



Following Jesus

Part 2 – Requires Service, Sacrifice, and Death

Pastor Ted Cunningham

We're in this series called *Following Jesus*. If you're brand new to our church, we started a fall series that will go from September through October. We're looking at what it means to be led in our lives and here in this church by our Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. We're going to look at what it costs, what it takes, and what we are to do with the faith that we profess in Jesus Christ.

We're starting today... It is a somber day and we recognize that and want to spend a little time processing that. If you remember this day, September 11, 2001, many of us had just crawled out of bed. Some were getting ready; some were already at work when the first tower was struck. Many of us went to work with nothing but speculation on what was happening and what was taking place.

It wasn't but an hour or two later that we began to understand and process what was, as President Bush said, a deliberate attack upon our nation. We saw him address the nation and it was really at that school in Sarasota, Florida that the war on terror was declared fifteen years ago. He boarded Airforce One and flew to Louisiana and then to Nebraska. Most of us went throughout our day, not knowing what was going on completely and whether we were at home, at work, or with friends or family, we spent a lot of time in front of the television.

I was pastoring in Forsyth, Missouri and I remember a lady coming in with her child. She was really the only one that came into the church that day. She was crying, confused, not really knowing what to do. We had a prayer meeting with her and the staff of that church. We all went home.

It was kind of odd that night. We had planned to go with friends in Branson to a show. Part of the show was comedy. I can't remember the show and I can't remember the entertainer; isn't that something about that day? But, I remember that we all sat in there. It was just a moment where we thought this just doesn't seem right. I'll never forget that with grace and class, the entertainer stepped out before the show began and he came in front of the house and just addressed the crowd. He said, "We are not going to let this stop us. We are going to proceed today, but we also understand that we are a nation that is mourning." It was really at that time that we began to mourn heavy as a nation.

I would say that in the weeks and months that followed September 11, 2001, I, in 42 years of living in this nation, have never experienced more unity as a nation than in those weeks and months that followed that time.

I remember in the weeks and the months that came out of September 11, we got all of these stories. There were almost too many stories to share of the heroes, of the men and women that sacrificed, that served. While thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of people were running away from the building... This still gets me. I saw it this morning as I'm sure many of you saw. Many of you were glued to the televisions coming in this morning. But just to think of the thousands that ran towards the building. We saw more pictures and more videos of people at all out sprints running away from the building and then we saw men and women who didn't think twice about running towards them with many of them thinking *this is it*. We see scenes of those who were climbing the towers when all were trying to exit.

So we know it is more than appropriate today and we want to honor those who we call our first responders. Woodland Hills Family Church would like to honor you today. If you would, stand and give us a moment to say thank you. They don't like doing it. I can tell you what's in the hearts of those who just stood and it's *Please let me sit down*. Isn't that true? We say thank you. We know as we run away from it and you run to towards it, we are grateful.

I thought we should begin this morning, as we talk about following Jesus and the service, sacrifice, suffering, and death that it requires, the denying ourselves and taking up our cross and following him, that we would begin this morning remembering those who have fallen and honoring our heroes. I'm going to invite you to stand. I think it's appropriate that we stand and let me lead us in a prayer on this day.

Heavenly Father, our hearts are heavy this morning, remembering the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The images of that day are still fresh in our minds. We have committed to never forget and to always remember. We mourn as the scripture calls us to mourn with those who mourn. We mourn with those who lost loved ones on American Airlines Flight 11 and American Airlines Flight 77 and United Flights 175 and 93. We mourn with those who lost loved ones in the Pentagon and the north and the south towers of the World Trade Center.

We mourn with the families of the first responders who gave their lives on that day and in the years that followed. We are grateful for the heroes among us this morning that serve us each day in our community and run towards danger as we run away from it. We pray for those who continue the fight against terror here at home and around the world.

Father, I pray for our nation now in an election year when friends and family are divided over political candidates that we would not forget this day, 15 years ago, that united us, and that we would be reminded today that we stand, still, one nation, under God, indivisible, and that we would not forget that on this special day. I thank you for those who are gathered here today and however each person is thinking, reflecting, or mourning, blessed are those who mourn that you would comfort them this morning. It is the name of Jesus that we pray... Amen.

