

God Has a Plan for Trouble Times

by Carter Conlon

God has a plan for troubled times, and it involves providing us with a living relationship with Him and empowering us to overcome the challenges we face.

Duration: 56:24

Scripture: Matthew 5:10, Matthew 14:25, Mark 4:35, Mark 6:37, Mark 6:52, John 6:26, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Dark Days"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by acknowledging God's faithfulness throughout generations and asks for the grace to deliver the message clearly. The sermon is based on Mark chapter 4, which tells the story of a storm. The preacher emphasizes that God has a plan for troubled times. He highlights the importance of recognizing what we have, even if it seems insufficient, and trusting God to multiply it for His purposes. The sermon concludes by encouraging the audience to have faith in God's plan and to not be discouraged by the limitations they may perceive in their own lives.

Transcript

This recording is provided by Times Square Church in New York City. You're welcome to make additional copies for free distribution to friends. All other unauthorized duplication or electronic transmission is a violation of copyright and other applicable laws.

This recording cannot be posted on any website. However, written permission to link to the Times Square Church homepage may be requested by emailing info at [timesquarechurch.org](mailto:info@timesquarechurch.org). Other recordings are available by calling 1-800-488-0854 or by writing to Times Square Church Tape Ministry, 1657 Broadway, New York, NY 10019. God has a plan for troubled times.

Do you believe that tonight? Mark chapter 4 please in your Bibles in the New Testament. God has a plan for troubled times. Father, I thank you, God with all my heart.

Oh Lord, you are so good. You never leave yourself without a testimony. Not just a story, but a living church.

A bride. A living relationship with the people who have turned to you. Lord, that's always been your testimony in every generation.

You're speaking something to my heart. I hear it. I'm asking you for the grace to deliver it.

I want to speak this tonight, Father, in a manner that honors you. I want to speak it clearly. And I'm asking you for an empowerment to do this.

I need you, Holy Spirit, to animate me. I need you, Lord, to expand the borders of my mind and understanding. I ask you, Lord, to even deliver me from the exuberance of my own nature.

And let me speak for you tonight. Lord, I thank you for this with all my heart. In Jesus' name.

Mark chapter 4, beginning at verse 35. This is a story about a storm. You're going to find yourself in the boat tonight before this is over.

And the same day when the even was come, that's Mark chapter 4, verse 35. He said unto them, let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship.

And there were also with him other little ships. There arose a great storm of wind and the waves beat into the ship so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow.

And they awake him and said unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith? Now, before we consider the lessons of this story, I want you to go ahead two chapters to Mark chapter six and beginning at verse 37.

And it's it's a time again where Jesus commissions his disciples to go on to undertake a similar journey to cross over a stormy place to another side. But this particular journey was preceded by an extraordinary miracle. And in verse 52, it tells us that the lesson at this time by his disciples had not been learned.

And many things that Christ has been attempting to teach them as he attempts to teach every generation. There are many things that the Holy Spirit has attempted to teach you and to teach me. But sometimes we find ourselves just the same way as the disciples were.

In verse 52, it says, For they considered not the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was hardened. They had come through this incredible journey. They had seen the miraculous, but still they're not learning the lesson.

The scripture says they considered not the miracle of the loaves. And the word in the original text in the Greek New Testament means to put it together or to make sense out of something. It's likened to collecting the pieces of a puzzle and putting it together to make a complete picture.

They were not able to consider. He was speaking. It's the Bible is not just a series of happenstance events that writers have just randomly recorded.

No, this is all recorded. It has a divine order to it. The more you study the scriptures and if you're studying with an open mind and heart, as only God can give you, you begin to see that there is a divine thread through this entire book.

No matter how many languages it's been written in or how many places and how many authors it is. It tells one story from beginning to end. There's a divine thought going right through the middle of it.

And you look in these chapters in the New Testament. And these are not just random scenes as if they're in part of a play that doesn't make sense unless the heart is hard. The heart and heart never fully understands.

There's always looking right on the surface, never understands. How does this piece fit with this piece? And how does this piece fit with this piece? And what kind of a picture? And they can never put it together. And the scripture tells us this is exactly the type of heart that these particular disciples had at this time.

They could not consider the miracle that had been performed before the journey that they undertook. Because their hearts were hardened. And the word hardened in the Greek New Testament means insensible to the touch.

God couldn't touch their hearts. They were set in their ways, set in their thinking. It also means a small piece of stone that is broken off from a larger one.

