people with depression, but it touches all of us somewhere. God looked at this wave and He looked at what we had done. He looked at our rebellion and He made a promise, and it wasn't a promise to kill us; it was a promise to rescue us.

So, you fast forward a few chapters and you get to Jacob's grandpa. Jacob's grandpa he's living in a place called Ur. I've been to Ur. There's a bunch of rocks in Ur. He didn't know who God was and so he was bowing down to these rocks. He knew that there was a God; he didn't know who He was. He looked at the rocks and he goes, "Maybe it's Him." God says, "Get up. I'm God. This isn't God. I'm gonna bless you. You don't deserve this, but I'm gonna bless you. I'm gonna make you into a great nation, and from your line will come the Rescuer." Abraham has a son. His name is Isaac, and Isaac has two sons. One was Esau and the second is Jacob.

Now, I said earlier that as we get to chapter 32 there's been things that's been happening in the life of Jacob that He's been wrestling his entire life. When we get to this moment what God is doing is He's looking at his entire historical narrative and He says, "You know all that wrestling you've been doing, well, I'm gonna wrestle with you in such a way that's gonna put you at peace." I want you to know something, if you came into this room and you're absolutely unsettled, the only hope you have in walking out of this room with peace is if you wrestle with God over your heart, over your soul, over your unbelief. It doesn't come easy; it will leave you with a limp, a spiritual limp, but it will leave your heart with peace.

So, let's look real quick at the narrative, just a few pieces of information of where we get. First of all, his birth. You can read of it in Genesis 25. It says that when their mom's days to give birth were completed, this is verse 24 of chapter 25, it says, "Behold there were twins in the womb. The first came out red. All his body was like a hairy cloak so they named him Esau, and afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob." Now, this is amazing to me, okay. You have to understand that names were critically important, in particular in the Old Testament, to something that they saw, a parent saw, was happening in their life. Both individuals, both little boys, they receive a name that was consistent with what their parents saw was happening at the time of birth.

Esau, it says that he came out. It says he was so hairy it looked like he had animal skins on him. Now, that's a lot of hair, in particular at birth. He's also red. So, you know what, they say, "You know what, he's red." Esau means red, and so they named him what they saw. They looked at a physical characteristic and gave him a name that aligned with what they saw. Just as Esau was coming out, the whole body comes out and suddenly there's a little heel and there's a hand that's holding onto that heel, it's like, "No, I want to come out first," and suddenly Jacob comes out. They look and instead of a physical characteristic that they saw in his body, they saw a relational characteristic, an emotional characteristic, that they saw in what he was doing. They gave him a name that aligned with what he was doing. Jacob in Hebrew means heel grabber.

Now, if you're named Jacob and your dad's right next to you just look at him and say, "Thanks, Dad, that was really kind. Great job." No, they weren't considering Hebrew when they named you Jacob, okay. But what's interesting is that within the Hebrew language, in the Hebrew culture, heel grabber was a euphemism for deceiver, liar, supplanter, someone that would look and say, "You know what, this is my state in life and that's your state in life and I'm gonna take what you have, because I am unsettled. I need more."

Well, the Bible tells us that Esau he loved the outdoors. He was sort of like the Old Spice man, right. He walks in on a horse and he's really hairy everywhere; He's rugged, he's a hunter, he's a man's man. His dad is like, "This is my favorite. I love Esau. He loves to hunt, shoot arrows." The Bible tells us that Jacob he loved hanging out indoors. He had a T-shirt that says Magnolia Farms. He loved HGTV. He loved making soup with his mom. His mom was really into Jacob. So, you had two sons, you had a man's man and you had an indoor man. Wait a minute, you have an outdoor man and indoor man. Look, if you like air conditioning God bless you, I do too.

But, anyway, so you had two sons and they both carried these names. Well, one day Esau he comes in, he's been hunting all day and he's famished. He needs food. He comes in and there's his brother. His brother's making soup and he says, "Why don't you give me some soup?" Jacob that day he began to heel grab again. He says, "I'll tell you what, I'll give you some soup if you sell me your birthright." The birthright what that meant was the first born got 66%. When there was two boys he got 66%, and the second born got 33% of the inheritance. He says, "I'll give you some soup so long as I get to be first born." He's grabbing, because his heart is unsettled. There's this insatiable demand for more.

