

A Stick and a One Line Sermon

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon encourages believers to recognize their calling and embrace God's empowerment despite their weaknesses and failures.

Duration: 40:58

Scripture: Exodus 3:1, 1 Corinthians 1:26

Topics: "Failure"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of reaching the lost for the sake of Christ and giving one's life as a living sacrifice for God's causes. The preacher refers to a song that talks about the beauty of those who bring good news on the mountains. The sermon also touches on the feeling of regret and failure when one's vision for serving God seems to be in vain. The preacher encourages the congregation to look away from their own weaknesses and focus on the power of God, reminding them that the spiritual future and destiny of many people are in their hands. The sermon concludes with an altar call for those who feel called by God to embrace His plan, even if it may seem foolish to the world.

Transcript

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This afternoon at 3 o'clock, Teresa is going to be sharing a bit about her recent journey to England. And then this evening at 6 o'clock, Pastor William will be bringing a, no doubt, powerful challenge from the Word of God. So it's going to be a good day all day in the house of the Lord today.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 26. So I'll start, my message is called a stick and a one line sermon. Stick and a one line sermon.

1 Corinthians 1, verse 26. For you see your calling, now it's my most earnest desire that before this message is through today, you will see your calling. So let those five words just stick in your spirit before we move on.

For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. And God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty.

And base things of the world and things which are despised has God chosen. That means things that men look at and would pass by. If you and I were building a corporation and were to go out in the streets and be selecting a partnership, there are certain people, I'm talking now if we didn't have the eyes of God or the eyes of the Spirit, there are certain people we would consider unworthy of being part of any venture we were undertaking, we would pass them by.

But not God. Base things of this world, verse 28, and things which are despised has God chosen. Yea, and things which are not, in other words of no strength, no report, no reputation, to bring to naught things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. That according as it is written, he that glories, let him glory in the Lord. Now this is a message I believe the Holy Spirit has given to me today for those who see their calling, as we discussed in verse 26, and have tried.

You've tried little or you've tried a lot. But you tried. You were somewhere in a church somewhere at some time and you heard a message talking about reaching the lost for the sake of Christ.

Talking about giving your life as a living sacrifice for the causes of God. You heard the song, how wonderful on the mountains are the feet of them will bring good news. And you headed out to do these things.

You had a vision and a sense of what you felt God wanted to do through your life. But it seemed to be to no avail. You headed out and you tried.

And little came of it. Like Paul in Romans chapter 7 verse 18, he said, for the will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. There are people here today who say, look I truly feel called to do something for God.

I'm sitting here today in the worship, I have this stirring inside of me. But the stirring produces in me a sorrow. Because I'm overwhelmed at my incapability of performing that which I truly feel that God wants me to do.

I've heard you preach pastor, I've heard you say that the purpose of my life is to glorify Christ. And I want to, with all my heart, but I don't know how. I can't find the strength to do this.

In Acts chapter 7 verse 25, Stephen, as he is standing before his accusers, tells us that Moses supposed that the people would have understood that he was called to be their deliverer. But there was no fruit, there was no response. He set out at 40 years of age to do something that he knew in his heart that God had called him to do.

And I don't really know if he had a plan or he was just impulsively moved by his youthfulness. Or perhaps he felt emboldened because he had some access to power and maybe he had a secret thing forming in his mind. That he could somehow bring about some kind of an army that would overthrow the powers that were oppressing the people of God.

And when he headed out to fulfill this ministry God had given him. Imagine your ministry is to deliver 3 million people and all he did was bury an Egyptian. A miserable failure.

And so in this deep sense of failure he fled into a wilderness. And that's exactly where many of God's people go and some are living there now. You set out to do this, you set out to live for God, you sense that God had something for your life, but you failed.

And the failure and the misunderstanding of God's ways sent you into a wilderness and that's where you're living. You're living there this very moment. In a dry place, a lonely place.

See this wilderness can be very, very lonely. It can be a place where a man or woman walks away from those that he or she has been called to help. The calling never goes away, beloved.

