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How to Avoid a Meltdown

Numbers 13-14

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I think we would almost all agree that one of the most enjoyable and one of the most desirable tastes in life is that of hot melted butter. Right? Yeah, I got an *Amen* on that one. It takes a long time to get an *Amen* on some things, but that didn't take long.

Whether it's on biscuits or bread, popcorn, your favorite seafood, we have a saying here in Georgia: *Butter makes it better*. Yeah, see, I don't even have to hardly prompt you. That's kind of one of the axioms of life here in Georgia for us. It's interesting, though, a few years ago, I was up in the Boston area. As I was walking back to my flight in an airport, I kept passing t-shirts that had a lobster on the front of them. It just said, *Keep calm and pass the butter*. It was just an incredible t-shirt. Whether you're North or South—doesn't matter where you from—people like butter.

For all the enjoyable and desirable experiences of butter when we taste it, when it's melted, one of the least desirable and one of the most often observable experiences in life is that of an emotional meltdown—when somebody loses it. In fact, even today, there's a whole group of videos on social media attributed to the meme, Karen—all about the idea of what it looks like to have a public, emotional meltdown.

And so, we live in a world where meltdowns have become very common and very profile and something that is common in our life experience together.

As I say that to you this morning, I don't know what may have prompted the latest or the last meltdown in your life—whether it was fear, or anxiety, or pain, or frustration. I know that almost everyone in this room could not only affirm the goodwill of melted butter, we would all affirm the frustration, and frankly, the disappointment with ourselves when we go through meltdowns.

Have you ever had a meltdown? Maybe this morning, right? ... coming to church, with your family? I don't know, but I know that meltdowns are very common in our lives. And I know that meltdowns have become a very public spectacle in our society. Sometimes life just seems too much. We just get so overwhelmed, we get so weighted, we get so burdened. We just feel like that, that there's no way to continue, and so the melting process begins.

Well, today, I want to take you to a passage of Scripture where we observe a meltdown—not just of a person, but of an entire nation of people. I want you to take your Bible And open it this morning to the book of Numbers 13 and 14. Let me quickly say there are 78 verses in numbers 13 and 14. I want to clarify at the beginning, we are not going to do a verse by verse study of 78 verses this morning, but what I am going to try to do is to bring the text and the truth of a story that is recorded in Scripture—something that happened in the life of Israel. I pray that ultimately, it will be something that will be a blessing and a benefit to you.

Now we started several weeks ago with study called, *It's Time to Move*. We started in Exodus 14. Moses, the chosen man of God, had led the people of Israel out of 400 years of bondage in Egypt. But as he led them and as they gathered together, they were on the shores of a body of water called the *Red Sea*. And suddenly, Pharaoh and all of his army King against them. There was tremendous fear and panic and uncertainty about what would happen next.

God in His plan and in demonstration of His power, opened the Red Sea and brought them through. Then after they went through the Red Sea, they went over and began to walk through the wilderness, and there was a need for provision. God began to provide food and water for them as they went through that way. But ultimately, they came in and camped around a mountain called, *Mount Sinai*. Last Sunday we studied together Exodus 32 and 33, and we learned that while Israel always had God's undivided attention, God was constantly having to deal with their divided affection. They did not trust the Lord. They did not rest in the Lord. They did not believe the Lord. As a result, we saw all that happen when they created gods of their own hands—idols that really represented the idols of the heart. We laugh at it as a golden calf—something we would never do—but every one of us has sources of trust that are not the Lord.

Now today, we skip from the book of Exodus, and we're going to leap over the Book of Leviticus because Leviticus has much to do with ceremonial law and the purity of worship. We need to get over into the book of Numbers because the book of Numbers tells us what happens next. The book of Numbers opens with a census. There was a census being taken because God was ready to move His people into the land, the promised land, for which they had come out of Egypt.

You know that if you've ever taken a trip with a group of people, one of the things you have to do (the larger the group) the more you have to work on keeping up with one another, right? So they wanted to be sure that they knew who was there and who to look for and how to have an accounting and how to have a buddy system. They were trying to establish all of that together. The book of Numbers opens with the census—the work of counting all the people and getting ready to go in to occupy the land.

Now once all of that work has been done, the next step is to get a picture of what lies ahead. Let's start our reading in Numbers 13:1: "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel. From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a chief among them'" [Numbers 13:1-2].

In other words, let's pick out leaders in every tribe—twelve tribes. Let's send them in.

"So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the Lord, all of them men who were heads of the people of Israel" [Numbers 13:3].

