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The Son Is Enough for Your Past

Guest:	Barbara Rainey
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Bob: When an earthquake shook the ancient city of Philippi, there was one man whose life was immediately in crisis. He was the keeper of the jail in Philippi, and the earthquake had opened all the jail cells and let the prisoners free. He thought he would be executed because of his malfeasance. But the apostle Paul told him in that moment not to worry, but to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Believing on Jesus is central to what it means to be a Christian. Here's Barbara Rainey.

Barbara: There are 84 uses of the word "believe" in the book of John. That's a lot of repetitions of one word. Jesus uses the word "believe" over and over again as a line in the sand, asking everyone in various ways, "Who do you believe that I am?"

There's no middle ground with Jesus on belief. Either we believe, or we don't believe.

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our host is Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine.

Someone has famously said, "When you finally get to the point where Jesus is all you have, you realize that Jesus is all you need." We'll hear more about that today from Barbara Rainey; stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us.

Our listeners are going to get a chance to hear from your wife this week.

Dennis: I just was thinking about that, in fact, Bob. We've had a lot of really cool people on the broadcast, but I was thinking who my favorite guest is we've ever had here on *FamilyLife Today*.

Bob: We know who the answer better be.

[Laughter]

Anything other than Barbara Rainey, you're in big trouble.

Dennis: I am in trouble. But I really like her, and she really enjoyed speaking to a group of I think close to 300 women at The Cove in Asheville, North Carolina. Of course, that's a beautiful spot over there.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: It was springtime when she gave this message, and she not only loved the time, she was energized by the people she met, the radio listeners, people who had been to the *Weekend to Remember*, those who've been through *The Art of Marriage* and looking forward to going through *The Art of Parenting*, which we launched with the movie "Like Arrows," and we have a book coming out by the same name, *The Art of Parenting*.

Bob: This is a message, that God had put on her heart, which is all about the fact that God is enough for us. I remember she was looking forward to delivering this message because it's a part of her story, isn't it.

Dennis: It is, and you'll hear her talk about it. All of us have disabilities. Some are seen, some aren't. Some folks walk with a limp. We have a son who that's a reality for him, as a man, husband, and father, but it's part of his story. Barbara shares a part of her story and where disabilities were.

Bob: Well, let's get right to it. Here is Barbara Rainey and part one of a message on God being enough.

[Recorded message]

Barbara: How many of you have read *The Chronicles of Narnia* to your children or you've read it yourself? Most of you, but not everybody. Okay, this is going to be fun, because some of you are going to hear one of my favorite authors and something that he's written that I think is just as good for adults as it is for kids. So I brought my *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* book, and I'm going to read us a little story this morning.

So, this is the story of four children who found their way into another land through the back of a wardrobe. They were there, and here's what happened in chapter seven.

"'Sh! Look!' said Susan.

"'What?' said Peter.

"'There's something moving among the trees over there to the left.'

"They all stared as hard as they could, and no one felt very comfortable.

“‘There is goes again,’ said Susan presently.

“‘I saw it that time too,’ said Peter. ‘It’s still there. It’s just gone behind that big tree.’

“‘What is it?’ asked Lucy, trying very hard not to sound nervous.” She was the youngest.

“…They all saw it this time, a whiskered furry face which had looked out at them from behind the tree. But this time it didn’t draw back immediately. Instead, the animal put its paw against his mouth, just as humans put their finger on their lips when they’re signaling you to be quiet. Then it disappeared again. The children all stood holding their breath.

“A moment later the stranger came out from behind the tree, glanced around as if it were afraid someone was watching… ‘Hush,’ [it said]…

“‘I know what it is,’ said Peter; ‘it’s a beaver. I saw the tail.’

“‘It wants us to go to it,’ said Susan, ‘and it is warning us not to make a noise.’

“’I know,’ said Peter…

“So the children all got close together and walked up to the tree…and there, sure enough, they found the Beaver...”

The beaver said to them, “ ‘Are you the Sons of Adam and the Daughters of Eve?’ it said.

