

Even In The Middle

Sermon Title: **Even In The Middle**

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Elisha Bronner: Circumstances are not what shows whether or not God is good. God is good regardless.

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(Music Playing)

And now for "Even in The Middle."

Elisha Bronner: Welcome to Brothers of the Word because brother and sister, you need the word. So as I was preparing for this message today, you know over the past -- ever since I figured out that I'll be speaking today, I've just been thinking more like -- I think it would be so much easier instead of me having to sit down and go through this whole process of like listening to you and praying and reading the word and studying. It would be much easier if I could just get up here and just speak, just get up here and just say whatever, you know, because you put things in my heart so I know there's things from you.

But it would be easier if I could just get up here not have to go through the process, but just stand up here and speak. But we all know that God works due processes, and so He let me know that, yes, I could just stand up here and speak and just start talking and not study beforehand or not spend time in prayer beforehand or not really get to know what he wants specifically for today beforehand. But He said, if I do that, I will miss what He has to speak to me through the process. And if I did not go through the process of developing a message, there would be no message to deliver today.

So we thank God for the process even though there are so many times in life. We don't want to go through the process. We just want the final result. We want to get to the end. We want the big picture. We want the trophy at the end. We don't want to run the race that is set up before us. We want to get to the finish line. But there is a process. And so an example for that for me, personally was in college, right?

So you get to college, and your first year of college is great, it's exciting, it's fun. You meet new people. You're learning new things. But then you get to suffer and you're like, "This is hard.

I'm tired. I'm ready to graduate" when you get to Junior Year. And that's when in Senior that really hits and you're just like, "I'm so done with this, like I don't want to do it anymore."

And if you're like me, you study abroad so you can take a semester off. But then you get to Senior year in the Senior addict is really real. And you're so focused. Sophomore year, Junior year, Senior year, you're so focused on graduation. You're so focused on being done with school. That is your only goal. That is all you want. But in being so focused on the finish line, you are missing everything that is necessary and everything that is fundamental during the process. If you finish out your first year of college, and just skip to graduation, you miss out on what you learned in Sophomore, Junior and Senior year and college. Nobody likes the middle. We don't like it. We asked people, "We do not like it."

Even when it comes to things from the Lord. There are things that God speaks to us, and she said that He's going to fulfill and we believe that and that is the Freshman year of college. It's exciting. It's good. God speaks it, and you believe it, and you're excited and you're happy. And then God takes you through this process, through this journey where you realize this isn't happening overnight. He spoke this thing on Monday and it becomes Tuesday, it becomes Wednesday, it becomes Thursday, it becomes Friday and you're still not seeing it. What do you do in the process?

You want it to happen. Whatever God speaks, you want it to happen today, you want it to happen tomorrow, but you're not realizing that there's a process, that there is a season of waiting, there are moments of preparation that you have to walk through. There is a middle ground that you have to get through. So the title of my message today is "Even in The Middle."

So what happens when God has promised us something and we're waiting for it, and we're not doubting God because we know that God is good, and we know that God is faithful, and we know that God is true to his word. We're not doubting it. But we're in this process and we're just not seeing it yet because we know that God speaks and then we wanted to happen immediately. But God is taking us through a process, He's taking us through this journey. And then we start to wonder, "God, when is this going to happen? Why am I having to wait for so long? I know you're going to do it, but right now, I'm stuck in the middle and I don't like the middle."

I don't like the waiting. I don't like the process. I don't like being frustrated. I want things to happen in my own timing. I don't want to wait on you, Lord."

What do we do when we are stuck in the middle? What do we do when we know that God has promise us healing but we still feel hurt in our body? What do we do when we know that God has promised a strength, but we still feel weak? What do we do when we know that God has promised us overflow and abundance, but all we can see in front of us is lack? What do we do when God has promised us restoration for our families and for our relationships and for our friendship, but all we can see right now is brokenness and anger and pain? What do we do in the middle? What do we do when it feels like God has spoken something, but we're just not seeing it yet?

So recently., I found myself in this middle, in the season of waiting where I was done with school, but then I was just waiting. Where I knew there were certain things that the Lord spoke over my life, that the Lord specifically told me that I would be doing when I finish school, but those things weren't happening yet. And so, I was there, I was waiting, I was in this in-between, I was in this middle. And as I was in this middle, it went from being a week to two weeks to a month to two months to three months to four months and they just kept going on and on and on. And as I found myself in this season of waiting, being in this in-between, being in this middle, God told me I had two options. I could either cling to God in the middle or I could withdraw from Him. And He gives us these choices.

We have a part to play, we have choices to make. We can either cling to God and trust Him in the middle, trust Him through the process, trust Him from beginning until the end. Not just for the end, but until the end. Or we can go on our own understanding off of what we see, and what we understand, and what we think, and what we feel and what we want. We have two options. We can cling to God or we can withdraw from Him. We can rebel against Him. We can do what I want to do when I want to do it, right?