And then beginning there in verse four, we have all the names of all these men. If you are expecting a child, you might want to consult this list of names. I can promise you, you will find some unique and unusual names in this passage. But if we drop down to verse 17, it says...

"Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, 'Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.' Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes" [Numbers 13:17-20].

Then look in verse 23.

"And they came to the Valley of Eshcol and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they also brought some pomegranates and figs. That place was called the Valley of Eshcol, because of the cluster that the people of Israel cut down from there" [Numbers 13:23-24].

And then verse 27, it says they came back. They gathered after 40 days and brought this report to Moses and Aaron and the congregation. They came in and they said the land to which you sent us, "It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit" [Numbers 13:27b].

What an amazing moment! They go over. They go in. They search. They come back. All of this had to do with a desire for Moses and the others to understand, to evaluate their aptitude for war, and to ultimately provide some estimate and evidence of resource. No doubt about it. Everything about what they brought back with them said *this is an amazing place*. Now, you

may wonder, *How did they go over and really scope out the land of Israel, this promised land?*

I don't know what you know about the geography of Israel today. But the geography of Israel is such that Israel itself (as a nation) is 270 miles long, north to south and 85 miles wide. It's a lot smaller than you really think it is, especially for the attention that it gets on the world stage. By comparison, if you wanted to go get a picture of Georgia, do you know how big Georgia is? We're 300 miles north to south long and we're 230 miles wide. So Georgia is much larger than Israel. You could put several Israels in Georgia.

If you can only imagine that even though they were on foot and even though they were limited, they were still able to cover a tremendous amount of territory going and looking in the land. In fact, today when we go to Israel, we typically go on about a 10-day tour because in 10 days, you can cover a lot of ground in Israel. Not everything, but plenty.

So they went over and they went in and they came back, and they had all of this. They brought the report of what they had seen and what had happened.

After they began to demonstrate all of the resources, then they began to talk about the people. At that moment, the spies began to squirm. The heat went up and their hearts began to mount. How do I know? Well, read verse 28. *However*—everything is great, but *however*.

You ever had one of those reports in your life? *Man, it's awesome... but.*

"However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there" [Numbers 13:28].

Then down in verse 30, it says,

You ever had a bad report delivered to you? It may have been a medical report. It may have been a grade in school. Maybe you had to take your parents a bad report card—a bad report. In other words, they began to take all the goodness they had said and to just, essentially, smother it with a bad report.

"But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, 'Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.' Then the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.' So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report" [Numbers 13:30-32a].

And it says, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim... and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them" [Numbers 13:32b-33].

It's literally as if they said, *We went over there and every place we saw, everybody could have played in the NBA. I mean, it was just nothing but a whole bunch of large supersize people.* And when they looked at the size and the stature of the people that occupied the land, and they looked at themselves, they began to see themselves in a very diminutive fashion, to the point that they said, "We are like grasshoppers" [Numbers 13:33b]. *We may be many, but we're living.* That's what they began to talk about.

Here we have two things that I want us to see today. The first is the position that they were in, and the second will be the principles that we need to live. So let's start with...

1. The Position They Were In

There is a turmoil; there's a tug of war. Suddenly they come back and ten of the spies are saying, *we can't*, and two men (one named Caleb and the other named Joshua) said, *we can, and we must!* This tug of war began to go back and forth. As they began to stand there and to consider that here, they were on the outskirts of a promised land and it had been a year since they left Egypt, now it's time to go occupy and build homes and a future. But now they're completely paralyzed by fear, and the fear that seizes their heart began to smother their faith.

Let me quickly say that fear is one of the most destructive and debilitating emotions that all of us face in life. When I talk about the position that they were in, I'm speaking to people today and this is the position that you are in. You are in a position in life where fear is constantly nagging and dragging in your life. Fear is constantly overshadowing and constantly intimidating you. In much the same way, that's where they were with their fear as they stood in that place. As they stood and as they looked at that issue—that fear would ultimately be something that was going to define their future. If you don't do something about it, fear is going to define your future!

Now let me quickly say that not all fear is bad. There is a fear that can be good, a fear that is needed. The Bible tells us clearly, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" [Proverbs 9:10a]. Does that mean we need to just tremble and be afraid of God? No. It's talking about respect—the right kind of fear. There's a sense in which you in life and I in life have to have some healthy fear. We have to have some healthy fear of disease and we have to have some

healthy fear of dangerous places and spaces. We have to have some fear to be protected. But the fear that I'm talking to you about in this passage is not that kind of fear. It was a fear that ultimately was disruptive and obstructive in their lives, so much so that I want you to see how the people responded.

