Renew Your Faith — Delivery Transcript

Genesis 13 (CSB) · Wes Terry · Sunday, November 12, 2023 · *Faith & Its Reward*

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If you have your Bible, you can open it to the book of Genesis. We're going to be in Genesis chapter 13 this morning. If you're new to Broadview, we typically preach through books of the Bible. And we've been going through the book of Genesis in a series called Faith and Its Reward. And it's one of those series that examines what God does every now and then when the world breaks. He typically hits the reset button and chooses one individual. To kind of start things over. And you certainly see that pattern in the book of Genesis.

And we're in Genesis chapter 12. The Tower of Babel had kind of broken the world. The nations had been scattered all over the earth. The languages were confused, and God chooses one man named Abram and says, "I'm going to use you to form a counterculture that's going to continue my plan and advance—or fulfill—my promise." And so Abraham is chosen by God to live a life of faith. But like most men and women who are chosen to live a life of faith, he had a season of his life marked by failure.

Anybody ever had a season of failure walking with the Lord? Okay. Some of you are honest, the rest of you, it's okay you didn't raise your hand. We know what's really going on in your life. All of us, if you've walked with the Lord for any length of time, there's been seasons of failure and Abraham, even as the OG, the founding father of faith, even Abraham had a season of failure in his life. The Lord allowed famine to strike in his life, and he ended up, instead of trusting in the Lord, he trusted in his self.

He didn't rely on the Lord, he relied on the flesh, and ended up making a series of decisions that were disastrous. That's not surprising. It's not surprising that people fail—even faithful people sometimes fail in their faith. What matters in your life is not that you never fail, because that'll never happen. What matters is that when you fail, you learn to renew your faith. And that's what we're going to see in the life of Abraham in Genesis chapter 13. If you go through the great Hall of Fame of faith, Abraham's not unique.

Every single person in the Hall of Fame of faith, up until you get to Jesus there in chapter 12, the similarities they all have outside of Jesus is that they all had a season of failure. Just like we will have seasons of failure. What matters is that we know how to renew our faith when it happens. And so if you're new to Genesis, again, Abraham has been chosen by God. He's been called to live this life of faith. It started out great. But God allowed that famine to come into his life, and when the famine struck, he went down to Egypt.

And in the book of Genesis and throughout the Old Testament, Egypt is a literal place,[1] but it's also representative of kind of worldliness and leaning on the flesh and running from God and trusting in military power and those things instead of trusting in the Lord. So when Abraham goes to Egypt, he does those things. He doesn't lean on the Lord. He makes decisions for himself. He ends up saying that his wife was really his sister. Pharaoh ends up kidnapping or taking his wife from him. Abraham instead of being honest about what was going on, continues to lie.

He ends up getting all sorts of material prosperity as a result of his deception. And then in God's grace and faithfulness, he exposes Abraham in his sin, delivers Abram's wife from her captivity, and then even though Abraham deserved to get absolute punishment, maybe even lose his life, God showers him with abundant mercy and grace and sends him away from Egypt with all that he had. That's where we're at in Genesis 13. "Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev—he, his wife, and all that he had, and Lot went with him.

"Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold. He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been, to the site where he had formerly built the altar. And Abram called on the name of the Lord there." We looked at this very briefly last week, but what you see here is Abraham engaging in what the Bible calls repentance. He does four things. He turns away from Egypt, or he turns away from his sin and the world. He turns to Bethel, which is a Hebrew word translated, the house of God.

He comes back home, you might say, to the Lord, to his true identity as a child of God, someone who's following God. Then he comes down to the altar that he had built, he engages in worship and adoration of God, making sacrifices of surrender and yielding himself to God and then he calls on the name of the Lord. And that really is fundamental if you're going to have your faith renewed in the Lord. If you want to get back up in the saddle and see God begin to use your life in a powerful way again.

