

I. Introduction

- A. Let me start with a big idea, and then work backwards from it:
  1. Your faith is too small because your God is too small...
  2. Your God is too small because your Savior and His Salvation are too small in your thinking and believing.
- B. Translation: Even though God's love for you never even flickers, your faith is too wimpy, so let's do something today to fix that.
- C. We are continuing today in our Giant Steps series. This is the year, where we are **stepping out** of the stuff that messes up our lives, **stepping into** the blessings and resources that improve our lives, and then **stepping up** to a life with a purpose and meaning, and a transcendent value.
- D. I'm going to read you two Bible verses. The first one is kind of spooky. Here we go.
  1. *"This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, [20] where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the Order of Melchizedek."* (Hebrews 6:19-20)
- E. If my talk today had a soundtrack, we will be playing this creepy introduction to one of the original scary movies from 1933. This Bible character named emerges from the misty dawn of civilization as one of the most ancient stories in Scripture. He disappears for a thousand years until he is mentioned again in Scripture. And then he disappears for another thousand years until we hear of him yet again. He is a spooky character, who seems to come from nowhere, and then vanishes away.
- F. We will come back to him.
  1. We can't play it online due to copyright, but if you want to hear it, that sound track is from the 1933 Mummy movie, and that music is Tchaikowski's Swan Lake.
- G. Here is the second verse.
  1. *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16)
- H. This is a standing invitation that most believers in Jesus barely use, if ever... or if we do use this incredible promise, we barely scratch the surface of it. This is the problem I want us to think about.
- I. So I invite you to think with me today on the Giant Steps topic: **Step Up to a Bigger, Badder, Bolder Faith.**
- J. I do not think that when any of us gets to heaven, that God will say that we expected too much of him. He's not going to make us apologize for being bold in our prayers, or shame any of us for pressing our case in his presence.
- K. To make this case, the author of Hebrews goes way back into time. He goes to the first book of the Bible and brings up a king and priest named Melchizedek.

II. Melchizedek

- A. So let's find that account. It's in Genesis 14. Here's the backstory.
  1. For 12 years, the nations in the land of Canaan were dominated by a group of kings, who were bullies. The nations paid taxes and tribute to the nations that dominated them. The main bully was King Chedorlaomer.
    - a) By the way, there is actual archaeological evidence proving that this account is true and historical.
  2. So this domination goes on for 12 years.
  3. In the 13th year, the subject-nations rebelled.
  4. In the 14th year, the bully-nations attacked. They pounded the subject-nations into submission. And they took the spoils of war. And they also took... well look at verse 11, 12:
    - a) *"Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. [12] They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed."* (Genesis 14:11-12)
  5. That was their fatal mistake.
  6. Abram (Abraham) finds out. "They took my nephew," he says.
  7. He mobilizes 318 servants into a small army. They attack the bully-kings, including Chedorlaomer. Abram wins the war, chases away the bad guys, and brings back his nephew, Lot, along with his family, and all his properties which had been seized as spoils of war.
- B. Now, Abram is on his way home. He's got Lot and his family with him. He's got all the spoils of war with him. This happens:
  1. *"And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him. [18] Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. [19] And he blessed him and said: 'Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; [20] And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.' And he gave him a tithe of all."* (Genesis 14:17-20)
- C. This is a kind of thank you party from the kings who had been defeated but were now rescued by Abram. Out comes the King of Sodom (v. 14). That is where Lot had been living.
- D. There was another king there who had not been part of the battle. His kingdom had NOT been one of the defeated kingdoms. We get his identity in three ways:
  1. Melchizedek (his name)
  2. The King of Salem (his title)
  3. The Priest of God Most High (his mission)
- E. What I just said had some Hebrew words in it. I want to translate them:
  1. **King of Righteousness**
  2. **King of Peace**
  3. **Grant Access to God**
- F. And this is always the order. Later on, St. Paul will follow the same order...

1. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2] through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand..." (Romans 5:1-2)
    - a) Therefore being justified by faith (King of Righteousness). That had to happen first.
    - b) We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (King of Peace)... That's only possible because you've been given the righteousness of God
    - c) Through whom we have obtained access (Priest of God).
      - (1) Jesus is...
        - (a) Your king of Righteousness... so that he could be...
        - (b) Your king of Peace.... So that he could be...
        - (c) Your Priest of God Most High.
  - G. But it gets better because not only is Melchizedek is a king who is a priest and a priest who is a king. Under the Law of Moses... Moses wasn't alive yet, and there would be no LAW for half a millennium... no priest could ever be a king, and no king could ever be a priest. Those two had to be separate.
  - H. So this man in Genesis is a ROYAL PRIEST, an idea that would fry the circuits of any good Jew living in the days of Jesus.
    1. **Who is Melchizedek?**
    2. **Melchizedek is the living representation of Jesus Christ two thousand years before Jesus was ever born.**
    3. **He therefore embodies the functions of our Royal High Priest.**
- III. What Does Melchizedek Do?
- A. **Enables Fellowship with God**
    1. The first thing he does is to bring out bread and wine.
    2. Does that ring any bells for you?
    3. This is the first communion service in the Bible, and it happens two thousand years before Jesus.
    4. Abram literally has fellowship with the representative of Jesus Christ around the elements of the Lord's Supper, the symbols of Jesus's broken body and the shed blood on the Cross.
  - B. **Opens the Door of Grace**
    1. The second thing that happens is Melchizedek blessed Abram.
    2. This is actually a big deal, because... it puts Melchizedek in a superior position over even Abram, a point made in Hebrews 7:7.
      - a) When he blessed Abram, he was in a sense opening a door of grace to Abram, so that Abram could walk through it.
    3. God's power, God's provision, God's riches, God's love, God's ability, God's healing, God's forgiveness, God's protection, God's security, God's salvation, God's everything... lies through this door. I open it to you, Abram.
    4. And that blessing was done in a very special name of God. Melchizedek called God by this name: The Possessor of heaven and earth (Gen 14:19).
    5. And Abram believed.
  - C. **Receives Our Expressions of Thankfulness and Love**
    1. The third thing that happened was that Melchizedek received a tithe from Abram. .
    2. This great father of the Jews, the great founder of Judaism, the great recipient of the promises of Grace... he gave his tithes to Melchizedek.
      - a) Picture him seated in a tent. Other kings are there. But they are all quiet in the presence of Melchizedek.
      - b) Melchizedek blesses Abram.
      - c) Abram is sitting there with a massive treasure outside on his camels and with his servants. The spoils of war. The wealth of many nations.
      - d) And he receives the blessing of Melchizedek.
    3. And he responds by giving Melchizedek a tithe, which means one tenth, of all of it.
    4. The reference here to tithing is important. It's the first mention of tithing in the whole Bible.
      - a) Tithing is how we recognize the Source: all our blessings have come from God.
      - b) Tithing is how we honor the Owner: everything we have belongs to God, we're just managing it for him.
      - c) Tithing is how we challenge the Promiser: if I give to you, will my life be more blessed or less blessed according to your promises? Tithing is living with the conviction that you'll never out-give God.
    5. People say that tithing is Old Testament, and tithing is the Law of Moses.
    6. May I lovingly show you how theologically wrong that is?
      - a) Here is a **timeline** from, through Abraham, through Jesus, to us. Over four thousand years.
      - b) Here are the three times Melchizedek is mentioned. Here in **Genesis**. Then fast forward one thousand years to King David writing about him in the **Psalms**. Then fast forward one thousand years to the Book of **Hebrews**.
      - c) This means that his whole era, from Abraham and Melchizedek, to our era today, it is all **THE AGE OF GRACE**.
      - d) And when Abraham tithed, he tithed in the Age of Grace.
      - e) **When did the Law of Moses come in?**
        - (1) 430 years AFTER Abraham already tithed to Melchizedek.
        - (2) And it only was in force until the time of Jesus.
      - f) Which is to say that in a span of 4,000 years, the Laws of Moses were only in effect for 1,500 of those years.
      - g) And the message of Abraham, which is grace, is before, after, and above the message of Moses, which is law.
        - (1) Under the law, the High Priest was after the order of Aaron and Levi.
          - (a) Under grace, our High Priest is after the order of Melchizedek.
        - (2) Under Law, the High Priests came and went because of death.