So, to jump right into the series, I think today is a very memorable day to think this through and to be reminded that this is even what our faith requires. Jesus said this in Mark 10: 45, ***"The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."***

As I studied this week, I was reminded that service and death are linked in the scripture. Christianity is about serving and about dying. It's about dying to self. It's about taking up the cross and following him. It's about if you want to gain your life, you must lose it.

It goes on to say in Matthew 16: 24, ***"Whoever wants to be my disciple... whoever wants to be my student, whoever wants to follow me ...must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."*** The apostles understood this. When you read what the apostles did with the teachings of Jesus, you're reminded that that's how you and I are called to live out our faith as followers of Jesus.

The apostle Paul said this in Philippians 3, ***10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection... Remember, you can only have a resurrection after there has been a death. ...and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...*** The apostles, after being beaten, after being flogged, walked away rejoicing over the fact that they were able to suffer because of the name of Jesus.

We read about this in Acts 5. ***41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name*** of Jesus.

So, as we talk about this series... I want you to know September is a little bit heavier month. Some of you may have heard things about our church and you're here today on a little bit different Sunday. Today, we are talking about what following Jesus requires. What it requires from you and what it requires from me. Here's what's interesting to me as I think about service and death being linked in the scripture. This is where I see many Christians. We want our service and our death to be quick and painless. Wouldn't you agree?

I was talking to Joe. Joe White spoke here this past spring and he shared the story of the suffering he went through after open-heart surgery. Raise your hand if you've had open-heart surgery. Raise your hand if you would use the term *suffering* coming out of that. It's painful, it's difficult.

As he sat there, Joe said, "Ted, it's so well-meaning for most people to come in and want to pray over you that you wouldn't suffer."

"Pray that Joe doesn't suffer through this and that it's not too painful."

But, let me tell you that those seasoned veteran Christians in here today will tell you that as they reflect upon the suffering and the pain and the difficulty and the trials of their life, those were the greatest lessons of their lives.

I asked Joe what his greatest lesson was out of that. I asked what he learned more than anything out of a month in the hospital, not knowing for sure if he was going to make it.

All he responded with was, "The Lord is my shepherd. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Do I want a long, drawn out painful death? No. I don't desire that. I would like it quick. How many of you, not to get too morbid, have thought about your death and the ways you would like to die? We talk about this almost too much. But, honestly and all kidding aside, when you're thinking about how you want to die, you're thinking about the quickest way. You're thinking about the pain free way.

Here, when we ask people to serve in the community of Woodland Hills Family Church, the same thing is being thought through. Yeah, I'll serve if I can do it in ten minutes. Denise said, "Ted, some of the phone calls I have with people, just asking them to be greeters... You would laugh out loud when you see people trying to be like 'Well, how long does it take?' and I tell them we're looking for a twenty-minute commitment a month."

They're like, "Oh, well, okay, twenty minutes... Let me think this one through."

We want our death and our service to be quick and painless. But, what if that's not part of God's divine curriculum? What if pain and trials and suffering is part of the way God molds us and shapes us and teaches us how to follow him? Many a song has been written about whether or not I'm comforted in the storm or just get me out of the storm. Many prayers have been prayed in this congregation of those who are going through difficult and painful times and the number one prayer is, "Get me out of this quickly; I don't like what I'm going through." But what if our prayers should be "Lord, what are you teaching me through all of this? How can I grow closer to you through everything that I'm going through?"

That takes us to Romans 5. This gives the gospel clearly and then it moves right into God's divine curriculum, how he grows you and how he grows me. ***1 Therefore, since we have been justified...*** declared righteous, not because of your works, not because of my works, but because of what Jesus did. ***...through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*** So our hope is in a future yet to come, but we also have hope in the glory of God and what we are going through this very moment. And that's what the scripture is going to point to. ***3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings...***

Now, if we really want to grow as a church, if you really want to see people step up and become strong, committed followers of Jesus, and you want to see a church go from a hundred people to a thousand people in a couple months, just do a series on suffering. People will flock to a series on suffering. We sometimes are torn. We need to meet felt needs. We need to speak to where people are at. Amen; you are right. We need to speak to exactly where people are at, but here's the problem. We don't need to speak to what people are wanting to get out of it. I think that's where we get tripped up, giving people help out of it alone, rather than teaching what they are supposed to learn through it. How are you growing as a result of it?