We are called to be the extended hand of God's mercy and grace to our generation. We are called to be salt, we are called to be light, we are called to be a voice for God. But many, many people walk away because they are encompassed with this overwhelming sense of failure.

Now some are just resisting because they don't see the fullness of the plan of God or they're not really fully developed in God's mercy. As Jonah, they end up prayerless in a perishing time. The whole of society as it is, is in danger of sinking and they're just down deep in the bowels of some hidden place.

And they're sound asleep, they can't even pray. They have no burden anymore. And think about Elijah, who sensed a failure in his heart and ended up in a lonely place on top of a mountain.

And he just began to wish that God would just take him home. And I know that some of you are living there right now. Your prayer is, God please, just take me home.

I don't want to live here anymore. You don't love the things of the world but you don't see God doing much through your life either. So you just say, well let's do the best of both Lord, just take me out of here now and take me to heaven.

Listen to David, a man called to truly be a representative of the lineage of Christ on the earth. In Psalm 55 verses 6 and 7 he said, Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then I would fly away and be at rest. Lo, then I would wander off and remain in the wilderness.

Now I don't know about you but I have journeyed into this psalm a few times throughout my life. Oh God, I wish I had wings and I could just fly out of here. I would fly away and be at rest.

You see that's the illusion. You got to land somewhere and wherever you land, you are there. David thought, oh I just, I would fly off and live in the wilderness and oh it would be, I'd get a cabin somewhere and it would be just so grand to live in the wilderness.

Well let me tell you, it's not. I would wander away with a deep sense of failure and live as the scripture tells us in Psalm 106 verse 15. It says, the people of God became discouraged and they began to ask for things which were not a part of God's plan for them.

And tragically for them, the Lord granted their request but the scripture says he sent a leanness into their soul. They got what they wanted in other words. They did in a sense satisfy their own inner cravings and started to live on a substandard plane lower than what God had for them.

And so here they are, they're sitting and their bellies are being filled with things that they think are going to satisfy them but a leanness comes upon them. And that leanness is given of God. If you have that sense today, it's God has given you this sense of leanness because he has more for you than you have for yourself.

His sights are set on something much higher than where your eyes might be right now. Now it was in this place that people find themselves not of the world but yet with so little power to go back and make a difference. And this can overwhelm so many people.

Walking through the streets of New York City and whatever town you come from, going to your place of work or a place where you're looking for work. And you're walking there and you're so grieved at what's going on all around you. And you know that you're not part of this but you don't seem to have the power to go back and make a difference in it.

It was in this wilderness that Moses found himself for a long time when suddenly the call of God for his life came back to him again. If you go to Exodus chapter 3 please with me. Exodus chapter 3. You see, there are many sitting here today, the call of God is coming back to you.

Well actually the call of God has never gone away. You're just becoming aware of it again. The Lord called you and it might be 30 years from the time that you first knew His voice and you've wandered far away from Him but the call is still there.

His mind has never changed. And your ears now are being opened to something again this morning. Exodus chapter 3. Verse 1 says, Now here's a man who for 40 years has felt like a failure.

He has lived day to day with the regret of what did I do wrong? Did I miss God? Was there something in the way I tackled this? Or perhaps he just was aware that I failed. I lashed out. I did something I shouldn't do.

He's been living now for 40 years with a deep sense of regret. Having been called to lead a whole nation out of bondage and all he's leading now is a few sheep on the backside of the desert. But God called him and when the Lord called him again he turned to see something.

And there before him was a bush. Now if you saw these dry desert bushes, most of them are dead. And quite often just the heat of the day or a reflection can ignite these.

I did a bit of research on it. They can just spontaneously ignite. But here's one that's burning.

But the strange thing is the fire is inside of it. The fire is outside of it. The fire is all around it.

But it is not being consumed. And he's looking at it and thinking how strange this is. But you see what the Lord was trying to do is to get Moses to see a picture of himself.

Moses you are the dry bush and I am the fire that you need to fulfill the calling that I placed upon you. And if you will allow me to touch you I will come upon you inside, outside, around. I will literally envelop you and set you aflame with a power and a mind and a direction that you never knew before.

