

I Believe

by Carter Conlon

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Duration: 30:39

Scripture: Acts 14:7, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:11, Romans 8:31

Topics: "Faith and Transformation", "Surrendering to God's Plan"

Description

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Transcript

I have a simple word this evening I'm going to be sharing momentarily, and it's simply called, I Believe. That's the title, I Believe. But before I do, I want you to hear a testimony that really is part of what I'm about to share this evening.

A young lady called Irina Cherkasky from Washington, and she has a story that you need to hear because just a short time ago, Irina was where you are tonight, many who are listening to me online, and you'll understand that in just a moment. But God came into her situation, and the last place I think Irina ever expected she was going to be was at a Bible school in Grantville, Pennsylvania as one of our sabbatical students. She's a delightful young lady.

God's hand is on her. He has raised her up for this moment and for this hour. Irina, why don't you come up? Irina has never spoken publicly before, so Irina is a little bit nervous tonight, but she's going to tell you how God spoke to her about the reason that she ought not to be nervous this evening.

So Father, we just pray for Irina right now, Lord, that you would just place your hand upon her life. Speak through her. There are so many people tonight listening to this prayer meeting who are exactly where Irina used to be, but you were able to reach her, and you did something miraculous in her life.

And so, God, I just thank you over the next several minutes, God, that she'll be able to clearly share the story and then pray for people who need to believe as she once did in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Pastor Carter.

Hello, Times Square Church. I can't believe I'm here. It's crazy.

Thank you, fellow students, everyone who prayed for me. I feel very blessed to be here, and I stand here to share my story, not based on anything I've done, but really how little faith it takes for Christ to move, to move miraculously in your life. And today, I walk in victory.

Today, I'm sober. Today, I stand here smiling. I'm happy to where I can walk in my identity and learn more about Christ.

I came to Summit to know God, to really, truly figure out who this person is that I want to follow for the rest of my life. But three years ago, things were not quite so smooth for me, so that's what I kind of wanted to share a little bit about. Three years ago, I was heavily addicted to drugs and alcohol, and my life became unmanageable.

Most of my early 20s, I really spent in the world to where I built up a successful career. I really had everything I wanted in the world, but this empty hole kept remaining in me, and it kept growing, and it kept getting worse. No matter how successful I got with my career or anything else, that hole, I kept covering up with other things, worldly things, and eventually, definitely alcohol.

So, I got to a point where really, within less than a year, my whole life flipped upside down to everything I knew, everything I thought I had. Everything I was using to fill that hole was no longer working, and I ended up just hitting a rock bottom after rock bottom, and really being unsure why God is this happening to me. I've been a good person most of my life, and sure, I've been rebellious in my 20s, but I really didn't understand.

For the longest time, I've just thought I'm a good person, like good things happen to good people, but I've learned to realize our self-efforts, the harder we try sometimes, and the harder we fall is what I've learned, but those falls were necessary for me to be where I am today. In some ways, I really do feel like I've lost everything, but I've gained everything at the same time. So, I really just want to praise God just for what He has done, because a lot of you are sitting in a hopeless situation where you don't think there's a way out, and my rock bottom was low, very low.

I remember sitting on the floor just in my bedroom, relapsed again from alcohol, trying to get sober and have no success whatsoever, and just sitting wondering if there's hope. For months, I sat on our balcony just at night, just sitting there, staring at just the sky, wondering is there any hope, and I really didn't know if there was. I really thought I was too far gone for God to want me, and I just remember those nights just sitting and looking at the nature.

The nature really testifies that God exists, and I knew I could never deny that, but really, I was just so mad at God and so stubborn that in my own failures, I just couldn't admit that it was my rebellion that was keeping me from connecting with God, was keeping me from His grace, His love, all these things that He's offered to me now, and it wasn't until I really came to the end of myself and said, you know, I'm not God. I can't keep living a life as if I'm God, keep telling myself what to do and what I want to do and what I don't want to do. It wasn't shortly after that that I heard Pastor Carter's message on YouTube.

