John Bradshaw:

It is great to see you. We will pray together and then we'll open the Bible together. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we come to you in Jesus' name asking that your spirit would speak to us and bless us. You have a message for us. I pray You'd guide us in our understanding and in our application, and I pray what has spoken would be heard in such a way as heaven can truly bless. We can see more of your plan for our lives and we can approach eternity with greater confidence than ever before. Speak to us, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen.

Can you blame them? Serious question, can you blame them? Now, I know you well enough to pretty much know what your answer is going to be, but I'll ask the question again anyway. Can you really blame them? The children of Israel had been in Egyptian slavery for 400 years. A series of dramatic miracles resulted in their liberation. The 10 plagues, a pillar of fire, a pillar of cloud, the Red Sea opening up before them and closing up behind them, the manna that covered the ground, the water that flowed from a rock, utterly miraculous, undeniable. But even then, could you really blame them?

Now, I'll remind you, I know what your answer's going to be. Nevertheless, I ask my question. They had to have had some serious reasons for wanting to go back to Egypt, back to slavery. As you read the story in Numbers and you get to chapter 14, you read where, "All the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron, and the whole congregation said unto them, 'Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this wilderness.'" They took it a step further. "'Were it not better for us to return into Egypt?' And they said one to another, 'Let us make us a captain and let us return into Egypt.'" Let's go back.

You read that and you think, "No, don't do that. What are you thinking?" You can easily think of a dozen good reasons why that's a bad idea. They'd be returning to slavery. They'd be forfeiting their freedom. God had something better for them. They would be giving up on everything their people had looked forward to for four centuries. They would be going to a place where people don't love them or even care about them. They were almost at the promised land. Why quit now? By going to the promised land, they were going to glorify God. The world would then know how wonderful God was. Even though the going was hard, they would learn great lessons along the way.

Think of what they'd miss out on. Surely they want a better future for their children, and friends, and family, than slavery in Egypt. That's 10 reasons already and that was easy. Let's keep going. God would provide their every need in the wilderness. Turning back to Egypt would be absolutely turning their back on God's will for their lives. A dozen reasons just like that. It's obvious to us. For me, the prospect of returning to a heathen Egypt, absolutely appalling. From my perspective, returning to Egypt would not make a scintilla of sense.

But what about from the perspective of the discouraged? Have you ever been really desperate, discouraged? Have you ever been in a wilderness feeling as though you'd rather be anywhere else than there? There are times desperate people do desperate things. In 2003, a young man named Aron Ralston was hiking in a canyon 40 miles West of Moab, Utah. His arm was pinned by a boulder. He couldn't move. He would've died there. So, he broke his own forearm and amputated it with a dull pocket knife. He then abseiled, or rappelled, 65 feet, and then hiked seven miles to safety. Desperate times, desperate measures. You say, "Oh, I wouldn't do that." But the chances are you would if you felt your survival depended on it.

These were desperate times for Israel. I asked you a moment ago, can you blame them? I told you I knew what your answer would be. Your answer was, "Yes, I can blame them, because all they needed to do was trust in God." Actually, that is the right answer. But sometimes knowing the right answer doesn't always make things easier. Think about it from Israel's perspective. Egypt meant familiarity. They'd grown up there. They spoke the language. They were evidently safe in Egypt. They didn't have to fear marauding barbarians bent on their destruction.In the wilderness, they faced the prospect of being attacked by enemies. Their actual survival was in question every single day.

Egypt is nice, good weather, warm climate. It's on the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. There was evidently decent food in Egypt, because during their wilderness wanderings, the Israelites said, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic." In the wilderness, they only had manna. No disrespect intended, but no one in the Bible ever waxed eloquent about manna. Nowhere you read of God's people getting into Canaan and saying to each other, "Remember that great manna we had back in the wilderness? Oh, I know that was the blessing of God." Sure it was. Numbers 11 says, "The manna tasted like fresh oil," pretty good, but day after day, after day?

