

Cherishing the Treasure of Christ

by Carter Conlon

The sermon emphasizes the importance of cherishing the treasure of Christ and living a life of intimacy with Him, and warns against drifting away from God even when we have great revelation.

Duration: 56:07

Scripture: Matthew 13:44

Topics: "Cherishing Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing his desire to bring God's word to the people and asks for God's sovereign power to be present. He then references Matthew 13:44-46, where Jesus speaks about the kingdom of heaven being like a treasure hidden in a field and a pearl of great value. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having the Bible as a guide and the promises of God as revelations of His faithfulness. He concludes by urging the listeners to beware of being led astray and to grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

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None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Father, I thank you for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I thank you for your strength and your power that have always kept me and sustained me.

Lord, I thank you that you give to those who ask a heart to pursue you, and a heart to apprehend you, and a mind to begin to understand you as your character and your power and your nature are revealed to us and in us. Jesus, we need you now more than we've ever needed you before. I would ask today that you would open your word.

God, speak to every heart, speak to every life, and let your kingdom come with great power. I ask, Lord, for a yearning, a yearning for intimacy with you to be developed in the hearts of those that are called by your name. Today I ask for everyone who has become slack in the word of God, everyone who is lost in their sin, every backslider, Lord, that you'd reach out, that you'd open these doors of imprisonment, that you would grant forgiveness and the power through the indwelling Holy Spirit to see the kingdom of God

begin to advance with great power in their lives.

Jesus, I don't come to play games today. Father, I come to bring your word to your people, and I ask, O God, that you would come with sovereign power. Lord, overturn everything that's unlike Christ.

Grant to us a living testimony, each one of us in this last hour of time. Give us a living testimony of the living Christ, and more so, and most of all, an ever-deepening hunger for intimacy with you. Father, I thank you for this.

I thank you for the quickening power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew chapter 13, beginning at verse 44 to 46.

How many have got your Bibles today? Can I see your Bibles? You're going to need it if you have. Hallelujah. Bless the Lord.

Again, Jesus said, "...the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hidden afield. The man, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls.

And when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Now, this particular passage of Scripture, Jesus Christ, I spoke about this last week, he is talking about the characteristics of heart of those who have found the kingdom of heaven. Not only have they found the kingdom of heaven, but the kingdom of heaven has in effect found them. And Jesus Christ is beginning to work in their lives.

The Holy Spirit has come. They're born again now by the Spirit of God. And there is a strong, strong evidence to be found in the hearts of those who belong to God.

They have found what they've been looking for. I hope that if you are a Christian here today, I hope that you have found what you're looking for. I hope that you're not still driven by the proverbial discontent of this present generation.

I hope that you're not so immersed in the thinking of the world that somehow you've been led to believe that you can be fulfilled if you attain this goal, or if you achieve this, or move here, or do this, or attain perhaps some new status in society, or your place of employment. Those who have been born again of the Spirit of God, there is no other desire, or at least there ought not to be any other desire, but to have an ever-increasing and fuller revelation of Jesus Christ within us. He is that treasure.

Jesus said when a man finds that treasure for joy, he goes and sells all that he has to buy that field. And again, when he found that one pearl of great price, he goes and sells all that he has. In other words, he releases his plans, his ambitions, all of his other pursuits, and he goes out and buys that one pearl of great price.

The Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 5 and 6, he said, for God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure, that is Christ, in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Now folks, that's an incredible thought.

We have the treasure of the eternal God living within us. This is an incredible treasure. It's something the Old Testament prophets could only think about.

They could only foresee it. They could only prophesy of the day when God was going to come in power and actually indwell. Not no longer a tabernacle, no longer a tent, no longer a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, but he was going to come and actually indwell.

Frail humanity. Those who would open their hearts and minds and cry out to him that he was going to come and he was going to make his abode within them. And that presence, that power of the Holy Spirit of God within a person's life would produce in the hungry heart, the hungry soul, an ever-increasing and continual revelation of that pearl of great price who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

And the Holy Spirit, as we begin to understand Christ, then gives us the power. He lives that resurrected life of Christ within us. And what a joy to so apprehend him, to so lay hold of him, that we can, in truth, one day say with the Apostle Paul, it is no longer I who live.

It's Christ, hallelujah, who lives in me. Hallelujah. What an incredible thought.