Look in [Numbers] 14:1: "Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, 'Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?' And they said to one another, 'Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt'" [Numbers 14:1-14].

Think about that! How did they get where they were? God sent plagues on Egypt and brought them out. God opened the Red Sea, and the wilderness, and God brought them through. God provided for them. And they were in the wilderness to get them to the edge of the River Jordan and to be ready to occupy the land. But for all of the things that God had done, there was this tremendous, fearful forgetfulness. And by the way, what fear always does is it causes you to forget.

Just quickly, to summarize what we just read—the responses of the people of Israel—they determined to live by sight, and not by faith. They complained about God's provision and their lives. They had forgotten how gracious God had been and how He had sustained them. They undermine the leadership that God had given to them, and they threaten to abandon God and to run from their calling. Fear.

We are living in a fear-producing, fear-provoking world today. If we are not careful, even those of us who claim to be followers of Christ, those of us who wear the name, *Christian*, we will live by sight and not by faith. We will complain about God's provision. We will undermine God's leadership and direction. And we will threaten to abandon and to run from Him. When fear is allowed to rule, it twists our perspective. When fear is present and prominent, it begins to dominate our emotions and our behavior. Fear becomes a fatal flaw that wreaks havoc, not just in our lives, but in our spiritual lives. When fear is present in us, it leads to stubbornness. It leads to selfishness. It leads to sinfulness.

In the month of January every year, we have a Sunday set aside to honor and to remember the sanctity of human life. It, of course, is in accordance with the 1973 legislation of *Roe vs. Wade*. For many years, we prayed that God would change the course of history and would deal with that issue in our legislature, and that ultimately, we would see a change. I am very

grateful to be standing on the first Sunday ever on the other side of that decision—taking down Roe vs. Wade. And though it has brought many questions and many concerns and many issues of debate into our world today, I am still convinced that beyond all of the other issues that we deal with, when it comes to the matter of choosing life and choosing abortion, the critical issue is the issue of fear.

Of course, I have sympathy and tremendous concern for any woman who finds herself in a place in life with an unplanned pregnancy. And then there's all the fear. The fear that begins to overwhelm. The fear that says that *I'm going to live with shame in my life. I'm going to not be able to be responsible. Somehow, I'm going to be inadequate*—all kinds of fear that begins to overcome. But even worse than that is the fear that is preyed upon by those who are willing to make profit off of that fear by telling a woman that all she has to do is get rid of it, and it's over. That is simply a lie.

While we live in a world that is now consumed with a culture of death, we, as a church, have made it our commitment that we will bring faith to that platform of fear. For that reason, we opened the doors this past year of a new outreach ministry called, *Hope Women's Center*, in order that we might bring faith, hope and love to a platform of fear in our culture and in the lives of women who don't know where to turn or what to do, and to remind them that there are people who love them, who care for them, and who will support them.

That's the reason we also, right now, are in the process of mobilizing to be a part of *Night to Shine*, a wonderful celebration for Gods differently abled to recognize the sanctity of life, the dignity of life, the respect for life. And so from the womb to the tomb, we want to honor life and support life. And we do not want ever in any time, to let fear cause us to become stubborn and callous and sinful because we are unwilling to believe that God is the author of life. God has given dignity to life and God has called us to defend and to protect life. And so, I think you know where we stand as a church on that matter and where our heart is on this issue. Having said all of that, our goal is to not let fear be what promotes the ongoing cessation of life in our culture, but to choose faith and hope and love. Now let me get back to Israel.

When we look at Israel, we not only see that they were in this position of fear, but we fast forward into the book of Deuteronomy. I quickly want to show you that God's intention, God's purpose and plan was that Israel would go into the land—this land that He had promised would be provided for them. It was all a part of His purpose for them.

Let me quickly just read Deuteronomy 6. So we're fast forwarding here beyond this crisis moment to another moment. And it says that someday in the future of Israel, when your sons

and daughters come to you, they're going to ask you a question. They're going to say, *Why do we do certain things as a people, as a nation?* And it says that in [Deuteronomy 6:21], "You shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in'" [Deuteronomy 6:21-23a].

God brought us out of Egypt because He wanted "bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us" [Deuteronomy 6:23b-25].

Here's an amazing picture of what God was doing and would do. God was bringing them out in order that He might bring them in. The position they were in was a position of transition, to get them out from where they'd been to get them in to where they needed to be.