Just, I don't even know how it came up. I didn't watch sermons back then, and it just, his sermon came up, the battle that rages for the mind, and I listened to that sermon, and it blew my mind to where it really convicted me of the way I was living, and it wasn't just the alcohol. It was really my thoughts and that led to then the actions, but really that emptiness of living for myself, wanting everything from the world, whether it was money, career, success, a lot of friends, but really just having nothing inside, and I remember just getting on my knees and just praying a simple prayer and just recognizing God as God, and something changed.

I had, I felt like I had this supernatural experience that just gave me hope. It gave me faith, and I don't even know how much faith I had. I remember praying, God, I really do have this mustard seed.

You say that's all it takes. That's all I got, and I remember listening to Pastor Carter and thinking, he has hope. He's got faith.

I don't have a lot of it, but he does, and the more I listened to his sermons, the more my faith grew. Somebody believed in me when nobody else did. By this point, I've lost all my friends and family.

Everyone's turned away from me. I was titled as just, you know, a drug-addicted alcoholic. Like, that was my new title, to where it really looked like a hopeless situation, and especially trying to get sober and failing.

I didn't understand why did God redeem me. I accepted him, but yet I couldn't get sober, and it took me a really long time to understand why I couldn't have victory over my sin, and I mean, it was just a process of surrender and trust. I just still kept believing that God has a plan.

The work he began in me, he will complete it, and I don't know why that verse just kept me going and kept me believing, to where I had nothing to show for anything, to where my parents couldn't, they couldn't trust me, and rightfully so. I really couldn't stay sober for a long period of time. Most of my friends turned their back on me because, I mean, when you're addicted, you're living a selfish life, and you're so broken that you hurt everyone around you, and I just remember sitting on the floor and, again, thinking, listening to another message of Pastor Carter's or Tuesday night prayer, and thinking, is there really hope? I failed again for however many time, and yet something inside of me just kept going, yes, get up, get up.

Whether it was the people here that were praying for me, actually, I do believe that it was everyone that was praying for me, but something kept me going. Even a lot of my friends who were non-Christian saw that I was falling more than they were. They were staying sober, and I couldn't stay sober.

I was the Christian, and yet they saw I kept getting back up, and something, there was a power greater in me that was working that kept me getting back up, and that really gave me hope to stand here today for those of you who are in despair and really don't see a way out of your situation. Maybe you keep relapsing. Maybe you're the family member who has that child who is in addiction or keeps going back, and you really don't see any hope.

I just, I guess I stand here three years later saying that there is hope. It's been a process, but looking back now, and I'm wondering, God, why did it take so long for me to get here? Why couldn't I be here earlier and done this Bible school and really had kind of a restart in life? And I realized back then I was really praying to get sober, but I think God had something bigger in mind, and while I have been trying in my own self-efforts to get sober, God had something bigger in mind. He didn't want to just get me sober.

He really wanted to give me a new life, and coming here to Summit has just been incredible. I mean, to get here in itself, God had to move mountain after mountain after mountain. A year ago, I really didn't even see that this would be possible, but again, just that little faith, hold on to that faith.

I guess that's, I think that's a testimony to anyone, really, that God will take that, and He grows it, and I think faith gives you hope, and it multiplies, and eventually God will fulfill what He started and get us to the places we're supposed to be to do what we're supposed to do for Him, and I always said, if I make it, God, if you get me sober, I will stand here and testify, and I will pray for that person that doesn't have hope. So it's really just an honor to be here, to be here standing in faith and saying it is possible. God is bigger than our failures.

He is bigger than our weakness, our faith, our small faith, and He's got great things planned for us. I'm just going to pray into that. Yeah.

Heavenly Father, thank you so much, God, for who you are. Thank you that you are alive. Thank you that you are working in us.

Thank you for your Holy Spirit that is with us. Lord, God, I thank you so much for what you have done in my life, God. I thank you that you have given me a new life, God.

I thank you that you have good plans for all of us, Lord, and right now, I just want to pray for every single person that's sitting out there who has no hope, who's failed, who doesn't think that you want them back, God, that person who's just in despair. I pray for those parents who constantly keep seeing their child who keeps falling, and they're hopeless and don't know what to do. Lord, I pray that the hope you give us, God, that you would pour that on them, Lord, that they would just believe, God, and I see how you've transformed my family, Lord, to where the faith of those around me has been strengthened, God, and I know you can do that for my brothers and sisters out there, Lord.

