

I Once Longed for New Things to Obey

by Carter Conlon

The sermon calls believers to seek God diligently and remain obedient to His word to finish their spiritual journey well.

Duration: 51:44

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 15:12, Psalm 51:10, Proverbs 9:10, Galatians 5:16, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Spiritual Renewal", "Genuine Worship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of renewing the altar of the Lord in our lives, shunning evil, embracing good, and maintaining a servant's heart. It highlights the dangers of turning from the spirit to the flesh, losing the fear of God, and locking away the voice of correction. The speaker urges the congregation to return to a place of genuine worship, obedience, and passion for God, seeking to finish the race well and hear the voice of God clearly.

Transcript

God bless you. Good morning, Times Square Church. I'm going to share with you this morning a message that's entitled, I Once Longed for New Things to Obey.

I Once Longed for New Things to Obey. Second Chronicles, please, in the Old Testament, chapter 15. And if you go to find the book of Psalms, you go back five books from there and you're in Second Chronicles.

Chapter 15, I Once Longed for New Things to Obey. Now, Father, I thank you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. I thank you, Lord, for your strength and your power to be able to speak this word today.

Lord, your entire kingdom is not by might nor by power, but by your spirit. And so I yield my life and body and mind into your hands. And I ask, Lord Jesus Christ, that you be glorified, O God, in everything that's spoken and said and done today.

Lord Jesus, be glorified. Thank you for it in your precious name. Amen.

Second Chronicles, chapter 15, please. Verse 1. And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa and said unto him, Here ye meet Asa and all Judah and Benjamin.

The Lord is with you while you be with him. And if you seek him, he will be found of you. But if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

Now for a long season Israel had been without a true God and without a teaching priest and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn to the Lord God of Israel and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

And nation was destroyed of nation and city of city, for God did vex them all with all adversity. Be ye strong therefore and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded. And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin and out of the cities which he had taken from Mount Ephraim and renewed the altar of the Lord that was before the porch of the Lord.

I once longed for new things to obey. Now the Lord has had me on a personal study. I have been spending some time in the scriptures studying the lives of those who started well and finished poorly.

Now I want to tell you why, because when Joshua began to lead the people of that generation into the place of promise that was theirs, the Lord appeared to Joshua in the beginning of this particular juncture in his ministry. And in chapter 1 verse 8, this is what God spoke to him. He said, This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate therein day and night, that thou mayst observe to do according to all that is written therein.

For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, then thou shalt have good success. And the Lord said to Joshua, You're to take this book of the law. Now he's in the same place that others have been.

And you're to meditate on this day and night. Now meditating means you're to let it, you're to read it, you're to study it, you're to understand it, you're to long for it. You're to let it be part of the very fabric of your life.

You're not to veer to the left or to the right of anything it says. And if you do these things, you will have good success. Now Joshua had just seen his predecessor Moses, a wonderful man of God that the Bible says was the meekest man on the face of the earth.

A man of impeccable courage and deep-hearted faith. But he had seen Moses not finish the course on this side of eternity in the full measure that God had intended for his life. And there had to be something in him that he said, Lord, I want to study.

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I am 57 years of age now. I started in ministry at around 28. I was in full-time ministry at the age of 33.

And it's been an incredible journey. It's been a marvelous journey. I know that I have been supernaturally helped all the way along the way.

We have gone into foreign countries. We have seen God do the miraculous before us. It has been an incredible journey.

But in my heart, a lot of these men in the Scriptures, they didn't really falter until the latter part of their life in ministry. And in my heart, I said, God, I don't want to finish poorly. I want to finish, the cry of my heart is that at the end of my days, that I'm putting my feet up into my bed.

It's a prayer I pray constantly. And like Jacob, I can bless each of my children, my grandchildren, my heritage, and I can speak into their lives. And I can raise my hands and shout to God and give him glory for all that he's done.

I don't want to get to the end of this journey and look back with regret. I don't want to be on my deathbed saying, oh God, if only, oh God, if only I'd done this, if only I'd done that. I'd rather look ahead from this vantage point and do it now.

And study it now, and know it now, and walk in it now. If you're fortunate enough to outlive me, and you're at my funeral, I hope that you can shout with glory and say, God answered his prayer. He finished the course.

And I hope my children can stand in whatever pulpit it happens to be, and they can make a declaration that on his deathbed, our Father was able to reach out and put his hands on our heads and bless us. The glory of God was on him. It's the cry of my heart to finish this.

