

Father, this evening, we just come to You, Lord. Yes, Father, You are the Potter; we are the clay. And never let us forget it, Lord. We are just clay. Even this evening, we surrender ourselves into Thy Almighty hands. Through the ministry of the Word, shape us, shape our thinking. For as the man thinketh, so he is. Shape the way we think so that we can make informed choices according to Your Word, according to Your will for each one of us, Lord. So, this evening, we just surrender, Lord. Speak to us. Let the entrance of Your Word bring even more light into our lives. Those areas which are still dark, clear it out, God, with the light of Your Word. Speak to us, Lord. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Do you remember at least some of the things we been looking at over the weeks? Children are a little scared. They're a little scared in classroom. It's good to be scared because their hands go like this – "I am there, I am listening, please don't ask me questions." But do we remember the things? Where the mind goes, the body follows. So, the world wants our mind, the devil wants our mind, God wants our mind. Whoever has your mind, ultimately, has your body. If God has to have your and my mind, then He calls us to a life of faith. It's a journey. Life of faith and the end of that journey is the last stance of the song, where we sang, "Christ is all." It's a life of faith and no other life pleases God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. By faith and faith alone. We also know faith also comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of God. That's the reason we come to study the Word of God so that faith will come, faith in this God. Remember in the past days we said – the ELT will tell you better. That's when we receive something. There are four things we call it in English, ELT; we call it LSRW- listening, speaking, reading and writing. I want you to look at this slide okay.

This is the order in which we actually learn – listening, speaking, reading, and writing, where this (writing) is the final skill. It should be in that order for it to naturally progress. But these two come together – listening-reading. And these two come together – speaking-writing. Though the order is like this (listening, speaking, reading and writing), these two come together – listening and reading come together. Speaking and writing come together. Depending upon how you listen and read or read will define, how you speak and how you write. Please remember. That's why reading is so important because reading will define how you speak or how you write. Listening will define how you speak or how you write even if you take it narrowly in the skills which we need in the classroom. This (listening and reading) also could be put together and be called what you all love, which is called watching. It's not a fifth skill as such but watching also comes there. Because when you are watching something, you are listening, you are looking, and you are reading. You are interpreting scene by scene, frame by frame. Lot of faculties are involved in this. So, remember; listen carefully and read. Let me tell you, speaking or writing can be non-verbal, yet can be read. You can listen or read would out a word being uttered because the actions spoke. I'll show you an example.

1 Kings 19:19

¹⁹So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him.

Elijah doesn't speak a word. He is a young man with a 12 yoke of oxen; he is plowing, Elijah comes takes his mantle and puts on his shoulders. Did he speak? No. But in his very action, there was an incredible message. And Elisha got it; he said, "Shall I go say goodbye to my dad and mom?" Understand, when we talk about speaking and writing, it can be non-verbal. Like you did something terrible and you are called to the principal's office, you enter the principal's office, you take the look on his face and you read the writing on the wall. He hasn't spoken a word. But from his face, you immediately realize, there's no mercy here. Okay? Understand how we perceive things. That's how you need to see Scripture, so we don't miss what God is trying to say. Like I said, this is one of the most powerful speeches without a spoken word. That would change the course the of Israel's history for years to come. That's why we always tell you – be dressed properly because dressing is a statement. Let me tell this once again, okay? Sounds a little tough but this is something which is true. There are two words in English. One is called chasity and other is modesty. You can lose your chasity by accident, by force, by choice, different ways. But you can lose your modesty only by choice. People don't realize, sometimes, it's more dangerous to lose your modesty than to lose your chasity because you are making a statement with the way you dress. Get these things clearly as to what communication is, because "*In the beginning was the Word the Word was with God, and Word was God.*" There,

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Word means God communicates to mankind through His Son, Jesus. He is the communication of the Father. Without Jesus, we never understand the Father. If we understand Jesus, we understand Father. Communication. Understand, verbal and non-verbal. So, faith is lived in action, which speaks. Faith speaks and faith which does not have action, corresponding works, is dead. So, ultimately, Scriptures shows us from,

Romans 14:23

²³ But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Meaning, suddenly, you realize every act of life is communicating in either faith or unbelieve. Even your eating, your drinking, your dressing, your words, your studies, the way you study, the way you sit. When children were small, we were all small, girls were always told properly, knees together, skirts down, sit properly. If you read Tom Sawyer, when Tom Sawyer dresses like a girl, and comes, how is he caught by that lady? He dressed like a girl, in a skirt, but how is he caught? He's caught when she throws something. When she throws something, you know, boys and girls do it differently. If you are trying to catch something, the boys will put their legs together, and the girls will separate and hold it in their skirt. And that's how she caught him. And it is communication. You can be dressed like a girl, in a skirt, everything but inside, you are either a boy or a girl and react normally according to your gender. Communication, remember these things, okay? In a life of faith, there are actions that should correspond to faith. Therefore, to live by faith is a choice. It's a choice. The choice to live by faith itself is a choice. Right now, for many, choices are being made because you are minors. Or even if you're not a minor, you live off somebody who told you.