He says, ***we also glory in our sufferings...*** Why? I always like the because. If you're going to tell me to find joy in my trials, if you're going to tell me to glory in suffering, I need to know why. That's why I love that word *because*. Every parent in here say it with me. Because. What follows in the parents' mouth? "Because I said so."

Well aren't we glad Paul gives us more than because I said so? He doesn't say to glory in your sufferings because I said so. He gives the outline. He gives the curriculum. We know that suffering produces perseverance. We know that when you go through a trial and you get through the trial...

Just to be really clear here. We're not looking for trials. We're talking about going through trials. Some of you are drama creators. You are creating crisis and suffering and trials in your life. I'm speaking primarily today to the folks who find trials and suffering coming upon them. Whatever way it gets to you, you're going to be one that understands "Okay, I'm going to work through this properly. I'm going to gain the knowledge I'm supposed to gain out of this and then when I get hit with this again, years down the road, this is going to be a class I took."

Have you ever thought about that? Every trial and every pain and every difficulty you've been through, whether it's in marriage, parenting, a job, in childhood, in a first marriage, in a second marriage... whatever the case is. Have you ever thought about it like a class? It's like a class; you should hopefully have some good notes. You should have some good binders with notes in it to say here's what I learned through that. I'm going through it again. I'm going to gain off of that and learn more. ...**because we know that suffering produces perseverance...** It's not just perseverance. **4 perseverance, character...** Perseverance, sticking with it, understanding what's going on through it, builds your character. ...**and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.**

Here's the bottom line. Follower of Jesus, if you say "Okay, I'm a committed follower of Jesus, I want to grow in my faith," this is like main point in God's diving curriculum. **Following Jesus means my character is more important than my comfort.** Following Jesus isn't about just saying whatever it takes for me to have peace at this very moment. If that means running from it, if that means putting that person down to make me feel better... No. What is being shaped in your character? It's not just the crisis, it's how you respond to it.

So here is the question we are asking about your character. "What are you learning through all of this?" It's a good friend that asks this question. Some of you have friends that when you go through a difficult time or a crisis and you begin to suffer, they are just going to validate your pain. You find the friends who are just going to say "That's terrible, you shouldn't have to put up with this, you shouldn't have to deal with it, you shouldn't have to feel this right now." But let me tell you that you want to find the friends that will ask you what you are learning through all of it. At the moment you're hurting the most and you hear this question, at first you're like *I hate you. Why would you ask me such a question?*

Fifteen years ago, on September 11, 2001, in between the first tower hit and shortly after the second tower hit, I was sitting through a meeting, basically losing my job. It was a painful meeting. Then we went through the time of mourning as a nation. It was just an odd time in my life, vocationally. I can still, to this day... And I've stayed close friends not with the people that were like "That's terrible, I hate those people, let's put them on sticks and put them out in the front yard." I don't even remember those people who were validating me. What I do remember are the people who asked me that question. "What are you learning, Ted? What part did you bring to the trials you're going through right now?" "Well... nothing. This other people's fault. This is not my fault."

They would keep asking me what I was learning and what I did to bring this on. "How did you find yourself in this situation and what are you going to do to make sure, ten years from now, you've learned from this? What are you going to do to make sure your ministry, your life, your family, your marriage is built upon what you're learning? What are you learning through all of his?"

So James takes it another step. When I go through trials, I want them over with quickly, as do you. When I serve someone, I want it to be quick and painless, but here's what James says in James 1.