And yet I will not consume you. God was showing him the way how a partnership with God and man works. This is exactly what happened in Acts chapter 2. When 120 fearful failed people went into an upper room.

They had nothing left but just to hear God's voice and begin to obey Him. They went up into the upper room. And in that upper room where they were seeking Him one more time.

He came upon them just the way He came upon this bush in the wilderness. And the fire of God came and touched weakened vessels, nobodies and nothings. People who are not royal, they are not noble.

They don't have a litany of great accomplishments. Society would have considered many of them outcasts. But there they were seeking the very life of God that He desired to give them that would allow them to go back into society and make a difference.

Now in this place when Moses encounters God, God tells him to take off his shoes. He says in verse 5, Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place wherein thou standest is holy ground. Now there is a reason for this.

You see Moses was an impulsive man when he was 40. Moses was a man who had to try to figure things out. Somehow had to give God a hand.

He had to put his hand as it is to the work that only God could do. And the Lord said, no Moses, from here on in, if you are going to know my presence, if anything is going to happen, I'm the one who's going to make it happen. Take off your shoes.

Now if you're a dry bush today and you want to know the power of God emanating in and through your life one more time, the very first thing you've got to do is take off your shoes. Get rid of your plans. Get rid of your strategies.

Get rid of all of the reasonings that will come from the natural mind. Because it's not by power. It's not by might.

It's by my spirit, says the Lord. It's by the spirit of God that these things are going to happen, not by human ingenuity. We have too many people today who are in the church of Jesus Christ with their shoes still on.

We have committees wearing their shoes. We have men trying to figure out and strategize how to promote a kingdom they can't see, they can't understand, they don't know anything about it. It is a supernatural kingdom.

God does not need mighty people. He does not need people who have all kinds of ideas. He does not need people of royalty and power in government and in military.

He needs people who know that they have no strength without Him. People who are willing to be yielded to Him, willing to take off their shoes and say, Lord God, use my life. Here I am, I'm a dry stick, O God, but I am willing that You should come upon me and take my life and ignite it, O God, by Your power.

And let me burn for You, God, in this generation and give glory to Your name. In this place, God tells them to take off their shoes because to walk with God is to remember and to reverence the fact that He is holy. God is holy.

He is not a back-slapping buddy. God is holy. It's only His grace that allows us to live when His Spirit comes upon us.

God is holy. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. His ways are higher than our ways.

I'm appalled in this generation at how casually men and women come into the presence of God, how casually we approach God. God is holy. If we're going to know His power, we have to know that He is holy.

And where He walks is holy. And where He takes us is holy. And He commands those who are bearing His Spirit to be vessels that are representations of the holiness of God.

God tells Him to take off His shoes. As I said earlier, because it's a taking off of His own plans. Remember when Joshua went in with the next generation into the Promised Land and he met the captain of the Lord's army.

The first thing he said to Joshua was, take off your shoes. Joshua, you're not going to conquer this with your own strategies. These strongholds are too big for you.

The things you're going to encounter are too powerful. Take off your plans. Raise your hands.

Hear my plan in my voice and just obey me. It's foolishness to the world. It's foolishness to those who don't know the Spirit of God.

You'll be laughed at. You'll be mocked. People will think that you've lost your mind.

But nevertheless, raise your hands. And just walk around this stronghold and I'm going to bring it down. As you begin to praise me.

As you begin to hear what I'm going to do. You see, it's a willingness to embrace the plan of God. Now, you're going to have to really give me your good ear now.

You have to have a willingness to embrace the plan of God. 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 25 says, The foolishness of God is wiser than men. Amazing.

Now, if anyone here today even dared to ascribe foolishness to God. What could be the foolishness of God that is wiser than men? How could anybody even dare to describe God as foolish? Or what would it be about the way God does things? The only thing I can come up with that could ascribe foolishness to God is that he has chosen me to be a partner in his work. That could be the only thing.

I don't know any other thing. Folks, look, it's like you and I leaving this sanctuary today and say I'm going to start a business of some sort. You go out on the streets and find the most disadvantaged, dysfunctional person in New York City and make him your partner in business.