It's as if it took a piece of a tombstone as it is. This is a smaller heart but broken off of a larger death as it is or misunderstanding of God. It cannot yet be touched.

Thank God that this was not going to be the end of the story. You might be sitting here tonight and I know I have and possibly do at certain junctures in our lives and walk with God where God is reaching out to touch us. And He can't seem to make an impression on our hearts in a certain area.

But this is not the end of the story. And don't let the devil ever tell you that it's the end of your story tonight. His story is over.

Yours is only beginning. Not just in time but for all of eternity. Now, go way back with me from the time this declaration is made in verse 52 to verse 37.

There's a crowd. The crowd is gathered. Jesus has been teaching these people.

They're very hungry spiritually and they end up hungry physically. And he doesn't want to send them away because it's the end of the day and they have nothing to eat. Other passages in the scripture concerning these things tell us that they were faint.

He was very concerned that they might not make the full journey if they were not nourished. And he said to his disciples in verse 37, give them to eat. In other words, feed them.

And they said unto him, you're talking 5,000 men here, the scripture tells us, plus women and children. And they said, shall we go and buy 200 penny worth of bread and give them to eat? And in other words, how are we going to do this? And in verse 38, he answers them and says, well, how many loaves do you have? Go and see. In other words, go and see how much you have.

Now, these are not just happening for an illogical purpose. Jesus is teaching something that they're not really comprehending. You'll see this as we go through it.

How much do you have? And they when they knew they came back and they said, well, we have five loaves, five barley loaves. We have we have two fishes, not much of a plan to feed a crowd. Five loaves and two fishes.

It's amazing. They came back and I know that people must have been thinking, I know that some of my thinking like this is downright embarrassing. This is all that we have.

You ever felt that way about your testimony, about your own life? You see the need. You work at a certain area of the city. You live in a certain building and you see this incredible hunger, the need all around you.

And you look at your own resources and you say not much of a plan, God, to feed this crowd. The things that I appear to have in my life are seemingly insignificant compared to the need. We think about this in the church as well.

You see, there's a typology here. Now, there are many, many typologies in the Bible. So the ones I'm going to share with you are the ones that the Holy Spirit's been speaking with reference to this message to my heart.

But I see it this way. He's about to feed not just this crowd. He's about to feed the world with five loaves.

Now, you say, Pastor, please help me understand this. What does it mean? You see, when Christ rose from the dead, he gave the Holy Spirit returned and began to indwell a people. And in this people he indwelled called his church.

He established the ministry. Now, the head of the ministry, as it is, is a five fold ministry. Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.

And through this five fold ministry, he had intended to feed the whole world. And that's exactly what he's done. He rose from the dead, sent the Holy Spirit and through a seemingly insignificant beginning has fed and continues to feed the whole world.

Everyone who's hungry can come to him. All, he said, who are hungry, come and eat. All who are thirsty, come and drink.

And he feeds them through an insignificant people that he has empowered with himself and called into the ministry and to fishes. And we say, OK, if the five loaves represents the five fold ministry, then what are the two fishes? Now, is this the way I've seen it as I've read this? Now, please misunderstand. I mean, don't don't misunderstand.

I'm not the ultimate authority on all of these. But I can only speak to you as the Holy Spirit is speaking to my heart. But I see the two fishes as two parts of the Trinity.

God himself is manifested in three persons. The father, the son and the Holy Spirit. I see the two fishes in this story is representing the father and the Holy Spirit, of course, because the son is already there and there is a trinity there.

And through this trinity of God is going to come a five fold ministry that is going to feed multitudes throughout the world. And now we begin to see the pattern of the church as we move on. In verse thirty nine, he commanded them to all sit down by companies upon the green grass.

Nothing here is without significance. Remember, David, the psalmist, says he makes me lie down in green pastures. This is how the Lord shepherds his people.

That's why you're here tonight. If I'm a true shepherd of God, if the pastors are true shepherds of God, we don't bring the word of God to you tonight to agitate you or to make you feel like a dismal failure. Yes, there will be a challenge of the Holy Spirit.

But ultimately, the burden of God is to bring you into a rest that only Christ can give you and to give you strength that can only come from the Holy Spirit. You will not leave here condemned. You might be convicted that you're not what you should be.

But if the Holy Spirit is reaching out to you will not be condemned unless your sin that you won't lay down ultimately condemns you. And he commanded them to sit down on the green grass and they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties. And I thought I was going to come out of my chair as I was reading this, because I said, God, this is the pattern of the church.