Very infrequently did anyone ask, "What's for dinner tonight?" Again, from Israel's perspective, they faced a very uncertain future. Who wants to live in a tent in a desert? When the spies returned from their reconnaissance mission to Canaan, the reports were that giants inhabited the promised land. There were a walled city, lots of people. It could seem irrational to press forward only to be blotted out of existence. They had struggled for food and water in the wilderness. Well, it seems irrational from our vantage point today for the children of Israel to have pined for the land of their enslavement to even think about going back to bondage, to even consider retreating to the place where they'd been forced to make bricks without straw. It isn't hard to sympathize with them in their distress. There are times when, for a variety of reasons, trust in God does not come easily.

When the Philistines squared off against Israel in the Elah Valley, it was six weeks before even one man chose to stand up against Goliath, and even then, the man who stood up wasn't a man, he was only a boy. In a similar fashion, the disciples of Jesus were terrified they were going to die during a storm on the Sea of Galilee, and Jesus was right there with them in the boat. Even in the presence of Jesus, it's possible to lose your grip. As the North American Division focuses this Sabbath on health, we are focusing especially on mental health and that is as it should be. The National Alliance on Mental Illness has reported that in the year 2020, one in five, one in five US adults experienced mental illness. Now, mental illness is a very broad term, but that is 53 million people. It is simply not possible that you don't know someone who has recently battled or is currently battling mental illness.

Now, there's a very high likelihood you don't know that you know of someone dealing with mental illness, which only illustrates that mental illness is something that lurks in the shadows. 5.6% of American adults experienced serious mental illness in 2020. That's better than one in 20 people. It cuts across all demographics. The CDC reported that more than 50% will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime. Those are astonishing statistics. And as a people who embrace a health message, we need to be concerned about this, because with numbers like that, the reality is that a mental illness might well affect those you know, those you love, or you.

John wrote, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." God's desire is that we are holy and healthy and there's much more to health than vegetarianism or veganism. We can't ignore this. The more we do, the more we see people slip through our fingers, the more we see people debilitated, incapacitated and worse.

Now, it wouldn't surprise me to hear somebody say, "Just trust in God and everything will be okay." The Bible does say, "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." That's a beautiful verse. It's Isaiah 26:3. God spoke to Joshua, the newly minted leader of Israel, and He said, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." It sounds so easy, doesn't it? It's the practice that can be a little tougher.

You say the children of Israel should have trusted in God, in a desert, with no food to buy or to grow, away from their homes with powerful nations all around them, and you're right, they should have, but they feared. Life is a challenging thing sometimes, and faith can be a messy business. That's because we are all still growing as we advance towards the promised land. We are not the finished article. We are imperfect, learning how to walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

Again, I would take you to that night on the lake, even with Jesus in their boat, the disciples called to Him in desperation and they said, "Master, Master, we perish." Read that in Luke 8:24. And that was after Jesus had said to them, and I quote, "Let us go unto the other side of the lake." Jesus had assured them they were going to make it across the lake. By now, Jesus had cast out demons. He had healed the servant of the centurion. He had turned water into juice. He had enabled fishermen to miraculously catch so many fish that two boats began to sink. He had healed lepers as well as the man let down into his presence through the roof of the house in Capernaum. They knew Jesus was the Messiah. They had evidence. And still, their faith failed them.

How can we be any different? You see, that's people today. Even people of faith have moments when life shakes, when challenges arise, they can be unsettling. I was recently in a place where there'd been an earthquake a short time before, everyone was talking about it, everyone felt it. Sinner, saint, man, woman, rich, poor, everybody felt that earthquake. Sometimes life quakes, and when it does, you feel it.

Go back to the Garden of Eden. As a consequence of sin, things changed. Childbirth became difficult. The ground would produce thorns and thistles. "In the sweat of your face, you shall eat bread." God said to Adam. The introduction of sin guaranteed that life was going to get bumpy. As we look down towards the end of time, we see things are going to get bumpier. In the time of the mark of the beast, those who don't receive the mark will not be able to buy and sell. Ultimately, they will face much sterner sanctions including the threat of death.