2 Consider it pure joy... So now we rejoice in our sufferings. ***...my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds...*** Again, I think we read this sometimes and we think we should go looking for them. No, it doesn't say we should go looking for them, but when you are facing a trial, count it joy, **3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.** And here's the key. There are no short cuts in God's divine curriculum. There's no fast way out. **4 Let perseverance finish its work...** Don't rush yourself through it. ***...so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.***

When I see this verse, one of the first things that comes to mind is a recession that hit our nation nine years ago. It hit sometime in the fall and we really began to feel the pain of that recession with losing homes and foreclosures and bankruptcies and all of that going on. How many of us were praying for it to be over with by November? We know how recessions work. We know how the great depression worked. We know this isn't something you get through quickly.

Then, a year or two later, I remember turning on the radio and hearing Dave Ramsey... If Dave Ramsey said it, James believes it, right? Isn't that how we kind of get with Dave Ramsey? I remember Dave Ramsey saying, "I hope we don't get out of the recession too quickly." I remember hearing that and thinking *You're a nut! What idiot is actually saying that?* And he was praying, "Lord, don't let us out of this recession too quickly, because I don't feel that as a nation we've learned all of our lessons."

I remember turning the radio off... Isn't that the good thing about a radio, unlike this sermon. You're sitting here and you have to listen because walking out is only for a few of you that do that. The rest of you, your parents taught you better. I remember turning the radio off. I didn't want to hear it. Why? I wanted my equity back. I wanted the bank to give me another lower interest rate. Raise your hand if you felt this. That was a voice of reason. Seven or eight years later, I haven't forgotten that prayer. "Lord, don't let us out of the recession too quickly for fear we won't learn all the lessons we need to learn."

As we started to recover from that, I still believe there are many of us haven't learned the lessons. As soon as we got our equity back, we're doing that home equity loan and we're going to Disney. We're going to go ahead and get right back into the same mess. Some of you have been brought out of disaster. Some of you foreclosed nine years ago. I don't know how all that works exactly, but you're at a different place today. Hopefully, you've learned the lesson from nine years ago. Don't short circuit God. Don't look for the shortcuts in God's divine curriculum.

Following Jesus means I can't rush the process. I want to learn as much as I can while I'm going through this. Here's the bottom line. **There is purpose in my pain.** For years, Rick Warren has said this and, again, some guys say some things and it sticks with you forever, but he used to say, "God never waists a hurt." Whatever it is that you've gone through, whatever pain you're going through right now, it can be redeemed. Actually, have you thought about this? Some of you need to learn the lessons in God's divine curriculum because you are a professor as well. You'll be the professor in the life of your children, but there's another believer that's going to walk alongside you pretty soon who is going through that and you're going to be able to say "Let me tell you what I've learned."

I was sitting down with a 22-year-old, a kid I love. God's doing great things in his life. But he was sharing with me all his struggles. He's 22 and a senior in college. Life's tough. I'm trying not to laugh because he's feeling real pain. He would share something and I would have to try not to laugh.

Brian Regen talks about your kid losing a balloon. Have you ever seen a kid freak out losing a balloon? And parents are like "Oh, knock it off; it's just a balloon." But Brian says, "What happens if I were to put your wallet on a string and let it float away?" Then you'd see a parent freaking out. It's perspective. You look at a kid losing a balloon and you're like "Oh, knock it off; it's just a balloon." But to that kid, it's everything.

I'm listening to this 22-year-old share his struggles. For a moment, I forgot that 20 years ago, I think was in about the same spot. But what he's going through now just doesn't seem... He actually said this at a moment. He said it kind of joking. The more he shared his struggles and it didn't really feel like struggles, he says this to me and he's being somewhat serious when he says it. He said, "You know what? I should probably write a memoir on my struggles." I'm thinking wait a few years because all this is doing is preparing you for the struggles you're going to experience twenty years from now. Have you thought about that? You're a professor. We don't laugh at people when they are in pain. We realize our pain has a purpose and we can share with them.

I share this all the time with senior adults. They have a great story to tell. I shared it last night in Springfield, but I share it all the time. I see all the senior adults that let their kids chew on cigarette butts when they were growing up. They need to find a mom with antibacterial products hanging on her purse. They need to let her know her kids are going to be fine. They are not going to die because somebody touches them. That's the whole point. You gain perspective as you go through God's divine curriculum.