Well, fast forward a few years and you get to chapter 27. Isaac, their dad, is old, he's blind. It's time for him to give the blessing to Esau. In the Bible when it says that a dad would give his blessing, what he is doing is he's giving family authority. He's saying, you are now in charge of the family. I'm about to die; I'm giving it to you. You get to lead now." He said, "This is what I want you to do, Esau, I want this to come to you; you're my first born. Go out. I want you to hunt. I want you to bring back some food that you know that I love and then I'm gonna bless you." He goes out. With the help of his mom, his mom and Jacob, they begin to scheme because they see an opportunity for more.

He goes before his father impersonating his brother, Esau, and it really took some effort, because he knew that he was a smooth-skinned person; his brother was hairy. His mom takes some animal skins to him so that when Dad came and says, "Let me touch your hand," Dad would feel a skin of an animal and go, "Yeah, that's my son, Esau." So, he comes in and he goes, "Dad, here I am." He says, "Who are you?" "I'm Esau." He lies to him. "How'd you get back so fast?" The first time that Jacob ever uses the name of the Lord it's right here and he uses it to lie to his Dad. He says, "The Lord your God granted me success." You see, nothing is off limits to a heart that is unsettled and has an insatiable demand for more, including the very name of God. We'll even use it to get ahead.

Dad says, "Why don't you come over here and let me touch you. Are you really Esau?" "I am." He touches him and all of a sudden his dad gives him the blessing. He says, "Let people serve you. You be lord over your brothers." Now, why would a man do this when he knew that his brother was about to come back and he would be exposed to his dad and his brother? This is why? Because an unsettled heart will risk loss and shame for the possibility of more.

His brother comes back and he goes, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? Heel grabber, deceiver. He took what was mine again. It's never enough for that man." Well, Jacob has to leave because he's good at making soup and his brother's good at shooting arrows. So, we get to Genesis 28. God comes and it's as if God doesn't know what Jacob has been up to. God comes and He says, "I am gonna bless you. I'm never gonna leave you. I won't ever forsake you." If you're reading it, you're thinking, "Wait a minute. How can God ... God's blessing the wrong person here. He's been tricked.

He's like his dad who says like, 'Oh yeah, I think it's you; I should bless you.'" This is how startling grace is to us when we see God give it to others. "You've gonna give that person grace? They don't have a relationship? They don't love you. God, they use your name in order to get ahead in deceiving people. You can't bless that person." This is how stunning grace is. Just keep in mind that someone was absolutely stunned, and perplexed, that God gave you grace one day, too.

His heart he has to have more. It is absolutely amazing that Jacob still wants more. It makes me think of the really popular U2 song that says, "You carried the cross and my shame. You know that I believe it. You're there, you're making promises to me. I know this, but I still haven't found what I'm looking for." He has the God of the ages, the Creator of the Universe standing in front of him and in grace saying, "I will bless you, just draw near to me." He says, "Oh, I think I need a little bit more." For the next three and half chapters he runs for money, and he runs for sex, and he runs for some semblance of family. Twenty years later we find he has 11 sons, four women, lots of money, busted relationships, a legacy of deceit. His life is in total disarray. He's managing the perceptions of others, and he's wrestling for more.

What I simply want you to see before we get to the second point is this. God will let you get here. He will let you wrestle for two decades after He says, "I am for you." You could walk out of this room in a half hour and you can continue your path of unsettledness, but you don't have to. You don't have to, because what we find next and that is that Christ wrestles with our restless heart. This is what we find. Jacob heads home. He thinks that all the tempers have settled after all of these years and Esau comes out with 400 men. Jacob's plan is to throw money at the situation. He's got money so he can throw that. He's not repentant; he's appeasing. So, he sets up all of his servants and all of his things into installment plans and so that every time Esau comes to a new entourage there's another gift waiting for him.

Jacob's at the end and he's thinking, "You know, if I can set it up to where he can just keep having to run into my gifts of blessing to him maybe he won't kill me when he finally sees me. He has one night before he sees his brother and there God comes and He says, "You've been wrestling your whole life, now I'm gonna wrestle with you." I realize it's an interesting story, and it's kind of odd and it's like physically God is wrestling with a man. But, don't forget this is our spiritual movie. This is what's happen in our life. You have to understand that this is absolute divine mercy. This is condescension, much like you see in this picture when a dad wrestles with his kids. This dad could, if he wanted to, could overpower his children in an instant and yet there is this merciful condescension where Dad is limiting his strength and power. This is what's happening. We know this because even though they're wrestling together, it took one slight touch to break his hip. They're wrestling, "Oh yeah, poof poof. That's it."