I pray that families would be redeemed, that families would be saved. I pray for addicts and alcoholics to rise up and try again, to rise up and keep going, to pray, Lord, to get on their knees and just seek you and keep believing, God, because you are real, you are supernatural, and you move mountains, Lord. I thank you for being here, Lord.

I thank you that I'm able to share this testimony for you, Christ, because it's all about you. In Jesus' name, amen. Bless the Lord.

Bless the Lord. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me. Bless his holy name.

Irina, we just thank God so much for you and for what the Lord has done in your life, and may your life be a raindrop of a thunderstorm of what God's going to do in this generation of setting people free and raising up an incredible testimony. Acts chapter 14, if you have your Bible with you, Acts chapter 14, and I'm going to begin at verse 7. So, Father, thank you again for the opportunity to open your Word. And again, we believe that the entrance of your words brings light, brings life.

And you say in the Gospel of John that as many as received you, you gave the power to become the sons and the daughters of God. So, Father, tonight we ask you, Lord, to stretch out your hand and do what only you can do. Father, raise up an army in this end time in which we're now living in, an army of the addicted, the afflicted, the oppressed, people who know that they can't go forward without a holy God intervening on their behalf.

Let it be an army that you raise for your glory. Father, we just want to say thank you for what you have done and what you're going to do in the days ahead of us. You are welcome here, Holy Spirit.

You are welcome in this sanctuary. You're welcome in our homes. You are welcome in our lives to do the work that only you can do.

Thank you for giving us the grace to surrender and let you do the work of raising us up. And we thank you for it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, next chapter 14, this was a... I'll set the stage in this. Paul and Barnabas and some others are with him, and they've been preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the society of a particular place that they were in turned against them, as a matter of fact, turned violently against them, so to abuse them and to stone them, the Scripture says.

So they had to flee from one place, and they went into another. And the Scripture tells us, beginning in verse 7, in this new place they were preaching the gospel. And in Lystra, Acts 14, 8, a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

This man heard Paul speaking, and Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand up straight on your feet. And he leaped and walked. I want to talk about perception.

Here is a man who's never... there's a certain thing in his life he's never been able to do. He's seen other people do it, like people maybe tonight that are listening online, and you hear Irina talking about listening to the Word of God, and the chains of addiction are broken off of her life. A brand new life is set up before her, where she's here at Bible School actually learning about what that life is going to look like, and what that path is going to be.

And you're looking at this tonight as this man was looking at other people, perhaps who walked into the meeting. They were able to do what he had never been able to do. And there's people listening tonight, you've never been able to get out of depression, you've never been able to garner any kind of a positive view of your future and your life, you've loathed yourself, you've never been able to escape the self-loathing that's in your heart.

The self-loathing or rebellion, as Irina said, has brought you into addiction, it's brought you into broken relationships, it's brought you into depression. And here you are tonight, sitting in your home with your laptop open, and you're listening now to songs of praise, you're listening to testimonies of what God can do. And now just as this man was, you're hearing somebody opening to you the Word of God.

And so this man is listening, and he's listening intently, and he's in a position where he's considering doing something he's never done before, at least hearing that God is able to give him the ability to do something he's never done before. And as he hears Paul speaking, Paul is observing him and seeing that he had faith to be healed. I don't know what it looked like, whether it's the look on his face, whether he had like a grin, or maybe he's on the edge of his chair like this, kind of bug-eyed as I was in my 20s when I first heard these words as well, I don't know.

But Paul saw something in the man that told him, this man is engaged, this man has come to the point of just saying, I believe. I remember that in my own life. I remember going to church as a young believer in Christ with such a horrid self-image and such a lousy view of my own future, and suddenly hearing a

preacher preach about a simple fact, that in Christ all things are possible, that because of Christ we become a new creation, because of Christ a new pathway is laid out.