The first and most important thing, without this thing, there can be no other things, is that you repent of your sin and you return to a life of worship. You've got to turn from your Egypt and turn back to the Lord. And that's exactly what Abraham does. And it would not have been possible without the kindness of God in Abram's life. As I mentioned earlier, he was not

willing to kind of fess up and bring his sins out into the light, and it was God's faithfulness that exposed Abraham when he wouldn't expose himself.

But that's always how the Lord works. We don't typically just choose to repent. Human beings don't. The Bible says it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. It's when God begins to move in our life through certain people or maybe certain messages or certain circumstances, and God breaks through the hardness of our hearts and says, I want to bring you back home. When God begins to do that in your life in his gentle way, as he always does, as we just read in Acts chapter 9 with Saul, you have a decision to turn from what you're doing and go back home to the Lord.

How you go about that repentance—every person's different, but there are commonalities that I think are instructive from Abraham's experience. He does two things when he repents and returns to the Lord. The first thing he does is he walks back the way he came. You see the language of by stages and the Negev, you see that if you look at chapter 12, verse 9, "Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev." And then in chapter 13, verse 1, "he went up from Egypt to the Negev." A little bit later it says in verse 3, "he went by stages from the Negev to Bethel."

That's intentional by Moses, who is writing this book. He's saying, the way that Abraham walked away from the Lord, the path he took away from the Lord, he took the same path back home. Now in one sense that's true geographically, he literally walked back the way that he came. Maybe there wasn't any other road. But I do think maybe he's communicating something more than just he went back the way he came. Maybe something a little more spiritual as it relates to repentance. Because one of the things God will often use in your life when it comes to repentance is having you revisit those places, those relationships, those points of failure, so that as you journey back, you are re-familiarized with the severity of your sin.

And begin to savor afresh and anew the goodness of God and the sweetness of his grace in redeeming you from your sin. An example of this, if you've ever done any kind of recovery ministry like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, one of the 12 steps, I can't remember which one it is, but one of the 12 steps is that they will have you go back and make amends with the people that you harmed in your addiction. It's not to say that they have to forgive you. You can't determine what people do or don't do when you make an action like that.

But you're essentially saying I'm going to clean up my side of the street. I'm going to go back and attempt to be reconciled to those that I've lost. And in a similar way, I think when it comes to repentance, one of the things that the Lord will do, as you walk back the road that you left, is you will begin to revisit landmarks, circumstances, people, relationships where you are reacquainted with the sinfulness of your sin. And you don't do that to linger over

your sin. You don't do that to kind of become self-absorbed and self-obsessed and say, oh, how bad I was.

It's not like that at all. What you're doing is not lingering over your sin, you're lingering over the goodness of God's grace. And what the enemy used to kind of destroy you and cause you to fail the test, God is going to use to restore you and turn that failed test into a testimony. He takes that mess of a life and he turns it into a message of God's faithfulness. And I imagine that's kind of what's happening with Abraham as he's walking back to Bethel. And maybe he's seeing some of those landmarks.

"And this is where it went wrong. This was the one moment where I began to compromise." And there's something instructive about going back to those places and allowing the Lord to speak to us and address us. In fact, I think one of the reasons a lot of people fail to overcome their sin. There are strongholds in your life you can't break through. One of the reasons is because you move too quickly from forgiveness to restoration. You have besetting sins in your life. God, I wish I would quit doing this thing.

God, thank you so much that you forgive me of this thing. I'm going to do better. If you don't stop long enough to really linger over the severity of that sin, how it has separated you from a holy God, how it grieves the heart of your Heavenly Father. It kind of cheapens the grace of God when you cheapen the severity of your sin. There's actually a quote by one of the Puritans named—I think his name's Thomas Watson. Is that his name? Is he up here? Yeah, there he is. Thomas Watson.

He says, "Until sin become bitter, Christ will not be sweet." Great quote. Great quote. And in your life, until sin really tastes bitter, until it's not just I made a mistake and I hope God will forgive me and I'll try and do better, but when you come and you see what's underneath that sin, why did you do what you do? What's the unbelief in your heart? What's really animating that rebellion against God and how has it damaged not only your relationship with God but the relationship with the other people in your life when you let sin taste like a bitter pill in your life, more and more you will begin to understand the sweetness of God's grace and the power of His forgiveness, and that will change you.