Now, I'm going to shake up some of you who've been around the church a while because many of you have grown up with the idea that whenever we talk about the *Promised Land*, we're talking about heaven—that heaven is the promised land of the Christian. Metaphorically, you could call it that. But I want you to know that biblically, you're hard pressed to find a parallel between the *Promised Land* in the Old Testament and heaven. Think about it. The Promised Land in the Old Testament had giants. There aren't going to be any giants in heaven. The Promised Land in the Old Testament had battles. There aren't going to be any battles in heaven. The Promised Land had people who still sinned against God and heaven is not going to be a place where we have people who sin. So what the picture is here is not the idea of some metaphorical ideology of heaven. This is the picture of what our lives are to be like in Christ when we've been brought out of bondage—when we've been delivered through the wilderness—and when we are now beginning to live according to the power in the provision of God's promise in our lives.

The position we are in right now is in a transitional mode of sanctification where God is taking us from the world and getting us ready yes, someday to go to heaven. For God right now, He's teaching us that we have the ability not to live as victims, but that we can have victory through the power of Jesus Christ. God wanted them to know that victory. God wanted them to understand His authority. That's why we now get to the place looking at this, that I want us to wrap it up by talking about...

2. The Principles We Need

We know the position we're in. Let's talk about the principles that we need. Why is this ancient Bible story so important to us? Well, let me let the New Testament answer that. Listen to 1 Corinthians 10:1. Paul says, "I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ" [1 Corinthians 10:1-4].

I don't have to make a parallel to say that what happened then had to do it now, because clearly the New Testament tells me this is a picture of Jesus. And then it goes on to say, "Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did" [1 Corinthians 10:6].

Again, in the book of Romans 15:4, the Scripture says, "For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

The hope that you need to combat the fears that you face are found many times in the stories of what God has done. God teaches us in the present through the acts of God in the past. What God did in Egypt long ago, God was doing to demonstrate to us that just as He intervened on behalf of His people to deliver them according to His promise, God has intervened on our behalf in Christ to bring us into a promised life. That gives us the strength and the power to live in the victory of Christ.

Listen to Romans 5:10. The New Testament says, "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

The Christian life is the Christ life. Christ in you, the hope of glory. To become a Christian is to be delivered from the bondage of sin. It is to be redeemed and reconciled with the Father in heaven. Now my life is to be a saving life—a life that is being saved by the life of Christ. Therefore, I am no longer to be living in the old life and its old bondage, but now to be living fully and completely. Therefore, I would say to you today that what we see in Israel and their redemption coming out of Egypt, that was ultimately commemorated and celebrated in a feast that Jews still celebrate today, called the *Passover*, was the image and the reminder looking backward of how God delivers His people.

It was our Lord Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, who came and who lived a perfect, sinless life, died on the cross, was buried, and rose again, who offers us His saving life. But before He went to the cross, Jesus gathered with His disciples around a table, and He celebrated the Passover. And then at the Passover, He took a cup and He took the bread and He gave it to them, and said, *This is a new covenant that I am making for you—this new covenant in My blood*. Every time we gather at the Lord's table, we are looking back at the redemptive work of Christ, just as Israel looked back at the redemptive work of God out of Egypt and to the promised land.

That's a fascinating reality that we find here in Scripture, and that's why the principles are so important. But just to know this positionally is not enough. I want to take it and wrap it up today by talking about some ways in which we need to embrace this practically. What are some of the principles that we need to know and to live? Well, principle number one (and I want to be sure you get this out of the text that we started in Numbers 13 and 14):

- **Fear is a Contagious Disease**

You worry about contagious diseases in this world? You worry about COVID and all of the potential issues that have come and gone and all the debates? Let me just tell you that one of the most contagious human realities is *fear*. When fear comes in, when fear is present, it will begin to absolutely poison everybody and everyone.

One of the greatest problems that we have in our world today is just like them. How did this fear happen? Someone brought a bad report—somebody posted a bad report. Then the crowdsourcing and the crowd-sharing created a nation full of fearful, melted hearts. And if you're not careful and you're allowing crowdsourcing and crowd-sharing to determine the way that you see life, you are going to be absolutely overwhelmed and consumed with the fears of this world.

That's why this year as your pastor and as a church, I have challenged you and encouraged you to join with me in memorizing some *Fighter Verses*. We're going to combat the fear that is constantly stirred and provoked in the world by embracing and acknowledging God's Word to us.

Do you remember the first verse we learned together? Joshua 1:9. What does it say? "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Be strong and courageous. Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Do not be frightened because the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. We need those verses so that every day when we get up, we can be reminded that whatever we may face today, we don't have to fall prey to fear. I can stand in the strength and the power of God in my life. Secondly...