“‘We’re some of them,’ said Peter.

“‘S-s-s-sh!’ said the Beaver. ‘Not so loud. We’re not safe even here.’

“‘Why, what are you afraid of?’ said Peter. ‘There’s no one here but ourselves.’

“‘There are the trees,’ said the Beaver. ‘They’re always listening…’

“[Then it signaled] to the children to sand as close…as they possibly could, so that their faces were actually tickled by its whiskers…

“‘They say Aslan is on the move,’ he said. ‘Perhaps he has already landed.’

“And now a very curious thing happened. None of the children knew who Aslan was any more than you do; but the moment the Beaver had spoken these words everyone felt quite different…

“ ‘S-s-s-sh,’ said the Beaver, ‘not here. I must bring you where we can have a real talk and also some dinner.’”

So the children followed Mr. Beaver to his little home built out of sticks, they crawled in the home, and Mrs. Beaver was there cooking dinner. They sat down and they all had dinner, and they talked.

And after dinner was over, they said together, “‘…yes! Tell us about Aslan!’ said several voices at once; for once again that strange feeling—like the first signs of spring, like good news, had come over them.

“‘Who is Aslan?’ said Susan.

“‘Aslan?’ said Mr. Beaver. ‘Why, don’t you know? He’s the King. He’s the Lord of the whole wood, but not often here, you understand. Never in my time or my father’s time. But the word has reached us that he will come back. He is in Narnia…[and he will make everything right].’

“…‘But shall we see him?’ asked Susan.

“‘Why, Daughter of Eve, that’s what I brought you hear for. I’m to lead you to…him,’ said Mr. Beaver.

“‘Is he a man?’ asked Lucy.

“‘Aslan a man!’ said Mr. Beaver sternly. ‘Certainly not.

“‘I tell you he is the King of the wood and the son of the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea. Don’t you know who is the King of the Beasts? Aslan is a lion—*the* Lion, the great Lion.’

“‘Ooh!’ said Susan, ‘I’d thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.’

“‘That you will, dearie, and no mistake’…

“‘Then he isn’t safe?’ said Lucy.

“‘Safe?’ said Mr. Beaver; ‘don’t you hear what [we said to] you? Who said anything about safe? ’Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.’”

So, we’re going to talk about this God of ours, who is good, He is very good; but He isn’t always safe.

All my life I’ve wanted a safe God. I don’t know about you, but I’ve wanted a safe God that I could understand, a God I could figure out, a God I could kind of put a formula to

or some kind of system of rules to, so I knew how He worked so it made sense to me. I've learned the truth of Mr. Beaver's words, that our God is very good, but He is also not always safe. But I have learned that He is enough for my past and for my present and for my future.

So, this morning we're going to look at three different Scripture verses, about God the Father, one about God the Son, and about God the Holy Spirit—the Trinity—and we're going to look at who they really are. I'm hoping that as we do this we will be humbled before their majesty and we will be led to worship.

First, we're going to talk about God the Son and that He is enough for your past. God the Son is enough for your past, and we're going to look at a passage in the book of John.

But before we do that, I wanted to tell you that there's a context to this passage; in fact, there's a context to all of the ones we're going to read because all of Scripture is written in the context of other things that are happening. There are two things of context that I want you to be aware of as we read it.

The first one is the word "believe." There are 84 uses of the word "believe" in the book of John. That's a lot of repetitions of one word. Jesus uses the word "believe" over and over again as a line in the sand, asking everyone in various ways, "Who do you believe that I am?"

There's no middle ground with Jesus on belief. Either we believe, or we don't believe, we're in unbelief. In the context of our lives, where we find ourselves today, Jesus is still asking us today, "Who do you believe that I am?"

Interestingly, I looked up the word "believe" and in the Greek it's a feminine verb. I find it fascinating—I'm still hoping I can get to do some study on this more someday—but English doesn't have masculine and feminine assignments to all of our words. Our words are just what they are. But there are a lot of languages that have masculine and feminine verbs, masculine and feminine adjectives and adverbs and nouns. Spanish does, Greek does, French does; a lot of them do. So, in Greek, the word "believe" is a feminine noun. It means a conviction of truth. It means believing in God and divine things, with the idea of trusting and having holy fervor.

