



Sermon – March 29, 2020
Wes Wilkinson

Verses Covered This Week

2 Chronicles 17:1 –
2 Timothy 4:17 - 18

Well, amen. Good morning church family. It's good to see you looking good this morning. You're a bright and shiny red dot just like normal the last couple weeks. So I hope and pray that you are doing well. I hope and pray that this past week has been maybe a settling in to what is at least our temporary time of normal in this unique season in world history. It's a joy, we're going to go back this morning into 2 Chronicles and I want to challenge all of us as we go back. We are in a different time. Our daily schedules for many of us have been upended. And I want to just ask that as we walk through this text this morning, that you would be heightened in your sensitivity to really allow the Lord to examine your heart, to examine our hearts, that we would open our eyes to what the text is saying. And really in this season when things are upended, we'll be willing to maybe have our eyes opened to areas where perhaps we've been blinded to previously.

So if you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, we're going to be in 2 Chronicles chapter 16. And we're going to finish out the narrative we've been walking through on King Asa. Two weeks ago, we asked the question, "What do you do when unprecedented fear comes knocking at your doorstep?" And we watched King Asa and the people of the southern kingdom rise up and stand firm in unwavering trust and reliance upon God. And then last week we came in and we watched as and were challenged by the response of the people to a charge that God is with you if you are with Him. So seek Him and you will find Him. And we were called to a renewed obedience; to walk in obedience with courage. And to seek the Lord personally and passionately and to rejoice in submissive worship to Him. And so we've walked through and we've seen Asa and the people respond in these ways. We've seen God bless that. At the end of chapter 15 it says,

¹⁹There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

We see God's blessing of rest and peace come upon the land. So today we finish out. 2 Chronicles chapter 16, verse 1.

¹In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from going out or going in to Asa king of Judah.

What we find is after this long period of peace, a disturbance has happened. There is a disturbance. Baasha the king of Israel has set up to fortify the city of Ramah. Ramah's a city about 5 miles north of Jerusalem. It's set on the major highway that people would have traveled to come in and out of Judah and Jerusalem for the purpose of trade. And so Baasha is fortifying this and this disturbance makes its way to King Asa. You can imagine Asa sitting in his throne room there in the palace in Jerusalem surrounded by his counselors taking care of business. And all of a sudden running into his court is that scout from the front lines. "Your majesty! Your majesty! News has come! Baasha is fortifying Ramah! Trade will be disrupted!" You can imagine potentially the fear, the panic, the thoughts that run through your mind. Nothing's happened yet, but something could be happening. We've experienced this recently. It says,

²Then Asa brought out treasure and silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord and the king's house. And he sent them to Ben-hadad the king of Aram, who lives in Damascus,

Aram being, your Bibles may say Syria. The kingdom that is north of the northern kingdom of Israel. And Asa said,

³"Let there be a treaty, a covenant, between you and me, as between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you silver and gold; go, break your treaty, your covenant, with Baasha king of Israel so that he will withdraw from me."

So Asa hears this and Asa comes up with a plan. This is what we're going to do to get Baasha off our back. We're going to go to the king north of Baasha. We'll give them money. We'll enter into an alliance, a covenant, with them and then he will begin attacking and this will cause Baasha to turn his attention to the north. So he comes up with a plan. A seemingly good plan. It's a plan that'd be common. A plan likely affirmed by other advisors. It's a plan that's successful. Look in verse 4.

⁴So Ben-hadad listened to King Asa. He sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they captured Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim and all the store cities of Naphtali. ⁵When Baasha heard of this, he ceased fortifying Ramah and he stopped his work. ⁶Then King Asa brought out all Judah, they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber which Baasha had been building, and with them he fortified Geba and Mizpah.