We live in a time, especially in the Western world, where we're teaching pastors that if you don't have a church of ten thousand, you're a failure. But here's the pattern of the church. He could have sat them down by the thousands because there were five thousand men plus women and children.

He could have made five groups, for example, of two thousand apiece. But that's not the way he did it. Divine order comes and he says, sit them down by hundreds and by fifties.

I remember being in a pastor's conference recently and a pastor approached me on the platform after service with his lip trembling. And he said, I feel like such a failure because I only have one hundred or one hundred and fifty people in my church and not realizing this is the pattern of God. It's a five fold ministry, empowered as it is by the life of God within them, sitting the people down all over the world in companies of hundreds and fifties.

There are churches as large as this church and even larger throughout the world. But and we thank God for that. But the pattern by large throughout the world has been throughout history and continues to be churches of hundreds and churches of fifties.

And a man is not a failure. A woman who pastors is not a failure because they've only got a hundred people in their congregation. I thank God for that knowledge with all of my heart.

I thank God for the the word opening and the freedom of Christ that is going to come into the lives of many pastors throughout the world are going to understand. You've not failed because you have 50 people in your church. You could be an absolute divine order.

This could be exactly what God has given you to pastor. And when he had taken the five loaves, it says and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven and blessed and break the loaves and gave them to his disciples to sit before them. And the two fishes divided he among them all.

Now, this is significant to me because I see it this way. He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said to them, you give this to the people. You give them the bread.

And this is what I'm doing tonight. I'm called. I'm part of this fivefold ministry.

And the Lord says, I'm I'm going to as you are faithful to me and seek me. I'm going to open this bread to you. You're going to break it open and you're going to go to the pulpit Tuesday night and you're going to give it to the people.

You're going to give them the bread. Now, the bread is the promise of God. It's the mind of God.

It's the plan of God, as it is. It's what's in God's mind. But that's all that I can do.

I can only bring the promise to you. I can only bring the bread to you, but I cannot. I cannot make God's life happen in you.

You see, he gave the bread to his disciples. They he broke it to them and gave it to them and they gave it to the people. But he gave them the fishes, it says right here.

And he divided. The fish is among them. He says, you give them the promises, but I will make the promises a living reality.

It's the power of the Holy Spirit. It's the grace of God. It's the redemption of the sun.

It's the life of Christ that makes you and I anything more than we are today and takes us where God wants us to go. It's not just simply me bringing something to you that's thought. God says, no, you bring them the thought.

You open the bread to them, but I will give them. The power they need to free them from their sin and to make them the people I've destined them to be. I will change them and strengthen them.

I will nurture them so that they will not faint along the way. Oh, thanks be to God. Thanks be to God.

And verse 42 says they all ate and were filled. Oh, folks, you don't have to be starving as a Christian. You don't have to be starving, period, no matter who you are tonight.

God says, I've got provision for you. I've got a clear thought thinking for your mind. I've got hope for your heart.

I've got bounce for your step. I've got something for you tomorrow. I've got more than this.

I've got mansions in eternity that are being prepared for those who will turn to me. I've got cities that you will rule and reign with me, God says, for all of eternity. Filled.

Filled. That's God's plan for His church. Filled.

Filled to the uttermost. Satisfied. Complete.

Empowered. And then in verse 43 it says, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments and of the fishes. Now, there's a lot of symbolism I could say about this today.

You could talk about the twelve tribes of Israel, the twelve disciples, twelve being a certain number of perfection, the work of God. But I think in this case he's trying to speak to his own disciples. There's a basket for each one of them.

You see, they've been involved in giving this bread out to the people. And he's trying to speak to them. Because remember, these are the ones who later on would not consider the miracle of the loaves because their heart was hard.

These are the ones who are sent out. He says, gather what's left. And they gather twelve baskets.

And Christ is speaking to them and saying, the provision is complete. And it's more than you can even think or imagine. Remember, they came to Him initially with just these five loaves and two fishes.

Now they're gathering a basket full of leftovers. Big baskets. And he says, no, I can do more than you can even think or imagine.

I'll anoint you until your cup overflows. Hallelujah. I'll set a banquet table before you in the midst of your enemies.

And now, after all this happens, Verse 44 says about 5,000 men, and of course there's women and children there too, eight. And then he says to them, get into the ship and go to the other side. Now, Jesus said to us, to you and to me, after he rose from the dead, he said to us, all power is given to me in heaven and in earth.

Go, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Go.

That's the command to the church. That's my commission. That's your commission.

If you're a genuine Christian tonight, go to the other side. There's an end to this journey for you. You're going to make it through.