Life is bumpy. You're driving along a freeway. Next thing you know you're being loaded into the back of an ambulance. That's, well, it's all kinds of things, but it's life. No one is exempt. Everyone's grandma dies eventually, a child may die, the house burns down, or the mechanic tells you the problem with your car is a lot worse than you thought, and you know that you don't have the money to pay for the repairs, or you lose your job, or you're failing at college, or you're away from home and you hate it, or people are talking negatively about you, or you have no friends, or you're lonely, it seems that no one cares and even at church you're invisible.

Notice, you hear me say that the house burns down and, well, that's terrible. You hear me say you're lonely or you have no friends, and the sting of that goes deeper, doesn't it? What happens when life happens? Well, 20% of Americans deal with mental illness on some level each year, and 50% of all Americans will be diagnosed with a mental illness at some stage in their lifetime.

No, no, someone is thinking, so let me cut you off at the pass. No, not all mental illness is due to the pressure of life. I understand that, so do you. Some people simply suffer from mental illness due to one or more of a plethora of reasons, and there are cases where there's simply nothing you can do to prevent it. That's understood. But that's not the majority. So, let's talk about mental illness from a health and spiritual perspective, because if we leave this thing unchecked, the consequences can be devastating.

50,000 Americans die every year by suicide. That's 132 a day. And you know it affects society, all of society. If you don't know someone who committed suicide, then you are definitely the exception and not the rule. It's not a stretch to say that we all know someone who has died by their own hand. Intentional self-harm, suicide, is said to be the 11th or 12th leading cause of death in the United States. That's stunning, isn't it? Well, it's not nearly as stunning as this. Suicide is the eighth leading cause of death for women aged between 55 and 59. It's the eighth leading cause of death for men and for all people aged between 45 and 64.

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for those aged between 25 and 44. And to add tragedy to tragedy, it's the second leading cause of death for people aged between 10 and 24. Our children with their whole lives ahead of them, with everything to look forward to, are losing hope and killing themselves. And what's staggering is that suicide is the one thing that can be said to be preventable according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC.

I want to be clear and state that not all mental disorders can, and not all psychological challenges should be self-treated. Sometimes you need to talk with someone. And different people respond differently in different situations. For some, they're working things through on their own. Some need a group setting like a 12-step group. Some should definitely see a doctor or a counselor. It's healthiest for everyone to see or to talk to someone when dealing with a mental illness or a disorder or a challenge, a psychological challenge. A physician, talk to a physician, a friend, speak to a pastor, a spouse, a family member, speak to a counselor.

One of the challenges when dealing with mental health issues is that you can easily believe the wrong thing. You can trust untrustworthy impressions. You can listen to the wrong voices, literally, in some cases. You can see things as impossible that are definitely not. So, it's always best to air it out and speak with somebody. Seek help if you need help, or just a listening ear if you need a listening ear. Here's a funny thing, some people don't want to talk to anybody because they're embarrassed. Can you imagine that? So, let me ask you, do you know how a colonoscopy works? You are going to get one if you haven't. Or a prostate exam, you know how those go? Or a Pap smear? They are pretty invasive procedures.

If you thought you were getting out of that with all of your dignity neatly arranged, you have to think again. Yet more than 3 million women a year get a Pap smear. 15 million colonoscopies are performed every year in the United States. A ton of prostate exams are carried out. And 20 million PSA tests are administered. The National Institutes of Health says that if they weren't, that's the PSA tests, an additional 25 to 30,000 men would die every year. My point is this, we need to do some stuff every now and then, even if we feel it's embarrassing. You got to do it anyway. But acknowledging that you need mental health help shouldn't be embarrassing. There should be no stigma.

I have tried to get people to go to depression recovery classes. I think of one man who just flat out refused. He needed it. He didn't want people to know that there was anything wrong with him. There was nothing wrong with him. He just needed to get some help about some things. Now, if that same brother had had an ingrown toenail or a bad back, he'd probably have told everybody that he knew. "Look at this toe of mine. Can you believe it?" But once the challenge is between one's ears, there's a tendency to clam up as though people will think there's something wrong with you. There's nothing more wrong with you if you're facing serious mental health issues than if you are seeing a cardiologist. Unwell is unwell. The key is taking the right steps so that you can become well again.

