

Faithful In Our Days

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Bible Text: Genesis 18:19

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I would like you to turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 18. I am going to read a few verses from that chapter, Genesis 18 beginning at verse 16.

Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."¹

There are many examples in Scripture of people living faithfully in difficult times, in dangerous times, in life threatening situations where they stand strong upon God and his truth like King David and the apostle Paul. There are also many modern examples of Christians doing the same. Jim Elliot comes to mind, the missionary who was murdered along with other brave men in the jungles of Ecuador doing mission work. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is another example of great courage in upholding a biblical standard in very difficult times in Nazi Germany during the Second World War.

In a reformed journal magazine called *Leiben* in an article written by Wayne Johnson I learned about a man named Paul Schneider. I had never heard of this man before reading this article. He was a German who won the iron cross which is the highest medal of valor in the German nation. But he won the iron cross in the First World War in Germany. He then became a pastor of a reformed congregation in 1926. By 1933 Adolf Hitler and the Nazis had come to power and had attained an iron grip upon the nation of Germany and their oppression touched every area of life including the Church. They controlled everything and the oppressed everything.

Those who are in rebellion against God's truth will never leave the Church alone, I assure you. Do not be deceived about that. Those whose hearts are in rebellion against God, they will not leave the Church alone and Hitler focused his attention on the Church, not to eradicate the Church, but to control it and manipulate.

¹ Genesis 18:16-19

Well, Reverend Schneider refused to comply with their manipulation and he resisted them as they sought to subject the Church to state control. He boldly told the German Christians that they were being summoned to battle and they needed to give faithful service and confession in these difficult times. He denounced the state church which was called the German Church or the Church of Germany. At this nationally controlled state church, he denounced that and exhorted the believers to be faithful to Christ the King.

A little break away group of Christians formed what they called the Confessing Church which was trying to be separate from the state controlled manipulation of Hitler and refused to become part of the German churches. However, even this Confessing Church refused to identify itself fully with Schneider. They were afraid of his strong position and stand that he took.

Pastor Schneider was married with five children, but he refused to compromise. It was only a matter of time until he was arrested by the SS. He refused to recant or water down what Christ's message was, the truth of Christ and what the truth meant for the German people at that time in the nation of Germany in the Nazi era. And, thus, the SS sent him to the concentration camp of Buchenwald where he was subjected to terrible tortures.

Though beaten and humiliated, Reverend Schneider never wavered in his Christian testimony. He refused to show respect to the Nazi anthem when it was played in the prisoner's assembly. Everyone else would remove their caps and he refused to acknowledge this oppression and perversion. For this he was beaten severely and placed in solitary confinement.

A fellow inmate described Schneider like this and this is a quote. "Wholly without fear he bore witness of his Christian faith to the SS. In his frankness he was probably unique in Germany. He called the devil by his name, murderer, adulterer, unrighteousness monster. Throughout this witness in which he presented the grace of Christ together with a call to repentance Schneider was exposed alternatively to severe bodily tortures, humiliations and agonies, heavy beatings, dangling up off the floor at the window cross pass. Schneider was utterly tireless, always calling out the words of Scripture to other prisoners, especially mornings and evenings at the count for the roll call." End of quote.

When two prisoners who had escaped had been captured and then murdered in their cell block Schneider called out during the roll call, "In the name of Jesus Christ I bear witness to the murder of the prisoners."

The silenced him temporarily through a new round of severe beatings.

He was placed under the oversight of a particularly ruthless prison guard, a guard who was not accountable to anyone and a guard who gloried in just ruthlessness and cruelty and he was left at the mercy of this man to do to him as he saw fit and this man did exactly that.

A fellow inmate recorded how amazed he was when he saw this man Schneider in his emaciated form, but still alive.

Pastor Schneider finally died on July the 18th, 1939. If you remember, World War II only began on September the first, 1939. So before the Second World War started Schneider had just died on July the 18th before that.

A telegram was sent to pastor Schneider's wife informing her of his death and saying that she had 24 hours to pay a certain amount of money if she wanted his body. She managed to raise the funds and got his body back and the family gave him an honorable funeral. A brave reformed pastor, a lone voice in the wilderness dying without recognition in a nation that desperately needed to embrace his message and his warnings.