We have the treasure of an eternal and a victorious kingdom with all of its promises and all of its power living within us. Hallelujah. No wonder Paul could say, if God be for us, who can be against us? Hallelujah.

Paul, the Apostle, had this revelation in his heart. And brethren, oft times this revelation is given to us through trial. Oft times it comes through sorrow and difficulty.

Oft times it comes by being led by the Spirit of God to places where we simply can't take another step without God's power. And then as we begin to cry out to him, then once again we're given the revelation of the treasure that we have within us. We surrender and yield the rights to our own lives in whatever area God is speaking to us about.

We give it to God. And in resurrection power, one more time we come out of the tomb on the other side, sharing that cry of Paul. It's no longer I who live.

It's Christ who lives in me. Oh brethren, that's called the living testimony of the living God. It's day by day being able to share with our neighbors and friends and family and office workers.

It's being able to say, I'm not the same as I was yesterday. Let me tell you why. I have once again, God has revealed something of the treasure of Christ that is within my life.

Hallelujah! He's given me power. He's changed my life. Paul cries out in Romans 11 33, he says, Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways are past finding out. Oh the treasure of God, the treasure of God. I hope that this is a lifelong pursuit in your life if you're a Christian, if you're a child of God.

I hope that you're on that, may I call it a treasure hunt, if I may, to find Christ and to see him revealed in us and through us in ever greater measure, that we may bear fruit through these lives to the honor and the glory of God. I go in the New Testament to the book of 2nd Peter with me. You go Hebrews, James, 1st Peter, then 2nd Peter, chapter 1. Now Peter begins to give us a clue of how this treasure of Jesus Christ in us, this treasure that we cherish, we should cherish above every treasure in our lives, about how this

treasure is released in us and through us.

In 2nd Peter, chapter 1, verse 3, Peter says, according as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. Now through his power, in effect, he has given us the things that we need for life and for godliness through the knowledge of him that has called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises. How does the kingdom of God advance in our lives? God gives us promises and by faith and by faith alone you and I lay hold of those promises.

It's not by striving in the flesh. It's not by any good works that we do, for the best that we can accomplish is still filthy rags in the sight of a holy God. But God gives to us because he is the treasure and he gives to us exceeding great and precious promises and by faith we lay hold of these promises and through these promises the kingdom of God begins to advance in us and through us.

Peter says that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature. Through these promises I thank God for the promises of God. Brethren, where would we be without the promises of God? Think it through just for a moment.

If we had, say, just simply John 3 16, God came, said his son loved us, died for us, now we're saved. And we didn't have this book and we're all left to our own resources. What an incredible miserable failure we would be as a church, individually and collectively.

But the promises of God are revelations in a sort of the nature, the character, the faithfulness of God through Jesus Christ to everyone who calls out to his name. Now go to the second Peter chapter 3. I want to read the last two verses. He says, Ye therefore, verse 17 and 18, he says, Ye therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

To him be glory both now and forever. Amen. Peter is saying to those Christians that he is writing to, beware, he says, lest you lose your position in Christ.

Lest you let something else perhaps come in. Begin to occupy your thinking, your minds, your hearts. You lose an understanding of the day that you're living in.

And all of a sudden you begin to drift away from the things of God. I want to share with you, brethren, it's always a danger that you and I can drift away from the things of God. We can even be living in the midst of seemingly great revelation being given to us of God.

I'm going to show you that in a moment. But at the same time, we can be drifting away farther and farther and farther away because knowledge is never a replacement for a heart that loves Jesus Christ more than anything in this world. Give anything in this life up, but don't ever give up your love for Jesus Christ.

Because that love will keep you. It will guide you. It will cause your heart to be smitten.

Every time you and I move in a direction that's not of God, there'll be a smiting that comes into your heart. The love for Christ, the cherishing of that treasure, that eternal pearl, that field, that truth that we look for all our lives that we found and have given everything to possess. We'd ask ourselves the question today, say, well, how does one begin to lose their position of ever-increasing growth and knowledge of Christ? How does this happen? I think the best way to understand this is to look at how a nation, and in particular

a lineage of kings, lost the presence and the power of God.

Now go back to the book of 1 Kings in the Old Testament, please. 1 Kings. We're going to look at how the carelessness, if I can call it such, in the things of God opens the door to what the enemy is always after in our lives.