You're going to get to heaven. I'm with you to the end of the world. You've seen my provision.

You know that your life is more than it used to be. You've experienced this increase, and there's an abundant supply of my life and provision for you as you head out on this journey. Now, just go to the other side.

Don't be concerned about the storms of this life. You're going to face them. Folks, you're all going to face them.

I'm going to face them. We don't know what tomorrow holds. But I know between now and the end of my journey, there are more storms coming my way, and there's more coming your way.

But Jesus still said, go. Go to the other side. Now, that's his word.

He's given us his word. I'm going to keep you. You're not going to be overpowered.

I can prove it if I had time tonight. All through the Scriptures, the floods will not overwhelm you. The fires will not burn you.

Not even a hair on your head is going to perish. Go to the other side. Go to the other side.

Now, let's go back to Matthew chapter 4, where we began. In verse 35, it says, The same day when the evening was come, he said to them, let's pass over to the other side. Now, in this particular story, he's in the boat.

The one I just read to you a moment ago, he was on the mountain. He sent them alone. The lesson is simple.

Whether he seems near or far away, he's still with you. He was in the boat. This first story.

The second story. He's on the mountain, but he's watching them. The Scripture says it was nighttime.

The storm was fierce and he saw them and came walking to them on the water. It's not about how you feel. There are times that we feel God's closer times.

We don't know where he is. But in reality, we have an inner knowledge that he said, I will never leave you or forsake you. Never.

Now, in verse 37, it says, There arose a great storm of wind and the waves beat into the ship and it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow. Now, this is a strange turn of events.

They're aware he's near. I mean, he's in the boat. He's in the back.

But something strange is happening. He's asleep in the storm. Now, think about this for a moment.

The God of Israel never slumbers or sleeps, the Scripture says. What is he teaching them? What is he teaching you and I through this story tonight? I know he's not asleep. He's God.

He's not asleep. He knows everything that's going on. He's omniscient.

Nothing is escaping him. Now, think for a moment about all the effort they were making in that boat that night to wake him up. Think about it.

Oh, sure is breezy out here tonight. You sure have to row hard. Their voices start to rise in the wind, start speaking to each other a little louder than they normally do.

They're slapping their oars on the water. They're doing everything they can to wake up Jesus. It's amazing.

That's what half of our prayer meetings in the Church of Jesus Christ are like. Make a lot of noise and shout just a little bit louder as if he's asleep and he has to be woken up. And all this racket that's going on, I can envision it as I was preparing this.

I know what I would do and you know what you would do if you're in that situation. If God's in your boat and God seems to be asleep and the waves are overpowering you and the boat's starting to fill up. And in the beginning you're, oh, we're so happy God is with us.

And you row on a little more, the water gets a little deeper. Oh, we're so happy. We're so happy God is with us.

Aren't we happy? We're happy. Let's everybody get happy. And then finally they can't handle it anymore and they do what every one of us have done from time to time.

They finally go to him and they accuse him of some lack. It's exactly what they do. They can't seem to understand.

They can't seem to get a response from Christ. And so they wake him up and they say, the first thing they actually say to him, don't you care? Have you ever said that in your prayer closet? I'm dying here. Don't you care? Where are you? I mean, I know you're here, but what are you doing? I'm dying.

You see, in Old Testament Israel, let me just read this to you from Isaiah 58. They prayed the same prayer. Isaiah went to a people, God's people at that time, and it said in the Scriptures, there are people who seek me daily.

They delight to know my ways. There is a nation that did righteousness and did not forsake their God. They take delight in approaching to me.

But there is an inward question in them. And they said, why are we fasting? And it's as if you don't see us or you don't care. And they said, why are we afflicting our soul? In other words, God, we are doing at least more than everybody else is doing.

We're at least in the boat with you. We're at least attempting to walk with you. And we're doing these things that are bringing us into distress.

But it's as if you don't see us. You take no knowledge of us. Actually, it says in the King James, Isaiah 58.

It's as if you take no knowledge. It's as if you're not even aware of what we're going through. Why, they cried out, God, is this happening to us? And then he answers them and says, behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure.

Number one, you're doing these things, but the core of why you're doing it is for yourself. You're walking with me, but there's an inner thought of what's in this for me. There are people who come to this church and they get halfway through the message and say, wow, there's obviously nothing in this for me and get up and walk out.

Because that's really the core of why they're serving God. They don't really come to learn how it is to walk with them or to be abandoned to the purposes of God. It's kind of a self-indulgent relationship as they see it with God.

