

“GETTING UNSTUCK IN MY FUTURE”  
by Rom A. Pegram (10/20/19)

Thank you all for being here today. It’s a very special Sunday, with Bibles being handed out, our kids singing, and wrapping up our early-Fall worship series—‘UNSTUCK.’ So, let me begin with this: *Are you worried about the future?* ‘Anything about the future?’

I came across a poll recently where folks were asked that question. Though a few said ‘no,’ most (81%) responded ‘yes, I’m worried about my future.’ In fact, many wrote down their reasons for their response; let me share some with you:

- “I’m very worried and try not to think about my future.”
- “I worry about my parents getting older and passing away one day.”
- “I worry about finding a girlfriend or wife one day.”
- “I worry about getting sick.”
- “I worry about this anxiety never going away.”
- “Yes, I’m almost exclusively worried about whether I will find a well-paying job when I get out of school and how I’m ever going to pay off these student loans.”

Can you identify with any of these today? Unfortunately, it’s easy to feel this way—worry, frustration, confusion, expecting the worst ... all these things surfacing very quickly when we begin to think about the future. The truth is ... it’s easy to feel *stuck* when you’re thinking this way. And here’s what I’ve noticed: *When we feel stuck today in the present, it’s really tempting to think we’re going to be stuck forever!* Being stuck *today* threatens our confidence for the future. We become hopeless, impatient, discouraged ... and we worry about where our life is headed...

Maybe that’s why you’re here today; or maybe that’s why you’ve just decided you’re glad you came today. Maybe you’re not happy with the circumstances of your life; you’re trapped ... thinking about, worried about, or anxious about what’s going to happen in your future. Maybe you feel stuck in a job ... or financially ... or in a relationship... If so, listen closely: YOUR PRESENT IS NOT YOUR FUTURE! (Repeat!)

You may be stuck today and feel like where you’re at is where you’ll always be, but I want you to know ... God sees your future differently! God sees HOPE. God sees PROMISE. God sees A PLAN for your life. And if you trust *his* plan, God will help you get UNSTUCK! Look at the first scripture lesson with me, and let’s share in this together. Proverbs 3:5-6: **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. <sup>6</sup> Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”**

Today ... we’re putting the final touches on this worship series, where we’ve looked at getting stuck in our faith, our finances, our family, our fields of work, and our friendships. Today, we’re going to look ... to the future. How many of us have ever worried about that? As we set this up, here’re 4 approaches to the future that leave us stuck in the first place: First is...

- *Worry*. The rich, the poor, the educated, the uneducated, the young, the old, it doesn’t really matter who you are. We all have a tendency to worry about our future. But the choice is ... worry or trust? Which is it going to be? Next...

- *Assumptions.* The fact is ... we don't know what the future holds; no one does (except God). But we're great with assumptions, aren't we? Positive assumptions: I'm going to be married someday ... to the perfect spouse. I'm going to have that perfect job ... making six figures. I'm going to have a family---xxx number of kids. And sometimes, we even put a date on it: by 2026, I'm going to (whatever it is). Those are positive assumptions...  
We can also have negative assumptions. Hey, I'm never going to be happy. I'm always going to struggle financially. I'm never going to have a job that I like. I'd love to have a family, but it's never going to happen for me...  
And making assumptions about your future can keep you stuck because you're painting a picture, and if it doesn't turn out exactly as you've painted it, it leads to disappointment and frustration. Assumptions. Here's the next approach:
- *Planning without prayer.* Anytime we make plans for our future without spending time talking and listening to God, we're living dangerously! You may be set on living in a certain place, going into a specific field or career, or ready to move forward in a relationship in your life. But if the specific plans you envision are not God's best plan for your life, there's going to be a struggle. You'll feel *stuck*... Here's one more:
- *Procrastinating.* Have you ever known anyone? I think there's one in every family—that person whose answer is always "I'll do it someday!", but 'someday' is not a day of the week. You'll never get around to it. Procrastinating will leave you stuck...