Like for me, when I came back, when my parents dropped in India at the age of 12, all the way till, I grew up, till I believed, (interesting, okay?) – till I believed; meaning, all the days when I did not believe, I went to Church regularly. Why? Because I was just told, "You need to go to Church." To symbolize what your father told you, you need to go to Church. It doesn't matter whether you believe it or not. He's the one who pays your fees, he's the one who puts food on your table, he's the one who puts clothes on your back. He said, "Go," you go. Then, I believed. When I believed, I did not go to Church. I went for the Bible studies because the Church was dead. And I didn't have Church for years until I came to Hyderabad, because every Church I went to, I found it dead. There was no life there. So, you need to understand. Some of you are here, not because of your own choice; a day will come when you'll have to choose. When that day comes, your choices will ultimately define who you become where you end.

So, faith is a choice which you make every day. But not like the world thinks it is not an uninformed choice. Like the educated ones from the university and colleges look at Christians, believers as illiterate, uninformed. Faith is not an uninformed choice. See, if you divide in people into groups, large groups. We can divide people into three groups; believers, I want to put you all of you as believers. Then, there is a second group called the religious, and the third group called the atheist. They may be the smallest group but they're a very powerful group because they control the system, they control the media, they control universities, they control the parliament. Remember, they are small but very powerful. Believers, religious and the atheist. But if you take these three groups, what is common about these three groups? Let us say, Amy, Praveena, Niharika; Amy is an atheist, Praveena is a believer and she (Niharika) is religious. What is common about all three of them? They all go for same education in the same school. Have you noticed? The atheist, the religious and the believer go to the same school. The education; are your text books different? "Amy, what are you? Believer. Okay, your text book is this. Oh, what are you? Religious, your text book is this." No, what you study is the same. It's the same but we call atheistic, secular education. Everybody goes through the same system. So, our thinking in so many ways are similar. You have a label 'believer', you have a label 'religious', you have a label 'atheist', but the thinking is same. Because the thinking is being framed from 12 years, 15 years, 17 years of secular atheistic education. Understand that.

And we struggle with faith, believers struggle with faith because we have been taught that everything has to be factual. The 'why' and the 'where' and the 'how' and the 'what'. Faith sometimes doesn't work like that. And this is not our struggle; this is the struggle; this is the struggle of everybody in the Bible from the beginning till after the fall. Because they see nature is governed by certain rules which science tries to understand and harness. But when you are faced with a problem, we try to be scientific. Atheism that uses science begins with the assumption that there is no God. Faith begins not with an assumption but with an assertion that God created everything. And one of the major cause of unbelief in the believer is that he tried to think scientifically when God speaks to him. In *Genesis 15*, let's look at the father of believers, okay? God is speaking to him.

Genesis 15:1-6

¹After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying...

First, science will say, "There is nothing like vision." If you go and try telling your science teacher about your vision, he will tell "That is just a dream. Forget it. It's from your subconscious mind. Maybe, you ate something which did not digest well and that was the final memory which you have." They will do a psychoanalysis on you and give you an interpretation which has nothing to do with God.

...*"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."*² But Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

God comes and speaks to Abraham. Abraham response is absolutely scientific. He is saying, "I understand what you are saying. But what's the point what am I going to do with all these, because when I look at it scientifically, I have no children. I have no children."

³ Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

He is thinking very naturally. He can use different words – science, logic, sight, reasoning, natural ways in which we think. That's how we all think. He is an old man now. His age is almost 75-80 years old. At the age when God comes and says, "I am your great rewarder," he is saying, "what's the point in being rewarded? If I had a son, I could understand it, this who followed me is going to take everything." So, he is not even excited by anything God says, because he is thinking the way world thinks. In *verses 4 and 5*, God response is very unscientific.

⁴ And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

It's a very unscientific response. God brings him out, makes him look at the starts and says, "You know, old man," the Ancient of Days is speaking to the old man, "this is how your children will be like." Imagine the faith, the mind of that poor old man. And Scripture says, in *verse 6*.

⁶ And Abraham believed...

Now, he's not going by reason, by logic, by scientific knowledge, he has about himself, about his wife and how pregnancy works, and procreation takes place. All that and also looking at 80, at the maximum, I can have a child. "Are you going to tell me one child end up like..." This is not liking doing combination, permutation, nothing. What God is saying doesn't fit in with your normal thinking at all. It defies everything you've studied at school. But Scripture says, he believed. That believe is counted as righteousness. Not when everything is $A=B$, $B=$, every equation is right, and you believe. And God says, "That is not faith." Much of our struggles are trying to reconcile the Word of God with our thinking which is logical or scientific. *Numbers 32*, other instances. This is God who is speaking to the next generation through Moses. Why will you discourage the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them?

Numbers 32:8

⁸ Thus your fathers did when I sent them away from Kadesh Barnea to see the land.

First generation got absolutely discouraged after two years. Why were they discouraged? They were discouraged because of their thinking. Their thinking was Egyptian or worldly. They think, thought, the way the world thinks, like everybody thinks.