We are moved by such demonstrations of courage and self sacrifice for God's truth and kingdom. And so we should be. However, it can also make us feel left out of real kingdom work and significance. We think that it is people like Schneider and Bonhoeffer and Warmbrandt and others that have been at the center of what God's kingdom is about. And that is how we think about kingdom work and how we think about what God is doing in his kingdom.

We also read about David risking his life when he stands against Goliath, when the whole nation was fearful and he stood and he had the courage to do that. We read about Paul who was ready to lay down his life as he walked towards Jerusalem knowing that bonds and imprisonments awaited him. And yet he says, "There I go to proclaim the gospel of Christ."

It is possible to have a perception of what real kingdom work is like. And if our perception is wrong we can have a completely wrong idea of what should be. To have a wrong perception of what our Christian lives should look like is to set out on an expedition to find the end of the rainbow; an elusive and worthless journey.

To stand for righteousness in the spirit of the gospel in dangerous lands is good and necessary and we should respect and honor those people who do that. And, thus, we pray for them weekly in our congregation, the persecuted Church and those who are standing for Christ in difficult and trying situations.

But Scripture shows that vital kingdom advancement is normally attained through much less exciting activities, much less exciting. A priority focus for kingdom advancement is the family. It is the family. This is God's design and, thus, we need to be reminded about the importance of the family and truly embrace it in the depths of our hearts. This truth needs to be understood and then consistently worked into or fleshed out in everything we ought to do as families, how this looks, what it looks like and what we are supposed to do because we have got to see how vital and central that is to the working of God's kingdom.

I need to give a caution so that I am not misunderstood. The constant danger we face is making too much or too little out of what God has revealed. You see, we can undermine the Church by exalting the family and we can undermine the family by exalting the Church. I don't want to do either. I am focusing this morning on the family, but I want to assure you that I acknowledge the importance of God's instituted Church, local church and the functions that he has prescribed for it to do. However, my focus today is upon what the Scriptures have to say about the centrality of the family in God's kingdom plan. So when I spot light the family please don't misinterpret that and say I have no place for the institutional Church in my theology. I am focusing on the family because it is an important and vital aspect of God's kingdom working. But I do not undermine the local congregation when I do that.

You see, potentially we face hard times ahead. The political horizon appears ominous rather than favorably inclined towards the liberty and the freedom one would desire for effective kingdom work to flourish. Thus, I would suggest it is vital that we obtain our hope and understanding of true reformation from God's Word and dedicate ourselves with renewed zeal and stamina to what God shows are the priorities for us otherwise our minds are distracted, our hope is wavered and we cannot have lack of courage for the future. But if we realize where God's emphasis and focus is and where the power of God's kingdom resides, then we can be renewed and strengthened and encouraged in the work that we are called to do.

It is easy for us to have our thinking shaped by the world and that means either the conservative or the liberal world. Yet, for the most part neither of these groups is interested in truly submitting to the Lord. It is the fear of the Lord that is the beginning of wisdom.² And the first step along the path—which means for those who are actually on the path—but the first step along that path, we will see, promises to the faithful that they will have an impact greater than the strongest government that now exists. The faithful who follow that path and follow the first steps that God shows us are the first steps will be incredibly powerful.

I ask you an important question. Is God interested in nations? Is he concerned about nations? To put it another way, are nations vital in the working of God's kingdom plans? Indeed, they are.

Well, when God wanted to make a nation what did he do? Well, what he did was this. He made a government, right? What did he do? He called a man, Abram. And around Abraham he gave a family. What is God's plan? Nation, world. Where do we start? With a family.

This was the practical first step for a godly nation. And for godly nations to fill the whole world this is where God started. This was God's vision. The whole world was going to be filled, but this is where he started. And this was his focus.

Maybe God had a point and understands something better than we do, just maybe.