I want to finish like Paul. I want to finish the race like Peter. I want to finish like those that have finished it in victory.

And I don't want to go through the course or journey for those who didn't. And one of the ways to avoid the pitfall is to study the Scriptures intently, clearly, with an honest heart. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, 16, and 17, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, I mean, to prove your theological viewpoint, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Now, the word perfect means brought into that place that God would have him or her to be. Brought to that, which is the perfect will of God, let's put it that way, for your life. Now, don't turn there, but in 2 Chronicles 26, this chapter speaks about a king, Uzziah, king of Judah.

I'm only speaking about two kings of Judah today. And he was marvelously helped, the Scripture says, until he was strong. This king had such advantage, he was given, similar to Solomon, he was given a brilliant intellect.

And he was given the power to lead people, he was given the power to see things and to invent things. Instruments of war, for example, he was given the ability to prosper, and to lead the people of God into a tremendous 52-year period. He was 16 when he began to reign, and he reigned for 52 years.

And in those 52 years, there was a tremendous peace and advancement of the kingdom of God under his leadership. But when he was strong, the Scripture says, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. For he transgressed against the Lord God, he went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

Now, it's almost unthinkable that this man would do this. It's like living your whole life in the church, and then suddenly doing at the end of your day something so abominable, that people stand back in horror, and say, how is it possible? How could he get so jaded in his thinking? Did he not read the Scriptures? Did Isaiah not know? Did he not have the history of those that attempted to offer false fire on the altar of God, and what happened to them? Did he not understand that there's a place and a position given by God, and there are some places and some things that are forbidden by God? And he knew, he had to know, as a king of Judah, he had to know that he had no authority to go into the altar of incense, and to, in a sense,

take the office that was reserved strictly by God for the priesthood. And yet he walks into that office, and I don't know how to understand this, other than he had to have lost the fear of God.

There's a grave danger, folks. It's a danger for me, it's a danger for you, that when you and I have walked in the blessing of God for many years, and we've known nothing but the favor of God, the human heart can begin to think that God will no longer hold us accountable for what we do. That somehow, things we knew in our youth, and things we fled from in our youth, and things that we knew were wrong, suddenly become right.

It's part of the twisted human condition, it's part of that fallen nature of humanity that ultimately wants to be its own God, and wants to be able to say, this is good and this is evil, even if God's word has an opposing view to that viewpoint. Uzziah is the type of somebody here today with the history of walking with God, worshiping, yet you're doing something which you clearly know is a violation of the word of God. Now that applies to some people here today.

You have a history. There's some here you've walked with God 10 years, 12 years, 15 years, and you've known the blessing of God, you've known the favor of God, but yet today you are here worshiping in this house, and you are clearly doing something that you know is a violation of the word of God, but somehow, feel in your heart, there will be no accountability for this. He started out, this particular king, at 16, he ruled for 52 years, and he ended up a leper.

He finished his journey in a leper colony, folks. With all that God did, and all that was in his life, and everything, 52 years of history is wiped out by one foolish act. Now we have the history of it, but it should have brought him to a glorious finish.

There should have been a glorious conclusion to his life. Instead, he's a leper in a leper colony. He's literally put away by the hand of the Lord.

When he went into the altar of incense to offer what only the priests were allowed to do, the Bible says the leprosy rose in his forehead. You see, he had a disease in his mind, and the leprosy on his forehead was a type of that disease that had gotten a hold of him, that I can do whatever I want to do, in spite of what God says, and there will not be a consequence to it. Beware of it, beloved, beware of it.

Beware when you and I have walked a long time in the blessing of the Lord. Beware of this casualness. Beware of this wrong view that somehow, because God has been with me for so long, and he's blessed me for so long, that now I'm free to do what I once knew was sin, and somehow not suffer any consequence.

Now, let's look at Asa, the king of Judah, that we're talking about today. This is a king that came before Uzziah. Chapter 14, verse 2, tells us that Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God.

2 Chronicles 14, 2. In other words, he started good, and he started right, just like many here today have. It's a type of a true conversion, of coming to Christ and saying, I want to do this God's way. I remember when I first got saved, I said to my wife, Teresa, I said, if this is the truth, I want the whole thing.