Numbers 13:27-33

²⁷ Then they told him, (remember, these are the 12 spies who came back, and this is the report.) and said: "We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. ²⁸ Nevertheless the people who dwell in the

land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.²⁹ The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan.³⁰ Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."³¹ But 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."³² And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature.³³ There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Every word they spoke (expect for the little exaggeration in the end), every word they spoke, reasonably, logically, according to the knowledge of the world, scientifically speaking was absolutely true. When you fight a battle, strength matters. When you want to overcome, cities and fortifications matters. What they were saying, actually looking at and were saying, "There is no way we can take the land." One – they are stronger than they, they are numerous than they, the cities are fortified. They cannot come in through any side. "The planes are occupied, the seas are occupied, the mountains are occupied; there's no way we can get these people." Everything they say is true. "And when we look at ourselves, who are we? Just nomads, ex-slaves, wandering for 2 years, never a fighting unit, never trained to fight, always been trained and wiped to keep quiet and never rebelled. How are we going to do this?" That is what Scripture calls it – a bad report. You see our thinking? Everything they say is actually true. If you speak according to the signs of war of those days, everything they say is true. But, Scripture says this in *2 Corinthians 5:7*, Scripture says,

2 Corinthians 5:7

⁷For we walk by faith, not by sight.

You cannot walk by sight. If you walk by sight and bring a report of sight, it is a bad report. See, you see, these people are dealing with scientific facts which is called 'sight' versus 'faith,' which is what God speaks. That, everybody struggles here, everybody struggles over here. Everybody, all of us struggle this at every point in our lives. That's also why debates – creation versus evolution usually never works because they are based on absolutely, totally opposing premises. Creation is based on the fact – God created everything. Evolution is based on the fact, or premise – there is no God. So, how do you debate? If we have to debate something, you need to have one common point. So, the question is: how do you debate with a believer, with a religious and an atheist. The three groups of people – the believer, the religious (different religions) and the atheist. How can you debate with these three groups? Is there a common point? Is there any common point where these three can come and have a conversation? There is only one common point. You know what? It is called, 'death'. Absolute common point – the religious, the believer, and the atheist – knows he will die one day.

You ask the atheist, "What is your hope?" He has nothing to offer. You ask the religious, he is totally confused. Many births, no births. Many pillars, five pillars. He has no real hope. because his hope is in himself. On the other hand, if you ask the believer, the man of faith, the women of faith, he has hope and he is very sure of his hope. And then, the question you ask the atheist is that, "What if you are wrong? What if I am wrong?" Let us say, for 10 years, I taught you, "Follow God, follow God, believe, follow God." You made these choices, and ultimately, one day, you die and realize, there is no God. What do you lose? Nothing. On the other hand, if I am right and you fought me in your mind, sat there, listened, wrote notes, and was the atheist and then, you die, you lose everything. Do you realize, you have everything to gain, nothing to lose? In English, we say, "Heads, I win; tails, you lose." But as believers, remember, you cannot walk two roads at the same time. You cannot walk by faith and think scientifically. You will fall apart. That's why *Romans 1:17*, says, there is a walk of faith,

Romans 1:17

¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

You cannot have two kinds of thinking; either you think faith or think sight. You cannot try both. Where faith and sight agrees, you receive it. Where it doesn't agree, you choose faith, always over and above sight, where it disagrees.

The second issue with faith is this – you cannot make a choice of faith and then, do the work of sight and expect the result of faith. Did you get it? You make a choice of faith, but do the work of sight or sign-tific work. But, you expect a result that

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comes only by faith. Let's look at a very familiar example, at *1 Samuel 17*; this is David before King Saul. Yes, young ones, remember.

1 Samuel 17:34-37

³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, ³⁵ I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." ³⁷ Moreover David said, "The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

He gives such a passionate speech on faith. Entire speech is on faith, on God. The faithfulness of God, the promises of God and the previous actions of God in its light. Listening to that speech, some faith which was there in king Saul came to the front, he was wound by this young man's faith. So, what did he say? "Go, God be with you." Then, it said,

1 Samuel 17:38-39

³⁸ So Saul clothed David with his armor, and he put a bronze helmet on his head; he also clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David took them off.

Did you see his solution? David is making a declaration of faith and is going to act out on faith and Saul puts a very scientific solution to this issue. "If you are going to fight a man, this is how you should fight. You should have a helmet; you should have an armor; you should have a sword." David is a smart young man; he is saying, "You know what? Faith and this doesn't tally." It's not working. You see, Saul's back is against the wall; he is desperate, very desperate. Goliath is very smart; the Philistines are very smart. And the people in the world are very smart. You need to understand that. They are very smart, smarter than us. You can never defeat the world with smartness because they are smarter than us, because they have the wisdom of the serpent. The only way you can defeat the world is by faith and faith alone. Never tried to outsmart them; you cannot. Because they have the wisdom of the serpent. What we have is the wisdom of Christ which outsmarts the serpent at every turn. The problem, the Church fails, and the problem the people in the Church are so unsuccessful is because they are trying to outsmart the serpent with the wisdom of the serpent. God says, "It never works. It has never worked." It never works. What we have instead is the wisdom of God and that comes by faith. So, he says, "It doesn't work." Goliath is very smart; he realizes, "These guys are absolutely fearful. We can fight them. We can crash them and we can take over but why kill people? Not theirs; in the battle, ultimately, some of us will die. There is no need for anybody to die. Let us do it easily – you send one man and I will fight him. One-on-one fight; I will win, you shall be my slaves." David's faith, Saul's ways will not bring God's result. This is the same mistake we, too, make. We hear words of faith; our emotions are all touched; mind is still thinking the old scientific way. And if we go to battle, if David had gone to battle like that, that would have been the end of David and the beginning of the Philistine occupation in Israel. Understand that. You cannot fight God's battles in man's ways. It will not work. A lot of parents try and try and ultimately, one day, look back and think, "Why is my child not succeeding?" The reason is – you thought these are the ways in which we need to succeed with God and God says, "It does not work."