He's after something. And if he can get that, he can take you and I into captivity. He can take an entire church generation into captivity.

1 Kings chapter 7. Now I'm only going to look at this in part and parcel. We're going to look a little bit at the temple that Solomon had built. Now the creation of this temple was a foreshadowing of the relationship that God desires to have with all of his people.

It was a type, and you're going to see that in a moment. This temple, the scripture tells us, was full of treasures, full of treasures. Verse 48 in 1 Kings chapter 7 says, And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord, the altar of gold and the table of gold, whereupon the showbread was, and the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers and the lamps and the tongs of gold, and the bowls and the snuffers and the basins and the spoons and the censers of pure gold and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the temple to it of the temple, of the house rather, to it of the temple.

And so was ended all the work that King Solomon made for the house of the Lord. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated, even the silver and the gold and the vessels that he put among the treasures of the house of the Lord. All of these treasures.

Now they must have been an awesome thing to behold. Each of these treasures had its own meaning, and each one of them, we don't have time to look at this today obviously, but each one of them represented something of the character and the nature of God. Some of them represented His holiness, some of them represented His mercy, some represented His goodness, some represented His power.

But everything represented something about the nature of God. The temple that Solomon built was a house filled with treasures, absolutely filled. It would have been overwhelming.

And brethren, it's exactly the same for you and I. When we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit came and made His dwelling within our physical body. And we became the temple of the Holy Spirit. If you are a child of God today, you are the temple of the Holy Ghost.

And when the Holy Spirit came in, this is this is the Godhead in effect that has come and made up a residency within your body. And the Holy Spirit is now revealing the treasures of Jesus Christ within us. He reveals to the hungry heart the meaning of these treasures, the purpose of these treasures, and all the attributes and the character of God not only reveals them, but as we see them, He gives us the power to lay hold of them through faith.

That the life of Christ now begins to be lived in us and through us. The underlying theme of the treasures was without doubt the desire of Almighty God to reveal Himself as a just and a holy God. There were some things, some treasures in that temple that would have given that impression.

Obviously when you walked in and saw the continual flowing of blood, the continual sacrifice that was being offered up for sin, there would be an awesome understanding that God is a holy God. He's a just

God. That He deserves reverence and He deserves all respect.

And yet also at the same time that He's kind, He's loving and protective and forgiving to all who approach Him in truth. The heart sensitive to His without doubt would be overwhelmed that such a magnificent God would want to dwell among mere men. I am overwhelmed.

The more I know Him, the more overwhelmed I seem to get. And when I see Him, the more I begin to understand Him. I feel like the Psalmist David when he said, when I consider the heavens, when I consider the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which you have ordained, he said, what is man that you are mindful of him? It's an incredible feeling that when we begin to draw close to God.

I believe it was Charles Finney said one time, he said that the man who is distant from God feels very good about himself. He's quite content, he's quite proud of his works, all the religious things that he does, he's very very happy about himself. He'll more than readily tell you about all the goodness in his life because he's actually quite distant from God.

But the man who's drawing or the woman who's drawing close to God, all of a sudden there's an undone-ness comes into the life. God in heaven. Charles Wesley wrote a hymn that says, and can it be, and can it be that I should gain? God in heaven.

How can it be? When I see you, when I consider you, when I see the depth of your character, when I understand your goodness, how can it be, oh God, that you would come and take your dwelling, your abode in such a man as I? Oh God in heaven, God in heaven, I want to know you more. That's the cry of the child of God. I want your kingdom to come.

Lord, I want you to possess my reigns, David said, in my heart. Lord, I want you to occupy every space of my life. I want you to grant to me the power to take this flesh.

Take it, oh God, I give it to you, take it and crucify it, that it may not reign in my life anymore. Paul cries out, oh who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God, to Jesus Christ, my Lord. It's the cry of the child of God to be delivered from all the works of flesh, the frailties of humanity, and to be clothed upon with our house, if I can call it such, that comes from on high, that wonderful treasure of eternity, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

If you're a child of God, he is your treasure today. If you're a child of God, you cherish him and love him and desire him and want him with all of your heart. If you're a child of God, there's no flippancy in your heart about the things of God.

There may be momentary failings. There may be times that you think your own weakness is going to overwhelm you. There may be struggles and trials in your life, but in the midst of all of these, there's still a heart that wants him.