We find that his plan works. Ben-hadad comes again and he begins attacking northern cities. He not just attacks them, but conquers them. King Baasha hears this, he sees the assault, he removes the efforts in the southern portion of the, his kingdom, sends them north. And Asa walks right into the city that Baasha was fortifying, takes all of the supplies and goes back and builds his own fortifications. His plan is successful. He has understood his role. He's the king of Judah. He is God's anointed representative. He is to protect the land. He knows what the right thing to do is to protect the land. He has acted and is successful. But he's wrong. Look at the rebuke. Verse 7.

⁷And at that time Hanani the seer

And seer is kind of the early term for what we would call a prophet.

⁷So Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, “Because you have relied on the king of Aram and not relied on the Lord your God, therefore the army of the king of Aram has escaped out of your hand.

He says, “You have.” He comes in and rebukes him. He says, “You’ve acted, you’ve not done anything objectively wrong. But in your actions, you have relied.” That word rely is the same word that we saw two weeks ago. Asa stand on the frontlines and say, “Lord, who is there but You? It’s a fight between the powerful and those who do not have power. We are here because of Your name, Lord. We rely on You.” It’s the same word. But here Hanani throws it back to Asa and says, “You have not relied on the Lord your God. Instead the actions you have taken, the heart behind them, is a heart that is reliant upon other men. And because of this, catch this, because of this, he says, right remember, Asa’s plan is successful. Baasha has removed his assault. But notice what it says. He says, “Because you’ve relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, it’s the king of Aram that has escaped out of your hands. Leaving it open that if Asa had sought the Lord, if he had, if he had relied upon the Lord, that the Lord would have brought about a victory far greater than he could have ever imagined. If Judah would have conquered Aram, Aram is north of Isarel. So here’s Judah, the southern kingdom. Here’s Israel, the northern kingdom. Here’s Aram or Syria. For Judah, to conquer Aram, likely means they would have taken back the northern kingdom. You would’ve had a united kingdom potentially. The ramifications of what God wanted to do were great. But they were missed. Hanani goes on and he says,

⁸Were not the Cushites and the Lubim, the army from chapter 14, an immense army, a massive army of great number with many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on the Lord, He delivered them into your hand.

See the contrast? God delivered them because he relied, here he didn’t rely, and Aram escaped. Why is this? Hanani says,

⁹For the eyes of the Lord, they move to and fro throughout the entire earth that He may faithfully show Himself strong to support those whose heart is completely His. Asa, you have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars.”

Asa has a disturbance. He comes up with a plan that’s not objectively right or wrong. He comes up with a plan that seems to make sense. The plan is successful. Yet all of a sudden, he is rebuked. And the rebuke is a strong rebuke. Realize, Asa has not bowed down to a foreign idol. He has not married a foreign wife. He has not done something that’s blatantly wicked like so many of the other kings. But he has failed in his faith. He has failed in his trust. He has failed in his reliance. His heart has been exposed. He has forgotten the reality that the eyes of the Lord, the languages, they scour the earth, they are active. Not frantically looking around, but active and direct and intense in their seeking to see the hearts that belong to God. The hearts that belong to God who are completely His. Meaning they rely totally on Him. Why? So He can

show Himself strong. It's a strong rebuke with massive consequences. Indeed, from now on you will have wars. Asa will not have many wars in his life, but his son will be the one who inherits the wars. And the descendants of his son, and the primary instigator in many of those wars will be Aram. The nation that has escaped out of his hands because of his self-reliance.

Well, how does Asa respond to the rebuke? It says in verse 10,

¹⁰Then Asa was angry,

Asa was vexed, there was frustration and confusion. The language there seems to give Asa, he said, "What do you mean?" He's blown away by this, by this rebuke.

¹⁰Asa was vexed with the seer and he put him in prison, for he was enraged at him, he was wrathful and vengeful. And Asa oppressed some of the people at this time. ¹¹Now, the acts of Asa are written from first to last, behold they are written in the Book of Kings of Judah and Israel. ¹²In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa became diseased in his feet. His disease was severe, yet in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but the physicians.