Because waiting is not easy, it's necessary, but it's not easy. And the think of waiting is that there are moments where we had waiting for a week maybe or you have waiting for a year maybe. But I found myself in periods of waiting before and these periods

of waiting, I doubted God. Because I'm like, "God, why are you taking so long?" Like, "Why am I waiting so long? If what you said is really true and if what you said is really going to happen, I shouldn't have to wait for this long for this to happen." Right? And so in previous periods of waiting for me, I've doubted God. I stopped trusting Him because He wasn't operating on my timetable. I forgot that God is a God outside of time. In his time, he does not have to make sense for me for it to be good. Right?

And so, I stopped trusting God previously and trusted what I saw and what I felt. But this time, the Lord reminded me, "You have two options. You can cling to me or you can withdraw from me." And so this time I thought about the past and I thought about other times of waiting where I was like, I chose my own way, I chose my own path and where did that lead me? Nowhere good, right? But of course, you don't see that. As you're doing it, you look back and you're like, "Wow, that was what. We're not doing that again."

So this time, I chose, I'm going to cling to God. Okay. I'm going to cling to God. And so, right here in the middle, in the waiting, in the season that feels like forever, but it's only a season. But we forget that because it feels like forever, but it's only a season. In the season of waiting, my choice was to cling to Him. And in the middle, even though I was not yet seeing what God had promised me, and even though I was not yet seeing the fulfillment of what I knew was going to come to pass, I chose in the middle to trust God. In the middle to remember that He's operating on His own timing. I chose in the middle that instead of doing what I want to do, I'm going to let that go and do what God wants to do, right?

And so, this time I chose to wait, I chose to be in the middle and wait intentionally and wait expectantly with God. And God reminded me that even though you're in the middle and it feels like nothing is moving, there is no time spent with me that is wasted. There is no time that we spend with God that is wasted. None of that is ever wasted. And so during this time, I chose to cling to God. And I chose to cling to God, not just because I wanted Him to do what He said He was going to do, but because He is God, because He is worthy. Because He is God, because He chose me. My only response should be to cling to him, right?

And so, when we get to the middle, we have these two options. We can cling to God or we can withdraw from him. And when I

made the decision to cling to God and I made the decision to see that he is good even in the middle. And I made the decision to see that whether I'm on a mountain or Valley, He is worthy to be praised. And when I made that decision, the Lord reminded me or the Lord showed me that when I choose to declare his goodness in the middle of the middle, in the middle of waiting, that is a direct slap in the enemy's face. Because the enemy gives us these seasons of waiting and these seasons of middles, and wants us to be in the season and to turn from God, and to walk our own way and to go our own direction.

But when we take that thing that the enemy wants us to use against God and turn and use it for God, that is a direct slap in the enemy's face. And he can no longer use those things against you because he is giving you the very tools to glorify God. And so, God reminded me that even though when it looks like there's nothing happening outwardly, there's so much happening on the inside. And He wants us to get to this place where we can be in the middle and still see His goodness. Where we can be in the middle and make His goodness the declaration of our hearts. Because our circumstances are not what shows whether or not God is good. God is good regardless. It's up to us to shift our perspective and to see God's goodness, even in the middle.

When we get to the point that we can declare God's goodness no matter what we are going through, then there will be nothing that can take our eyes off of him. And we should constantly walk through this life because we are going through so many middles where we are walking through the middle with our eyes on Jesus. And when we do that, we will see that even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil. Why? Because God is with me, right?

And so, Psalms Chapter 23. I'm just going to read the whole thing. And this whole chapter, this whole passage just shows that God is with us in the middle. So starting in Verse 1, it says, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restores my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

So this says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death not if I walk through the valley of the shadow on the desk, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me. Why in the Psalm is David not fearing evil? Is it because there is no evil to fear? No. Is it because there is no valley? No. Is it because there is no darkness? No. The reason he is not fearing evil is because even in the valley, even in the middle, God is with him.

And so because God is with him, he has no reason to fear because God is with him. He can walk confidently through that Valley. He can walk confidently through that middle because God is with him. He is not pretending that the valley doesn't exist. He's not pretending that the evil doesn't exist. He's not pretending that darkness doesn't exist. He is acknowledging that God who is greater than all of those things is with him in the middle of that.

He is proclaiming that even in the middle, God is there. Even in the darkness, God is there. Even in the valley, God is there. And because God is there, because God is with me, I will fear no evil. Because God is with me, I will continue. Because God is with me, I will keep my eyes on Him and see that He is good and that everything He does is good. In everything, He is good. In the middle, He is good. In the middle, God is there. In the middle, God is providing. In the middle, God is giving peace. In the middle, God is guiding me. In the middle, God is getting the glory. In the middle, the enemy cannot overtake me. In the middle, I am being comforted. In the middle, I have the victory. In the middle, my cup overflows. In the middle, I can experience God's goodness and God's mercy. Even in the middle, I can dwell in the house of the Lord.

And this is not because last doesn't have valleys, because we know that it does. This is not because there's some secret way to navigate your life in such a way that you can avoid the valleys or go around them. Or to magically get out of them. It is because even in the middle, God is there. Even in the middle, God is good. Even in the middle, God is worthy of it all. Even in the middle, God is faithful. Even in the middle, God is consistent. Even in the middle, God gives grace. Even in the middle, God has His eyes on you. Even in the middle, God is working on your behalf.