- (a) Under grace, our High Priest has a perpetual priesthood because he is forever, without beginning and without end.
- (3) Under Law, the High Priests were never finished with their work.
  - (a) But under grace, our High Priest offered one sacrifice once for all and forever, and his work is finished forever.
- (4) Under Law, the High Priests required obedience, performance, ritual, and works.
  - (a) But under grace, our High Priest requires faith, big faith, little faith, and a bigger, badder, bolder faith.
    - i) Which is exactly what Abram was putting on display, first, when he tithed to Melchizedek, and second when he does the next thing in this passage.

#### IV. Faith

- A. After Abram tithes, the king of Sodom—one of the kings he rescued—steps up.
  - 1. *“Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.’”* (Genesis 14:21)
- B. He says, keep all the spoils of war. It’s kind of silly, because Abram already had rights to all the spoils of war. In fact, he’s just tithed ten percent to the representative of Jesus.
- C. Now, the King of Sodom says, “Well you can keep all the spoils of war, just give me back my people that you rescued.”
  - 1. He had no business saying it because he had no claims on any of it.
  - 2. But look at what Abraham says:
- D. *“But Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, [23] that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’— [24] except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.’”* (Genesis 14:22-24)
  - 1. Abram tithes to God and then gives all the spoils of war back to their owners. He only makes sure the leaders who went with him get paid fairly.
  - 2. Are you kidding? This is a small fortune! He has every right to it. He fought for it. He risked for it. He stuck out his neck for it.
    - a) “I will take nothing, not even a thread or strap on a sandal from you.”
    - b) So why does he give it all back?
    - c) He looks the King of Sodom in the eye—and Sodom was a particularly corrupt kingdom, very immoral, violent, sexually messed up—Abram tells the King of Sodom, “I don’t want anything from you lest you say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’”
    - d) He doesn’t want anybody taking credit for the blessing in his life but God.
  - 3. I started by saying these words:
    - a) Your faith is too small because your God is too small...
    - b) Your God is too small because your Savior and His Salvation are too small in your thinking and believing.
- E. Would it surprise you to know that Abraham is called “the father of all who believe” in the Bible (Romans 4:11)?

#### V. Hebrews

- A. We have this wonderful verse of promise in Hebrews 4:16:
  - 1. *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:16)
    - a) When you believe that your lifetime supplier is actually the Possessor of Heaven and Earth...
    - b) When you believe that his throne is a throne of grace...
    - c) When you believe that you have 24/7 access to this throne...
    - d) When you believe that the one who sits on that throne is not just your God, but also your Father...
    - e) When you believe that it is a throne where you can obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need...
      - (1) Then, whatever the King of Sodom has to offer you, you don’t want, and you don’t need...
      - (2) Because the King of your Righteousness, who is also the King of your Peace, who is also your Great High Priest has filled you to overflowing with his love and with his grace.
- B. Let me show you the context of this verse.
- C. Starting in Hebrews 2:17 and finishing in Hebrews 10:21, we have an extended explanation of what it means to say that Jesus is our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, not after the priestly order of Aaron or the Levites.
- D. And this verse is tucked into all of that.
  - 1. *“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:16)
- E. The “therefore” is in this verse because every single believer in Jesus is personally represented in heaven by a great high priest such as this, after the Order of Melchizedek.

#### VI. Therefore

- A. Let us therefore come boldly.
  - 1. This is not an exact translation. The word boldly is the translation of the Greek word *“parrhesia.”*
  - 2. If you go to the etymology of the word, it means literally to speak everything. This is the unembarrassed, unrestrained, full out-pouring of your heart.
  - 3. Not holding anything back. Total freedom of speech, freedom of expression.
  - 4. Pour out your heart. Pour out your thoughts. Pour out your complaints. Pour out your requests. Pour out your desires.
  - 5. Get it all out. Put it all on the table. Quit holding back with God.
  - 6. No need to edit.
    - a) Do you want more money? Tell him.
    - b) Do you want healing? Tell him.