² See Job 28:28; Psalms 11:10; Proverbs 9:10

God called Abraham in Genesis chapter 12 and promised him that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed.³ As the Scriptures tell us in Genesis 12 verses one through three:

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."⁴

This was God's plan and the plan was for multitudes to be involved in the kingdom work, such large numbers that God compared them to the stars of heaven and the sand on the seashore. This glorious plan included multitudes of people and was to extend throughout the whole world. But notice. It wasn't just about individuals. It also included nations. Abraham was going to grow and extend the whole world and this included nations as well throughout the earth. Massive numbers of people covering the whole earth was the goal and all functioning as godly nations or people groups.

Yet how did God begin? With one man and around him he builds a God fearing family. It is the starting point. That is the seed that God plants.

This shows that according to God's order you can't have a godly nation—because that was the goal, remember, a godly nation—but you cannot have a godly nation without godly families.

By how God sets up things we learn an inescapable principle of how he has ordained his kingdom to advance, through families reproducing themselves in godliness for generations. That is the plan. That is the purpose and that is the first step along this path that God has called us to walk. Reproducing godliness with kingdom focus is to be the primary goal for every Christian family. God to the kingdom is bigger than the family, but God shows the family is at the core. Without godly families you have no chance of having a godly nation or having a godly local congregation. When godly families do not exist, neither do godly congregations and neither do godly nations. And as the families go, so goes the nation, so goes the nation; a sobering thought, indeed, for our day, is it not?

It seems strange that God chose to use what appears to us to be a very slow process for exercising dominion and advancing his kingdom. Man, according to his wisdom, would have opted for another strategy and designed a much quicker method. But the wisdom of God is greater than man for even as Paul says, "God's foolishness is wiser than man's wisdom"⁵ in 1 Corinthians one verse 25.

³ See Genesis 12:3

⁴ Genesis 12:1-3

⁵ See 1 Corinthians 1:25

Our responsibility is to bow our hearts and lives to God's wisdom and not to be led astray by the false wisdom of this world. And this requires that we walk by faith since almost everything around us contradicts God's way of how things should work and function.

Though the Lord had such a small beginning to his plans, he clearly revealed the size of the work to Abraham from the start. The goal was to have a multitude following the Lord as great as the stars of heaven as Genesis 15 and verse five show. God's vision was comprehensive and it was in the midst of displaying this grandeur that he showed what the most important central position was for him in this grandeur because this is God's vision. Remember, it is huge.

"Abraham, I am calling you because this is the vision. You, I am going to make a great nation and this is going to bless the nations and the whole world. This is the scope of the vision that I have for you, Abraham."

And in the center of that is what we have read already in Genesis chapter 18 and verse 19. And God said, "For I have known him."⁶ Abraham, "I have known this man." "...in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."⁷

Other translations instead of "I have known this man," they say, "I have chosen this man." And that is a legitimate translation. The word "know" refers to an intimate relational knowing which also comes out in the word "chosen." That is how God uses this word "chosen." "I have chosen you." There is an intimacy, an intimate relationship and connection with the person that he has chosen or that he knows in that way. Both speak of intimate relational union. And God tells us that he chose or became intimately acquainted with Abraham in order that he might instruct his household, because this is the starting point, this is the way and the method that this whole plan is going to unfold and be manifested in God's glorious kingdom because he would instruct his household in God's way for God's glory.

The end result of this instruction in righteousness would be God fulfilling everything which he had said to Abraham. Abraham's family would be blessed, the nation would be blessed and the world would be blessed. He says, "This is what is going to happen because Abraham will do this. This principle Abraham is going to do of instructing his children, this is what the consequence and the fruit is going to be. Everything is going to be blessed." It is all going to flow out of that as Abraham does that step by step.

Surely it is obvious that everything that God was doing with Abraham was not for exalting Abraham. "I want all nations to be blessed in your name." It wasn't Abraham's name that was the great thing. It was God's name. This was what God was doing for his own glory and his own purposes. But this was the plan and the way he was doing it.

⁶ Genesis 18:19

⁷ Ibid.

God's own glory is the focus and the plan is to have multitudes of people as the sands of the seashore and all nations walking in righteousness.

And so my paraphrase of Genesis 18 and verse 19 is, "I chose Abraham so that he might command his children in the way of righteousness because then I will accomplish all what I said to Abraham."