Even in the middle, God is working every single thing together for your good and for His glory.

We don't like the middle. We don't. We are humans and we do not like the middle. We hate the middle. I hate the middle. We don't like the middle. We don't like the waiting. We don't like the process, but it is the process and it is the pruning that comes with the process that allows us to bear fruit. If we only went through our first year of college, skip second year, skip third year, skip fourth year and somehow managed to walk across the stage, it's not going to happen. But it just -- somehow if it did happen and we walk across that stage and we graduate, and then we start applying for jobs and we realized, I lack the necessary skills in order to get what I'm trying to get.

Because I wanted to rush the process, because I wanted to skip the middle, now I'm at this place where I cannot do what I'm supposed to be doing because I skipped the process. Because I'm not prepared where I currently am now because I skipped the process. The process is not to hurt us, it's not to discourage us, it's not to prevent us from living. The process is for our good, it is for God's glory. The process is what enables us to bear fruit.

So because we skip out on the middle, because we don't like the middle or because we are impatient in the middle, or because we're not happy in the middle, or because we wanted to just skip the middle and go straight to the end, we look back. And then that is when we realize that the middle is there for a reason. The middle serves a purpose. The middle is not fun, but it's not supposed to be fun. The middle is there because it is preparing you for where the Lord is taking you. The middle is there because he is preparing you for the things that He has for you, for the things that He has promised you. He has to take you through the middle in order for you to get to those things. Because if you get this prematurely, you will not be ready. You will not be able to handle it.

Psalm Chapter 1 Verses 1 to 3. It says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or set foot on the path of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in its season whose leaf does not wither and who prospers and all he does."

So when you read this or hear this, it says, “The tree is planted by streams of water.” The tree is not moving. The tree is not going anywhere. This tree is planted. Even in the hard seasons, even in the harsh conditions, even in the bad weather and the horrible circumstances, the tree is planted because it knows that in its season, it will produce fruit. If the tree uproots, it moves to a different place, every time the harsh conditions come or every time the weather patterns change, the tree will never have roots that dig deep enough to provide the necessary nutrients for the fruit to be produced. The tree stays planted by the streams of water knowing that in its season, it will produce fruit.

And in Verse 3 where it says, “In its season it will produce fruit.” The NLT version actually says that, “It bears fruit in each season.” And so, on one hand, we have, when we wait and when we are consistent, when we are faithful with the Lord, we will eventually get to the place where we are bearing the fruit that God has promised us that we were going to bear. But then you look at it and it says, bears fruit in each season and that is just a representation of, even in the hard seasons where I’m staying planted, I’m staying faithful, God is bearing the fruit of the spirit in me. Because in each season, whether it is a good season or a bad season, whether it is a mountain top or a valley or somewhere in the middle, we are able to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

In the middle is where we are able to bear the fruits of love, of patience, of kindness and goodness, of faithfulness, of gentleness, of self-control. When we are bearing the fruits of the spirit in every season, that is what the middle is there for. It teaches us how to have joy when times are hard. It teaches us how to have patience during our waiting. It teaches us how to be gentle when we are dealing with people we rather not deal with. The spirit of the Lord in us enables us to bear His fruit in every season. And the hard seasons are required to produce the fruit in us.

So Romans Chapter 5 Verses 2 to 4. It says, “And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character and character, hope.” If we did not go through the sufferings, the valleys or the middles, we would not know what hope is.

James Chapter 1 Verses 2 to 4. It says, “Consider it pure joy my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds. Because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything.” We go through seasons of valleys and of waiting and these middles so that we won’t lack anything because they are making us more and more like Christ every single day.

We are all in the middle. We are all in the middle whether it is that you’re waiting on a healing, you’re waiting to get married, you’re waiting to have children, you’re waiting for your children to come back home. All of us are in some kind of middle of something. But even more than that, we’re all in this middle called life. Because in the beginning, in the garden, God dwelled with Adam and with Eve and then sin happened. And so we’re in this middle waiting for Jesus to come back and to fix everything that we messed up.

And so because of our sin, because of what we did, we caused the middle and then we complain about the middle. But anyway, we are in this middle, but we can have hope because our hope is in Jesus Christ not in anything in this world. We are hoping and waiting with expectancy during the middle for the day that Jesus will return to set everything straight. We are in the middle, but we are waiting with expectancy and with hope and with confidence that Jesus will provide as you promise the day where there is no more fear, there is no more death, there is no more torment, there is no more suffering, there is no more pain. This life is the middle and we can have joy because God is in middle with us. Because God gives us joy in the middle.

I’m going to close with this. This is Isaiah Chapter 43 Verses 1 to 2. It says, “But now this is what the Lord says, ‘He who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel, do not fear for I have redeemed you I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you; when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned, the flames will not set you ablaze.’” God is with us even in the middle. Thank you for joining Brothers of the Word because brother and sister, you need the word.

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