There's still a heart that acknowledges that he's the treasure of eternity. Hallelujah. The relationship that God had with Solomon in Israel was a type of that which we as the New Testament believers have through Jesus Christ today.

This relationship was based in essence upon the promises of God's faithfulness towards those who walk before him with an honest heart. God had a relationship with Solomon and a relationship with Israel in this temple, which was a type of our relationship. Now I want to show you this.

Go to 2nd Chronicles, please. Chapter 7. We remember that when Solomon dedicated the temple after it was built, he prayed an incredible prayer of dedication. You remember some of the elements of that prayer.

Basically, if we've been put to the worst before our enemies and pray, God hear us. If there are encroachment upon our borders, God hear us and pray for justice for the stranger and the widow and all types of things like this. In 2nd Chronicles, chapter 7, verse 15, the Lord says now, in verse 12, it says, the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him, I've heard your prayer and I've chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.

In verse 15, he says, now my eyes shall be opened, my ears attend to the prayer that is made in this place. For now I have chosen and sanctified this house that my name may be there forever and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually. Now here's a promise.

He's made a promise that if you have my heart, because you've longed for me. Brethren, if you long for God, if you long for Christ, his heart is towards you. I promise you that today.

There's no power of hell that will come against you that will ever triumph against you. No weakness that will ever overpower you. No devil in hell that will ever take you out of the hand of God if your heart is towards Christ.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! It delights Christ to fight for his church. It delights him to vanquish our enemies. It delights him to open prison doors and give sight to the blind and healing to those that are bruised in body.

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! He said, I've chosen, I've sanctified this house that my name be there forever and my eyes and my heart will always be there. This is what he's telling Solomon. It was a type of our relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

He says, and as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked and do according to all that I've commanded thee and shall observe my statutes and my judgments then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom according as I have covenanted with David thy father saying there shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. And God is saying to Solomon, Solomon walk with me. Solomon walk with me in truth.

Solomon don't forget the prayer that you prayed when this house was dedicated. When you come into this house and my glory, my power came down. Don't forget the prayer that you prayed.

Solomon walk with me and I'll walk with you. It was a type of the relationship that God has with us as the New Testament believers today. And as Solomon continued to seek God he increased in wisdom and power as he walked with this Holy God.

In 2nd Chronicles chapter 9 verse 22 the scripture says, Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. Remember the cry of Paul, oh the incredible depth, the unsearchable riches of Christ. And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart.

Verse 24 says they brought every man his present vessels of silver and vessels of gold and raiment, harness and spices, horses and mules arrayed year by year. And Solomon had 4,000 stalls for horses and chariots and 12,000 horsemen whom he bestowed in the chariot cities with the King at Jerusalem. And he reigned over all the kings.

And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. When Solomon walked with God, Solomon reigned. Oh brethren, let's settle the issue once and for all.

If we will walk with God, if we will love him with all of our heart, if we will obey him when he speaks to our heart, we too will rule and reign with him. In chapter 9 again and verse 16, scripture talks it throughout this chapter of the things that Solomon made. But I want to draw attention to this one aspect.

It says he made 300 shields, made he of beaten gold. 300 shekels of gold went to one shield and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. Now these were shields that were for a special group of soldiers in effect.

They were soldier shields. And Solomon made 300 of these golden shields. And I'm not there, I wasn't there obviously, but if you will take a journey with me in your mind or your heart, you see God and his promises and his attributes, everything about God, were represented mainly by gold in the temple.

When you walked into the temple, if you and I would have been there and we would have been walking in with Solomon, we would see all this, the gold on the ceiling, the golden vessels, the mercy seat, we'd see all, everything that is represented by gold, which represented the character, the promises. It represented God, the very nature, the attributes of God. And Solomon built, made golden shields that some of his soldiers would carry.

And I can picture in my mind Solomon coming up to the temple. And obviously being the king going to the temple, he's not going to be walking alone. There'd be an entourage with him, there would be protective guards around him.

I can see these guards coming up with these golden shields on their arm. And as they're walking to the temple, there's knowledge that these shields that were carried by his soldiers represented faith and the faithfulness of God, who had promised him the victory. They were carrying on their arm, what did the Apostle Paul say? Above all, carrying the shield of faith.