And he said, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure and you exact all your labors. Now, the closest translation I could give you from my understanding of this, exacting all your labors, is that you allow grief to continue to exist. That's really, I think, the closest to the Hebrew.

You allow grief to continue to exist by your actions. In some cases, it was the hands of God's people that were causing the grief. And in other cases, it's just the lack of doing something about it that was allowing grief to exist.

It's an amazing thing. Jesus could have easily said to them, don't you care? You're accusing me of not caring, but don't you care? You see, there's something they had missed on this journey. They're in the boat.

They're going across. They've got Christ with them. So what are they missing? And why does he seemingly asleep in the back of the boat and not listening to them? And you find it in verse 36 in three little words, actually.

And it says, start at the beginning. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships on this journey, by inference, of course.

Other little ships. Three little words. And they missed it.

Other little ships. Three little words. Think of the single mother with two little children.

Think of the three school kids walking down 50th, coming home from school, despondent, despairing. They too are trying to get to the other side. They're in the same storm that you and I are in.

But you see, there's a difference. We have God with us in our boat, and they don't. And they're in that storm, and they're just little ships, and they're trying to make it.

And the same waves that we feel are going to sink us are actually sinking them. And here they are accusing Christ of saying, don't you care? And he's trying to teach them as he tried to teach Israel. No, it's not me who doesn't care.

It's you who doesn't care. You haven't considered the miracles of the loaves and the fishes. You haven't fully embraced the fact that I've chosen already to provide for you.

Your provision is already settled. You don't have to worry about yourself. I'm taking you through to the other side.

I already gave you my word. You don't have to ask me. I've already told you you're going to the other side.

So you don't have to ask and re-ask and re-ask and re-ask. Every time we go, you go into the prayer closet. Stop praying about yourself all the time.

There are other people out there in the same storm trying to get to the other side. But they don't have the hope that you have. God is not with them in the boat.

They are perishing in these storms. Another translation said he stood up and he said, Where is your faith? Where is your faith? Not your faith to calm the storm. And I've heard that preached.

And I've preached that many times. And it perhaps has a small application here. But I don't believe that's the full context.

Where is your faith? He said to them. I told you we're going through. I said it.

Let's go to the other side. It's not as if God can say something and it doesn't happen. I said I'm going to be with you even to the ends of the world.

I said all power is given unto me. If I seem asleep, it says in the book of James, You ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you may consume it on your own lust or yourself. It's bottom line.

Half the churches in this country don't have prayer meetings because they don't have any burden for the lost. They don't really have God's burden at the very center core of why they're even walking with God. They love the loaves.

They love the fishes. They love the miracles. Love the stories.

Love the testimonies. But don't love the work of God. And deep, deep down in the core, they may not have the courage to admit it.

But deep in the inner core of their entire being is let the whole world go to hell as long as I'm comfortable and not wet. You see, you and I have what those in these other little boats need. We have a word of

assurance that they need.

We know we're going to the other side. We know that God's provision can be also theirs. Everything God has given us, He will give to them.

We know it. We have it. We have it.

Can you picture how different this story would be if Peter and John and James and the others had stood up in the middle of the storm and just started yelling out across the bowels, Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. God is with us.

God will keep us. God will keep you. Turn.

Come in this direction. Come to where we are. Hook on to the side of our boat.

And because we're going through to safety, you're coming through to safety with us. How different it might have been. I don't see Jesus, if that would have been in their heart.

I don't see Him sleeping. I see Him standing up in the back of the boat. I see the voice of God calling out in the storm.

I see Him empowering a church who needed power at that moment. We have a word of direction. We have a word of encouragement.

I know where I'm going. And I want to take as many as I can with me. I know I'm going through to the other side.

I don't expect life to be easy. But this is not about life being easy. This is about eternity in heaven with God.

This is about deliverance from the power of hell. They need your prayers. They need the giving of the supply.

God says that I have shown you. They need it. These other little ships that are trying to make it through.

If you think of New York City tonight, how many are rowing in this storm? How many have no hope? How many have no direction? How many have no idea? You have God with you tonight. They're trying to get to where they think He's going to be. They don't even know where He is.

In contrast to this, in Acts chapter 27, and I'm going to finish with this tonight, we have the apostle Paul. If there's any man, I guess, in the scriptures that I would like to be like, I'd like to be like Paul. This is such a wonderful man of God.

He knew where he'd come from. He never lost sight of it. He didn't become proud.