It reminds me of the women who went to the tomb on Sunday morning. I think the women had a greater capacity to believe, and I think that's a part of the reason why the word "believe" is a feminine noun, because I think we do. I think that's why Eve believed the serpent. I think we have a greater capacity to believe.

Now, nobody has told me this who's a great theologian, but as I've looked at the way we're wired, the way we operate—one of the greatest gifts my husband says I've ever given to him is that I believe in him, and I've always believed in him. I believe in my

children, and that belief empowers and fuels and strengthens those that we love. I think that the women who went to the tomb, their faith in who Jesus was was rewarded when they saw Him first. I think Jesus honored and recognized their faith, their quick-to-believe-in-Him faith when they went to the tomb. So, the word “belief” is a part of the context of the story in John.

Secondly—this story is in John chapter nine, so if you have your Bibles you can turn there now—but the timing of this story is really interesting. It’s the halfway point of Jesus’s ministry. Two months earlier, Jesus had just been in Jerusalem, and He had celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. At the Feast of Tabernacles, He had claimed to be the light of the world, which created a ruckus among the Pharisees, but He had stood up and said, “I am the light of the world.”

Well, this story, in John chapter nine, is happening in the month of December, and in this month is the Feast of Lights, the festival of lights. We call it Hanukah, or we know it as Hanukah. So we’re going to look at the story of John chapter nine really quickly.

Verse one says, “And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth.”

I want to talk for a couple of minutes about this man, who was blind from birth. First of all, Jesus saw this man. The man didn’t see Him, because he was blind, he couldn’t see. But Jesus saw this man, saw his need, saw his heart, recognized who he was, and he knew (because He was fully God) that this man had been blind from birth. He knew that he needed help.

Now, think about this man in his life growing up, as he was born without sight. How did he function in the world? He had to have help for everything.

So, from the time he was born he was dependent on people for everything; for his food, for his clothing, for his sustenance, for everything. This man was needy.

When we look at the passage, we think he was probably of age, which mean he was probably 30, because he was allowed to go into the temple. He was grown. I thought about, how did he feel as a kid growing up, or how did he feel as a teenager, or even as a young man? I would imagine he felt left out. My guess is there were times he was rejected. I think there were probably times he was made fun of. There were probably times when he was not allowed among the community of believers, because in those days anyone who had something wrong with them was unclean and they were cast out.

I’m wondering if he was trying to get well. Did he have hope anymore that he would get well? I wonder if he had lost his initiative. But Jesus took the initiative to reach to him which is what He has done in all of our lives. “We love because He first loved us.” Jesus loved this man and He reached out to him.

Verse two: “And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?’”

I just love this, because this is so who we are. The disciples wanted to know, not, “Are you going to heal him?”, not, “What are you thinking about this man?” They wanted to know whose fault it was! Why did they want to know whose fault it was? Because they wanted to avoid a similar fate.

I think it’s an issue of control, quite frankly. They didn’t trust God. We don’t trust God, because we think we can manage this. We think we can control the circumstances if we just figure out what’s really going on below the surface.

Then verse three, “Jesus answered and said, ‘It was neither that this man sinned nor his parents, but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”

He didn’t rebuke them for asking the question. He let them ask the question, and He turned it and showed them what the truth was. The truth was that God wanted His glory to be seen. He wanted those who were there to watch Jesus’s power and who He really was.

There’s a verse that I think is really interesting, Exodus 4:11. God said to Moses, “Who has made man’s mouth? Who makes him mute, or death, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?” Who was behind this man’s blindness? It wasn’t the parents’ fault. It wasn’t the man’s fault. It was God, who wanted to do something to demonstrate who He was to people. God intentionally made this man blind, He intentionally subjected Him to decades of life with a handicap, a disability, and the man suffered for it. We don’t like that kind of God, do we?