I want to live it this way, I want to walk it this way. Now, Asa started this way, he did that which was good and right. Verse 3 says, he wholeheartedly served the Lord.

He took away the altars of the strange gods in the high places, and cut down the images in the groves. And that's the type of those of us who've come to Christ, and in those first years, you so longed for some new thing to obey, didn't you? And when God spoke, it was just a given. When God speaks, that's what I do.

God directs, that's where I go. God says, this is no good, and I agree, it's no good. If the Lord says, tear this down, I tear it down.

If the Lord says, put it away, I put it away. And there are so many here today that you can, you remember those altars, the altars of lust, and the altars of substance abuse, and hatred, and violence, and bitterness, and all these other things. And you simply put them away, because God said to put them away.

Verse 4 tells us that he led others into obedience. It says he commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandments. And you led your family, you led many in your sphere of influence, into the obedience of God.

There are people here today that people are saved in church, in the kingdom of God, because of your obedience, because of your zeal. You brought your whole family into the kingdom of God, just like Asa did. Verses 5 and 6 says he took away all the cities of, out of all the cities of Judah, the high places, the images, and the kingdom was quiet before him.

And he built fenced cities, places of protection. The land had rest, and no war, because the Lord had given him rest. And he brought the people into rest.

Do you remember how wonderful it is when you first came to that place? Do you remember those early years when you walked with God, and the rest came into your soul? And worship was something you just had to do. And it wasn't confined to church, was it? You had to worship on the subway. You had to worship.

I remember waking up in the middle of the night and singing sometimes. Just, oh, Jesus, just speaking his name. The gratitude for what he had done, the rest that he brings into the heart and into the soul.

The assurance of heaven when you die, and the wonderful future that he gives to those who belong to him. Verse 7 tells us in chapter 14 that under his leadership, the people built and they prospered. Things began to happen.

People around began to be industrious. Verse 8 tells us that he knew the source of his strength, and that as with King David, the people became mighty under his leadership. Verse 8 says, Asa had an army of men that bear spears, targets, and spears.

Out of Judah, 300,000. Out of Benjamin that bear shields and drew bows, 200,000. And fourscore thousand.

And all these were mighty men of valor. And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian, with a host of a million, actually a thousand thousand, and 300 chariots, and they came to Mereshah. Then Asa went out against them, and they set the battle at Nereah in the battle of Zephthah at Mereshah.

And Asa cried unto the Lord his God and said, Lord, it is nothing with thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power. Help us, O Lord our God, for we rest on thee. And in thy name we go

against this multitude, O Lord.

Thou art our God. Let not man prevail against thee. So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa and before Judah, and Ethiopians fled.

And the scripture says that they were so beaten that there was hardly a few of them left together. He knew the source of his strength. He knew his strength was in God.

An army came against him with almost two to one odds. But he went into prayer, and he said, God, he had that same spirit that Jonathan had on him. When Jonathan, with just his armor bearer, climbed up onto the top of a cliff to take an acre of ground from a whole squad as it is of the enemy, and he said, Lord, it doesn't really matter.

If you're in this, O God, we're going to win this battle, and we're going to fight it for your glory. And that's been the type and the pattern. You and I have known this.

We've walked in impossible places. You've come through some doors. You've come through some trials in your life where you knew you didn't have the power to get out of what held you.

And you went into the prayer closet and said, Lord, I know I'm weak, but it doesn't matter, because the power of your Holy Spirit is on me. I have your word, O God, and for the glory of your name, take me out of this place and take me into the place where you want me to go. And can't you say today that God did that? God opened that door of impossibility.

Asa prospered everywhere he went. Verse 14 of chapter 14 says, They smote all the cities round about Gerar, for the fear of the Lord came upon them. They spoiled all the cities, for there was exceeding much spoil in them.

They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem. He prospered everywhere he went. Everything he touched began to prosper.

And if you are walking with God with a true heart, you know this to be true. Now I'm not saying everybody here is going to become a millionaire, but what I am saying is that you see the prosperity of God. You see the blessing of God.

You see it in adversity. You see it in the fire. You see it in the flood.

You see it on the mountaintop. You see it in the valley. You see the blessing of God.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Everywhere we go. And in chapter 15 verse 12, it says that Asa brought the people into a covenant to seek the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul.

Verse 14, They swore to the Lord with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire. And he was found of them, and the Lord gave them rest round about.