Now just a very brief note. Want to be extremely clear on something. Especially given where we are at in our day today. The problem is not that Asa sought medical help. There is nothing in Scripture that says being a doctor in the field of medicine is wrong, bad, or ungodly. And that seeking and heeding and listening to wise medical council like we are being called to right now presently. That is a good thing. The problem is that in this, Asa does not recognize the disease he has is an act of discipline from God. And the issue is he has shut himself off from seeking God. The issue is not that physicians are involved, but that Asa has not sought God at all. He does not recognize God as the one who is behind all things and the great physician. How does Asa respond? He's blind to his own sin. He's enraged at those who would dare confront him in his sin. This is the first instance; it says that he through the prophet in prison. Literally, the house of stocks. This is the first instance of the persecution of God's prophets by God's people in all of Scripture. And it comes not from a king who's worshipping foreign idols. Not from a king who's marrying foreign wives. Not from a king who's blatantly violating the treaty. But from a king who has turned inward into self-reliance. And then it makes this interesting statement; verse 13.

¹³So Asa slept with his fathers, having died in the forty-first year of his reign. ¹⁴They buried him in his own tomb which he himself had cut out in the city of David, and they laid him in the resting place which he had filled with spices of various kinds blended by the perfumers' art; and they made a great fire to celebrate his life.

I went through in my study and looked at the death of every king in the combined kingdom of Israel and in the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom. This is the only king who has drawn attention to the fact that he buried himself in the tomb that he made for himself. Why is that? I believe the text is clear. Asa has turned from being this hero of what it looks like to walk in faith and reliance upon God. And in an action carried out over time, he turns inward to a place of self-dependence where he depends on himself and himself and his competency and his ability alone. Are you surprised? If you're not familiar with the story, was this the ending to the story

that you were expecting? Our college team leaders in the GroupMe last Sunday, they were joking and they were calling dibs on who could name their first child Asa. Asa up to this point has been a hero. But now we watch Asa come to the end of his life and fall deeply into self-reliance.

How do we process this? What do we take away from this? What are the implications for you and I? Let me tell you one. What we find in this text is we find a God who takes issues of faith, of trust, and of reliance with the utmost of seriousness. We find a God who is deeply concerned about whether or not we trust Him, whether or not we honor Him, whether or not in our hearts we seek Him and rely upon Him alone. You catch Asa hasn't done anything blatantly wicked in the passage. Yet his rebuke is in some ways even more harsh than the call of the prophets to the wicked kings when they would say to those wicked kings, "Turn from your ways and God will restore you." We find all throughout Scripture that God takes issues of faith, of trust, of reliance seriously. God hates self-dependence. He hates pride. We find in the gospels, what is the strongest rebuke in the gospels? When the disciples failed to what? Have faith in Him. "Oh you of little faith." We find in Paul's letters in the book of Galatians. Galatians is almost the strongest, really the strongest rebuke given to any church. Yet it's not a church filled with immorality. It's a church being tempted to rely upon their own righteousness rather than the righteousness of Christ. You find the same message in the book of Hebrews. God is a God who takes the issues of where and how we rely and whether or not we are reliant completely upon Him with the utmost of seriousness. So understand today, as we walk through the implications of this text. There is not one of us, not you, not me, who is above falling. For 35 years Asa walked uprightly with God. 35 Years. Now just to put that in perspective to you, I'm only 31. 35 years. More than my entire life Asa walked rightly with God and all of a sudden in the final six, something changes. There is not one of us who is above the sin of self-reliance. Not only that, but self-reliance has to be recognized. Just because you and I lived well yesterday, does not mean we are relying and trusting well today. Faith, trust, reliance must be exercised in the present. We look to God's victories in the past, yes, so that we trust Him in the present. We cannot live off of yesterday's trust. We find in this text a God who takes issues of trust, faith, reliance, with the utmost of seriousness. Because we find that self-reliance is dangerous and subtle. It does not take a crisis to bring you and I to self-reliance. Do you notice? There's no crisis. It's a disturbance. "Hey! We've got reports. Baasha's building a fortification." But they haven't been attacked. There's no army sitting at their northern border coming in. They don't even know what the reality is. It's not a crisis. It's a disturbance. And in this disturbance, whether it's because, because Asa forgot the truth of His God and just came up with his own plan. Or whether because it wasn't something big; it was just something, "Hey, we're good enough. We'll take this." It wasn't a crisis that drove him to self-reliance. It was merely a disturbance. Disturbance is met with fear and complacency lead to self-reliance. Maybe it's the disturbance of, "What will my child amount to? How will they go to college? What kind of job will they have?" Maybe it's the disturbance of future thoughts. Maybe it's the disturbance of, "Will I be able to retire well off?" Maybe it's the disturbance of, "Is this person my only shot at marriage?" Maybe it's the disturbance of "fill in the blank". But many times it's not the crises that drive us to self-reliance; it's the disturbances of daily life. And perhaps the reason when we come to the crises that our trust and our reliance is so unsteady and is weak is because against the daily disturbances we have relied upon ourselves. We have made God little in our daily life. We'll honor Him. We'll do a devotional. But when it comes to how we walk out the day, we