So, what do we do with ... all these approaches to the future that leave us stuck? God wants you to move forward into the future, and I hope you do, too. What is our definition of UNSTUCK again? "Moving forward in life because we're willing to give God complete control." Have we done that with our future? And *how* do we do that? First...

**Recognize that I am stuck.** This is where it all starts: we have to humble ourselves, admitting we're stuck when it comes to the future...

Several weeks ago now, we determined that the first rule to getting UNSTUCK is to admit that we were stuck in the first place. Don't water it down. Don't try to say 'this is just a phase I'm going through.' No, no. no. Just admit it ... "Hey, I'm stuck!"

The Bible teaches us very clearly that there are predominantly only two reasons we get stuck in our lives—and consequently, in our futures. Do you know what they are? SIN and CIRCUMSTANCES. (You don't have that for a fill-in, but it's probably worth writing down.) Sin and circumstances...

You may be stuck today because of SIN in your life—sin being anytime we choose *our* way over God's way. And when we choose sin, we choose to put a barrier between us and God—keeping us from experiencing God's very best. With sin, it's like a brick wall ... that keeps us from moving forward. It separates us from God; and the specific sin could be any number of things—our attitude (some have 'stinkin' thinking'), the way we treat others, maybe a sexual sin you need to deal with, or maybe a sin that's a part of relationships with your spouse or family or co-workers. Maybe there are just some poor choices you make whenever you're with a certain group of friends...

Whatever it is, here's a powerful truth: *When there's sin in the present, there's going to be uncertainty for the future.* In other words, the choices you make today ... are going to impact your tomorrow. We often think, "One day, I'm going to deal with \_\_\_\_\_ (you fill in the blank)." Or maybe we think, "Hey, what I'm doing right now won't matter 10 years down the road." But, folks, *it doesn't work that way.* Your present choices determine your future...

Any time we live our lives according to our ways instead of God's ways, we'll get stuck. So, if you're stuck today because of sin in your life, what do you do? Look at 1 John 1:9: "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." So, don't deny sin in your life. Recognize you're stuck ... and take steps with God to turn those things around. How? Confess; repent; ask forgiveness. What needs to be turned around in your life today?

Then, there're your CIRCUMSTANCES. And we all know life isn't fair, don't we? Unexpected situations arise—some very difficult. We lose a job, get an illness, have to deal with the death of a loved one, a difficult breakup, a change in our financial status. Sometimes things happen and even though it wasn't sin that caused them, they're still difficult and threaten our confidence to move into the future. BUT I want you to know something: *No matter how big your circumstances or your difficulties may be today ... GOD IS BIGGER!* He can be trusted. You can rely on God when you get stuck!

The Apostle Paul certainly knew what it meant to trust God when he got stuck. He said (2 Cor. 1:8-9): "We think you ought to know, dear brothers and sisters, about the trouble we went through in the province of Asia. We were crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it. <sup>9</sup> In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God, who raises the dead."

Do you remember this one? Paul's circumstances were less than desirable; he thought he was going to die! He knew he was stuck; we need to recognize that too! So, ADMIT/RECOGNIZE YOU'RE STUCK, then I need to...

**Remember God's faithfulness in my past.** Over the years, I've realized that no matter how uncertain or insurmountable things seem, there's nothing more powerful than to remember how God's taken care of me in the past!

So, here's my question for you: *Which voice do you listen to?* When you get stuck in thinking about your future, which voice do you listen to? I'm here to tell you, there's no voice more powerful than when we look back at how faithful God's been in our past! But so often, the voice we listen to is ... *our own.* So, which view of the future do we want? Do we want uncertainty, fear and anxiety ... or do we want assurance, trust and peace? You've got to learn to listen to the right voice when you're stuck. Don't forget how God's taken care of us in the past...