But the reason He did it, Jesus makes it really clear in verse three: because God had a higher purpose in mind to display His glory.

As I thought about it I thought, “If the man had been born whole, he would have never experienced the wonder of being healed. But he lived with this blindness for so long that when Jesus healed him he was exuberant. If you read the rest of the chapter, he couldn’t stop talking about it. He was jumping up and running around and telling everyone what had happened to him, and we would too, right?

Now, I want to turn this to us. What handicap were you born with that has never left you since birth? My handicap was not anything physical that could be seen or measured, like blindness or deafness. My handicap, I always felt like, was that I was shy, and I was insecure, and I was quiet, and I wasn’t comfortable with people.

I remember going through high school and noticing people who were really popular and they had fun and they talked easily, and I remember thinking, “Why can’t I be more like those people?” I tried to be different and I couldn’t break out of my shell, and it followed

me all of my life. I always felt like if I didn't have this, if I wasn't made this way, if I wasn't made to be cautious and quiet and think things through, if I could be more like these other people, I would be happier, I would have more fun. People would like me, I could be popular.

I remember one day years later. I was married, I had kids, and I was still struggling with this and feeling insecure. I just didn't like the way I was. I was driving somewhere, and I just had this thought out of the blue, which of course was God Himself, the Holy Spirit. He reminded me that it was important for me to be that way. He said, "You don't know what you escaped. You don't know what you were saved from because you were not a part of that group of kids that you longed to be a part of."

I went, "Yes, Lord. You're right."

I shared this story with a group of women about a month and a half ago at a retreat. We all shared what our handicap was. One woman said, "I always felt like the odd person in my family, because everybody else in my family—all my other siblings were just like my parents—and I was so different from anyone else. I always felt like the odd one out. I felt like I was a mistake my whole life."

So, I want you to think for a second: what were you born with that you have wished all of your life was not a part of who you are? You may never see the reason why God did this in your life this side of heaven, you may never experience dramatic healing like the man born blind, but you can know without question that God did not make a mistake in your life. You can know He meant it for your good, that the works of God might be displayed in you.

The story of the man born blind finishes with Jesus going and finding this man and asking him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The blind man, who was now seeing, said, "Yes, I believe," and he fell on his face and he worshipped Jesus.

So my question for you and for me: will you be like the blind man, who recognized his need, who believed God intended good for him; or will you be like the disciples, who wanted control?

[Studio]

Bob: Well, that is Barbara Rainey with a penetrating question right there.

Dennis: That's a good question. Frankly, I was listening to her and I was going, "Whoa."

Bob: Yes. We all want some level of control in our lives.

Dennis: We do.

Bob: When things are out of control, nobody's comfortable in that situation.

Dennis: Right. I got a letter from a friend who is struggling right now, and she just sent me a text to let me know that it's really easy to say you can trust God, but it's really difficult to do it in the midst of the storm.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: That's what Barbara's talking about here. When you're disciples, you still have the wrong conclusion that you are in control and somehow you can change your destiny.

Bob: I know a lot of people look at their past and wonder if they are disqualified from being a part of God's family because of the past, and yet the apostle Paul, I think, gives us the best evidence that even if you were an accessory to murder, even if you hated the things of God, God can still welcome you into the family, and he tells us to forget what lies behind and to press on.

Dennis: I'm sorry David, King David, sinned and committed adultery and murder and spoiled his son and on and on and on, but you know, there's great hope for all of us broken human beings to realize, God never gave up on him.

He never stopped loving David. He never stopped loving Paul, and met him on the road to Damascus. So, God may be after somebody right now who's on the road, and He may be after you and wants your whole heart. The question is, how will you answer what Barbara said? Will you be like the blind man, who cries out, or will you negotiate with God and try to retain control?

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We'd love to hear from you.

Thanks for listening. Thanks to Larry Loraine, Dennis Leake, Rhonda Street, and our entire broadcast team. We hope you've enjoyed the broadcast and that you'll be back for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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