keep Him on the shelf. We enjoy His company in the car, but it's us who sit in the driver's seat, committed to using our map that's outdated and lacking all the information.

Self-reliance is subtle. It doesn't take a crisis to bring us to it, but it takes daily disturbances. It's not simply a single momentary decision. Do you notice, we forget this, we think Asa just, "Hey! There's a disturbance. Let me call up the king of Aram. Hey, Ben-hadad what are you?" That's very much thinking in our twenty-first century terms. It would have taken, if the messengers Asa sent walked straight from Jerusalem to Damascus, it would have taken a minimum of seven days. They likely didn't walk straight because that would take them through the nation of Israel. They likely had to walk around. They had a caravan of treasure with them. You're looking at a situation and a decision that was made here and then carried out and cemented over a period of weeks. You see, self-reliance is not just a one-time mistake that we make. It's a pattern of life where we make a decision and it becomes settled week in and week out as we ignore the conviction and the voice of the Holy Spirit. That we are relying upon ourselves. Self-reliance is subtle. It's subtle because it's not outrightly. It may not be outrightly sinful, but it will be absolutely not be above reproach. Notice back, look back at the beginning of the passage. Asa brought out silver and gold from the treasuries of the house of the Lord for the purpose of making, "I want to make a covenant between you and I." Now I've gone through Scripture. I've even gone back and talked to one of my seminary professors who taught me Hebrew, whose specialty is 1 and 2 Chronicles. That's the primary area of his study. And even talked through this with him. But I cannot find an outright command that says, money that's taken from conquering other people and placed in the treasury cannot be pulled out and used. It's not above reproach. It's not really what that money probably is supposed to be used for. It's supposed to be used for the temple, for the upkeep, for things of the Lord. But there's not a black and white command that prohibits it. There's nothing in Scripture that says they can't, there are certain alliances that are wrong. Solomon makes alliances through the marrying of foreign women. Those are wrong. But there's no blanket prohibition against a military alliance. There's nothing blatantly sinful about Asa's actions. Yet they're not also completely above reproach. They seem a little back-handed; a little shady. There's some that maybe even say it seems like he's trying to bribe. Understand that self-reliance is subtle. Because we're easy to look at self-reliance and go, "Well, this isn't black and white wrong. It's not wrong to necessarily watch this show that may not be the best. But I know that it will bring me an emotional, an emotional lift." Yeah, but it's self-reliant. It's me taking something that seems a little bit shady to use it for means that God would use other things. It's not black and white wrong. There's nothing wrong for a child to play sports or to take part in extra-curricular activities. But all of a sudden, we go from, "Oh, it's not wrong to play sports and extra-curricular activities. It may not be wrong to miss a single Sunday. To now we miss most Sundays because of this. But it's OK because it's not black and white wrong." Self-reliance leads us to areas of gray. Where do we justify those areas of gray? Perhaps when we look at our lives and we see the areas of gray that we justify, perhaps that would expose areas where we are self-reliant. Self-reliance is subtle.