- c) Do you want a husband or a wife? Have you told your Father?
- d) Do you want to be an excellent husband or wife? An excellent mom or dad? Tell him.
- e) Do you want a miracle? Do you want something for your kids? Do you want something big? Something great? Something impossible? TELL HIM.
- f) Do you want victory over addiction?
- g) Do you want to rise above depression?
- h) Do you want to silence voices of discouragement, or despair?
- i) Do you want deliverance from the evil one?
  - (1) Tell him. Tell him. Tell it to Jesus.
- j) Let us come to the throne of grace with an unembarrassed, unrestrained, full out-pouring of the heart.
  - (1) If prayer seems weird to you, then don't pray. Just talk to God instead. [Wink. Wink]
  - (2) Talk. Whisper. Think thoughts. Write. Sing. Shout.
  - (3) Communicate with God.
  - (4) You don't even have to pray. Just talk to God.
- 7. Do worry about getting your words right. Don't worry about eloquence. Don't even worry about hurting God's feelings or stepping on his toes. He can handle it. He'll be okay.
- 8. These weak and timid prayers send a message to God that you have weak and timid thoughts about who he is.
- 9. Bring it.
- 10. God will answer however God will answer. I don't know for sure that you'll get everything you ask for.
- 11. But I do know you'll never get what you don't ask for.

**B. Your faith is too small because your God is too small...**

**C. Your God is too small because your Savior and His Salvation are too small in your thinking and believing.**

#### VII. Conclusion

- A. Quit making God the scapegoat for your boring, bland, sucky life.
  - 1. Quit whining about how pathetic you are. How bad things are. How stuck you are. How whatever you are.
  - 2. You have not because you ask not.
- B. You have not because you ask not.
  - 1. You say, but Bill. I asked, and God didn't answer.
  - 2. Don't be a wimp.
  - 3. Go ask him again. Ask him harder. Go push him.
- C. But you say, but Bill. I already did that. Go do it again, and this time remind him of his promises.
- D. But you say, but Bill, I asked him again. And again. And again.
  - 1. Do you know what your problem is?
  - 2. You have to put some skin in the game.
  - 3. Abraham tithed... And God give him a rich inheritance. He put skin in the game.
  - 4. One of my favorite quotes comes from the man who invented the bulldozer, and helped every major heavy equipment company get its start. His name was R.G. LeTourneau, and he became a wealthy Christian philanthropist and the founder of a Christian university.
    - a) He said, "I shovel money out, and God shovels it back... but God has a bigger shovel."
    - b) He put skin in the game.
- E. Let me bring this home.
  - 1. **Step up to a bigger, badder, bolder, faith.**
- F. What are you asking God for that is so amazing that if it happened, it had to be God who made it happen?
  - 1. What if you started a new side hustle?
  - 2. What if you went on a missions trip?
  - 3. What if you came to me and said I want to be a pastor?
  - 4. What if you actually asked a woman out on a date, and kept it respectful, noble, and pure?
  - 5. What if you actually joined a small group?
  - 6. Or got baptized?
  - 7. Or what if you actually got saved?
    - a) I don't know... what is it for you?
- G. At the beginning of every year I sit down with our senior staff, and I set a couple of goals that I think are pushing it.
  - 1. This year I stated a numerical goal, and even as I said it out loud to our team, I wasn't quite sure, deep in my heart. I said, "There's part of me that thinks I should..."
  - 2. Tim jumped in, "That thinks you should double it?"
  - 3. I said, "No. There's part of me think I should add a zero after it."
- H. So I'm still thinking on that one.
- I. And I want you to know I'm preaching to myself when I say to Step Up to a bigger, badder, bolder faith.
- J. I think we should be throwing such big requests at God that if he answered even half of them, our whole city would be changed.