That will overwhelm you so that that sin is something you can leave behind instead of something you carry with you. That's what Abraham does. He walks back the way that he came, and then the second thing he does is he worships the way that he started. He walked the old paths and he worshipped the old way. Again, if you go back and you look at the language, he went back to the tent that he had formerly dwelled in. He went back to the same exact place between Bethel and Ai. He went back to the same altar that he had worshipped the Lord in.

And that is also something that happens when you repent from the Lord. There's power in nostalgia. I don't know how to explain it. There are times when I've been running from the Lord or I need a fresh kind of reviving in my spirit. And one of the things that I'll often do is I'll go back to those places, those special places where I encountered the Lord. One of those places for me is Southwestern Seminary. And I don't know what it is about going back to Southwestern Seminary, but I met the Lord in that place on that campus.

And being there does something spiritually. Another place for me is the deer blind. I'm so thankful the Lord met me in the deer blind. I'm not saying it's an excuse to go hunting, but there's something about being in that place with the Lord that does something in my heart spiritually. And it's important to note that what's special is not the place. Because worship isn't about the place, right? Abraham's returning to a life of worship. Worship is not about the place, the tent, the specific dwelling. It's about the person that he met in that place.

It's about his encounter with the Lord. And just like going back to the city of your honeymoon can kind of rekindle a romance in your marriage or if you're in a dating relationship, kind of going back to that place of your first date kind of rekindles the romance. So also does going back and visiting those places where you encounter the Lord rekindle your affections for the Lord Jesus Christ. And so where's that place in your life? Abraham knew where he needed to go, but he didn't just engage in a familiar place, right?

He didn't just visit a familiar place. He also engaged in a familiar practice. And that was calling on the name of the Lord. This is exactly—if you read the New Testament in the book of Revelation, chapter 2, Jesus is rebuking seven different churches that had kind of drifted and fallen into sin. Actually two of them didn't, but the rest were. The first was the church in Ephesus and he says, you're doing all the right things, but you've lost your first love. You don't love me like you used to love me.

So he tells them to repent. And then he says, go back and do the things you did at first. Go back and worship me the way that you used to worship me. And if you think about your life when it comes to renewing your faith, one of the best things that you can do is remember what was your life like when you first came to know the Lord. When you were really walking with Jesus hand in hand and you heard his voice and you experienced his presence, what did your life look like?

Who were your friends? What kind of music did you listen to? What types of entertainment did you allow or not allow into your life? What was the rhythm and structure of your life? Are there ways that you can go back to worshiping in that way? Because that's why God frees us from our sin. He frees us so that we might worship him. So then we would repent and return to a life of worship. God doesn't just set us free for the sake of being free. This is actually one of the amazing parallels between Abraham's experience in Egypt and Israel's experience during the Exodus.

There were so many of these last week. Last week I wish I would have had more time to just develop every one of them. But one of the parallels is this idea of worship. And if you go back to the Exodus, or if you go to the Exodus story, we all probably are familiar, if not because we read the Bible, but because we watch the movie, we're familiar with Moses' words to Pharaoh when he said, "Let my people"—what? "Let my people go." Do you remember what Moses says directly after those words?

"Let my people go"—why? "Let them go so that they might worship me in the wilderness," so that they go have a festival in the desert. I am freeing these people not just so that they'll be free, but so that they will return to me, so that they'll come back to a life of worship. And that's what's necessary. If you want to renew your faith, you need to walk back the road you walked away from the Lord. As quickly as you left the Lord is as quickly as you can return. He is always ready to receive you.

And then begin to worship the way you did at first. Sometimes I'll just go back and listen to the old songs that I, you know, got saved in—the 1990s cringe worship music, but it touches me. Or I'll go back and listen to certain hymns. Worship the way you started. Walk back the way you came. That's the first thing. Most important thing, repent and return to the Lord. Worship is less about a place, it's more about a person. Worship is less about singing, and it's more about service and submission. It's about how you live your life.