Self-reliance is blind. Did you notice in the text it's blind to seek God? You notice what's different at the beginning of chapter 16? Here comes this disturbance. Asa, prior to this, God, he seeks God. He seeks out to God. We find Asa does not seek God at all. He just makes a decision. He makes a decision that makes sense. Seems to be the most convenient decision that likely would be affirmed by the other nations around him. It's a decision common for the way

the world would act. But it's blind to the fact that he's not seeking God. Let me ask you a question. This is the same question I'm asking of myself. What is our first reaction to a situation? What's our first reaction to a disturbance? Is our first reaction to plan, to think, to stew, to worry, to strategize, to talk to all our peers? Or is our first reaction to go and say, "Lord, what would you have me do?" Whether it's a great decision or whether it's a small decision. Is our first reaction to seek the Lord? I watched this play out in ministry many times. In the 15 years that I've been in some form of ministry leadership, I've watched what will come up with the right thing. We need to reach this group of people. That's correct. For the right reason. Because God has called us to and He desires to reach them. That's correct. But then many times, our first reaction is not to say, "Well, hey, before we do anything, why don't we just get on our knees? Why don't we just right now seek the Lord and say, 'Lord, we recognize we need to reach this group of people. We don't feel like we are doing it. Lord, how would you direct us?'" The first things we do is we throw up the write board. We strategize. We talk. We bring in consultants. We do these things. None of which are bad things. It's not sinful to strategize. It's not sinful to talk. It's not sinful to share. It's not sinful to come up with a plan. None of those things are wrong. The question is, am I relying upon those things? Is our first reaction to the situation we find ourselves in, is our hope daily in what the medical community is or is not going to find about how to defeat COVID-19? Is our hope in what the government will and won't do to jumpstart and keep the economy? Or are we relying upon the Lord? It's not wrong to be interested in those things. The question is, where am I relying? Often with issues of faith, trust, and reliance, it's not a matter of whether the action is right or wrong, but the heart behind what we're doing. You and I as Americans live and have grown up in a culture that is obsessed with achievement. That is obsessed with productivity. That is obsessed with moving forward. These things are hardwired into us. It's not wrong to be a hard worker. It's not wrong to pull yourself up by the bootstraps. But it is wrong to depend upon your own hard work. To depend upon your own ability to pull the bootstraps up. And it blinds us to the fact that God wants you and I reliant upon Him for everything. When the Lord teaches us how to pray in Matthew 6 and He says, "Our Father who's in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. As on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." That's not just simply a spiritual statement of, "Lord, feed me my spiritual meat for the day." It's literally a statement of saying, "God provide for even the most basic fundamental need that I have." You see, God wants us aware and awake that He and He alone is our provider. Our employer's not the provider. Our paycheck's not the provider. Those things provide because God has provided them. It's blind to seeking God: self-reliance. Self-reliance is blind to Godly council. Do you notice what Asa's reaction is to Hanani? It says in verse 10 that Asa was angry. He was vexed. He was miffed. He was frustrated and saying, "I don't understand. What do you mean? What are you saying?" And then after he hears it, he was enraged at Hanani. And the king who doesn't bow to foreign idols is the first one to oppress a prophet of God. It's blind to receive. Self-reliance is blind to receive Godly council. Unlike David who when confronted with his sin, comes down and falls before the Lord weeping and fasting and says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God. For I have sinned against You and You alone." Asa goes more entrenched in his own sin because self-reliance is blind to Godly council. Let me ask you a question. How many times have you, how many times have I read the word of God or heard the preacher of God deliver a word that we just don't really like? And so we choose to ignore it. How many times have we heard and been called to seek the Lord in the word in prayer? We say, "Yeah, I know spending time in the word is important but having all these things in my routine is important." Or letting this come over here is important and so we ignore it. Or how many times have we heard that