He brought the people into sincere and joyful worship. Now isn't that what we're experiencing today in this house? And every time we meet, God is here with us. Presence of the Holy Spirit is here.

And there is sincere and there's joyful worship. Do you remember the first time you experienced this? Whatever seat you were in, wherever you were in this house, or one that's similar to it, how did it seem like nothing when God asked you to do something? How your heart burned when the word of God was preached. How you wanted to honor him and to glorify him, and to see your family alive in God.

How you began to move and you began to see God's power and God's prosperity at every turn. In chapter 16, the scripture shows us that the northern kingdom of Israel came up against Judah, and built a fortified city as it was against one of the areas of Judah. And suddenly we see this turn in Asa.

All this history, all the faithfulness of God, all the oaths, all the worship, all the promises, everything that God has done is now about to be put on an altar of testing. And this king comes up against Asa, and Asa went into the house of the Lord. But he didn't go into the house of the Lord to pray.

He didn't go in to the house of the Lord to seek again that God glorify his name in an impossible situation. He went into the house of the Lord to go to the treasury and to take out the treasures that were there, and to hire a foreign army to come and fight against his enemy. And you see Asa now, all of the treasures that have been brought into the house of the Lord.

And the New Testament typology is incredible. All that God had brought into that house, all that was set apart for the glory of God, he now comes in and you can picture him coming into the temple. He would have had to have most likely quite a few with him going into the treasury.

I don't know what he took out. Gold, silver, maybe some of the shields of gold that had been built for the warriors. He takes all of this out.

He carts it out and ships it off to Syria and hires the Syrian army to come and fight against his enemy. And so the Syrian king came in and fought against the northern kingdom or part of the northern kingdom and caused this northern king to leave off building of this city that he would build to starve out some of the places of Judah. And he left off building it and retreated.

In verse 6 of 16, it says, Then Asa the king took all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof wherewith Beshar was building. That's the king of the northern part of Israel. And he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

So it looks successful. It looks like, hey, we won again. We literally outsmarted our enemy.

We might even have given some credit to God for this. And we've taken down this fortified city that we're building against us and we've used the stones of it to build two more places of habitation for the people of God in Judah. Now what possible problem could God have with this? Verse 7 says, And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him, Because you've relied on the king of Syria and not relied on the Lord your God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of your hand.

Now, bottom line, you've turned to the flesh. You've turned to human reasoning. You're no longer trusting in God.

Your reasoning has taken over from the Spirit of God. We're not the Ethiopians. That's the army of one million.

And the Lubam's a large host with very many chariots and horsemen. Yet because you did rely on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him.

Herein you've done foolishly. Therefore from henceforth you shall have wars. You've done foolishly, Asa.

You started in the Spirit and you've moved to the flesh. You started with a wholehearted trust in God. You started with a passionate heart that burned for the things of God.

You started with a mind that was open to the word of God. But now, after this long series of walking with God, you've now moved to human reasoning. You're now reasoning your life.

You're reasoning your future path. You're scheming and plotting and planning about how you're going to get through. Then one time it was faith and faith alone that was guiding you.

And it has an appearance of success. But the prophet of God said, No, it's not success, it's foolishness. You've literally cut off the source of your own strength.

That which brought you to where you are, you've cut that source of strength off. And now the end result is you're going to have trouble the rest of your life. You would think the scripture would say, And Asa fell on his face and said, Lord, God, forgive me.

That's what Joshua did when Joshua made a mistake with the Gibeonites and actually welcomed into the camp of Israel an enemy of the people of God. Joshua fell on his face and God was able to speak to him and correct him. You would think that Asa would have been able to be brought into a place of correction.

And I think this is a pivotal moment in many people's lives. It says, Then Asa was wroth with the seer and put him in a prison house. Put him in a prison.

In other words, he locks away the voice of correction. And he now holds the key to what can and cannot be spoken. He is angry with spiritual authority.

And the scripture tells us, And he oppressed some people. It says, Asa was wroth with the seer and put him in a prison house, for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time.

In other words, the people around him started to become discouraged. He was once leading them into might. He was once leading his family into the glory of God, the strength of God.

But now he's become angry with the voice of God. Now he's moved from the spirit to the flesh. Now he's locked the voice of God in a prison.

And that's exactly what people do. Come into the house even this morning and say, Well, if Pastor Carter or Pastor William or Pastor Teresa or Patrick or whoever is speaking, If they speak this, I'll let them out and listen to them. If they don't, I'll lock them up again.