Everybody. Abraham and all went through this. Look at another issue in Abraham's life in *Genesis 17:15-18*; God is speaking to Abraham,

Genesis 17:15-18

¹⁵ Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

Mother! Not princess anymore but what shall be her name? Sarah.

¹⁶ And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her." ¹⁷ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" ¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!"

God is speaking to Abraham; Abraham is absolutely medically scientifically correct in his response. He is saying, “I’m 100 and Sarah is; she has been in menopause for the past 40 years, Lord. Do You understand biology, Lord?” He was absolutely scientific in his thinking. “But Lord, I understand Your promise. It’s not that I don’t believe You; I do believe You. You want a result? Shall we do it my way? Can we do it may way? You take the credit; it’s fine. I have no issues with that but can we do it my way. Can Ishmael live before You?” You need to realize – throughout the Bible, this struggle is peculiar only to believers. Believers struggle with unbelief. Unbelievers do not struggle with unbelief; they walk and live in it. Only believers struggle with unbelief. Unbelievers don’t struggle with unbelief. Darkness doesn’t struggle with darkness. Those who are learning to walk in light constantly struggle with the darkness they discover inside themselves.

So, understand how it works; what our struggles are in this walk of faith because we are all educated children. That’s why the poor receive the Gospel just like that. That’s why the Gospel is for the poor because they don’t struggle so much like the educated ones.

Another struggle. I don’t want to say the third struggle but another struggle of the believer. Another struggle of the believer is this in his walk of faith. It is connected with the result. Often, we have a preconceived, let us say, scientific result in our mind to our prayers. We have already, according to the world that has framed us, the thinking that has framed us, even when we pray to God, ask the Living God for something, we already have the way the result should come or what the result should be. Like Namaan. Namaan goes; Elisha doesn’t even come; he says, “Tell him to go dip himself seven times in the river Jordan.” But Namaan already has a pattern in his mind. What is his pattern? “The prophet will come out; he will wave his hand like this.” The problem is – we have preconceived results and the way God works results in our mind so that when the result is staring in our face, we don’t recognize it because we do not understand the ways of God. When we have a problem, all of us have faith; at least, little faith and we pray. Everyone prays. Don’t tell me you don’t pray. Everyone prays. But the problem is – when we see the answer to our prayer, do we recognize the answer? Because the answer is not according to our science or according to our college education.

Let us look at another example from the same portion. *1 Samuel*;

1 Samuel 17:16-17

¹⁶ And the Philistine drew near and presented himself forty days, morning and evening.

Who is this? Goliath. Forty days, morning and evening, he will come and challenge, “Who will fight me? Send a champion.” They are trembling; they are fearful; and I am telling you – it is not written but you can be absolutely sure every Israelite was praying, “Lord, have mercy! Lord, please bachao (save us).” That is all prayer. And I’m sure everybody, even king Saul, was praying. And He is a merciful God. So, what does He do? He answers their prayer. Next verse.

¹⁷ Then Jesse said to his son David, “Take now for your brothers an ephah of this dried grain and these ten loaves, and run to your brothers at the camp.

God put this thought in Jesse’s, this man’s heart and he called his youngest son, David, and said, “David, take all this stuff and go to the battle field and see how your brothers are doing.” God had answered their prayer. The answer is a young boy carrying a load of food for his brothers and he came on the fortieth day. The answer was staring right at their face; nobody recognized the answer to their prayer because their answer did not fit in with their pattern of thinking. It didn’t fit in with their pattern of thinking because if this 8-foot tall champion has to be fought, it has to be at least 7 feet 5 inch or at least, 6 ft 5” and must be a warrior from his youth. You see, we have preconceived ideas. Sometimes, that’s the whole problem. People this side and that side, young ladies and young gentlemen will pray, “Lord, give me a man after Your own heart.” The man is staring in your face but you don’t see him. Why? Because in your mind, there is a combination of Shah Rukh Khan, Ameer Khan and all these Khans put together and you give it a Christian label. You take the ‘Khan’ off and give it a Christian label and in your mind, you are looking, “When is my prince charming coming?” God says, “He is standing before you.” We have all these preconceived ideas and we often go through life without recognizing the answers to our prayers. God has answered their prayer but they are not able to see the answer. Look at the next verse.

1 Samuel 17:28

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²⁸ Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab's anger was aroused against David, and he said, "Why did you come down here?"

Who is this? His brother. His brother is not able to see God's answer in his brother and instead of getting encouraged, he is angry. Do you get angry when you see certain answers to your prayers? Look at the king.

1 Samuel 17:33

³³ And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are a youth, and he a man of war from his youth."