It is hard not to be stunned by the simplicity of this plan, this great plan that God has for the kingdoms and the nations of the world. This comes back to this principle and this policy as he lays it down in Genesis 18 and verse 19. This mechanism that it plays that will bring about the ultimate goal and the vital or central to the mix is a godly family and godly family instruction and teaching generations to come.

Even when something is mentioned once in the Scriptures it is authoritative and binding. However, when God repeats things it is for the purpose of underlining the importance and making sure we don't miss his point. What God said to Abraham is not a once off idea, but it is emphasized throughout Scripture because time and again we notice the family's functioning within God's family structure retaining its central role in all that God is doing and God repeats this over and over again as to how his kingdom plan unfolds. That is fathers teaching their children and training them for generations to come and training them to be generationally faithful.

As we read in Deuteronomy four verses nine and ten.

Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, specially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'⁸

See, the emphasis coming out time and time again.

Deuteronomy six verses six and seven. It says:

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.⁹

Deuteronomy 11 verses 19 to 21.

⁸ Deuteronomy 4:9-10

⁹ Deuteronomy 6:6-7

You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.¹⁰

Deuteronomy 32:46: “And He said to them: ‘Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law.’”¹¹

And one from Psalms. We just have two more. One from Psalm 78 verses two through seven.

I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments.¹²

And Proverbs six verses 20 and 21.

My son, keep thy father’s commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.¹³

You see, and that is what Paul exhorted the fathers based on these principles and these truths. Paul exhorted the Fathers. “Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord”¹⁴ in Ephesians six verse four. And that is why we see the instructions given for leaders in the Church. The focus is, once again, on families. Are their children in order? Are their children governed under them? Do they have their houses in order because that is a qualification to be leadership in the Church and needs to be the important point which is assuming the teaching and the instructing in righteousness taking place in the home where there is an eldership level or even the deacon level those are the requirements that the Scriptures lay down for us in 1 Timothy chapter three.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 11:19-21

¹¹ Deuteronomy 32:46

¹² Psalms 78:2-7

¹³ Proverbs 6:20-21

¹⁴ Ephesians 6:4

What is inescapable is the importance of families instructing their own members. When it is embraced by parents and children we have two reformations and the making of a godly nation. When this principle fails the effects are such that judgment is hanging over that nation or people. This is what Malachi was prophesying about in the last book of the Old Testament Scriptures. In fact in the last verses of the Old Testament where he tells us in Malachi chapter four verse four through six: “Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments.”¹⁵

Ok. He is focusing on the law. “Remember what I have said to Moses.”¹⁶

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.¹⁷

Now many commentators read struggle with that interpretation. Well, what does that mean? What does it mean turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers? And they come up with all kinds of... “Well, that’s the patriarchs. It is the fathers historically in the nation and we are going to...”

And the reason they do that, the reason they escape from what is so blatantly and inescapably clear here is because they don’t understand the centrality of the family. They don’t understand how important the family is in the working of God’s whole plan and how central it is to a godly nation, to godly churches, to godly anything. It is the family and the family alone that God has laid upon it the responsibility and the foundation to build these things. And therefore what Malachi is saying is pointing the hearts of the people to this fact and this reality and people who are sidestepping what Malachi is saying, those commentators, are failing to understand what God has placed that is so central in the workings of his kingdom.

You see, what Malachi says is exactly what Moses says in Genesis chapter six and it also ties up with what was written about Abraham in Genesis 18 and verse 19. See, because Malachi when he starts off in chapter four and verse four he reminds the nation of the law of Moses and then shows in a very practical way what true religion looks like.

He says, “I want you to remember Moses’ law. It is vital you understand all that he has revealed, all the truth he has given to us. Remember that this is vital.” And then he shows us a practical key. He warns, “If you want to avoid judgment, here is the key. This is the key. Because you rebel against Moses, judgment is coming. Do you want to avoid judgment? Here is the key.” And he tells us what the key is.