David said, Lord, my glory, my lifter of my head, you are my help, you are my hope. David always called the Lord his shield. And I see in my heart that as the soldiers, as Solomon is heading to the temple and the soldiers, they've known nothing but victory, victory after victory.

They rule over all the kings in all the area. And everywhere they went, there was nothing but victory. But they carried on their arm, in effect, the shields that represented that our victory, that we are winning, is because of the promises that God has made to us.

It's not by might, it's not by power, but it's by thy spirit, O God, that we are winning the victory. And what an incredible thing to be walking in the house of God and knowing that it's not our own strength that has gotten us the victory. Knowing that it is God, it is Christ in our lives that has given us the victory.

And therefore, our pursuit should be to know him more intimately on a continuous basis. Our pursuit should be, as Christians, to cherish him with all of our heart. What's the most important commandment? A lawyer said, tempting Christ, and he said, love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength.

This is the first and this is the most important commandment. Now, God's promises are as good as gold, are they not? They are. Hallelujah.

They're as good as gold. We acknowledge your protection, your provision, your power. My heart's cry is to let the glory of God, the glory of the risen Christ, shine in us and through us, especially in this hour that we're living in right now.

David said, many there be would save my soul. There's no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory and the lifter of my head.

You are my shield. You are my strength. It's because of who you are.

It's because of your promises that I am able to stand. It's because of your promises that I have victory. It's because of your promises I will become whatever it is that you have destined me to be.

However, the triumph for Solomon in Israel took a turn towards tragedy when Solomon began to be careless in his relationship with God. This is where we need to take heed. He got careless.

It's ironic that he wrote the words, yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. And so shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth and thy want as an armed man. A little sleep, a little slumber.

You notice they don't say a big sleep and a great big slumber. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands. Solomon got careless with the word of God.

In the abundance of what he was learning, I often wondered, did it seem like those first truths were, well you don't have to obey the first truths because look at the greatness of the revelation that God has given to me. Folks, it was the first truths, the things that David his father had taught him, that he disregarded, that eventually cost him his relationship with God. No greater tragedy than to leave off the pursuit of God.

Instead of coming into that temple and seeking God with all his heart, then his heart turned and he began to love strange women. He brought horses out of Egypt that he was told, specifically in the Word of God, that he should not do. He began to bring home silver into his borders and gold and he was told specifically in the Word of God.

He would have been taught that by his father David. He would have known, but those were the foundational truths, the first things. And oft times as we begin to learn things about God, we begin to go to studies and open the Word of God, and God begins to open heaven, we get tremendous revelation.

And somehow in the abundance of that revelation, we forget. This is the end of side one. You may now perhaps opening this book every day and meditating once again on some of the very first truths that we learned.

Holding on, Peter says to these things, lest we should lose our position of steadfastness in Christ. Holding on. A little slumber, a little sleep, a little folding of the hands.

Every time even a supposed on fire Christian backslides and you begin to talk to these folks, you can be sure that the underlying cause is having turned away from this book and having come out of the closet of prayer. Instead of passing on a glorious heritage and a glorious kingdom to his son, his son Rehoboam took over what was then a divided kingdom. And in chapter 12 verse 1 it says, it came to pass when

Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord and all Israel with him.

We begin to get careless with the word of God. You watch the downward spiral now that comes into the nation of Israel and those who are called to lead the nation. But consider it a type of what happens to the believer who becomes careless with the things of God.

Now his son, the next in line, the next one to lead this nation is now forsaking God and bringing the whole nation into that forsaking with him. Now the enemy begins to come. You remember it was those shields of faith that caused Solomon and Israel to win the victories that they were winning.

And in verse 9 it says, so Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the house of the Lord. You see God, the enemy rather, is always after the treasure of Christ in your life. Always.

After the one thing that can destroy his kingdom and that is the revelation of Christ, the treasure in you and in me, the enemy is always after the treasure. And if we get careless with the word of God, the very first thing that begins to go out of our lives is the treasure, the manifest presence of Christ, the awareness of Christ's presence in our lives. And he took the treasures out of the King's house.

He took all, he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. Instead of which Rehoboam made shields of brass and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard that kept the entrance of the King's house. And when the King entered into the house of the Lord, the guard came and fetched them and brought them again into the guard chamber.

And so now Rehoboam forsakes God, the enemy comes in, steals away the golden shields and Rehoboam now replaces them with shields that are made out of brass. Confidence in God now gives place to the ingenuity of man. It is a cheap replacement.