The king looks at God's answer and says, "Oh, you? You can't fight that fellow. You are a small boy and that man has been a warrior from the time he was a small boy." You go through the pages of the Bible and you will see this often reflected – man prays; God answers but we are not able to see the answer of God because we have a preconceived worldly educated way that – this is the way my answer should come. The answer stares at our faces, stands before us and after some time, it departs from our face and you say, "Lord, why didn't You answer?" God said, "I did. You didn't receive My answer." Everybody goes through this. Even Mary went through that. Gabriel comes and says, "Most blessed of women are you," and she says, "How is it possible?" She is thinking rationally and scientifically. "How is it possible? I have not known man," but then, she says, "Let it be according to Your Word." She says, "I will not let my scientific mentality stop or let it go above God's Word. I don't have to understand how God works but I can just surrender to the work of God in my own life even if I don't understand." Meaning – I understand that God is a God of science also.

In *Exodus 2:23-24*, the people are crying and praying,

Exodus 2:23-24

²³ Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. ²⁴ So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

What does it mean? The children are crying and crying, "Lord, deliver us." God said, "I heard your cry. I heard your prayer. I'm answering your prayer," but the problem is – His answer was two old men with a stick. That answer did not fit in with their assumptions of how God would answer their prayer. You are slaves of the most powerful nation on earth. Tens and thousands of soldiers, iron chariots. We are talking about North Korea – two hundred thousand believers in labor camps and an army of ten million people, soldiers and tanks and everything and God is sending two men to Kim Som, "Set My people free." They would say, "Lord, we prayed and You send this? Is this Your answer?" That's our problem. And later, when he goes over there, remember, the only reason first, they believed Moses' words was only because of signs. Listen to what Scripture says,

Exodus 4:29-31

²⁹ Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. ³⁰ And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. ³¹ So the people believed...

Why did the people believe? Because of the signs and God understands that. He says, "These are the people who have no faith at all but they are My people. They have no faith but I love them. They cried; I answered." They are looking at the answer and they are not able to believe in the answer because they see in the power of Pharaoh. "So, let Me show them a little of My power so that they would believe in Me." The sign they saw was a display, a tiny display of God's power,

...then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

That's what signs are for. Signs are initially for those who are very weak in faith or have no faith. That's why *Mark 16:20* says the final word in the Gospel according to Mark,

Mark 16:20

²⁰ And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the

accompanying signs. Amen.

He knows when the Gospel is going out, nobody is going to believe. So, He gave them signs so that they started believing because they saw, "Oh, look at the sign! Therefore, what Peter says is true; what James says is true; what John says is true." They started believing in the message because of the signs. Same thing happened there – they believed in the message Moses brought because of the signs but the problem is this – if you believed every time when there is a sign, then you are walking by sight and not by faith. If you only believed every time because there was a sign, which is visible, that means you are walking by sight and not by faith. So, what happened to the Church and the world? The world is full of scientific people; the Church is full of sign-tific people. In between, faith got lost. There, science; here, signs. The only difference is the spelling. You know the problem with science and science alone? Our thinking may not change at all. Only our feelings have been touched. In your emotions, you are a believer but in your mind, you are sign-tific. You are still thinking the same ways. So, every time, unless God manifests His power, you won't believe and because you won't believe, you won't follow. And it is a power play. That's what happens in religions. It's a power play. Why, in India, do we have over a crore of (not people) gods? It is power play. It is real. Those gods are real gods. They are real. It's a power play. If you look at which god has the maximum number of player, you need to realize – that deity displays more power than the others. It's power play. That is why, in all ancient nations, including India, when two kingdoms clashed and one kingdom won over the other, they didn't go; they went into the other fellow's temples and took his gods also and brought them and put them in his temple because he knew this is a power play. That is what happened to the Philistines. They took the Ark of God's Covenant and put it in their temple because the more the power, the better. None of them are walking by faith. Every religious person is walking by sight, in power and we cannot reduce Christianity to that; it's a walk of faith because when you come to signs alone, your mind is not changed; if your mind is not changing, you do not understand the righteousness and the holiness of God, the very purpose for which He saved you and why He saved you. If we don't understand that, we can go through all the signs in the Book and end up in hell because our thinking never changed. Understand that because the demonic is all power play.

This is what the Pharaoh says in *Exodus 5:1-2*,

Exodus 5:1-2

¹ Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" ² And Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go."

He is used to power; not just his power; he is used to the power of his gods. He says, "You two? Are you the representatives of your God? You guys are telling me to let these people go? I don't know your God." And you know what? They asked for a three-day break. He said, "All play? No work? Oh, you want to take a three-day break?" He called his leaders and said, "Give them more work and this time, tell them to make brick without straw." Now, what he does; he doesn't focus on the leaders; he focused on the congregation, to make the life of the leaders miserable. That's what he does. He says, "Leave Moses and Aaron alone. Get the people." Verse 14-21 is interesting,

Exodus 5:14-21

¹⁴ Also the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten...

There were these six hundred thousand men and let us think, over each group, there is a leader. These leaders were called and they were beaten.

...and were asked, "Why have you not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today, as before?" ¹⁵ Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, "Why are you dealing thus with your servants? ¹⁶ There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, 'Make brick!' And indeed your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people." ¹⁷ But he said, "You are idle! Idle! Therefore you say, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.'

"Why do you want to go for Worship Service all the time? That means you have no work to do."

¹⁸ Therefore go now and work; for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks." ¹⁹ And the

officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble after it was said, "You shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota." ²⁰ Then, as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. ²¹ And they said to them, "Let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to kill us."