¹⁵ Malachi 4:4

¹⁶ See Malachi 4:4

¹⁷ Malachi 4:5-6

You see, the actions for Malachi, these actions of the fathers turning their hearts to their children are the works of true justification. These people have truly been born again. Their hearts have been regenerate because now they understand the truth. They understand the focus of where God's kingdom focuses and they turn their hearts. They are assuming their responsibilities before God to raise up generationally faithful heirs and children, giving their hearts to obey the instructions of their parents.

Moses used the same pattern in Deuteronomy in the passage we have already read in Deuteronomy six. Let's compare with what Malachi said at the end of the Old Testament what Moses said in Deuteronomy six. They are exactly the same.

Deuteronomy, if you remember, is the second giving of the law. That is what the title means, Deuteronomy *dueteros nomos*, second law. And it is Moses repeating the law of God to the children of Israel.

The first generation, if you remember, had been delivered from Egypt. They had come out and they were being marched to the Promised Land and their hearts were hardened and rebelled against God and God judged them and said, "You people will not enter the Promised Land. You are all going to die." And, thus, the nation wandered around in the wilderness for 40 years until that generation was gone. And now a new generation had risen up of children. And these children now had come to the position and were now ready to cross into the Promised Land and Moses gives the second giving of the law saying, "Look here. You have got to know what God's will is for you as you are going to enter into the Promised Land and carry out and conquer what God has given you to do. This is law. Hear it." And he reads to them the law and lays it before them.

But Deuteronomy is not just a book about giving of the law. It is a very practical book. It is a book that takes the law and says, "This is what it looks like in real life," and expounds it to them.

So Moses is showing these people what daily living looks like when it is lived under the light of God's truth. So Moses gives a practical application of the law, a practical application for them to live in the Promised Land and glorify the Lord. They needed to know what the dusty truths are.

"What does this mean, Moses? You stand up there and you read out these commands from God. But what does it mean? What does it look like in the dusty earth when we are walking around here on the fields with each other? How does it look?"

Moses shows them. So the context is important to keep in mind of Deuteronomy.

So while speaking to this new generation on the brink of crossing the Jordan to possess the land Moses summarized the covenant. He summarizes and then he repeats the law to them. And then he says, "I am going to tell you, practically, what I have just said." He shows them what it means.

And as he begins the practical application of that law he starts somewhere. He starts with a point. And usually when you start with a point it is usually your most important point when you are laying down a thing. If you are going to give a lecture on the importance of something or what you need to do, you are going to start with your most important things and lay it down. And that is what Moses does. He starts with the most important thing after reading that law. He begins. That is what Moses does.

And the first application, in other words the most important one, is that they teach this law diligently to their children when you rise up, when you lie down, when you walk in the way, unceasing, comprehensive, God centered instruction.

We saw that in order for God to fulfill his grand plan he chose Abraham, Genesis 18 verse 19. So that Abraham might instruct his children after him. That is the plan and the process that God set up in order to accomplish all that he promised to Abraham. That was the promise and that was the plan.

This means the means to the end was going to be through Abraham's family which was to be a generationally repeated operation.

We have seen what was central to Moses' understanding in God's law in Deuteronomy six. We see that comes out in connecting to what was said about Abraham. And then we have seen what is central to Malachi as the Old Testament ends in our Bibles, the idea is clearly spelled out to Abraham and then Moses and then the rest of the verses of the Old Testament.

Then as the New Testament opens the angel Gabriel begins by coming to John the Baptist's father and saying, "I am going to talk to you about John the Baptist, the son that is going to be born to you and I am going to tell you what is significant about this man."

And do you know where the angel Gabriel quotes from? He quotes from Malachi, the end of Malachi and he says this now. "I want you to see a connection between this what I say here, what God promised through that last prophet in the Old Testament that we have and what is happening now through John who is going to be the precursor, the one announcing Jesus Christ. Let me tell you what is taking place here. Let me tell you what reformation is. Let me tell you what redemption is. Let me tell you what liberty and deliverance is from sin and judgment and all those things. It comes through this." And he quotes those words, "To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children."¹⁸

That is God's message to their homes, to their homes, to the centrality and the significance. I have got to be a father who has his heart in the home. That is a sign of reformation. That is a sign of deliverance. That is a sign of glorious future for any nation, for any people, for any community is when that happens and the family comes into the glorious harmony of what God has ordained. That is the glory for any nation, for any congregation. That is the only hope for this nation.