Make him your partner. And that's not even a remote comparison to God choosing you and me. The distance is so much greater.

The God comes down and he chooses partners in ministry that are so disadvantaged, so out of the loop in a sense, so not of strength or power. This is the foolishness that's an insanity to the natural man. And then he gives him the plan.

In Exodus chapter 4 again. What an incredible plan. Verses 3 to 4. He has a stick in his hand.

And he says, cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground and it became a serpent. And Moses fled from before it.

And the Lord said to Moses, put forth thine hand and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand and caught it. And it became a rod in his hand.

Now here's the plan of God. To send a man to deliver three million people out of captivity. He says, what have you got in your hand? Now he had a staff.

I truly believe with all my heart this is a type of the cross of Jesus Christ. He said, now cast it down. Think about Christ for a moment.

John 10, 17. I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself.

I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. He says, now cast it down. It's a type of Christ.

He was cast down seemingly. And the rod turned into a serpent. It seemed momentarily that Jesus Christ was under the power of the serpent.

Because he had put him on a cross. He had technically in the eyes of men at least cast him down. But on the third day, the hand of God reached down and raised him from the dead.

Actually caught the serpent by the tail. I love that. The fleeing serpent who thought the whole thing was over.

And perhaps was headed off to do more mischief. And God says, not yet. Reaches down, grabs him by the tail.

And immediately the serpent turns into a rod. It speaks to me about bringing into captivity all the power of darkness to the obedience of Jesus Christ. Christ swallowed up death in victory.

Christ triumphed over the powers of the devil. Christ triumphed over evil. Christ triumphed over everything the enemy has sown into this whole world, this whole society.

Christ has triumphed over it. He is the supreme authority. He is the supreme power.

I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing shall by any means hurt you. God said, now I reached down on the third day.

And I picked my son up out of the grave. And I put the power of his resurrection in your hand. Hallelujah.

Blessed be God. That God would put the power of Christ's victory in the hands of man. So he put a stick in his hand and gave him a one line sermon.

Let my people go. That's all that was necessary. Let my people go.

Can you imagine Pharaoh? He's leading what's considered to be one of the most powerful armies perhaps in that part of the world in that time. And this old man comes in, 80 years old, with his 83 year old brother. I think it was humorous in the beginning.

He walks in with a stick in his hand, stands there and says, Thus saith the Lord, let my people go. I think it was humorous until it became a contest of power. Until Pharaoh began to realize, something more than just this old man and his stick and his voice is behind us.

Folks, can you see it? For the scripture says, for you see your calling brethren. Do you understand that God has put the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the hand of the weakest of those who are called by the name of Jesus Christ? Do you understand that you have the power to go into situations and neighborhoods and say, Let my people go. Let them go.

Do you understand that you're not powerless in your community? You're not powerless in your apartment building. You're not powerless because society tells you you're disadvantaged. If you have Christ within you, you have the full victory of Christ on Calvary at your disposal.

You have the power of God in your hand to stand in this generation. Don't be turned back because of former failure or because of what you see in the mirror when you get up in the morning. It's not about you.

It's about Jesus Christ. Glory be to God. If we can lay hold of this one truth, thousands and thousands of people in New York City could come to Christ.

We can get up from under that rock of the enemy, that stone he's tried to roll across your heart so you don't see the power of the life of God that is now being lived within you. Whatever God tells you to do, you can do it because God has spoken it. You stand in your weakness.

You stand in your frailty. Let men laugh all they want to laugh. I had a vision in my heart as I was preparing this message of an older lady.

Her 70s. Looking out her window and seeing young men accumulating on the street corner for no good. And I just saw her going down and taking authority.

And looking those young men in the eye and saying, you were created by God. You were created for fellowship with God. You were created to live for God and to serve God.

Now you grab my hands and I'm going to pray. I'm going to command the devil to let you go. That you may serve God.

Now, I see the silence in here. It's almost like it's too far fetched to ever happen. No, it isn't.