Paul put it this way to the church of Corinth in 2 Corinthians 1. ***3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort...*** So he just said, "Your character is more important than your comfort" and here is how Paul is going to address that. ***4 ...who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.*** This means you've taken your suffering and turned it into a story. You've taken your mess and you've turned it into a message. You've taken your pain and you have found the purpose and now you're going to take the comfort that God gave you as you went through your trial and your difficulty, and you're now going to share it with someone else. Don't let the lessons you're learning stop with you. Be as Psalms 78 says and share it with the next generation. Pass it on and let them gain perspective.

We shared this in the first prayer, but this is, again, understanding this idea of comfort. As followers of Jesus in a family, ***We rejoice with those who rejoice; we mourn with those who mourn.*** (Romans 12:15) Every time I think about this verse, I think about Mother's Day at Woodland Hills Family Church. On Mother's Day, we really do both of these. We rejoice with those who rejoice. We do this a baby dedication. We celebrate with the new families, with the parents that are new for the very first time, but we also are mindful of the fact there are many who are mourning because of a miscarriage. We are mourning with many who lost children. As a family, we validate one another. But let me tell you, to see God's plan in your pain and the message from your mess and the story from your suffering, you have to move beyond just the pain that you're feeling at this moment. You have to understand there is more to it.

I think we understand this with social media. I mentioned it a second ago, but let's make it even clearer. Your Facebook friends may validate your pain, but do they care about your character? If you've ever vented or whined on Facebook... I just want to say... I posted this a couple of weeks ago and it was for many friends within Woodland Hills Family Church who were just posting things so they could get sympathy. But let me tell you; it's easy to validate pain. It's easy to say, "I'm sorry that you had to go through it. You shouldn't have to. I hate that you're going through it." But let me tell you what a friend does. Someone who knows how to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn comes alongside and says "What are you learning?" "What's going on?" "Why did you post that?"

Proverbs 27: 6 puts it this way. ***Wounds from a friend can be trusted...*** A friend who speaks honestly to you and speaks truth to you as you go through something challenging or difficult. ***...but an enemy multiplies kisses.*** The bottom line is there is a story in my suffering and often times, I need friends to help me glean that wisdom. I need other believers to come alongside me and help me rejoice in what I'm going through.

I need others to do what Gary Smalley did before he left this earth. He would sit down with me and laugh at my pain and he would say, "Oh, are you praising your Father in heaven for this right now?"

"Noooo, I'm not."

He said "You should be on your face before your Father in heaven, thanking him right now for this because who knows. Let's just talk about all the different ways He can use this."

And I'm like, "Come on, stop smoking those little cigarettes, man." That's because at the moment, we didn't want to hear it. But let me tell you those are the greatest lessons of our lives.

I sat down two weeks ago with a friend of mine who was just diagnosed with stage four cancer. I'm watching what God's doing in his life as he suffers, as he sits there and has a difficult time. He's fidgeting because he's trying to get comfortable in a chair. He's continuing with his life and his job and his family. And I'm just watching him. I'm watching God build out a message and a story, God's story, through the life of my friend.

I sat down with him and I asked this question, a question that I want to ask each one of you in whatever you're going through. I'm sitting there with him at the Keeter Center and I asked him, "What do you want to be known for in your life and death?"

My friend shared with me the clearest gospel message. He put it this way, "I have two sons and you have a son. When I reflect on the fact that God gave his son for you and for me, I have to ask myself the question would I give one of my sons for you, Ted? Would you give Carson for me?" We just sat there. He's understanding the bigger picture with what he's going through. He's understanding that, as a dad with grown children, he going to teach his children how to live and how to die in the name of Jesus. He's clear about that.

As you reflect on this and understand your faith and understand what it means to truly follow Jesus, does your life, does the way that you live and the death you will one-day die reflect the power of the resurrection of Jesus. Does it reflect suffering for his name, understanding that when you begin to suffer and go through trials and difficulties, people look at you and think *You are handling this way differently that I would. Explain to me why. Why with this terrible diagnosis are you rejoicing. Or You just lost a family member and I know you're in pain and I know you're mourning, but why, in the middle of the mourning, can you hope, can you find joy. Explain to me how that works.* And there is no other name that can explain it, but the name of Jesus Christ.