It looks like faith perhaps, but it's not faith. It's all mixed in with human reasoning. And folks, I want to tell you, we live in a generation where the church of Jesus Christ got careless with the word of God, careless.

The bride of Christ began an incredible slumber in the Western world a few decades ago and allowed careless people to stand in pulpits and bring a careless gospel. And the church got careless. And when people get careless with the things of God, the very first thing that is gone is the desire for Christ.

Second thing to go is faith in the promises of God, because there's a carelessness now about this book. And the third thing to happen is that faith in God now is replaced by the ingenuity of man. We have churches now that are no longer built by faith.

The church can only be built by faith. You cannot build the church of Jesus Christ any other way. But now we have churches built by community surveys.

Faith has given way to the ingenuity of man. And if we had time through all of Chronicles and Kings, we'd find this continuous downward spiral. We had some attempts at revival, mostly dictated and imposed upon the people.

And even though they seemed to have some value, none of it was lasting until finally we come to Asa in chapter 16 of 2 Chronicles. Verse 1 says, In the sixth and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Bashar, king of

Israel, came up against Judah and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in unto Asa, king of Judah. Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord and out of the king's house and sent to Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There's a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father.

Behold, I have sent thee silver and gold. Go and break thy league with Bashar, king of Israel, that he may depart from me. And Ben-Hadad hearkened unto the king Asa and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel.

And they smote Ijon and Dan and Abel-Maim and all the store cities of Naphtali. And it came to pass when Bashar heard it that he left off building of Ramah and let his work cease. Then Asa the king took all Judah and they carried away the stones of Ramah and the timber thereof wherewith Bashar was building.

And he built therewith Geba and Mizpah. And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa, king of Judah, and said to him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubams a huge host with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand.

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly, therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. Asa sells off treasures to save himself.

We're living in a generation of self Gospels, self-advancement, self-help, self-healing, self... you'll find that term terminology completely almost inundating much of the Church of Jesus Christ. The church that has sold off the treasure to save themselves. Self-preservation, self-reliance has now almost completely taken over.

From once having trusted in the promises of God, from once having known complete victory, to now instead of going in and seeking God when the enemy comes, they go in and sell the treasures of God. Sell off the treasures for the preservation of self. When this begins to happen, it leads ultimately to complete defeat.

In 2nd Chronicles chapter 36, verse 14, it's a progression, folks, and it all starts with carelessness with the Word of God. Carelessness. Carelessness to even obey the little things that God has spoken to us.

No sense going on to deeper revelation if we have neglected the little things, the first things that we learned. Don't tell me God is giving you great, great revelation of some eternal perspective of the kingdom of God if you are still hating your brother. 2nd Chronicles 36, verse 14, moreover all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen and polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

It's such a tragedy, this house once built on such promises and such relationships, such revelation, is now a polluted place because they have sold off the treasure that was therein and not trusted in the Lord God. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up at times and sending because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people until there was no remedy.

Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees who slew the young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary. Folks, I want to tell you something. There are places today where they are saying that there is great revival going on the Western world.

I prophesied it a long time ago and I stand by that word that there's going to be a great slaying and many of these who think that they are in the presence of God are going to be strewn among the hills, lost, hurting, lonely, depressed, not knowing what it is that even hit them, not understanding that they have forsaken the greatest treasure of all of eternity, Jesus Christ, and the understanding of his kingdom for some momentary satisfying of the flesh. He had no compassion on young men or maiden, old men or him that stooped for age. He gave them all into his hand and all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon.

Now the things of God are so intermixed now with the things of the world that they're no longer discernible as the things of God. And they burnt the house of God and break down the wall of Jerusalem and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. This is the end of dealing carelessly with the Word of God.

Folks, it has repeated itself all throughout history. The types, the patterns, the shadows are here. For if anybody wants to see it, both for a nation, for a church age, and for you and for me, it all starts with the careless dealing with God.

A carelessness, a laxity, getting so used to the presence of God. There's a danger. Sometimes we come in and we say, God, what a marvelous presence, what marvelous anointing, but there's a danger that comes with that too as well.