That's how God works. He takes the weak and the base and the foolish and the nobodies and the nothings and the despised. The things that even a church that is so engrossed in strategies now in church age would look down and despise it.

But God says, no, that's the way I work. That's where my power is found. I believe with all my heart that all hell trembles at the thought of grandmothers in the body of Christ.

Realizing the authority they have. And young men and young women and older men and older women finally, finally realizing. God, you don't need my strategies.

You don't need my strength. You don't need my plans. You just simply need my obedience.

I need your power to come upon me. You need to tell me what it is that you want to do through my life. And I need to set out.

And God, you'll make it a reality. You'll do it. First Corinthians chapter 1. I want to read it again to you.

Beginning at verse 23. But we preach Christ crucified. Unto the Jews a stumbling block.

And unto the Greeks. Now the Greeks are symbolic of a society that lives by its own intellect. Unto the Greeks foolishness.

But unto them which are called. Both Jews and Greeks. Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men. And the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling brethren.

Do you see it? This is really the question that the Holy Spirit has put on my heart. How not many wise men after the flesh. You say that's me.

Not many mighty. Not many noble are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

And God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound things which are mighty. And base things of the world. Things which are despised as God chosen.

And things which are not. To bring to naught things that are. That no flesh should glory in His presence.

In other words where are the boasters then? If it's all Christ. Where are the boasters? Where are the big people? Where are they? If it's all Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God.

He's pulling the curtain back one more time in this hour that we're living in. And showing us that the ground is truly level at Calvary. It's the hungry heart that will know the power of God.

It's not about education. It's not about social standing. It's not about the size of your bank account.

How well you can sing or how good you look. It's about the fact that you have a heart that says God. Come and use my life for your glory.

The church began in an upper room with 120 nobodies and nothings. Young fishermen. And tax gatherers.

And harlots and publicans. Despised by the religious elite as it is of that day. But they got together and the glory of God came upon them.

And they stepped into the marketplace. And their lives became a declaration of the reality that Jesus Christ is alive. He's risen from the dead.

The religious who had crucified Christ looked at them and said, God, what must we do to be saved? Have you seen your calling? Do you understand what God wants to do? It's not just for a select few. It's not just for a spiritual elite. It's for the entire body of Jesus Christ.

It's for whosoever will. The greatest sin of Israel in the Old Testament was when they limited the Holy One of Israel. They said in their hearts, can God furnish a table in this wilderness? Folks, that's the greatest sin you'll ever commit against the knowledge of God in the Scriptures.

Is that you look in the mirror. You see the emptiness of yourself and say, oh, can God furnish a table in this wilderness? Not only can He furnish a table, but He can feed you until you overflow. He can fill your cup until you are forced to speak His name.

You can die in the wilderness of unbelief. Or you can see one more time what God wants to do. I don't want New York City to go to hell.

I don't know how you feel about it today. And New York doesn't have to go to hell. There is a church.

There are 3,000 preachers in this building this morning. There is a testimony. The power of God is resident in His body.

This city doesn't have to go to hell. People in your building don't have to go to hell. People in your workplace don't have to go to hell.

The kids on your street corner don't have to go to hell. As long as Jesus lives in me, people don't have to go to hell. Do you have to go to Bible school? Do you have to get a Master of Divinity degree? No, you need to get a stick and a one-line sermon.

That's all you need. Thanks be to God. Thanks be to God for those who teach the deeper things.

Thanks be to God for those who expound the Scriptures. Thanks be to God for all of this. But if it doesn't lead you to that one fact, it's not brought you to the knowledge of Christ.

Oh God, we can't just gather and sing our songs and let this world go to hell. I'm not trying to put anybody under condemnation. The issue is, do you see, do you see, do you see? Do I see? Do we see our calling? The authority that God has placed within you is not of yourself.

It's another's authority. And our part is to embrace it and walk in it. Believe it.

When he says, do this, do it. When he says, go, go. When he says, speak, speak.

Oh, but they're going to laugh at me. Of course they're going to laugh at you. What do you think Pharaoh did? Can you see the first, second, third, fourth time Moses and his brother walk out of the court, the big joke, bring on the wine, let's laugh at these idiots with their stick and their commands and their dogs and their blood started coming.