I read this story a couple of weeks ago of a young family. I want to introduce them to you. This is the Pals family. The Pals family, from Minnesota. This is Jamison and Kathryne. This is their three-year-old Ezra, their 23-month-old Violet, and their two month old Calvin. They were headed from Minnesota to Colorado for final preparations as missionaries to Japan when, in Nebraska, they were struck from behind by a 53-year-old truck driver and they all died at the scene.

I sat there and I read Pastor John Piper's prayer at their funeral. It's about a twelve-minute prayer. I can't read the whole thing for you this morning, but I want to share what he prayed because it is a prayer of lament, a prayer of pain, a prayer of great purpose, a prayer of great hope, and it sums up everything we are talking about today. How will I be known in my life and death? How will you be known in your life and death? How are you doing right now going through God's divine curriculum of trials and suffering and pain? I just want to read his prayer for you as we close out our time. You'll see how this all comes together as he is praying at the funeral of the Pals family. Pastor Piper says this:

O Lord, God of might and mercy and mystery, you have driven the arrows of your quiver into the breast of your people, your beloved. You have filled our throat with bitterness and gall. You have made our teeth grind on gravel, and laid us down with wounds in the ashes of dreams.

You have taken away our sleep, and replaced our gladness with groaning. You have covered us with the shadows of those we love, and we have reached out in vain to touch their bodies.

O Lord, our eyes are on you. We do not look to another for hope. To you alone. To you we cry. Remember our affliction, remember the bitter wormwood and the gall! You have not made us drink this cup in vain.

This we call to mind, and therefore we have hope: Your steadfast love, O Lord, never ceases; your mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. You alone, O Lord, are our portion, therefore we will hope in you alone.

You are good to those who wait for you, to the soul who seeks you. You are good today. You were good last Sunday. We are waiting, we are looking for the salvation of the Lord. We are not running from the yoke of this dark providence, or throwing off the burden of your good sovereignty. But we are waiting, and looking, for the yoke to be made easy and the burden light.

You do not hide yourself forever. Though you cause grief, you will have compassion, according to the abundance of your steadfast love; for you do not afflict from your heart, or grieve the children of men. We know your heart, O God. For there is nothing in the world more bright, more blazing, more terrible, more beautiful, more bloody, more hopeful, than the revelation of your heart in the death and triumph of your Son, Jesus.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned — every one — to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

This is the great and glorious Rock where we stand — or lie prostrate — and on which we give thanks for the lives of Jamison and Kathryne and Ezra and Violet and Calvin, who did not count their lives to be more valuable than obedience.

We praise you that they did not snatch a few vain years of life on this earth in exchange for allegiance to their King, but set their faces, like flint, toward Japan and the finishing of their course and the ministry they had received from the Lord Jesus.

And we praise you that they did finish it — like your apostle Paul who wrote from Rome, “I have finished my course,” though he never got to Spain.

We stand on this mighty Rock of Christ, and on his shed blood for our sins, and for the sins of the Pals family, and on his victorious triumph over death. And standing on this Rock we pray...

For these parents — grandparents, great-grandparents — who sit with pieces of thread in their hands from a fabric of life woven from the womb, and then consumed. Father, we ask that you would sustain in their hearts an unshakeable confidence that the countless hours of investment in Jamison and Kathryne and the children were not in vain.

And we pray, Father, for Tony Weekly, whose head is covered with shame and whose hands are stained with blood. The heart of this family is not a vengeful heart. We pray that Mr. Weekly will find the one and only remedy for shame and guilt, Jesus. And we ask that, in time, through Christ, he would make his way to heaven, and know the indescribable miracle of reconciliation with those already there.

And finally, we pray for Japan, that the great idols of gold and silver and material success would fall before the blood of this family — that these five, even these three little ones, who have now grown to the fullness of their glory and the perfection of beauty, not through the trials of three score and ten, but in the

twinkling of an eye — that these all — all five — might be found among the champions of the victory of the gospel in Japan.

In the name of Jesus and for his glory, Amen