there are biblical guidelines for who we date and how we engage in that process. And yet we go, “Oh, well, I don’t know that I agree there. I want to do something different.” How many times have we heard the call, mothers, fathers, to disciple? You are the ones to disciple your kids. You are the primary ones God has given. But we go, “No, we got it. We’ll continue to do things like we see others doing.” You see, self-reliance is blind to Godly council.

Not only that, self-reliance is blind to seeking God. It’s blind to Godly council. It’s also blind to God’s sovereignty. But can only see its actions and fears. Likely you missed this the same way I missed this. It took me several times walking through the passage to see this. But I want you to look back at verse one. It says: In the thirty-sixth year of Asa’s reign king Baasha came up against Judah. He fortified. Why? In order to prevent anyone from going out or coming in. It’s an interesting little phrase. The only other place that phrase is used is back in chapter 15 where it says in verse 5:

⁵In those times there was no peace to him who went out or whom came in.

And then it says that this was because God troubled them with every kind of distress. You see, self-reliance is blind to the movement of a sovereign God. God is clearly, there seems to be this implication that behind Baasha coming against Judah, that there is a movement of God. And we know this from what Hanani tells Asa. “That if you had relied upon God, God would have given you the king of Aram into your hands.” God had much bigger plans. God had a different plan, a different will, a different desire, a deliverance that He would have given. But it was missed because Asa chose to rely upon himself, his strategies, and other people. How might God be using the disturbance and crises we’re facing right now? How might God be using them? Whether that’s to bring our culture to our knees. To look up and see that He alone is the deliverer. How might He be using to put us in different directions and go different places? The question is, will you and I rely upon ourselves or rely upon Him? Because self-reliance is blind to His sovereignty. And because it’s blind, we see that self-reliance fails. Self-reliance always fails. Notice Asa’s plan is successful. Baasha backs off. But Asa fails to receive what God desired to give. Because he failed to seek God, to trust God, to rely completely upon God. He forgot the truth of who his God is. His sights were settled too low. His sights were settled on what he and he alone could accomplish. So understand this today. Whether or not you and I are walking in faith is not illustrated by whether or not our plans are successful. Who’s successful in this text? Asa’s successful by the world’s standards. Who’s unsuccessful by the world’s standards? Hanani. Here’s the prophet of God who goes to the king of the people and he confronts him with his sin. Here’s Hanani who steps up, who’s relying upon the Lord. And what’s the result for Hanani? He’s thrown in prison. You see, self-reliance gives the appearance that its successful. But success is not really the determiner of whether or not we’re walking with God. Whether or not we’re trusting or relying on God is the determiner of that. You see, Asa wins the battle, but loses the war. And there is an aspect of the God that we follow is the one who seemingly lost the battle as He hung on a cross and died. And the world said, “We have won.” But when He rose from the grave, who overwhelmingly conquered and won the war. That’s the One. He is One who we follow. We rely upon the One, we rely upon a God who is sovereign. We rely upon a God that even when things seem to be unsuccessful, we know that His purpose will be not fail if we rest in Him. Self-reliance fails. It fails to receive what God would give. It fails to remember who God is. God says over and over, remember. It’s what Hanani says. Were not the Cushites and the Lubim an immense army. Yet because you relied