It says that while he's laying on the ground he's still grabbing hold. Maybe he's grabbing hold to his heel, I don't know. You got a broken hip, you're laying on the ground, he's not reaching up and grabbing his shoulder, I promise. He says, "I'm not gonna let go until you bless me."

What's he saying when he says that? He's saying, "You know what, my dad blessed me and that wasn't enough. The birthright wasn't enough. The blessing wasn't enough. Women aren't enough. Children aren't enough. Riches aren't enough. I'm tired of having an unsettled heart, and I'm tired of the jury of my peers being unsettled in what I think they're thinking about me. I'm just so unsettled in my life. I'm anxious constantly and I don't even know why, but I need you to just tell me I am accepted. I'm enough, well done, I love you, something."

Have you wrestled with God spiritually? I remember when I was 16 years old I was watching a basketball game and my heart was absolutely restless at the time. I was like U2, I knew that He died for me but I didn't see why that was consequential to the rest of my life, and so I just knew that I needed more. I loved sports and basketball, and I remember watching a basketball game and I saw one of the players on the court fall over and die on the court, ESPN. I'm just thinking ... I went in my room, there's nobody else at the house and I began to wrestle with the Lord. I began to wrestle over why things happen. I began wrestling with that is the path that I want and I just saw a man die, fall straight over. One day I'm gonna die also, and so what's life all about, and haven't I done enough? There was just this wrestling match where all that I knew who God was, and I believed that God met me in my room.

It wasn't a physical wrestling match, it as a spiritual one, and it was a wrestling match that left me with a limp. Let me tell you how. It's not a limp maybe that you can see physically, but it's a limp that you should be able to hear throughout the rest of my life in what I say to you, because that day I said, "I cannot save myself," and so I released my hands on all of my good works to say, "Maybe this will contribute to His pleasure over my life." Instead of believing in myself I said, "I have to place my belief in Jesus Christ alone." Instead of me demanding that I'm gonna call the shots for the rest of my life, I had to say, "Christ, you are the Lord of my life."

You see, this leaves a limp in somebody's life that other people can see, and it leaves a difference. People can look at it and go, "You know, this is a changed person." Listen, it left me with a limp, but that night it left me with peace, a peace that has never gone away. Oh, there's been times where it's been shaken in the circumstances of my life, but even in the circumstances of my life I know whose I am. There's a new name, and this is exactly what takes place in the life of Jacob. That night Jacob received a new name. He received a new relationship, a new legacy, a new peace, and a limp to remember it all.

My question is this, have you? Have you? Do you know how it's possible for you to be able to wrestle with God and come out with peace? It's because, number three, Christ wrestled for our restless heart. Before He wrestled for any of you, or for me, with us, he wrestled for us. You see, the fact that we have all sinned is not just truth, it's tragedy. Well all rebelled against God and He responded by sending Jesus Christ to us. His name is called Jesus, and the reason is because His name means He will save His people from their sins. Do you know what Jesus did for you? The first thing He did was He wrestled temptation, and He prevailed by not giving into it a single time when He was on the Earth. He wrestled with anxiety in the garden when He was saying, "I don't want to do this," and yet He prevailed and He went forth to the cross.

He wrestled when our sin, all of it, was placed upon His shoulders, convulsing over it, and yet He prevailed and He wrestled with abandonment. Not only His disciples left and ran from Him, but God Himself turned His face from Him. Jesus prevailed and He wrestled on a cross when they spat upon him, and they crucified Him, and they nailed Him, and they put thorns over His head, and He prevailed on the cross. Then, they put Him in a grave and He wrestled with death itself and prevailed when Jesus rose from the dead. Jesus wrestled, and He prevailed so that you and I can receive a new name, and a new relationship, and a new standing of righteousness with Him, and a new legacy, and a new limp to remember it all. Have you bowed your knee in faith to Jesus Christ? You will be unsettled until you do.