I will choose what truth is. I will choose when to bend my knee and when not to bend my knee. I am the master of my own destiny.

No one has the right to tell me that what I'm doing is wrong. After all, I've been walking with God for 30 years. Who has the right to tell me that my journey is a foolish one? That I've turned into a mess.

I know what's right and I know what's wrong. We were victorious. My pathway led to victory.

We were able to build two fortified cities out of the ruins of this attack. How dare this prophet of God tell me that I've done foolishly. I'll take him and I'll put him in a prison.

Isn't that what Herod did to John the Baptist? He put him in a prison. And he locked him up. And that's what the backslidden Christian will always do with the voice of God.

All through history. Those that backslide and move to the flesh will lock away the prophet of God in a prison. And say, I will call for you when the time is convenient.

And if you don't speak to me what I want to hear, then I'll lock you right back up again. In prison. I will shut you out of my life.

I will shut you out of my mind. I will shut you out of my family. God help me that I never get to that place.

God help me. Angry with spiritual authority. Angry.

The scripture says he was in a rage. Now, he probably still kept his smile. He probably still walked regally and royally.

Probably still very much had the bearing of a king. But he's got an internal rage in him now. He can't get away from the thought that he was rebuked.

What's wrong with this? What's wrong with this prophet? Does he not know all the good things I've done? Has he not seen the last 30 something years that I've been walking and serving God? Is he unaware of the victories that I've won? How dare he take it upon himself to rebuke me? And that is the dilemma of the older Christian, folks. It's never really the problem of the young one. It's the dilemma of those who have walked with God.

And verse 12 tells us. Now, this is the Lord's mercy. And they said in the 39th year of his reign was diseased in his feet.

Until his disease was exceeding great. Yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord but to the physicians. I'm not against doctors, obviously.

But I don't think the physicians in those days had a whole lot of skill. You see, Uzziah was diseased in his forehead because his mind had turned against the ways of God. Asa was diseased in his feet because he was pursuing a direction.

That God was trying to stop him and get him to come back. It was all just really a sign. Even the psalmist in Psalm 119 says, Lord, in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me that I might learn thy statutes.

God, you faithfully allowed this into my life. If something has come into your life that you don't understand, could you have the courage to just stop and say, All things do work together for good to those who love God and are the called. So that means if it's something I don't like, I don't understand, is it possible, God, you've allowed this into my life to stop me from something I'm doing, something I'm thinking, somewhere

I'm going, something I'm embracing, something that's gotten a hold of my life, is in your faithfulness, God.

If Asa would have just stopped and said he didn't seek God and said, Lord, why are my feet diseased? The Lord would have sent a prophet to him if he couldn't hear himself and said, Because you are walking on the wrong path. You are walking in the flesh, Asa. You started in the spirit and you've moved to the flesh.

You've walked too long in your own strength. And so Asa slept with his fathers. Verse 13, he died, in other words, and died in the 140th year of his reign.

41 years in ministry, diseased in his feet, in spite of all that happened. And they buried him in his own sepulcher, or grave, which he had made for himself in the city of David. You know, you can be, the whole time you attend church, you can be making yourself a grave in it.

And they laid him in the bed, which was filled with sweet odors and diverse kinds of spices prepared by the apothecary's art. And they made a great, very great burning for him. Folks, if we ever lose the dependence on the Holy Spirit, you hear me, here's what you end up looking like.

You're looking real good, you smell real sweet, but you're very, very dead. One of the churches in Revelation, the Lord said, you have a reputation that you live and are dead. And the word dead means you are cut off from the enlivening influence of the Holy Spirit.

It's that simple. You are now walking in the flesh. You've learned how to sing the songs, you've learned how to clap your hands, you've learned how to shout at the right time, you've learned how to attend church on time.

You've learned these things, but you're now cut off from the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit. You smell good, you look good, very, very dead. And that's how he ended up.

But go back to chapter 15 now with me, where we began today. I want to conclude with what we started with. This is close to the middle, roughly, of his reign in that vicinity.

And the Spirit of God came upon Ezra, the son of Oded. I believe the Lord's given me this because we are 23 years of church now. And many who are here have walked even longer than that with God.

And we're at this point of chapter 15 where the Lord comes. And he says, he went out to meet Asa and said to him, Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you while you be with him.