Singing is great. Singing is wonderful. We love to sing on Sunday mornings, but that's not all worship is. Worship is doing the things you did at first, serving the Lord the way that you initially served him. The second thing Abraham does is he removes strongholds in his life that keep him from moving forward. This is in verses five to seven. Let's see if you want to throw those up on the screen. "Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents, but the land"—you might underline this in your Bible—"the land was unable to support them as long as they stayed together, because they had so many possessions that they could not stay together.

"And there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. And at that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land." What I think is so fascinating about this is that the Lord allows a crisis to re-enter into Abram's life directly following his repentance and return to this life of worship. The crisis that Abram originally experienced was in the Negev, where the famine created a climate where he was no longer able to feed his family. And that lack of material prosperity, the lack of the ability to provide, caused him to kind of lean on the flesh, stop trusting God, and go down to Egypt.

But now that he's returned back to the Lord, you see the Lord manufacturing, this time out of them staying together, he brings the same exact type of crisis into Abram's life and says, what are you going to do this time? And the same is true in our life. One of the things the

Lord does to renew your faith is present you with the same crisis that you failed previously. Just like a young kid learning to ride a bike, if he has a really bad experience going down a certain hill, one of the best things you can do for that kid is to help him face his fear and overcome that hill by getting back on the bike and riding down it successfully.

And the same is true in your faith. God does not present you with the same crisis to tear you down or to say, I can't wait for you to fail. He does that to build you up and to say you can overcome. If you'll lean on me instead of leaning on yourself, if you'll trust me instead of trusting yourself, we will overcome this crisis. And that's exactly what Abraham does. And that's what I mean by removing strongholds from your life. The stronghold really has two levels for Abram's life. The first thing that he's going to do is he's going to replace those old vices with holy virtues.

And the second thing that he's going to do is release unholy relationships. With what the Lord wants. He replaces old vices with holy virtues and he releases unholy relationships with good ones. The first thing is that he removes these unholy vices that he previously had. If you look at chapter 13, verse 8, Abram says to Lot, "Please, let's not have quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, because we are relatives." Your translation may say "we're brothers." Abraham is his uncle; vice versa, Lot is the nephew.

Look at this: "Isn't the whole land before you? Separate from me: if you go to the left, I will go to the right, and if you go to the right, I will go to the left." What is Abraham doing? Abraham's doing the exact opposite of what he did the first time. The first time he was anxious, he relied on his flesh, he said, I'm going to take care of this myself. He was driven by fear and greed. He said, "Say that you're my sister so that it will go well for me."

Now that greed has been replaced with generosity. That arrogance and pride and kind of leaning on the flesh has been replaced with faith and trust in the provision of God. So much so that he says to Lot, you pick. The whole land's in front of you. I don't care what you choose. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right. And if you go to the right, I'll go to the left. I'm going to trust the Lord with my future. He has replaced those sinful vices of unbelief and pride and greed with these virtues of humility and generosity and faith.

And the same is true in your life. Jesus said when a house gets clean from a bad demon, It's important that you don't just clean the house and leave it alone, but that you put the strong man in the house. Otherwise, stronger demons will come back sevenfold and take over. And basically what he's saying is it's not enough just to remove sin from your life. You need to fill your life with the fullness of God. You need to put Jesus in there and Christ's likeness in there. Another way to think about it is you need to starve the bad dog and feed the good dog.

You need to take off the old man and put on the new man. If you struggle with pride in your life, you need to put in humility. You need to start serving people in ways that you feel are

beneath you. When you begin to serve in ways that you feel are beneath you, you will begin to experience humility in your life. And it may not taste good at first, but it is good. If you struggle with greed and or maybe anxiety, then you need to learn to be generous. So start writing a check.