They will laugh. But they will also get saved. But of him are you in Christ Jesus, whom of God is made to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

In other words, we are complete in Christ. He is all the knowledge we will need. He declares us to be clean.

He gives us the power through the Holy Spirit to be separated to the work that is the work of God. And he is the one who does the work and it's all in him. As it is written, he that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

Folks, I've lived this, I think, in measure. Brother Dave's lived it, the other pastors have lived it. I have no training to do what I do.

I have no skill to do this. I just had a dry stick and I went to an altar. I said, God, I can't even speak publicly and I've got issues that you're going to have to help me with but if you want me, you can have me.

I get whatever I have. It's not much. I remember the prayer I prayed about 28 years ago.

I said, it's not much but you can have it and I just ask you to use it for your glory. You see, today millions are captive and God needs people who will embrace a plan that the world calls foolish but the scripture calls it the power and the wisdom of God. Do you see your calling? I told you at the beginning that if you can receive this, it can make the difference of thousands of people going to heaven if you can receive it.

Now, I want to give an altar call for every dry bush in the house. In the annex, in the main sanctuary. In the annex, please, if you stand between the screens.

In the main sanctuary, you say, Pastor, you've just preached my heart, my life. He saw something and he just moved towards it. And as he moved towards it, God began to speak to him.

Beloved, that's how it works. You see it and you just move towards it. It's no more complicated than that.

You agree with God and God begins to speak to your heart. If the Holy Spirit is drawing you today, folks, this is serious. It's not just another message.

This is serious. The spiritual future of many people and the destiny of many people is in your hands, whether you know it or not. God has called you to do something for him.

If you're willing to look away from your own frailty and look to the power of God, I do believe that as we worship, and we're going to worship for about 15 minutes, he's going to meet you. Come. As we stand, balcony, main sanctuary, come, let's meet here at this altar.

Let's allow God to speak to us. Moses stood before the power of God and he said, this is a good idea, Lord. I do hope you bless the man you send.

And the Lord said to him, who made your mouth? This is what God would say to you today. Who put breath in you? Who formed you in your mother's womb? Who is well able not just to keep you but to refashion you, to give you giftings, to make you far more than you could ever hope to be in yourself, that the glory might be of God and not of man, that you'll stand not with a testimony of yourself. You're not going to be able to say, well, I figured it out and this is how it's done.

You're going to be able to stand and say, it's all Jesus. It's all Jesus. It's all Jesus.

It's all Jesus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Beloved, don't say no to God. Don't let your first rebuff turn you back.

Ask God for a love for people that casts away this fear. And most of all, you need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. You and I can't do this work without the Holy Spirit.

Foolish to try. Lord, God Almighty, I pray for mercy for New York City, and Connecticut and other areas, New Jersey, and other areas, Lord, that I represent. I pray for mercy, God.

Mercy. Lord, bring us out of the upper room in the power of God and send us into the marketplace. I pray for the power of Calvary's love to be upon us, the word of God in our mouths and faith that does not look at adversity as anything that can stand against it.

God, help us to understand the simplicity of Christ, to walk holy lives, to trust you for everything. I pray, God, that your blessing be on this church, that you rend the veil, show us the fullness of Jesus Christ, help us to understand the power and the anointing of the Holy Spirit and guide us into the coming days. From this service alone today, I pray that thousands and thousands and thousands of people find freedom and deliverance and Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Oh, God, we see our calling. I see, I see my calling, Lord. Do you see your calling, beloved? Do you see your calling? Hallelujah.

You didn't choose God, he chose you. He chose you. He chose to work through you.

Bless God. I want you to sing that song, if you can, Greg, the Lord is high above the heavens. And let's, we're still only 10 to 12.

Can we just take time? It's a four-minute song. Let's rejoice and then we go. But you've got to see God high.

You've got to see that he loves you. You've got to understand that he chose you to be his partner. You didn't choose him, he chose you to be his partner.

Praise God. That should be so liberating. And if he chose you, you should accept the conclusion of the message.

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