He kept to the course, as it is, of the purpose that God had saved him. He loved people, beginning with his own countrymen, and obviously became the apostle to the Gentiles. And God was able to use him.

He had this passionate heart that took him on this journey of storms. And if there was any man that suffered storms, it would be the apostle Paul. He suffered in his body.

He suffered in his mind. Suffering was part of his life. He was baptized into suffering.

God Himself, Christ Himself, told Ananias, go lay your hands on this man, and I will show him the great things that he must suffer for my namesake. He was called to suffering. His whole life was a life of suffering.

And yet, there was something in this man that not only was able to lead into thousands, most likely in his generation, to Christ, but he was able to be... God could put a pen in his hand and begin to write the Holy Scriptures through him that are an encouragement to us even today. Verse 20 in Acts 27, it says, And when neither the sun nor the stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was taken away. And this is where many people are living.

Now, Paul's on a physical journey. He's a prisoner on a ship. He's being held in the hold of that ship.

And the people who think they have him captive are being captivated by the storms around them. They've lost hope. And we're living in a time where this is going to be increasingly the story of New York City and many other cities throughout the world, where hope is going to be taken away.

People are just going to become aware of this increasing lawlessness, the increasing downward spiral as it is, it's seemingly having no solution. But after long absence, verse 21, Paul stood forth in the midst of them and said, Sirs, you should have hearkened to me and not have loosed from Crete to have gained this harm and loss. And I see this as the voice of a church that's been silenced because people wouldn't listen.

It seems that for the last decade or even longer, the voice of the church seems to be almost gone, buried in the ambition of a world that has been traveling farther and farther away from God. But in this hour that we're living in, people are getting into trouble and they're starting to look for hope again. And the scripture says after long abstinence, Paul stood up one more time.

I believe that with all my heart. I feel it in me. This is the church's finest hour ahead of us.

And I exhort you, he said, to be of good cheer. For there shall be no loss of any man's life among you but of the ship. In other words, the things you've trusted in, where you've placed your security, the things you thought were going to get you to your destination are going to be lost.

But your life is going to be spared. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, for thou must be brought before Caesar. And, lo, God has given thee all them that sail with thee.

Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer. For I believe, God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Amazing.

This is Paul. Now, go ahead. Go ahead.

Just a bit. Verse 34. Now, he's standing in the midst of the storm.

Can you picture Paul? He's on the deck of this ship that is creaking and groaning and flooding. Think of the disciples accusing Christ as it is of not caring. But here's Paul.

He knows that God cares. He knows that God is going to keep him. He's got a word.

The whole thing is going down. But Paul says, No, it might be, but I'm not. I've got a destiny ahead of me and I'm heading to this place where I'm going to stand before governors and rulers and I'm going to testify for Christ.

I don't know the end of my journey, but I know it's going to be glorious because God is with me. And I've been in prayer. And God says, I'm not going down.

And God, in his mercy, has given me all of you who sail with me. What a contrast to this original journey we started with in the gospel of Mark at the beginning of this message. He said, I pray you, verse 34, take some meat for this is for your health.

There shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you. Can you imagine how incredulous this must have seemed? There is a storm so fierce they're throwing their tackling overboard. They're throwing their provisions overboard.

They've got anchors thrown out eventually out of the back of the ship. They're hoping for the day. They're fearing they're going to be thrown upon rocks.

And Paul says, start. Take some meat. Not a hair is going to perish in the head of any of you.

Amazing. And when he had thus spoken, it says he took bread. Remember the disciples? Remember the miracle of the loaves? He took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all.

And when he had broken it, he began to eat. Now, I see this as the type of the Christian who in the midst of the storm, whatever it is coming your way, whatever it is you're going now, you open this book and you begin to eat. And the glory and the joy and the keeping power of God comes on you.

Hallelujah. People look at you and say, where do you get this strength in such a difficult time? You say, well, I have this basket of bread and I open it up every day and I eat and I eat and I eat of this bread. It says when he had broken it, he began to eat.

And verse 36 says, then they were all of good cheer. And they also, they also, they also took some meat. They also began to get into this Word of God.

They also began to take courage and say, God, if you can strengthen this man in this way, in the midst of this storm, you could also strengthen me. We have good cheer. Paul says, eat, all will be well.

God stood with me. I'm on a journey and he's given me your lives. Imagine those that work on Wall Street.

You're going to need the courage of God in the coming days. We're having, I understand it, another flash financial boom, which is exactly going to be that. When it's all over, it's going to be very difficult in the days ahead of us.