And if you say, well, the preacher just wants my money, don't write it to the church, write it to somebody else. Give away your money. Give away the things that have a hold on your heart that control you more than the Lord controls you. If you struggle with addiction, one of the best things you can do is begin to weave into your life habits of self-control. Temperance. Even—I knew one guy, he would leave a thing of M&M's in his truck right there in the cup holder, and he would not eat one.

Ever. They were always there. "Eat me, eat me." "No." He was filling his life with virtue. One of the ways you can defeat the sin in your life is by revisiting those old places and letting sin become bitter. And another way to have total victory over your sin, to remove that stronghold from your life, is to replace those vices with holy virtues. That's what Abram does. And the second thing that he does, he doesn't just remove strongholds by replacing unholy habits. He also removes strongholds by releasing unholy relationships. If you look at chapter 13 verse 10: "Lot looked out and he saw that the entire plain of the Jordan as far as Zoar was well watered everywhere, like the Lord's garden."

You might circle this. So Lot looks out. He says, I don't know what to pick. What am I going to pick? What am I going to pick? Oh look, that looks like Eden. That looks like the Garden of Eden. That looks like paradise. That looks like what we had in Egypt. "This was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. And so Lot chose the entire plain of the Jordan for himself. And then Lot journeyed eastward and they separated from each other." So Lot looks, Lot sees. Lot chooses for himself. Lot journeys eastward.

These are all important words. This word here, the Lord's garden, and this word here eastward, those are all important. It's as if Moses, who's writing this, is saying Lot and Abram could not have been more different in how they responded to this moment. Lot is going east, Abram's going to go west. Lot is going to the valley. Abram's going to the mountain. Lot is going to Sodom and Gomorrah, where they sin wickedly against the Lord. Abraham is staying in Canaan, the promised land that God was going to give him. Lot chooses for himself.

Abraham depends on and discerns from the Lord. Lot is driven by immediate gratification. Abraham is driven by delayed gratification. The two people could not be further from each other. They both saw, they both look out, they both choose, they both move, but one is going away from the Lord and the other is going towards the Lord. And there will be times in your life where for you to be renewed in your faith, you are going to have to release people from your life because you're not going the same direction anymore.

Because they're going away from the Lord and you're trying to go to the Lord. And sometimes they will be people that you love, just like Abraham loved Lot. Sometimes they may even be a relative. Can't be your spouse. You're stuck with that one. You can't do nothing about that. There's a covenant there that trumps what I'm talking about. But it might be anybody else. In fact, Jesus said in Luke chapter 14, one of my favorite passages on discipleship: "Unless you're willing to hate your father and mother, brother and sister, yeah, even your own life, you cannot be my disciple."

Another version of that, he says, "If anybody loves father or mother more than me, then they're not worthy of me. If anyone loves son or daughter more than me, then they are not worthy of me," because there will come times in your journey where for you to be renewed in your faith, for you to step into what God has for you, you're going to have to release those people who are going a different direction. And it's painful and it's difficult and it's messy and I'm sure it's complicated, but it's what's got to happen if you're going to be renewed in your faith.

So Abraham lets Lot go because they're going in a different direction. Lot says, "To be happy, to find paradise, I've got to leave the Lord." And so Lot lets him go. The second reason you got to release people from your life is because God has a different plan. And you see this not necessarily in this text, but if you go back to Genesis chapter 12, verse 1, if you want to turn there. You see in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1, that the Lord says to Abram, "Get out. Go out." Look at the three things: "from your land, your relatives, and your father's house."

And Abraham does that, right? He goes out from the land, he goes out from his father's house. But if you look at verse 3—I'm sorry, verse 4: "Abram went as the Lord had told him," and who goes with him? "And Lot went with him." Now let's have a little Bible quiz. Who is Lot to Abraham? Yes or no? Is Lot a relative of Abraham? So yes or no, does the Lord get what he asked or not? It says, "He went as the Lord had told him," but "Lot went with him."