Before we take the supper let me give you a few applications. The first one always goes to the heart, and so let me encourage you to let's identify why we are restless. If Jacob's story is our movie where do you find yourself in the movie? You see, restlessness what it does is it causes us to run so fast that we forget why we're running, because we're just trying to stay on the treadmill. So, let me ask you a few questions? Why are you working yourself dizzy? There's a cause behind it. Why are you drinking every night? Why are you sleeping with so many people, so quickly, you can't even remember the last one's name? Whose approval are you seeking today in your life? You see, you do not pause and identify why you're running, and the cause of your restlessness. Just like Jacob, 20 years will pass and you may end up with money and kids, but you'll lack peace, and you'll leave a legacy of shame that you do not want. Pause long enough in this life to think why you're running the race you're running.

The second thing is let's release our functional saviors and trust Jesus Christ. I want you to know that nobody, and nothing, can give your soul rest except Jesus Christ, so grab ahold of Him and do not let go. A relationship with Jesus Christ begins with wrestling, admitting that you cannot save yourself. Believing and trusting in his accomplishments and confessing Him as Lord of your life. You know what, this leaves a limp but it also leaves great peace. I urge you to do that right now. But then this relationship with Christ it continues to grow as we wrestle with Him every single day of our life, with our fallen heart.

Psalm 86:11 says, "Unite my heart to fear your name." So instead of resigning yourself to the whims of your unpredictable heart, we have to wrestle it to the ground every day. What am I saying? I'm saying, "Pray until you pray, and worship until you worship, and read until you read and are fed." Think about your new identity in Christ until you rejoice at it instead of just know it. You have to wrestle your heart to the ground and say, "God, fix it." When the Psalmist says, "Unite my heart to fear your name," what is he doing? He's confessing it's not united, it's divided. I want you but I want something else. I believe you but you're not enough and so, God, would you unite the inclinations of my heart and help me to fear you more than anything else, anyone else. We have to let go of what we're wrestling with, and we have to hold fast to Jesus Christ.

The last thing is this is let's learn to wrestle with an open Bible. This is really important to me. This is why I encourage you to read the Bible. This is why we have a Bible reading plan. Whether you use it or not I want to at least provide you opportunities to know how to read through the Bible. You see, the fact is is this. When we get weary of our wrestling we tend to close our Bible and we tend to open ourselves up to vices. I'm begging you to keep your Bible open. Psalm 119:71 says, "It is good for me that I was afflicted that I might learn your statutes." So, the psalmist is reflecting on a hard season of his life when he was absolutely overwhelmed. Instead of grumbling about that time he was giving thanks for that time, because he learned things from God's Word that he would not have learned otherwise.

When I look at my life ... I don't like pain but I would not love Romans 6, 7, 8; I would not love Exodus 1, 2, 3, and 4; I would not love Isaiah chapter 40-45; and I would not love Ecclesiastes chapter 1-12; I would not love those passages as I do had God not led me through a limp-inducing afflictions in 1990, and 1994, and 2003, and in 2012; when I came to faith in Jesus Christ; when I was confronted with the fact that I had a speech impediment because God was calling me to preach; when one of my sons was born with a tumor on his back; and fourth when I went through an extended period where things just felt really dark. You see, I know that pain can cause His Word to taste dry, but even so I beg you keep your Bible open. If you will, the Word of God that now tastes so dry will become food so rich that you won't ever forget the banquet, and later on you just may thank God for the affliction.

Do you know why we can hold fast to Jesus Christ? It's because He held fast for us. So, for those who are going to be serving us the Lord's supper, if you want to go ahead and stand and head to the back. As they prepare to pass the elements let me encourage you that if you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior you can do that right now, but if you haven't we encourage you to let these things pass because the Bible says that only those who have tasted and seen of the Lord is good, only those who have trusted in Jesus Christ should take of these things. But, if you have trusted Christ, we welcome you to this table. We ask, as these things are being passed, that you maybe consider your life. Maybe you're wrestling right now. Let me just encourage you to pray to the Lord.

As you think about the fact that you can hold fast to Jesus Christ, the reason is because He's holding fast to you. So, let me pray for us. Father in Heaven, we thank you for your kindness, and as we take this supper remembering that you wrestled for us, with us, we pray, God, that you would stir peace within our heart, and we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.



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