Think of people all over the city as all kinds of despair begins to hit. And you're standing there. And you can tell your neighbors and you can tell your family, you can tell your coworkers, God stood with me.

I'm on a journey. And in his goodness, he's given me your life. In his goodness, he's going to take you with me as he's taken me with him.

And you say it with authority. You don't apologize for it. The time for apologizing for being a Christian is over, folks.

It's over. Stand. Stand in the grace of your God.

Now, Paul had to have said other words and I wrote down what I feel, what he might have told the people, those who have to swim. He said, some of you are going to have to swim. But God is going to give you strength to make it to the shore because he's given me a promise.

And if you trust in the word that he's given me to give you, he's going to take you to the shore. You're going to make it to the other side. You may have to swim.

Your boat may fall apart, but you're going to get there. You may crawl on the sand when the journey's over, but you're going to get there. And imagine, as Paul tells the centurion, tells all the rest of the people, the ship is going to fall apart.

Whoever can swim, swim. God will get you there. The rest of you, grab onto a piece of wood.

There's plenty to go around. Think of the bread. There's plenty to go around.

Think of the cross. There's plenty to go around. There's enough forgiveness for everybody.

There's enough strength for everybody. There's enough power for everybody. Grab onto the cross.

Grab onto the victory that Christ won 2,000 years ago on Calvary. That's got to be your message. There's wood enough for everybody to get you through the storm.

Grab onto a piece of the wood of Calvary. And God will not fail you. You'll all make it.

And that's the word that God gave me for you tonight. But before you can preach it to others, you have to believe it. It's got to be in your heart.

You're going to make it. God has already made you more than you used to be before you came to him. You've already changed.

He's already done the miraculous inside of your life. He's already called you with him on a journey. And all around you are people who are perishing.

And he's given you the promise that he's going to take you to the other side. There is a season in your heart as a Christian where you have to settle this forever. I know in my heart I'm going to the other side.

I don't expect this to be an easy journey at times. I know there are going to be storms. But if I'm going to reach people who are in these storms, I have to be where they are.

There's no way around it. I can't live in an ivory tower and expect it to impact my generation. The greatest gift that God can give to a perishing society is to put you and me in the center of their storm.

Right where they live. Right in the workplace where they are. Right in the apartment building where they live.

Right on the streets where they hang out. That's the greatest gift that God could give to this world and this generation is you and me. Standing in the storm.

Saying be of good cheer. God is with me. And God will be with you.

You've got to believe it. If you don't believe it, then your heart will be hardened. You will not comprehend the miracle of the loaves.

You will not comprehend the multiplication that he's already brought into your life and your character. You'll not understand the picture. If you don't understand the miracle of the loaves.

And if your heart is not to reach a lost generation. I want to reach this city. And I don't consider it impossible.

I don't care what anybody says. When you see New York City from the air, it's pretty small. When you see it from space, it's even smaller.

When you see it from heaven, it hardly is visible. It isn't very big, folks. I don't consider it impossible that God can reach a city.

I believe in his mercy he's going to. And he's going to do it with the people. In the storm.

I want to give an altar call tonight. I want to give an altar call for people who want to stand in the storm. And be a voice.

Calling these other little ships to safety. Like Paul did. You want to be that voice.

It's time, beloved, it's time. It's time to stand. Because you are the only plan that God has for the coming storm.

There's no other plan. If you can say, let me just give you a quick testimony, two minutes. Then I'm going to open this altar.

I was two years saved. I was a young police officer. But I was ashamed of Christ.

Oh, I could sing the songs in church. And do all of the religious things. But getting out into the marketplace was a different story for me.

It's almost like I couldn't make the break. And stand for him. And one day driving down the road, I got so mad, I punched the steering wheel in my car.

And I said, Jesus, I'm going to live for you if it kills me. I really don't care anymore. I'm just tired.

I want to live for you. I want to stand for something that honors you. Within a few days, I had a sovereign encounter with God.

He met me. He met me twice. Met me the first night and filled me with the Holy Ghost.

I hadn't expected this. I was in a church that taught that these things were past. But you see, you can't teach about a God who is as if he's not.

He met me. And you see, that's the first thing that will happen. He's the one that has the fish.

He will give you of himself. You have to want to live for him. I fear for a generation of Pentecost that have called people to an altar and said, you know, repeat after me, Yabba-Dabba-Doo.

And now you're filled with the Holy Ghost. I fear for that because it produced nothing but foolishness in God's name. No, the Holy Spirit is given to those who want to walk with Christ, who want to do the work of God, who want to honor him in their generation.