Look at Psalm 42:5-6: "Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and <sup>6</sup> my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you— even from distant Mount Hermon, the source of the Jordan, from the land of Mount Mizar."

And that, folks, is what we need to remember to do—remember our history with God! Or remember the history of God and God’s people. What situations/circumstances has God helped you through already? Has God helped meet a financial need before? Has God given you strength when you felt weak? Has God comforted you when you felt alone? Has God given you direction and opened doors of opportunity for you in the past? See ... here’s the thing: *those aren’t isolated incidents. God does those things because that’s the very nature of God.* It’s who God is! So, if God’s done some of these things for you in the past, guess what? He’s going to be there for you in the future too (Deut. 7:9)! *Whose voice are you going to listen to?* Remember God’s faithfulness in the past, then...

**Refocus my mind on the hope of Heaven.** If I’m going to get UNSTUCK in my future, I need to refocus my mind!

The problem, many times, when we get stuck in thinking about the future, is we forget there’s a much bigger story going on in the world—the universe! The Apostle Paul recognized this flawed perspective way back in the early Church. He wrote to the Colossians (3:2): “Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.”

It’s all a question of perspective, and sometimes to move us into the future we need a different perspective—*God’s perspective*. It’s like when you’re flying on a plane at night, all the shades are down, you look around and see the same people sitting in the same seats, same flight attendants dropping off those same pretzels. You feel like nothing is really changing. But then you reach over and pull up the shade. As soon as you do, and look out the window, you can see for miles in all directions. Talk about a change of perspective!

The same is true in your life. Are you going to choose to look at life through the lens of a problem to problem, circumstance-based perspective? Or are you going to take the opportunity, whenever it’s presented to you, to zoom out, to refocus, and look at your life with an eternal perspective? Phil. 4:8 says, “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” *Fix your thoughts...* I like that! So, we don’t need to stay in that ‘stuck’ mindset; we need to refocus on eternal things. Then (briefly), I have to...

**Respond obediently to God’s direction.** Giving God complete control of your future—the key to getting UNSTUCK, means responding obediently to God’s direction—from God’s word...

Obedience is key! In fact, here’s what Peter says (1 Peter 3:12), “The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil.” So, what does it mean to respond obediently? *In all honesty ... the answer depends.* It depends on what’s going on in your life right now. It depends on what you’re facing. Do you remember the two reasons we get stuck? Sin and circumstances, right? If you’re stuck in sin, the answer is ... repent (which means ‘to turn away from’). If your stuck in your circumstances, for any reason, the answer is

... stay the course. Don't give up! Keep trusting God. Matt. 6:33 Jesus says, "Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need."

What a powerful promise! But, if we want to get UNSTUCK, we must seek God and God's ways first—give God complete control of our future. And remember, *delayed obedience* is just another form of disobedience. We need to be obedient to God's direction NOW. And finally, I need to...

**Replace my thoughts with God's thoughts.** If you've been paying attention today, most of our action steps have more to do with our thoughts than our physical actions. That's why we've turned to Paul's words from Romans 12:1-2 many times throughout this series:

"And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. <sup>2</sup> Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."

This scripture is talking about giving complete control of your future—and your thoughts about your future—to God. And as you allow God to transform your thinking, as you begin to realize how mighty and powerful this God is ... that wants a relationship with you, you'll begin to realize *he has a lot more in store for you than you ever dreamed of...* Let me close with God's promises from Jeremiah 29:11...

**"For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope."**

Now, that's a promise I can hold onto. And as we wrap up this series on getting UNSTUCK in our lives, I want you to know that *God wants you UNSTUCK*. God wants to see you moving forward in your life. God wants to see you moving closer and closer to your God-given potential. And the key to that is ... *obedience: giving God complete control*. So, as we close today, won't you give God control of your faith, your finances, your family, and your friendships? How about your job? And, especially today, won't you give God control of your future? Today's the day ... to let God make it happen...