You can begin to take his presence for granted and leave off the seeking of the kingdom of God and lose that love, that first love, that causes us to pursue him as a treasure to be most desired for our lives for all of eternity. And they that had escaped from the sword they carried to Babylon where they were servants to him and to his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. For as long as she lay desolate, she kept Sabbath to fulfill three score and ten years.

All the treasures, the people come into complete defeat and all the treasures that were intended to be for the betterment of the people are now taken to Babylon and the people become slaves, slaves in effect to the powers of darkness. And we're living in a generation where there's a slavery to darkness, I think almost unprecedented in any other generation, incredible slavery. But yet in the midst of this, God gives an invitation.

He says, now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it in writing. And he said, thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me.

And he has charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him and let him go up. God invites his people to return.

This is the heart of God. Maybe the people dealt carelessly, and yes there was a suffering that came into their life because they dealt carelessly with the treasure of eternity. But yet in the midst of it, God once again reveals that the ultimate end of all that he does is to be merciful to those who will call out to his name.

Even his judgment is intended to show his mercy towards all who would call. And Cyrus is stirred up, it says, by the Lord. And he says, who's among you of the people that want to go? The Lord his God be with him and let him go up.

And that same invitation is still here for you and I today. Revelation chapter 3 verse 18. Jesus is speaking through the Apostle John to a church that had gotten all kinds of wealth and all kinds of things that the world had to offer.

They said they were rich, increased in goods and had need of nothing. But he said to them, I counsel thee to buy of me gold. Try it in the fire that thou mayest be rich.

The prophet Isaiah, in speaking to Baxlod and Israel, in calling them home to God, he said, for brass I will give you gold. I will return you. In effect he's saying to your former estate, violence shall be no more heard in your land, wasting nor destruction within your borders.

But you will call your wall salvation and you shall call your gates praise. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Now go quickly with me to one last scripture, the book of Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1. Hallelujah. God forbid that you and I should ever get so familiar with the presence of God that we become careless with him and careless with our relationship with him. That we begin to think, well, the temple will always be there.

This began to be the saying of Israel, the temple, the temple. It'll always be there. I can, I can neglect this all week and I can come back Sunday and God will be there one more time.

Samson played that game and he only got away with it for so long. One day he woke up and his strength was gone. In Ephesians chapter 1, Paul says that the, verse 17, he says that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power. That your eyes, Paul says, will be opened.

That you will see what is the hope of his calling. That you will understand the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints. Now who do you suppose that is he's talking about? It's Jesus Christ.

Paul said it's Christ in you that's the hope of glory. And the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power. How do we lay hold of it? We lay hold of it by having a heart that longs for God.

We lay hold of it by not dealing casually or carelessly with this book. We lay hold of it by opening the words of this book and saying God give to me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of he who lives in my life, who dwells in my heart. Give me an understanding of the inward working of your

kingdom, O God.

And by faith let me lay hold of it like the woman laid hold of the hem of the garment of Jesus. No matter what I might be going through that I can say to God I'm not letting go. For I've read it in your book and I'm not letting go until you bless me.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. And what's the exceeding greatness of his power? To usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places.

Far above this is the kingdom that is within us. Far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this world but also in that one which is to come. Paul says that your eyes would be opened, that you would walk in and begin to understand that we have the treasure of an eternal God abiding and resting right within our lives.

That we begin to cherish this treasure of our relationship with Jesus Christ. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

I say God banish from my life any careless dealing with this book. God help me as a preacher. Pray for us all the time.

Pray for Pastor David, myself, and all the ministry team that we not be preachers who hold the truth in unrighteousness. You know what holding the truth in unrighteousness is? It's holding it, understanding it, but holding it away from yourself. Pray for me.

I don't ever want to hold this book in unrighteousness. I don't ever want to be given revelation of truth that I'm not willing to live in my own life. And I know today I can only live it by the power of God.

I beg you, in the name of Christ, to be a people who love Jesus with all your heart. And if you don't, just ask him. He understands that.

Some people are afraid to even admit it, but if you don't, just ask. One of the signs that you're losing that love, that you're failing to cherish that treasure, is carelessness with this book. Now, I'm not talking about just reading it.

Carelessness in obeying it. Carelessness in asking God to apply it. Because if truly our hearts are one with his, there's a cry in us that says, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, in me as it is in heaven.

There's a cry if our hearts are one with him. If you're a slave to sin, if you have become careless and you begin to trade faith in this book and the promises of Christ for ingenuity, and then you begin to sell off Christ to survive, then ultimately you're swallowed by the powers of darkness. God says today you can get up and you can come home.