One of the keys to combating certain mental health challenges is believing what the Bible says about you, believing what God says about you. The Bible says you are a child of God, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." 1 John 3:2. That's clear. Galatians 3:26, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." 2 Corinthians 6:18, "God says that He will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, said the Lord Almighty."

So, we've settled that, you, no matter what you're going through, no matter how you feel, are God's child. Secondly, you are loved, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." John 3:16. "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Jeremiah 31:3, Romans 8:38-39, "For I am persuaded," Paul wrote, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What the Bible says, it says clearly. God will forgive you. Jesus died for you. Jesus is coming back soon, and that's the blessed hope, so you can always live with great hope. But what often happens is our sense of value, our sense of self-worth. Self-worth is tied to externals and not to the word of God. Things like the opinions of others, the comments they make. Oh, those can sting, they can hurt to the extent that some people will give up and believe the lies being told about them rather than believing the truth that God speaks. There's a difference, isn't there, between deep, deep clinical depression and the depression, ooh, I hate to call it mild, but I will, the mild depression that many people experience. But if you can get on top of depression before it becomes an absolute monster, you'll avoid a lot of hurt, and that is God's will for you.

What are thoughts playing around in your mind? "No one loves me. No one cares. I've made too many big mistakes. There's no coming back from this. I've gone too far this time." All of those statements you know are lies. "There is no hope for me." Another lie. "There is nothing to live for." Oh, that's a lie. I interviewed a lady for a program on mental health for an It Is Written health series that we called Take Charge of Your Health. Now, this lady was a medical professional, a nurse, and she battled mental health issues essentially her entire life. One day, she drank an entire bottle of tequila, took a gun, and attempted to end her life. The gun jammed. She actually attempted suicide five times. Things are bad when you get to that place.

But ultimately she attended a residential depression recovery program, changed her diet for better brain health, got on an exercise routine, started early to bed and early to rise, began light therapy and learned to trust in God. It was a process. When I asked her about the person she was and the person she is now, she said, "I don't recognize that person from before." She said, "My life has transformed. I'm grateful, joyful, and at peace." And now? Now, she works full-time in depression recovery, helping people who are in the place that she was once in herself. What a turnaround. That's a recreation. It's what God can do. You see, there is hope.

The mistake we often make is like the mistake of a friend of mine. She was in a small town late at night waiting for a traffic light to change. She sat in her car and waited and waited and waited and then she decided she just couldn't wait any longer. There was no traffic around and so she just drove off through the red light. Well, wait, there was traffic around, there was one vehicle, a police car and she was pulled over right away and ticketed. Her issue wasn't really running the red light. Her issue was impatience, not waiting for the light to change. We can get impatient with God and I'm not meaning to minimize this. I'm not talking about any small challenge here. Major challenges.

Can you trust God to bring you through? Now, we have God's promises. It's a good one. I mentioned it before. Isaiah 26:3, memorize this one, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." That's a promise, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Promise. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart, wait, I say, on the Lord." Absolutely a promise.

Hey, what do you think it was like on Noah's Ark? Have you ever thought about that? It was a big airy boat made of wood so it would've had that new timber smell. Speaking of smell, there would've been the aroma of animals caged for weeks on end. I expect the inhabitants of Noah's Ark would've eyed their food supply with a little caution. Someone on the ark may have wished that Noah had brought smaller elephants, as the pachyderms ate their way through mountains of fruit and vegetables. It rained for almost a month and a half and we can expect the stormy seas were stormy, far from calm, even when they were right where God wanted them to be, there would've been fear and nervousness on that boat.

But above it all, through it all, in spite of it all, Noah trusted God. He didn't jump overboard. He stayed on the ark with his family and the animals and the smell and the dried rations. He stayed on the ark when the world around him was literally falling apart. He stayed on the ark trusting God when every single detail of his life was going to be altered. His past life was gone, washed away. His future life was now one big question mark. His friends and family were mostly dead. Those who survived were questionable, as he would find out. Yet, Noah held fast.