And I remember sitting on the edge of my seat thinking, could this be true? Week after week hearing this evangelist preach a similar message, and I don't know what day it was, but there was a day in my heart where I said, I believe, I believe this. And I got up and began to walk towards this new life that I felt was true, that God was promising to me, and that would be my hope and would be my future. Paul observed him, saw that he had faith to be healed, and then suddenly spoke to him with a loud voice, stand up straight on your feet, and he leaped up and he walked.

So the question is, what was Paul preaching that gave this man the faith to walk, who had never walked before? He had never even contemplated walking, perhaps. It was just not there. He had been lame from his mother's womb.

Obviously there's no muscle tone in his legs. There's nothing physically he can do to get up. Try as he might, there's nothing there.

And probably his legs had atrophied by this point and most likely were unusable, completely unusable. Was he hearing 2 Corinthians 5, 17? I'm just thematically going through a lot of Paul's preaching where Paul said, if anyone be in Christ, he's a new creation. The old things are passed away.

Behold, all things have become new. And is that the point where the man said, God, if that's true, I want that. If all things, if the old things in my life, the old paralysis, the old disabilities in my life, this thing that's got the power to actually determine my future.

If you are, if I am in you and you are in me, you say that these old things pass away and behold, all things become new. Romans chapter 8, verse 11, Paul the apostle wrote these words, if the spirit of Christ be in you, the same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies. These were the teachings of Paul.

He's preaching something. It has to be along these lines because it led this man to believe that he could be healed. If the spirit of God is within you, he will quicken your mortal bodies.

Basically it means bring your mortal body to life. He will give you abilities to do things that you were never able to do before. He will make you into what you could never hope to be, give you what you could never possess in your natural strength and take you where you could never go by any amount of your own initiative or effort.

And suddenly he's hearing these words, if the spirit of Christ be in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will quicken your mortal bodies. Amazing. I wonder how many people in the church of Jesus Christ actually believe that in this generation, that I can actually be raised out of death in areas where I died, in areas where relationships died, or hope died, or ability died, or I came to a place of death in this area of my life, and I don't see any chance of going forward or ever changing.

And suddenly hearing a message that if the spirit of God is in you, he who raised Christ from the dead. See, that's what our gospel is all about. You know that.

It's about dead people living. You know that, right? That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's about not only being forgiven, but living.

Raised from the dead. Raised out of darkness. Raised out of weakness.

Raised out of places that you could never get out of in your own strength by the spirit of almighty God within you. Also in Romans chapter 8, beginning at verse 31, the apostle Paul, he said these words. Let me just read it to you for time's sake.

That he who did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Everything we need for life and forgiveness. Everything we need for a future that glorifies God. Everything we need to go through every door that God calls us through, and to be everything that God has called us to be.

Might I add a caveat to that? It's rarely, if ever, in our comfort zone that God gets the most glory. It's not in something we could do. Now Irina has never spoken publicly before.

Didn't she do a great job tonight? By the spirit of almighty God within her. I think she did amazingly for somebody who has never held a microphone, never stood in front of people, and never given a speech in her whole life. You see, by the spirit of God, we are taken out of our weaknesses and brought into his strength.

She looked like a seasoned speaker to me tonight. I don't know about you. By the spirit of God, who will bring a charge against God's elect? Who dares to say that you will not become this if God says you will? Who dares to say that you won't do this if God says that's what I've destined you to do? Who dares to say that you're going to stay in a place of death if I have pronounced life over you? Who will bring a charge against the elect of God? It is God who justifies.

Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sort? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. I am persuaded neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I think Paul's message was as Paul's message always was. God loves you with a love and a passion and a compassion that you don't fully and never can fully comprehend. But what I can tell you is that it can never be taken away and you can never be separated from the love of God, the passion of God to redeem you, to raise you, to make you into the person that God has destined you to be.

That can never be taken. Nothing, no condemnation, no voice has the right to tell you tonight that this is for Irina or it's for Pastor Carter but it's not for you. There is no voice under heaven that has the right to tell you that tonight.

There's no voice that has the right to tell you that you will never be free or you will never change or you will never be healed or you'll never amount to anything. No voice has that right. When Jesus died on the cross for you in his final breath he uttered the words, it is finished.