If you seek him, he'll be found of you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel has been without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. But when they in their trouble did turn to the Lord God of Israel and sought him, he was found of them.

And in those times there was no peace. Now think about our season that we're living in in this world. No peace to him that went out nor to him that came in.

But great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation and city of city. For God did vex them all with adversity.

We're seeing that and it's going to increase in the coming days. Be strong therefore and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded. Now look at the contrast between the middle of his life basically

and the end of his life.

And when Asa heard these words and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin. And out of the cities which he had taken from Mount Ephraim. And he renewed the altar of the Lord that was before the porch of the Lord.

He renewed the altar. And folks, what God has been speaking to my heart, and I'm preaching predominantly to myself this morning. This has been my personal study.

What he's been telling me is that you don't have to finish poorly. If I can speak to your heart, if you will go into this book and study it. And let it study you.

And let it become part of your life. When he heard these words, he heard that the cities were going to be in disarray. That nation was going to stand against nation.

But God promised to be with them. And he took courage and put all of the things that were on that altar that shouldn't be there. He took them off.

Got rid of them. And he restored and renewed the altar of the Lord. That altar that the New Testament talks about where I should be laying my life down as a living sacrifice for the purposes of God.

That altar is the altar I'm talking about. That altar where it's not my will but thine. Not my ways but your ways.

Not my thoughts but your thoughts. That altar. That altar folks.

That altar. I'm not willing to fail because of success. I'm not willing to falter because there's been a history of faithfulness.

It's that altar. That altar where I am given the privilege and so are you of laying our lives down. That altar where my eyes once filled with tears at the mention of the name of Jesus.

That altar. I remember one time there's a six hour movie called Jesus of Nazareth. As a new Christian I was invited to somebody's house and they put it on.

The VCR player. And I couldn't get through it. I was crying so hard.

I wept. I'm not talking about just the scenes of the cross. I'm talking about just hearing the words of Jesus.

And knowing he died for me. Knowing I was called to walk with him. I couldn't get through it for the tears.

For the gratitude. And there was this something in my heart that said Jesus all my life I want to live for you. I want to walk with you.

I want to glorify you. Oh God. Nowhere you ask me to go is going to be too great.

No sacrifice too hard. Getting back to that place where your heart burned when his word was preached. I remember hearing Elder David's testimony.

Elder Bill's testimony about how they sat in the balcony and cried. And their hearts burned when the word of God was preached. And the Lord took them from there.

And now they're elders in this church. Staying at that place. I loved the word of God.

I didn't care how long the message was when I'd go to church as long as of course the anointing was on it. When there's no anointing it's a very lengthy thing. To get back to the place where my heart burns when I read this word.

Because I know this word is my life. It's my protection. It's my hope.

It's my future. It's what keeps my past from catching me. Hallelujah.

It's everything to me. Old and New Testament. To get back to the place where I long for new things to obey.

That was the title of this message today. I once longed for new things to obey. I once longed.

God asked me to do something. Give me something to do. Lead me.

Guide me. Lord it doesn't matter what it is. It doesn't have to be big.

It can be a broom. I don't really care. God just give me something to do that will glorify you.

I want to be at work in your kingdom. Guide me. Lead me.

I remember when I was asked to be an elder in the church. I was probably only five years a Christian then or maybe even less. It was 36 miles to church from my home.

I would drive home from work and drive back to church and drive home and drive back and drive home and drive back. I had to be in church folks. I had to be there.

It's what I was called to do. To get back to a place where we shunned evil and embraced good. And knew the difference between the two.

Shunned what was evil and if it was doubtful just put it away. Shunned it. I've told you this story before of being a brand new Christian.

Brand new. Going home after a night shift. Stop in my favorite restaurant for bacon and eggs and home fries like you've never seen in your life.

And a pint of beer. So bacon, eggs, home fries and a pint of beer and my Bible open on the table. Love God with all my heart.

Brand new Christian. I've never heard a sermon on alcohol. I don't know any of these things.

But I'm reading the Bible where the angel appeared to Zacharias and Elizabeth and said you're going to have a son. And he's going to be a righteous man. He's going to be the forerunner of Christ.

And wine will never touch his lips. I remember reading that and I thought huh. I want to be a righteous man.

I don't want anything to hinder my life. And so I just put my hand there and pushed it away. And that was 30 something years ago now.