You can be cleansed, you can be forgiven, you can be given new life in God. That's what it's all about. It's about the mercy of God and his desire for you and me to dwell in covenant relationship with him through Jesus Christ.

If you're lost today or backslidden, I'm going to open this altar in a moment and ask you to come home to God. Say, Lord forgive me. Somewhere down the line I got careless.

I got careless with maybe just some of the little things and they became bigger things. I began to replace faith with other things and now the enemy has come in and he's swallowing me. And it could be just an area of your life that it just looks absolutely hopeless.

But today if you can humble yourself before the Lord, if we can all do this, God says I'll set you free. Who among you is able? Let him get up. Let him go back and meet his God.

I'd like to give one more call for this afternoon and it's for those who are becoming careless with this word. I can't think of a greater danger in this hour for the true child of God than to become careless with this book. Study, Paul said, and show yourself approved unto God, rightly dividing the word of truth, the workmen that will not be ashamed.

Now the word ashamed in the original text means overpowered by his enemies. Study, study. Father, God in heaven, thank you that you are a loving God.

You are a merciful God. You are a wonderful covenant keeping God. For my own life, I cry out today to you, Lord, and I said, God forbid, God forbid that I should take you for granted.

God forbid it, Lord, I'd rather die. I would rather you take me home today than I should ever discredit your name and disgrace you. Oh, Jesus, I trust you today for the power to stay in this book and to stay in communion with you and to love you with all my heart and soul and mind and strength.

Oh, Lord, I ask for this to be given to those who are in leadership in this church, to all of us, that you keep us and hold us in the palm of your hand. God, hold the people, Lord. Give us hearts that treasure Christ more than anything in this world.

Banished from our lives, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands, a little sleep. Take this away from us, Holy Spirit. Give us hearts of diligence to seek God and his kingdom first.

Father, I thank you for this in Jesus name. Amen. Would you stand, please? Pastor Carter, not only have I been careless with the word of God, but I'm a sinner.

I live apart from God and I need to be saved. And today I'm willing to acknowledge that I'm a sinner, that God had to send his son to die on a cross to pay the price for my sin. Today I want to turn from that sin and I'm trusting in the power of Christ to save me.

I'm trusting in the Holy Spirit to give me the power to be able to live a victorious life. If that's you today and you'd like to come to Christ, would you raise up your hand with me? Unashamedly, it can be the balcony and the main sanctuary all over. You may or may not have come to this altar.

Please just raise up your hand. All right. God bless you.

Their hands all over. God bless you. Oh, hallelujah.

Father, pray with me now. Let's all pray together. Lord Jesus, I am a sinner.

Thank you, Lord, for dying for me and paying the price for my sin. I ask you now, come into my heart and be my Lord and my Savior. Thank you for cleansing me and giving your life for me.

I now give my life to you. And I say, Jesus, come and become the chiefest desire of my heart. I love you, Jesus, and I thank you for loving me.

Hallelujah. Now, to those who prayed that for the very first time today, please get in the New Believers class as soon as you can and begin to learn about Jesus Christ, about the ways of God. How many can say, Pastor, this is me.

This message has been me today. I became careless. And now the enemy is coming against me like a flood.

Remember, the invitation of God is to get up and come back. It's always get up and come back, get up and come back. God says, I'll restore you.

I'll restore you. I'll restore you. It's all through this book.

I'll restore you. I'll give you back. If you will learn about me, learn about me.

And once you begin to learn about me, your faith will increase and then you will have the power then to stand against your enemies. When again, your faith is based not in yourself, but it's based in the promises of God's word. Pray with me, Lord Jesus, thank you for forgiving me.

I became careless with your word and I've paid a price because of it. But today I thank you for your mercy, your grace, your incredible goodness. Open to me a new understanding of Jesus Christ.

Show me who you are. Show me your power, your grace. Give me an understanding of the working of your kingdom.

Open my heart to receive your promises. Each one of them as if they're made just for me and for me alone. And give me a heart of faith to believe and to watch you stand against my enemies and to see every last one of them go down in total defeat.

I promise you today, I will give you the honor. I will give you the praise. I will give you the glory for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory.

Hallelujah. Thank you, Lord. This is the conclusion of the tape.

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