The right of hell and sin and death to govern your life and your future were broken on the cross of Jesus Christ and the fact that the spirit of God raised him from the dead on the third day is all the proof that you need that the same spirit that raised Christ will quicken your mortal body. Paul was preaching these words and suddenly he looks at this man who's on the edge of of his seat or if he's sitting on the floor wherever

he is he's he's moved forward he sees his countenance and Paul says with a loud voice stand up straight on your feet not crooked not hanging on to something straight on your feet and he leaped and he walked hallelujah he didn't just stand up he left up by the power of God. Can you just imagine the the response of the people was when they saw it they said the gods have come down to us in the likeness of man they knew that only God could have done this.

This man heard something and at a certain point in his life he said I believe I believe. I used an illustration one time a few years back of a football team in the locker room and they they put on all their gear just like we're called to put on the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit and we cover our loins and we put on the breastplate of truth and pick up our weaponry and and they do that they're in the locker room and they put on all this stuff and then they they kind of rouse each other up and they they head down the tunnel and just before they get onto the field just before they get into the game there's a paper wall anybody's ever watched a football game you've seen this and you have to go through the paper wall before you get into the game. Now the devil spends all his time writing things on your paper wall he draws fake bricks to let to make you believe that you can't go through the paper wall somehow it's too tough for you he writes loser you'll never mount anything the the quarterback will pass you you'll fumble the ball you'll miss it because of you they'll lose the game writes all this stuff and it's just a paper wall it's just a paper wall you see and once you get the courage to get up and go through the paper wall you're actually in the game praise God everybody's a star in the game of God I'll tell you right now when you when you get on that field of being raised from the dead by the spirit of Christ everyone everyone brings glory to God everyone gets in the end zone and everybody gets to spike the ball and shout with all their might praise be to God and so there's a point in every one of our lives where we just say I believe I believe I do and we just stand up and we leap and we walk and so I'm saying to you tonight online you sitting in your home addicted depressed don't you don't see a future I'm telling you stand up stand up in the power of God stand up based on the word of God that cannot fail Jesus Christ died for you he died for you so that you might be reconnected to God it was through the shedding of his blood and the giving of his life that every wrong thing that you have ever done was paid for the debt was paid so now you could get up and you can go back to God and be fully connected now to the living God because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on a cross for you two thousand years ago first of all you have to believe that he took your place and believe that he's willing to forgive you and open your heart to his offer of not just forgiveness but a reason to live on the earth that will bring glory to his name and start to confess I can just see this man can you imagine being in that room with that man and he's leaping and dancing going I'm walking I'm walking I'm walking Jesus made me walk and he's just confessing who God is he's confessing what God has done he's confessing this this new ability to do what he couldn't do before that he's now doing by the strength of the one who called him out of the grave and called him into an eternal life through Christ as Irina once did I want to invite you to open your heart tonight to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and when you do the next thing I want you to do is get up now just physically get up in your home physically get up get up off your couch get up off your bed get up out of the dining room chair that you're sitting in whatever it is if you're on a park bench outside listening to this on your cell phone just get up as an act of faith just get up now if you feel so moved you feel free to leap and dance and praise God as well what do you care what people think about it I mean they look at you and they see you as a hopeless alcoholic or a depressed person so you might as well just get up and dance and just say glory to God what does it matter what they think they don't think much of you now anyway so don't worry about what people are going to think don't worry about your neighbors leave the blinds open don't close them leave the blinds up and dance around and they'll think that you've been that you've been at it again but you're not it's the spirit of God that's come upon your life this time praise God and just start singing and shouting like we do here

we're going to get Isaac Backkeeper and the worship team shortly after communion and you're going to get a chance to sing with us and a chance to give God glory tonight I'm going to ask you to pray this simple prayer with me people that are listening online there's a great turning to God happening now in Times Square Church on Sunday morning there were more than 80 people came to Christ in the sanctuary it's absolutely amazing what God is doing now people are hungry they're tired of living in depression they're tired of the incivility they're tired of all this other stuff going on around them and they're saying I'm just not living this way anymore I'm going with God

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