What happened to all their faith? Everything is gone, because their mind never changed, and they said, "You know what? You guys have actually here to get us killed; they are not here for us." Even Moses was not able to understand the ways of God because he was also new believer. So, this is what Moses says,

Exodus 5:22-23

²² So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? ²³ For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all."

The problem was when Moses went, he thought, "I will go to the Pharaoh; I will stand before the Pharaoh; I've been given a stick and I will tell to the Pharaoh, 'The Lord God of Israel says, 'let My people go'', and the Pharaoh will say, 'Okay, Moses. Take your people and go'." That's what Moses thought. Moses' first ministry is continuing – you name it, claim it, grab it, but it doesn't work like that. If you name it, claim it, grab it, where does character come from? Where does the righteousness of God come from? How will we ever know what God is, what kind of a person He is? Listen to God's response very carefully in,

Exodus 6:1-7

¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand he will let them go, and with a strong hand he will drive them out of his land." ² And God spoke to Moses and said to him: "I am the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them. ⁴ I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. ⁵ And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. ⁶ Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. ⁷ I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

We read that and we feel so good but do you know actually what God is saying? God is saying, "When you prayed and now that I am answering you, you thought that was about you; this is not about you; this is about Me; this is about My name; this is about My honor; this is about My righteousness; this is about My Kingdom; this is not about you. That is our issue – when we pray prayers and the answer doesn't happen when we want it or how we want it, we get so upset, disturbed and disappointed, discouraged because we think this is about us. This is not about us; this is about Him. In our emotions, we are very excited about God but in our thinking, we have replaced theology which is the knowledge about God with humanism which is the knowledge about man. In our mind, we are, who? Humanists. We are not theologians. That is how we think. That is what they all thought and that's where we get disappointed. I am talking about believers; I am not talking about religious and atheists, and all our disappointments are connected with that and life can be full of God-ordained disappointments.

Listen carefully now. One thing which you must realize – if you are not expecting anything, you cannot be disappointed. Some students, when their results come, they are never disappointed because they have no expectations. You cannot experience disappointments without expectations and the more the expectation, the more the disappointment and therefore, listen carefully again – the disappointment we face as believers is far greater than the disappointment the unbeliever faces because the hope that we have is much greater than theirs. Understand that. Our disappointment is much greater than an unbeliever's disappointment because at the end, the unbeliever's expectation is temporal. Our actual expectations are much more, "Lord, set me free. Take me out of this bond of Egypt." God says, "With mighty judgments, I will set you free and I..." He doesn't stop there. We prayed, "Lord, set me free." He says, "No. I won't just set you free. I will take you to the land flowing with milk and honey and I will give you cities which you did not build; I will give you houses which you did not build; I will give you gold and silver which you did not work for; I will give you wealth which you did not..."

Scientific or Sign-tific?

“Lord, are You serious? I only asked to be delivered from this situation. Lord, deliver me from the bondage of sin, Lord. Please.” God says, “With a mighty hand, I will deliver you. Not only that, you who receive My deliverance shall be My son and My daughter. You walk by faith, I promise you – one day, you shall sit on My throne as My Son sat on the throne and you shall reign for eternity.” “Lord, are You serious?” Do you see our expectations compared to the expectations of the world? Therefore, God will definitely allow us to be disappointed in our earthly expectations so that He can frame in us a character that fits in with eternal expectations. Otherwise, character cannot be built. It cannot. It never can be built. So, you have to fight it by faith. What you have to fight is your disappointment from becoming discouragement. They are not the same. You are learning a lot of new things today. Young children, write it down because you may not hear it anywhere else. Disappointment is when your expectations are not met. Discouragement is when you fail to expect anything else. Disappointment is when your expectations are not met. You are disappointed but you still have an expectation that something else will come but discouragement is when you expect nothing. So, you see; you go through the entire record of the first generation. Every time they were so discouraged, all they thought was death. They are not just disappointed; they are so discouraged, they have no expectations. In *Exodus 14:10-11*, they will say; this is when they are out of Egypt,

Exodus 14:10-11

¹⁰ And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?”

Being disappointed is okay. You cannot work with discouraged people. It’s almost impossible to work with discouraged people because every obstacle they see, they only see death there; they don’t see life. You need to realize why God allowed that generation to die in that desert – it’s because that is all they expected. Every time they opened their mouth, they said, “We are going to die,” and God said, “Okay, finally, die. If that’s all you expect, that’s all you get. I did not bring you out; I brought you out to give you life but your minds are so enslaved by the captivity of Egypt, every time you see an obstacle, all you see is death.” Death, death, death. In *16:3*, Egypt is gone; Pharaoh is gone; army is gone; three days into the desert,

Exodus 16:3

³ And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full!...

Suddenly, they are hungry. Three days fasting and they want to die.

...For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

You know what’s happening? The emotions are occasionally touched by the signs; the mind is never changing. And when our mind doesn’t change, we are on a pathway to death because God said, “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses; you choose.” Because our mind is not changing, once in a week, on a Sunday or a Wednesday, you get excited by the Word or by the worship, you are not choosing life. Choosing life is a pattern and every time when an obstacle comes, that is when you really know what you are choosing and every time, through their thinking, they are actually choosing death. That’s why God says, “If you walk by sight, you will die.” For that is the road that leads to death. If you walk by faith, you will live because that’s the road that leads to life.

Let’s look at the next one; this is the 10th one. In between, I took off the other 7.