¹⁸ Luke 1:17

How is it possible to fail to see the emphasis that the Bible places on the family? Yet people do. Nevertheless we must not be afraid to put the emphasis where the Bible puts the emphasis. By God's grace we need to see the simplicity and the wonder of God's plan for us and focus upon kingdom things.

When fathers truly see this their priorities and their goals and their expectations will be brought into line with God's glorious plan, with God's generational vision. Fathers will see it and they will turn their hearts away from the foolishness and the distractions of this world, turn their hearts away from the frivolity that they engage in and the foolishness that they give themselves to and the chief things that they sell themselves for and they will turn their hearts to this glorious. That is what God is doing. The responsibility rests upon fathers. And the time they have been given to accomplish this task is very limited. It is a short period, a short period that we have our children for to communicate that vision, to instill it into their breasts, to pour it into their lives, to give them the grounding and the foundation and the vision and the hope of this glorious plan.

And, thus, fathers need to be ruthless and deal with whatever steals from their limited time to accomplish this task.

There are many distractions out there that would try and rip us away from this, distract us from the focus. And we need to deal with those things and say, "No, I understand what is God's plan. I understand what is the foundation and I am going to stand upon it. I am going to be ruthless and deal with those things that distract me."

We need to cut off everything that undermines what God calls us to do. There are many things in our life that undermine the message we are trying to promote and we need to deal with those things and remove them, deal with them ruthlessly, courageously. We need to put to death whatever distracts us from our responsibilities toward this end as fathers. Fathers need to be self consciously following a path whereby they are equipping and whereby they are being equipped to fulfill this calling. There is much to do.

It is only when fathers see how vitally important the family is in God's plan that God's emphasis will shape their vision and direct their focus. The goal is for maturity or godliness in every aspect of their own lives and relationships and then for them to bring their family to maturity and pass on a zealous kingdom vision.

The biblical emphasis is upon fathers because wives and children, they were made to follow godly fathers. Do you know that? Their heart wants to follow that direction. They want to be led by a godly man. They want to get their direction and counsel and instruction from a godly man. And, thus, the emphasis falls upon fathers.

It is important for wives to follow your husbands in sincerity and reality, to let your husband lead. Encourage him in his leading. Demonstrate to your children what submission looks like by your words and by your actions and by your attitudes. Demonstrate submission.

Children, give your hearts to your parents. Give it to them. This is God's way to protect you. Turn your hearts to your father and to your mother.

The world is an exciting place I assure you. There are many things out there that will tantalize you and draw you and attract your attention. But it is fool's gold. It is, in fact, worse than fool's gold. It is a monster waiting to snap you up and churn you up like a meat grinder and spit your pieces out all destroyed and worthless and useless. That is what it is going to do. And your protection, your protection that God has given to you is that you turn your hearts to your parents, you bow to their will, you listen to the instructions, you give yourself to them. That will protect you from the many wiles of the devil. Do not be self willed, but submit your will to them sincerely and cheerfully in all things. Lay down your lives in service for your family and others. This is real kingdom work.

The Church... It is vital that the local church helps to equip fathers for this work that they have been called to do. But in this method, that the method they choose to equip the fathers they must not undermine the very thing that they should be doing. And that is making fathers assume the responsibility for the instruction and training and direction and all things for their families. We do not want to undermine that and take over those things that the Father should be doing and the parents should be doing.

It is men who must lead and unless this pattern is followed success will not be attained in the family, the Church or the state.

Both Bonhoeffer and Schneider are great examples of demonstrating devotion and courage. Yet I believe that fathers need the same kind of devotion to truth and the same kind of courage and vibrant zeal if they are going to succeed in the calling that God has laid upon them. Godly fathers are to be admired, as admired as those men who laid down their lives in those situations.