- **Fear Relies on the Wrong Authority**

Not only the fear—is it a contagious disease that relies on the wrong authority—While fear afflicts, faith enables you to stand, even when others are mistaken. There's a statement that we have and that we've learned in life, that simply says this: *The majority is always right*. But may I say to you that everything in the Scripture says the majority is not always right. To the contrary, Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

We're living in a world today where we are letting far too many people begin to be the cause of our thinking and our perspective, and we're letting the wrong authority determine our identity and our security in life. We're living in a world today where our culture and public opinion and social media are constantly saying, *Speak your truth. Express yourself*, but it ignores everything that God says. We are foolish to allow the hysteria and the confusion of the world to dominate in our lives when God has spoken to us and God has instructed us. God never changes. So *Fear Relies on the Wrong Authority*—that's the second principle. Principle number three:

- **Fear Distracts/Distorts God's Purpose in Your Life**

It distracts and distorts from God's purpose in your life. What did they say about themselves? They said, *Here we are out here in the wilderness, looking to the Promised Land, and all we can see is that we're a bunch of grasshoppers*. It's a problem with the Christian world today. We look at the world and we think we're just grasshoppers.

May I say to you that the whole book of Ephesians in the New Testament is written to tell us about our new identity in Christ. The Book of Ephesians talks about the riches of Christ in us. It tells us that we're saved, that we're adopted, that we're loved. It tells us that we have a hope and we have a future. It tells us that we are warriors. It tells us that we are reconciled to God. It tells us that we have all the sufficiency of everything that we need. The problem is that we let the world give us its identity. We need the new identity of who we are and what we are in Christ. You don't need to see yourself as a grasshopper. But in the words of Hudson Taylor, a missionary of another era, you need to see and understand this: "All God's giants have been weak men and women who have gotten hold of God's faithfulness."

When fear rules, spiritual failure will follow. But when faith begins to be applied in your life and mine, spiritual flourishing begins. I also like the way Max Lucado, the popular author, has said this: "Focus on giants—you stumble. Focus on God—Giants. tumble."

Number three. As we said, *Fear Distracts/Distorts God's Purpose in Your Life*. Number four:

- **Faith is Forged One Step of Obedience at a Time**

The faith that you and I need can only be forged not by just saying, *Alright, I'm gonna have faith*. No, it's not something that is subjective, it is something objective that says, *I'm going to take one more step forward in my obedience to God*. God is always looking for people who are willing to risk their lives and their futures on His promises. What was our second *Fighter Verse*? "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him" [2 Chronicles 16:9].

If you're willing to take God at His Word and to believe Him, whatever the area may be in your life, you're going to find that God gives strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward Him. That brings me to the last of the principles that I want us to observe today, and that is... and frankly, I wish I could leave this one off. But it's necessary to the entire testimony of Scripture.

- **Unbelief has Consequences**

Unbelief has consequences. If you continue to read in the book of Numbers 14, you discover that God in His judgment determined that none of the generation that was standing there (and that believed the bad report) would go into the Promised Land. So for the next 40 years, Israel wandered. There were two men standing there—Joshua and Caleb—who would ultimately become a part of the team that would occupy the land in the days to come because they had been men of faith. But an entire generation was lost because of unbelief, and the consequence of that in the life of Israel.

I say this to you today because I think that one of the great and urgent warnings of the New Testament is that we would not just come a few steps by faith and then fall back, but that we would hear and respond to the Lord—that we would continue in our walk in our fellowship with Him.

Listen to Hebrews 3:7: "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your

fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end" [Hebrews 3:7-14].

There is a consequence of unbelief. There are promises that are never received and experienced. There are rewards that are never enjoyed. There's burden and brokenness that continues because we fail to take God at His Word—to believe and to choose faith instead of choosing fear.

Probably the most overexposed verse in all of the Bible is John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." But one of the most unacknowledged of all passages is John 3:18 (two verses later) that says, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

There's a seriousness, there's a sobering reality to this message today, and that is how to avoid a spiritual meltdown in your life as a believer, but also how to avoid eternal judgment in your life because you have failed to believe on the name of the Son of God.

So Father, here and now today, I pray that You would prompt faith, that You would use Your Word, Lord, to cut against the bondage of fear that so often controls and consumes our lives, and that, Lord, here and now and today, that there would be a moment of response to You. Father, I thank you for the way the story walks us through and leads us through a picture, but Lord, how we do not want that to be the picture of our lives, but, Lord, instead, that our lives would be dominated by the principle of faith, that You are the same yesterday, today and forever, and that we would look to You in Your faithfulness and goodness to deliver us, to shape us, to use us for Your glory in this hour. We pray in the name of Jesus, Amen.