Numbers 14:2

² And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!

Ah! Now, they added one more. By the time they came that far, they realized – “God is not going to let us die in Egypt. He is not going to take us back to Egypt.” So, they added one new sub-clause. What is that? “If only we died in the wilderness.” God said, “So, let it be. At least, in one thing, you understood My mind. I’m not going to let you die in Egypt.” The second thing, I had not planned it. That’s what He says. He looks at all humanity and says, “Understand this – hell was not made for

you; it was made for the devil and his angels but if you choose to go with him, you are welcome. But I'm telling you straight up – you were not meant to die there or meant to die here; you were meant to possess the Promised Land but if this is what you choose, that is where you go." Discouragement is a choice. Faith is a choice. Joshua and Caleb also saw the same giants, the same fortified cities and I'm sure they, too, were disappointed. See, nobody wants to fight a giant. God said, "I'm giving you this land and towns which you did not build and wells you did not dig," and Joshua also thought, "Okay, we may have to fight. Lord, I pray these guys are smaller than me." Then, he goes there and says, "Boy! They are giants!" He was disappointed but he was not discouraged. I'm sure they were disappointed. "Okay, I failed one exam but that's not the end of my life. I can write again." "Oh, I will quit studies. I'm not going to study anymore." No. Edison, how many times? 800 times? 900 times? He said, "Those weren't 800 failures; those were 800 steps to success." 800-900, we say, failures before he invented the electric bulb. He said, "Who told you they were failures? 900 steps to success. Okay, I had to take 900 steps," but what discouragement does is – discouragement gives up after the first step. A lot of God's people just give up. Faith is a choice. Discouragement is a choice. All of us will be disappointed in life but don't give up because you are disappointed. Just because you failed an exam, just because one company said, "Leave and quit," don't give up. You should say, "I'm going to fight it even more next time. I'm not going to give up." Why? "Because, unlike the unbeliever, I have God; I have the promises of God and I walk by faith and when I walk by faith, I understand the knowledge of God; I understand my God. I know who He is. Yes, I goofed up." Now, don't go and rationalize and say, "Who doesn't goof up?" That's not what God wants to hear. God doesn't want to hear, "Who doesn't goof up?" God wants to hear, "Lord, I goofed up." He would say, "I know that. Are you willing to accept it?" "Yes, Lord. Can I have another chance?" "What one chance? I will give you as many chances as you want. Do you know Me?" "Yes, Lord. I think I know You." That's the difference. The people in the Bible who are called overcomers are not people who did not have disappointments. These are the people who, by faith, fought discouragement every day of their lives. God will look at this generation and say, "You were discouraged and you died."

In 1 Samuel 30:3-6,

1 Samuel 30:3-6

³So David and his men came to the city, and there it was, burned with fire; and their wives, their sons, and their daughters had been taken captive. ⁴Then David and the people who were with him lifted up their voices and wept, until they had no more power to weep. ⁵And David's two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the widow of Nabal the Carmelite, had been taken captive. ⁶Now David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters...

Now, let us look at the background of this story. Do you know the background? 16 months in darkness in the Philistine camp. At the end of the Philistine camp, the king wants David and his 600 men to fight along with him. The leaders of the Philistines say, "You cannot bring him." The king said, "David, go back. I'm sorry. I cannot take you because my leaders don't want you. Go back." And they are going back. Discouraged, disappointed – whichever way you want to call it; I don't know. The king said, "I don't want you. You can go back." And they have travelled for 3 days. They are tired; they are disappointed; they are tired and when they are getting close, I'm sure they are getting close, all they can see first is smoke. Do we see smoke? You see, when you are far away in the country side, when you see smoke and smoke coming from familiar houses, you would say, "Wow! At least, I can have a good dinner. My wife is cooking. I can rest." They get closer, they see, "This doesn't look like smoke of cooking." They realized the whole city is burnt down. You have to see in your mind – everyone's crazy; they are running into their houses, tents, whatever; searching, looking – only ashes; no wife, no children, nothing. Everything gone. They cried; they wept. Why are they weeping like this? Because of the past events and this is piling up. 16 months with no God, no fellowship, no worship, no hearing of the Word of God, nothing, living in the world, living in the Philistine camp, compromised on everything they know is true; they are actually down in the dumps already. Then, the king said, "Go." Three days walk and then, you come over here; and then, the one who should be the most discouraged and depressed is David because at that hour, the men were talking about stoning David, their leader. That's what Scripture says,

⁶...for the people spoke of stoning him...

We don't know what happened. Probably, a few of his loyal ones came and said, "David, sir, king," I don't know what they called him, "Lord, I think we need to get you out of this place." You have seen in movies, right? Always, in the western

movies, one shot, the first thing the secret service does is that they cover the President and take him out of every hall because they have to protect him with their lives. So, some of them must have come and told him, "Lord, we need to take you out because they are thinking about killing you." It should have been the darkest moment in his life but Scripture says,