Look at this from Hebrews 10 starting in verse 32, "But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings, partly while you were made a spectacle." Now, the Greek word there is [Greek 00:26:20], to be exposed publicly as though you were in a theater, so, "You were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated." That is even if they weren't going through the distress themselves, they shared in the reproaches and tribulations of their friends.

The writer writes, "You had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods." Their possessions were taken from them forcefully and they accepted it joyfully. Can you believe that? "Knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." Notice what God says here, "Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward." That word confidence, it deals with the conviction in the heart of the Christian of the certainty of the things that she or he has learned to believe concerning Christ. Like that beautiful hymn, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." We can have assurance no matter what our situation.

Paul went on to say, "For you have need of endurance." Patience, the same word as is used in Revelation 14:12, "Here is the patience of the saints." So that after you've done the will of God, you may receive the promise. Notice, the message is you have been through some terrible stuff, but you hung on. You receive the promise after you have done the will of God. The trials the Hebrews were going through were disastrous. Their stuff was taken. They were terribly persecuted. And Paul says somehow this was the will of God. The struggles they had, they needed patience. The terrible things inflicted upon them, they would still receive the promise.

See, life can throw stuff at you, and God's message to us, like his message to Job, was, "You can trust me in this." You may not understand everything. Things may appear bleak and dark and difficult, but there is light in the darkness. I attended a funeral for a young man who took his own life, 26 years old. His mother was there at the funeral, of course. This young man had his entire life ahead of him. The only person who felt that his life was hopeless was him, and he was truly loved. And that's the thing, to you, it's the end of the world, whereas someone looking on would say, "No, no. You'll pull through that." It might not feel like it, but since when are your feelings the very best guide? "I feel angry." Well, that will pass. "I feel lonely," but tomorrow you probably won't. "I feel disappointed." Sure you do. You'll feel disappointed again. "I feel a lack of joy," but God can restore that.

I'll never forget that funeral. They played a song, an Elton John song, Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me. There was just something strangely troubling about that. I mean, the sun doesn't go down, does it? It's always shining somewhere. It's just that at nighttime you can't see it. So, you hang on, knowing that in the morning the sun's going to shine brightly again.

I spoke to a dear friend of mine a couple of days ago. His son took his own life a couple of years ago. I remember how he was at the time, utterly broken by the loss of his son, who wouldn't be? Grief is awful, but add to grief the complexity of knowing your loved one had chosen to end their own life. You saw the potential, you remember the smiles, and the love, and the good times. There were still dreams and plans. Yet, in the young man's struggle, he could only see hopelessness, not stopping to think of the heartbreak, and devastation, and pain that suicide leaves.

My friend's son was dealing with a traumatic brain injury that caused paranoia. He was dealing with psychosis. His death was a terrible shock to the family. The shock was so bad for my friend that he was taken to a hospital in an ambulance. He dealt with guilt. It's common for surviving family members of someone who takes their own life to say, "What more could I have done? If only I had, if only I'd said, if only I'd made another visit." My friend said this to me, "The hole that is produced in your life when you hear your loved one has died, not only that, but has died at their own hand, leaves the type of hole that with prayer you can live with, but it doesn't really ever go away." He said, "To say it'll get better is true, but it takes time." He saw a grief counselor. He was careful to tell me that everybody grieves differently.

He said, "There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to the grieving process." Now, he did something interesting, for 40 Fridays, his son was 40 when he passed away and he died on a Friday, so for 40 Fridays he wrote a memory of his son and posted that memory online along with a picture. He said that on the day that he posted the 40th memory, he said, "I was able to close the door on the painful grief." Notice, not on the grief, but on the painful grief. He said something to me that I thought was quite astonishing and really quite helpful. He said, "If you can wrap yourself in the Lord's plan and say, 'I'll be happy when He explains that part of His plan to me,' you'll get through." That's what he told me.

We make a mistake when we think we can't stand it any longer. We think we are saying, "I can't do this." But what we're really saying is, "Not even God can get me through this." The one who created something out of nothing can sustain you. The one who hung the stars in the sky is able. The one who wrapped the rings around Saturn is your strength and your hope. You might think that you just can't go on, that there'll never be another good day, that you have nothing to live for, but of course you do. God put you in this world to bless you and so that you can be a blessing to others. When you can't hope, you hope in God, surround yourself with people who care. That can be a challenge sometimes, I know. You don't have any, pray. Pray and ask God to bring people, even someone into your life. Be active in your local church. That is potentially and should be always a wonderful support group.