That's when the Holy Spirit came to me. And I didn't go to him. He came to me.

And then the next night or a few nights later, I had a very, very sovereign experience with God. I can never forget it all of my life. I was just visited by the Holy Spirit.

I don't know how else to say it. And the fear of God became part of my life. I had the power of God, but it was coupled with the fear of God.

To know that, yes, God is gracious and is willing to give power, but you'd never play games with his power. And the power of God is not to ever do something that dishonors his name. And he's kept me.

It's not like I haven't struggled, but he's kept me. And tonight I want to give a call to those who want to stand. And I'm not going to tell you anything's going to happen at this altar, but I'm going to tell you that if it's truly in your heart, you will have an encounter with God.

It could be on the subway on the way home. It could be when you get home in your bedroom alone, but you will. If it's in your heart, you will encounter him, and he will empower you.

I've opened the bread, but he gives the fish. He gives the Holy Spirit. If it's in your heart to believe him, if it's in your heart, young people here tonight, stand up.

Don't let your friends go to hell at school. Working people, stand up. Ordinary office people, stand up for God.

Stand up for truth. Do his work while it's still day. If it's in your heart as we stand, would you make your way here? And we're going to pray together.

Elijah prepared the sacrifice, but you had to send the fire. I'm asking tonight, Lord, that you meet this church. This city can't be won without your power.

We can't stand without your life within us. I feel, Lord, like you've invited us to the throne tonight. You want to empower a people to represent you.

I yield my life afresh tonight for this purpose. I don't care what's at the end of the road, Lord, as long as you're there to greet me. That's all that matters now.

I'm asking you tonight, Holy Spirit, to come and fill every hungry heart, every yearning heart, every one in the sanctuary who truly wants to walk with you, wants to glorify Jesus Christ. God, you'd never call us to walk without your power. You said, I'm with you even to the ends of the world.

Now, Father, I ask in Jesus' name, Lord, that you empower every hungry heart tonight. Folks, would you raise your hands to him? Would you cry out from your innermost being if you're thirsty? Would you tell him if you're hungry? Would you ask him to feed you? Would you ask for the power of the Holy Spirit tonight?

You have to ask. It's not a mystical prayer.

There's nothing I can do for you. I've broken the bread, but only Christ himself can give you his life. Would you ask him now? Would you ask him? The Scripture says if you ask for bread, he'll not give you a stone.

How much more, Jesus said, will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him? Father, tonight we're asking for the Holy Spirit. We're asking for an empowerment from heaven. We're asking, O God, for the power of Christ, that we can stand in a stormy time and a darkened generation, that our lives might be beacons to those who live in darkness, that our voices might be voices of encouragement to those who have gone without life and strength most of their lives.

God Almighty, do what only you can do tonight. Come and empower this church. Empower us, Lord.

We're not interested in playing games. We're not interested in singing songs. We're interested in being your church, the bride of Christ, in this city, on this side of eternity.

O God, O God, O God, put your cry within us. Put your cry within us, Holy Spirit. Put your power within us.

Put your compassion within us. God Almighty, plant a trust in our hearts, O God. Put a cry for the lost in us, O God, that is born of your heart, Lord, born of you, Jesus, of nothing of the flesh, but only what is of your Spirit.

O Jesus, I thank you, God Almighty, I thank you. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Folks, you've got to cry out to yourself. You have to cry out to yourself. You have to cry out to yourself.

I can't do it for you. You have to cry out to yourself. You cry out.

You cry out unashamedly if you need Him. You ask Him. Ask Him for His power.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Lord, hear the cry of your people.

Don't be ashamed. If you ever need, don't be ashamed to tell Him. Just tell Him.

Just tell Him, folks. Just tell Him. O Jesus, we need you.

Holy Spirit, I'm not ashamed to say I need you. I can't live without you. I can't sing without you.

I can't preach without you. I can't be a father without you. I can't be a husband without you.

I'm no testimony without you. I need you, Jesus. I need everything you have for me.

My God, my God, my God. I pray you make our lives a living testimony. God, make us a city set on a hill that cannot be hidden.

O Lord God, O God, O God, come and empower us. Holy Spirit, empower us. Empower us, O God.

Empower us to live for you, Lord. Father, we thank you. God, we praise you for this.

God, we give you the glory. We thank you, Father. You'll never send your children away empty.

Never, never will you send your children empty. Never, never will you send us empty. O God, thank you.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus.

This is the conclusion of the message.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/11/SID11818.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/carter-conlon/god-has-a-plan-for-trouble-times/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net