6 ...But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

Faith and encouragement is a choice. It is based on the knowledge of God which is above all your scientific logical reasoning. Because if your logical reasoning... see, the prodigal son sitting in the pig pen was logically reasoning, "Okay, my father gave me this. I went out and messed it up, made a fool out of my father. Logically thinking, if I go back, I cannot go back. He probably will chase me or let the dogs loose." But that's not what he is logically thinking; he is thinking in his heart, "At the end of the day, my father loves me." That's what David is thinking, "I goofed up. I did it all but I know something about my God. My God is merciful. And if God is merciful, He will forgive me. First, He will forgive me. If God forgives me, I also know He is a Father. If He forgives me, He says, 'okay, I have forgiven you but don't come to Me again'. He won't say that." The prodigal son thinks, "Okay, I will go." Inside, he knows his father but he says, "I will go and tell him, 'can I be like a servant?'" The father would say, "Yes. Tomorrow onwards, you shall be my servant." And you need to realize – unbelieving parents do that. They have done it. I know personally people in my life whom I have met who are from Hindu backgrounds and when the son said, "I believe," the father said, "From today, you are a servant and that's what you will do." They disinherited him. I know people in our own Churches here in Hyderabad who have married and gone and when the daughter said, "I'm a believer," the father came and made her sign in paper saying that, "No inheritance for you." They do that. So, that logical thinking is there but God doesn't think that way. He knows. And then, he can say, "We are only 600 men." With 600 men, that too, tired men; not only tired men, depressed men. "What are we going to do with 600 men against an army of Amalekites." He is not thinking any of those things. He is thinking in faith, "If God forgives me, God will speak to me. If God speaks to me, I will have an answer. All I have to do is do what God says." So, the next shout from his mouth is, "Abiathar! Bring the ephod. Lord, what do You want me to do?" It's like the prodigal son's father running to the prodigal son and the speed with which God's answer came, "Pursue, overtake and recover." His whole life changed, right?

That's one of the fundamental differences between man and God. If you are going to think about God according to how man has dealt with us, our faith will falter. You have to look at God as to how He has dealt with man. You have to look at that. You look through this and see – what touches God's heart? Jonah said, "I know You. That's why I told You that I did not want to go to Nineveh. I know You. You thought I was excited when You said, 'Go to Nineveh; I will give you one message – forty days and you shall be no more'." In the beginning, Jonah must have been a little excited. Then, he was thinking, "Wait a minute. What if I speak, they believe and they repent? Knowing Him, He will show mercy. You know what? I don't want to show any mercy to those people. I'm not going." See, Jonah knew his God very well. David will say in his Psalms, "Where can I hide from You? Even if I go to hell and make a bed over there, You will see me." Jonah experienced it from the belly of the whale, from the bottom of the sea, he cried out and God answered him and took him out. He knew his God very well. Are you getting it?

As I close, one final verse as to why we need to know God. Why, in this journey of faith, is not about the things we do. In this journey of faith, it is actually getting to know the Person of God and if that doesn't happen, this journey is in vain. The whole purpose of this journey is so that we get to know the Person of God. *Romans 4:20-22,*

Romans 4:20-21

²⁰ He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

I don't know whether it is true about you; it's true about me. I'm not talking about physical measurements but actually speaking, my mouth is bigger than my hand because often, I say stuff which I can't do. That's why, sometimes, we have to eat our words. It's an English phrase – you have to eat your words because our mouth is often bigger than our hand but let me introduce you to somebody – His mouth is not bigger than His hand; what He says, He does. And you can be absolutely sure, if God says something, He is well able to do it. He never says anything which He is not able to do. That is where our faith comes from. Faith comes from hearing and hearing; that's what it is talking about. Abraham looked at himself; he looked at Sarah; he looked at everything and he said, "You know what? God's mouth and His hand, they work together. His mouth is not bigger than His hand. If He said something, I don't know how He is going to do it. I'm not going to scientifically,

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rationally, logically try to work it out; I'm just going to believe it and I'm going to believe that God is going to work it out."

So, put it all together tonight and understand what disappointment is, what discouragement is, what faith is and what are the different ways in which we can think we have faith but actually, we are very scientifically logically minded and we think we are walking with God when we are emotionally touched occasionally by God. The rest of the time, we are actually walking with the world. It's a very dangerous place to walk because this world is under wrath, under judgment. Amen? Shall we pray?

Closing Prayer:

Father, this evening, we just come to You, Lord. We just come to You, Father. And I pray, Father, for every one of us here, in Your room, in this house – our disappointments will not lead to discouragement. Every disappointment will lead to an appointment with God. We will see them as Your appointments. Those are the places where we will meet You, where we will know You as You told Israel, "I revealed Myself to your father, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as a mighty God but to you, I'm going to reveal Myself as the Lord." The children of Israel thought God had forgotten them but God was going to reveal Himself to them in ways He had never revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And for that, they had to be disappointed first. And I pray we will see, Lord, in our disappointments, there is an appointment with the Living God, to know Him in a way we have never experienced Him before and not to be discouraged but by faith, believe that the One who promised is faithful and to wait, to stand and to change the way we think that we know our God; for Your Word says, "Those who know their God, only they can do great exploits and this walk of faith is to know You, Father. For You have promised in the New Covenant, from the youngest to the oldest, they shall know Me. And I pray, in this journey, we will know You better and better as each day passes. The next time we gather here, the seventh month will be here and I pray, in this sixth month, we have known You a little more, Lord. Thank You, Father. You brought us safely into Your house. Now, as we go, I speak Your peace and Your presence into every life. Reach us all to our destination safely, Lord and teach us to walk with You each day. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.