Someone wrote that, "Even though Jesus couldn't see through the portals of the tomb, he trusted in God." Can you imagine that? As Jesus hung on the cross, it's as though He'd himself had no hope, or now He understands anxiety, Jesus understands emotional struggles. He didn't let go of hope. He prayed to His father and He said, "If it'd be possible, let this cup pass from Me." On the cross, He cried out to God, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" But He trusted not in Himself, not in His circumstances, but in His Father. He trusted when all seemed hopeless, He trusted.

Now, let me pause and say this. What we're really talking about are the principles of Christianity, the principles of righteousness by faith. You cannot, but God can. You cannot overcome that sin, but Jesus can live His life in you. You are weak, but you remember that God said, "My strength is made perfect in weakness." You feel that you can't go on and so you remember Paul writing, "I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

Every negative thought you have is a call to you to practice righteousness by faith. It's a call to you to lean heavier on Jesus than you've ever leaned before. That's the Christian experience. I will say this to you, if an emotional struggle leads you to that place, then you can thank God for that emotional struggle, because it led you to where you may never have arrived otherwise.

Let me show you where God is when you struggle. Elijah the prophet had an experience on Mount Carmel that no human being had had before or has had since. He prayed fire down from heaven. Then he prayed rain down from the skies to break the drought and water the parched earth. Then he ran before the chariot of the king. He ran further than a marathon in the driving rain guiding Ahab to the city of Jezreel.

Now, the next day, he hears that Queen Jezebel has threatened his life. Now, this man saw God send fire from heaven. He defeated the prophets of Baal. He saw God work miracles. And yet, his faith failed him. He fled, he ran. He begged God to let him die. Read 1 Kings 19:4, it says, "He requested for himself that he might die, and said, 'It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.'" Well, God caught up with Elijah, the man who fled, the man who failed, the man who was used by God in one of the most dramatic displays of the heaven's power in the history of the world, and yet ran away from a wicked queen.

What would God do with someone like that? Well, surely He'd dismiss him from his job as a prophet. Surely, God would sternly rebuke the man. Well, surely not. Elijah, erroneously and rather presumptuously, says to God, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." Now, God could have corrected him, but He didn't. He could have chastised him, but He didn't. God said, and this is stunning, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria." When God caught up with cowardly Elijah, who frankly brought shame to his office as a prophet, He didn't dress him down, He put him to work, "Go and anoint a king for Me." And as if that wasn't enough, God said, "Also, you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel." Elijah, anoint not one but two kings. Then, this is stunning, "And Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place."

Now, did you catch that? Elijah, yes, yes, you failed pitifully, but what I want you to do is not to quit, but get straight back to work, anoint a king, in fact, anoint two kings and then anoint your replacement, your days as prophet are over. Why's that? Was God firing Elijah? No. No. God was telling Elijah he was going to take him to heaven after all Elijah had done. Yes, Elijah wanted to die. Meanwhile, God was preparing Elijah for translation. When you feel that you've got nothing to live for, you make a great mistake. God sees your life and your future. God knows just what you have to live for, for eternity, to be a blessing to others, to learn and grow more and more in Jesus. Life is going to be challenging at times, but the best days are ahead.

One day soon Jesus will return, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." You know The last great battle before Jesus returns is a battle for the mind. You can expect the devil to go after you. Do all you can to be as healthy as you can. Be careful what you put into your mind, whether it's media, social media, the kind of music you listen to, the kind of entertainment you watch. Don't allow peer pressure to get to you. Alcohol and mind-altering drugs, financial pressures, relationships, your diet, every one of those affect your mind, many of them, negatively. We're in a battle for the mind.