Firmly focused fathers who are committed to raising godly families are God's picture of true manliness. That is true manliness. Young men, when you give yourself to serving your younger siblings, when young men give themselves to learning about babies and learning about younger children and what that means, that is true manliness, true manliness in God's sense of the term.

Let us not be influenced by the world as to what manliness and macho is. All those things are liars and deceivers.

While there is no cookie cutter model where one shape fits all families, there are godly principles that we have and each family is to work out their own salvation. It means their own way of salvation, not to get salvation, but their own path that God has placed them on. But they work that out with fear and trembling, finding out how God wants us to function as a family. The major principles are there and we hold to those as God has laid, but the little details are going to... the flavor of your family, how it works and the time tables and all that thing is going to vary.

May we commit ourselves to this task by faith, trusting in the Lord's designed way and not fearing the faces of those who despise the Lord and don't bow to his Word. It means courage and self sacrifice. But the goal is glorious. May we willingly lay our lives down, not counting the cost so that future generations who haven't even yet been born might prosper from our labors. That must be the goal. That must be the extent of our sacrifice. We want to sacrifice for those who haven't even yet been born and lay down a foundation for them to walk upon that they might reap the benefits.

We are not wasting our lives when we spend them in a way that is consistent with God's will and design. We don't need flashy lights telling us we are useful. God's Word alone is enough.

"This is my way."

And when we understand this is what God wants we can know with assurance and confidence, despite what the world screams that we are being useful and effective in the kingdom of God. We must believe it and bow to it.

God said to Abraham in Genesis 22 and verse 17 as we close, "[In] blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies."¹⁹

They shall possess the gates of their enemies. Do you know what that term "gate" means? It turns to the political authority, the political sphere. Your descendants shall possess the gates of your enemies in manifesting the political entity of a city or a nation. Political change, brethren, is only possible upon God's foundation and this is the foundation: godly families. We don't look to men, to men's ideas. We look to God and his truth and we have got to have courage and strength and the conviction that says, indeed, "This is the power. This is the future." And if we see that and we have... we are energized with that we can pour ourselves into this glorious thing.

God will manifest the power of his kingdom through his own decentralized, nation changing, world impacting strategy and that is it: godly families. And he is going to shake the world. He is going to transform the world through that means, not a political pop bureaucracy, top down. No, this is decentralized. It is families understanding this and functioning in that way. So take heart. Real change that our nation and the world needs is near to you. It is so close it is right within your grasp. It is right before your eyes. It is right there. May we see it. May we embrace it. May we give ourselves to it with the energy and the power of the Spirit walking by faith in all that God has said.

I pray that you have eyes to see and a willing and faithful heart to do with all your might the work God has given you to do. The influence and potential in the hands of fathers

¹⁹ Genesis 22:17

and mothers is ultimately greater than the potential in the hands of the most powerful president in the world.

So as I close, it is that real and it is that dynamic. “This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our sight.”²⁰

“For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”²¹

I exhort you to believe God and to live by faith with your eyes fixed firmly upon him and upon his promises.

Bow your hearts with me and let us pray.

Our Lord and King, we thank you for the truth that you have revealed. We thank you for the simplicity not only of the gospel, but the simplicity of your plans and your purposes as you carry them out through this earth. I pray, Lord, that you might teach us what this looks like within our own families that you might give us faith to embrace what we have heard today and that we might see, indeed, we have important work to do. I pray, Lord, for us fathers that you would help us to be protected from the many distractions that would deflect us from being effective in your kingdom. I pray that you would give us hearts that truly do turn to our families, that we might love them, that we might serve them, that we might lay our lives down for them and instruct them in the ways of righteousness, teaching them your truth and demonstrating to them what true sacrifice looks like. I pray, Lord, that we might pass on the glorious vision of your kingdom that their hearts might burn with a zeal and a love for the glorious work and that they, too, might lay their lives down in the future in their families, training their children so that this is passed on from generation to generation as a might army growing in stature and size and effectiveness and in power.

We thank you, Father, for this calling. We thank you that this is your vision and your purposes. And I pray that you make us effective to this end in Jesus’ name we ask. Amen.

²⁰ See Psalm 118:23

²¹ Genesis 18:19