upon the Lord, He delivered them. Asa forgot the character of his God, the character of his God who it says, the eyes of the Lord move to and fro. Understand right now, church family, God is sitting on His throne fully secure. And His eyes are intensely, they're not watching, they're not far removed, they are gazing with intent. They are earnest in their seeking. God is seeking out, looking, examining, our hearts. Our hearts before the eyes of Him. We cannot hide. He is gazing. He is intense in His gazing. He is looking for those hearts who rely completely on Him. For what reason? To show Himself. Literally the language is, my Bible translates it, He may strongly support those. The language is that He may be faithful to prove Himself strong. Now understand, church family, for you and I who are followers of Jesus Christ, this is not a promise of a guarantee of earthly deliverance. But it is a guarantee of heavenly deliverance. We find that the God who is faithful to show Himself strong, whose eyes scour the earth, He is the same God. He is the same God whose eyes were on Joseph as Joseph was locked in prison in chains as a slave. He is the same God whose eyes were locked upon Daniel as he was carted away from his family and thrown into a school system of a pagan nation where his faith was oppressed. We find that He is the same God who strongly supported and aided Stephen as he's being stoned to death. He's the same God who strongly supported John as he's exiled on Patmos. He's the same God to whom Paul was crying out bound in chains fighting a thorn, imprisoned and headed to death. The same God that Paul cries out and says this about Him. "The eyes of the Lord, the God whose eyes searched to and fro, this is the God." 2 Timothy 4:17.

¹⁷But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished. And that the Gentiles might hear. And I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed. He will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The God whose eye scours the earth to and fro, He seeks seekers who seek to rely completely upon Him. This is what it means to have a heart that's completely His. It's not sinless perfection, but it's a heart that relies fully and completely on Him alone. And He strengthens us even if the outcome is not earthly deliverance. The same God whose faithful to show Himself strong as the Son hung on the cross is the same God who showed Himself strong when His Son rose from the grave. He's the same God who shows Himself strong to every martyr who has laid down their life. To every brother and sister who gives what we cannot keep to gain not which we cannot lose. Perhaps in times of crisis and disturbance, the reason we know so little of His strength is because we're blind to how self-dependent we are. He is strong in wisdom to teach and guide. He is strong in love and mighty to save. His word is strong to encourage, to convict, to instruct, and reveal. He is strong. And church family, right now, His eyes are scouring the land. His eyes, His gaze, is upon Bryan/College Station. He is looking at each and every one of our hearts to see those of us who rely completely on Him. And He is faithful and sovereign and able. We can rely fully on Him. The question simply is. Will we? There's not a one of us who is above the sin of self-reliance. We cannot live on yesterday's faith and success. Today we must ask the question, do we trust and rely upon Him? And if we trust and rely upon Him, then we seek Him who alone is able to stand between the powerful and those without strength. And we come out and we take our stand in faith against the enemy. That unprecedented fear that comes knocking on our door. If we really rely upon Him, then we seek Him personally. If we really rely upon Him, then we rise up in courageous obedience. If we rely upon Him, then our worship is submissive and joyful. The question is do we rely upon Him our self?

Pray with me.

Father, Lord I am reminded of times young in my faith where my trust was far more childlike. Where all I knew is that this was, here was something You wanted me to do. I knew that I needed Your help to do it and so I asked, "Lord, would You enable me to do it?" And Father, You proved Yourself faithful every time. It's only as life goes on, as tragedies happen, as daily disturbances mount, that then it becomes tempting, more and more tempting to rely on my own wisdom, my own thoughts, my own plans, my own strategies, rather than to rely upon You. And so, Lord, I know that temptation is subtle, it's blinding, and it always fails. Even though we may think it's successful. God, may You do a work in our hearts in this time, this unique time of crisis in our world. Do a work in our hearts where we as a church no longer come together and we sing about You. We claim You but we don't rely completely upon You. Because, God, You will be faithful.

So church family, as you are in your homes right now with your heads bowed and your eyes closed. I just want you to take, as we've done these last few weeks, I want you to take a minute to just be still and silent. To allow the Spirit to move in your heart. To be unafraid by the silence and just simply say, "Lord, after hearing Your word, my hands are open. My answer is yes. How are You leading?"