Now, why did Abraham take Lot? I think the reason Abraham took Lot could have been as an act of mercy. "I don't want to leave him alone. My dad's dead. His dad's dead. He's got nobody. He's not going to make it unless he goes with us. And so, Lot, why don't you just come along?" That's giving Abraham the benefit of the doubt. Probably more likely is that Abraham in hearing God's promise that you're going to give me land and descendants and blessing like nobody can imagine, you're not going to be able to do that when I don't have any children.

And so Abraham let his present circumstances dictate the scope of God's promise. And so Abraham's thinking, since I don't have any children and the promise is for my descendants, I better take Lot. I'll kind of adopt him as my son. The promise will be fulfilled through him, but that's not what the Lord said. The Lord didn't say, I'm going to give it through your nephew or through the other guy's descendants, I'm going to do it through your descendants.

Isaac was the child of promise. It was through Abraham's relationship with Sarah that the promise was to continue.

And this is the second time Abraham has dropped the ball. He also allowed his wife to be taken into Pharaoh's court because he stopped believing the promise. He was letting his present circumstances dictate the scope of God's promise. And so sometimes there will be people in your life that you need to let go, you need to release them because that was not God's original plan for you. You were supposed to go a different direction. You were supposed to be a different kind of thing. But you let your present circumstances dictate the scope of God's promise.

And so now you're stuck in a relationship or you're stuck with a set of circumstances that are keeping you from experiencing the fullness of God's blessing in your life. And you need to let them go. Just like Abraham let Lot go. And what's so crazy is as soon as Abraham does this, look at what happens in chapter 13, verses 14 and 15. Not only does the Lord reaffirm his promise to Abraham, but he actually amplifies it. "After Lot had separated from him, the Lord said to Abram, Look up"—notice the Lord speaking again.

All the time in Egypt, he didn't hear from the Lord. Now that he's repented, returned to his life of worship, he's removed these strongholds from his life, now the Lord's speaking again. And he says to Abraham, "Look up from the place where you are. I want you to look north and south, east and west, for I will give you and your offspring forever all the land that you see. I'll make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring would be counted."

I want you to compare this promise with chapter 12, verse 7. Because in chapter 12, verse 7, the Lord says something similar. In chapter 12, verse 7, the Lord appears to Abraham and he says, "To your offspring I will give this land." Now he's saying, I'm going to give it to you and your offspring. Now it's not just for now, the present, but I'm going to give it forever. And it's not just some of the land, but it's all of the land that you see. And it's not just some of your descendants or one of your descendants, but your descendants are going to be like the dust of the earth.

So that if anybody could even count the dust, they could count them. There's a principle here related to God's blessing in your life and your willingness to be fully obedient to what the Lord's asking you to do. One of the reasons that removing strongholds is so central to being renewed in your faith is because the fullness of God's blessing in your life is directly linked with the fullness of your obedience. If you're completely obedient, if you said, Lord, there's nothing I'm going to hold on to, I'm giving everything to you.

It's absolute and total surrender. And I'm not just saying it with my mouth. I'm doing it with my life. I'm showing you manifestly, concretely, and practically I'm all yours. When you

completely obey the Lord in everything that you know to do, it is then that the Lord begins to unleash blessings in your life like he would never do before. Because now you're ready to receive them. Now you're able to steward them in the way that the Lord desires you to steward them. So repent of sin, return to a life of worship.

Release strongholds that are keeping you from moving forward. And then finally reorient your life based on God's promise. Chapter 13, verses 17 to 18, the Lord continues in speaking to Abraham: "I want you to get up. I want you to walk around the land through its length and width, for I will give it to you." "So Abram moved his tent and went to live near the oaks of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an altar to the Lord." So step number three is to reorient your life around God's will for your future.

This was a big deal for Abram. If you're kind of in a position where you feel like you're kind of stuck treading water, you need to be renewed in your faith. You need to be revived. Sometimes there's a stronghold in your life that needs to be removed. Sometimes it's not anything bad that you're doing. It's just that you're not proactively pursuing, you're not proactively reorienting your world around God's will for your life. You're in a holding pattern because you've come out of Egypt but you haven't stepped into the next season.