Paul wrote, "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." That's Romans 12:2. Transformed by the renewing of your mind. Mental health is so serious, so fragile, honestly, and the devil is at the top of his game. So, fortify your mind through prayer. Read God's Word, get it in your mind. Find strength there. Memorize promises made to you by God. There is power in the Word of God. Attend church, it's so good for your emotional wellbeing. Sing, sing songs of praise to God. Sing the great old hymns that speak of faith out of a mighty God. Take steps to strengthen your mind, trust in God and see someone if you need to talk or if you need help, if things are desperate, if things are desperate, call 988. That's the 988 suicide and crisis hotline. There is always someone there to help.

May I share this with you, by the way, parenthetically, can I ask you to do something for me? Can I ask you to do something for Jesus? If there is someone you know that's lonely, reach out to that person. You don't have to ask him to move into your house, but show interest. If there's someone at church who's always on the fringes, let them know, "You are welcome to join us for lunch. We'd love you to go on that walk with us this afternoon." "Hey, I notice you never stay for this or that." Or, "I'd love for you to come to prayer meeting." Or, "Would you come to my home?" Would you do an act of kindness for somebody? Because there are people all around us who are really battling and they feel like everybody's ignoring them and, in too many cases, everybody is ignoring them.

So, what if you started right at church where you are and you reached out to someone, "Hey, come to my place for lunch." Or, "Let's meet Tuesday afternoon." Or, "Why don't we go play racquetball or take a walk together." Or, "Is there anything I can do for you?" Or, "Here's a loaf of bread, just wanted to bring this to you and show some kindness." Many people are so good at that, but so many of us are doing nothing of it.

Is there something you could do to reach out to someone and let them know you care? That simple thing make a world of difference. Was driving one day with a man I'd recently got to know. He shared with me his story. He said he got so down, he felt like his life was no longer worth living. He'd got in his truck and was driving to the spot where he was going to end his own life. Now, for some reason, he stopped for gas. He didn't know why he did that. He filled up his truck, paid for the gas and was walking back to his vehicle. The person inside the gas station was the last human being he would ever interact with.

But just as he was getting into his truck, someone called out to him, "Larry," I'll call him, "Larry." Larry stopped and turned around. He didn't really know the man. The man said, "Larry, what are you doing Tuesday night?" Well, Larry told him that, at that moment, he really did not have any plans for Tuesday night. "Why?" Well, the man said, "I'm having a Bible study at my house on Tuesday night. I'd love you to attend. Would you care to join us?" Larry stopped. The truth was, his entire life depended on how he answered that question.

He paused and then he said, "Sure, I'll be there." Instead of driving to carry out his plan. Larry went home. On Tuesday, he attended the Bible study. He did the same the following weekend, and the following weekend, and it wasn't long and he was attending church. Larry was baptized. When I met him, he'd been the pathfinder leader in his church for almost 20 years. Yes, God is able. Would you pray, for me, for grace to trust Him, for grace to let Him do His work and your life? Would you look towards heaven with me in hope? We live for the blessed hope, Jesus is coming back soon. Even if you're struggling now, Jesus is working to prepare you for that day. Would you pray with me? Let's pray together right now.

Our Father in heaven, oh, sometimes life is a challenge. The children of Israel wanted to do something utterly reckless that, wow, they were in a tight situation. They didn't know what else to do. They didn't feel like they had the strength to press on. What they needed, of course, was faith. Undoubtedly, that's what we need, faith. Sometimes, help. There's someone listening to me right now who needs to approach the pastor, or a medical professional, or a counselor, or a trusted friend and say, "Hey, I just need to talk. I just need help. Things aren't going well." Would you please assure that person, it's okay, it's okay to reach out.

Give the person reached out to wisdom to be a listener and to point that person to Jesus and to further help. Help us all in our faith experience, to learn to lean on Jesus fully and completely. Friend, is it your desire, whatever you're facing, something or nothing, to lean on Jesus entirely? If it is, would you raise your hand, would you do that? Wherever you are, lift up your hand. You are praying, Father, it is my desire to lean on Jesus completely. That's our prayer. Live your life in us, so that we may do just that, we pray and thank you. We look forward to a great hope, the blessed hope of Jesus' return. Keep us until that day, we pray in Jesus' name, amen. Amen, and may God bless you.