And that's what the Lord's saying to Abram here. You need to get up, you need to go and look, north, south, east, and west. I'm giving it all to you. And then I want you to act. And so he does. And I want you to see on the map how far he goes. It's not like he went next door. He's up here worshiping the Lord. The Lord speaks to him. Go north, south, east, and west. Lot had already come down here to Sodom and Gomorrah. Some people say it's up here.

There's a debate. It's interesting. Not for now. But maybe Lot's down here, maybe he's up here. Point is, Abraham goes all the way down here to Mamre near the oaks of Hebron and he begins to live there. And he builds a new altar because God is doing a new work. And I don't know what it may look like in your life, but I do know when the Lord revives a soul and he brings you back and puts you back on the field, he has new mountains for you to climb. New obstacles for you to overcome, a greater work, a new work that he wants to achieve through you, but you've got to do the hard work of orienting your life around his will for your future.

And that may mean you need to move. That may mean you have to relocate geographically. It may mean you need to change your job. It might mean you need to start a relationship or start an initiative. It may mean you need to stop doing something. It may mean you need to start doing something. Maybe it's related to the local church. Maybe it's joining or getting more involved. Maybe it's as simple as baptism. It's saying I'm going to remove every barrier that's keeping me from experiencing the fullness of what God wants to do in my future.

Do not allow your failures to keep you from moving forward in that way. Just because you failed doesn't mean that God's done. And it doesn't matter how old you are either. I was preaching this in the early service. You know, you may be seventy, eighty years old and you'd say, "I failed, and I failed and I failed again. And not only did I fail, I was stuck in my failures for 50 years. There's no way God's going to use me anymore." And that is a lie from the enemy. It's what the Hebrew says is malarkey.

It's not true. He can use you. He can do greater things and greater days if you'll reorient your life around his will for your future. You say, what does that look like? I don't know what it looks like for you. Here's what I do know. If you will repent and return to a life of worship, and if you'll remove those strongholds from your life and pray and seek the Lord, he will reveal those things to you. He will speak. And you will hear. The question is, will you put into practice what he's calling you to do?

So here's what I want us to do as we respond. There may be some of you here this morning who, for you, it's not being renewed in your faith. It's giving your life to Jesus for the first time. And one of the things that was so beautiful about our baptism is when Jesus calls people to himself, he calls them publicly. He never ever called anyone privately. He always calls them publicly. And if he's calling you this morning to salvation, to put your faith in Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, I want to invite you to come down here to the front and to say, I want to give my life to Jesus.

And we will celebrate with you and rejoice in what God's doing in your life. You need to believe a couple of things. You need to believe that you're a sinner separated from God because He is holy and your sins separate you from His holiness. And so because of that problem, he sent Jesus into the world to die on the cross for our sins so that we could be forgiven of our sins and reconciled back to God. Even though he's holy, we can be brought near to him, not because we're holy, but because Jesus was holy for us, and he died in our place for our sins on the cross.

Three days later, God raised him from the dead saying, "Your sins have been paid in full", and true life, abundant life is found in Jesus' name. So if you believe those things about the Lord Jesus and He's drawing you to Himself, I invite you to come as the band plays. If that's not necessarily your story, but you'd say, I need revival. I need to be renewed in my faith. I would ask you to really discern what the Lord would say to you on these three things that were in the life of Abraham and ask him for wisdom and discernment on what it looks like practically for you to weave these things into your life.

And if there's any way I can pray for you or anything I can do to help, I'll be down here at the front to pray. The altar is also open. And maybe for you, you need to come down to the altar symbolically like Abraham did. New work, new place, new altar. It's a new season in your life. God is doing a new thing and as a way of committing yourself and saying, "I want to

reorient my life to your will for my future," you can come down and make this stage an altar and allow the Lord to minister to you.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "Egypt is a literal city"; Egypt is a country (a land and nation), not a city—in Genesis 12–13 Abram goes "down to Egypt," the land ruled by Pharaoh. Source: Genesis 12:10–20 (CSB), BibleGateway. ↩