Where you shunned evil and embraced good. Put away what you knew was wrong and embraced what you knew was right. Getting back to the place where you saw being a servant as a high calling.

Not something to be avoided. Serving God. Serving people.

Serving his church was a high calling. As a matter of fact you saw it as the highest calling. When I was a young pastor I used to after the church would leave.

I was the guy who would vacuum the carpets. Clean the floor. And to me that was as much an act of worship as preaching the gospel was.

A servant was a high calling. I wasn't murmuring and complaining because I had to do it and nobody else would. It was something God gave to me and I embraced it as a high calling.

I was called to serve the people. Not serve myself. He renewed the altar of the Lord.

Took courage. He put away the idols and renewed the altar. That's my altar call this morning.

That we renew the altar. To get back. Let me say it again.

To where your eyes filled with tears at the mention of Jesus name. To where your heart burned when his word was preached. To where you longed for new things to obey.

To where you shunned evil and embraced good. To where being a servant was a high calling. Get back folks.

Get back. Many are at the middle of the journey. And the voice of God.

Is coming into your heart. And calling you home. If you have doubtful practices in your life put them away.

If you have embraced sin. Believing erroneously today that there have been no judgment for it. Flee that as quickly as you can.

Walk in what is right. The new covenant is a wonderful, wonderful truth. But it's only for the honest Christian.

It is not a contract for dishonesty. It is not a covering for willful rebellion folks. Against God.

There is no protection for Isaiah and there is no protection. For the person who willfully embraces wrong. If you don't believe that then read Acts chapter 5 and see what happened to Ananias and Sapphira.

That was new covenant Christianity and they died by the hand of God. And folks. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Don't ever lose the fear of God. God is wonderful. Loving, just and kind.

But you cannot mock Him. You cannot play games with the Holy God. There has to be an honesty in the heart.

And I don't know about you but I want to finish right. I want to finish right. I want to come across that finish line with my hands raised in the air.

I want to finish it saying like Paul I have run the race. I have fought the faith. There is a crown of righteousness laid out for me.

I want to finish the way Paul finished. The way many many saints of old have finished. The way many leaders in the body of Christ.

Many Christian people, good Christian people have finished throughout the course of history. I don't ever want to get to the place where I cannot be corrected. Now Father I just thank you Lord.

I know I have delivered your heart. And I'm asking you in Jesus name. God be merciful to me and be merciful to this church.

And help us Lord in the days ahead. Help us to build the right altar. Help us not to become arrogant or proud or angry with the voice of God.

Help us not to lock your voice in a prison. Jesus give us the strength we need Lord as a congregation. And I pray now for those who need to turn back to you.

Who need to hear this voice. Father I ask in Jesus name. Give them the courage to come to this altar.

When Esau heard these words he took courage. And he put away all the idols. And he renewed the altar of the Lord.

That's my altar call today. If you have something in your life that you know needs to be made right. If you're literally dying on the vine.

Something is not right. You have no passion for the things of God anymore. Your heart is like stone when the word of God is preached.

The only hope is that you come to the Lord. And say God help me to get back to what I'm losing. In some cases what you've lost.

Jesus help me to finish the race. With my hands raised. And my voice giving you praise.

As we stand. Those who feel that you want to respond to this. I'm going to ask you to come to the front of the sanctuary.

And in the annex you can stand between the screens if you will please. And after a moment of worship we're going to get together and we're going to pray. Please as you do.

In the balcony you can go to either exit. As we stand together in the main sanctuary. Just slip out.

Meet me at this altar please if you will. Let's do that today. And we're going to pray together.

I felt the Holy Spirit asking me to do something a little different this morning. For those that are at this altar. And those in the sanctuary.

I'd like you to pray for yourselves. Pray for yourself. Individually.

In just a moment just God help me. Help me to deliver me from the sins of the mind. From the sins of the flesh.

Keep me in the spirit. Give me an obedient heart. And I also want you to pray for your pastors.

For the elders. Musicians, the choir. Pray for this church body.

Pray for the testimony of this church. Let's take five minutes right now. And would you lift your hands to the Lord.

And just begin to pray. Just begin to pray. Lord we just lift up this congregation.

God Almighty. From my own heart Lord I just ask that I may finish this course with joy. And I finish it righteously and honestly in the sight of God and man.

God deliver us Lord from everything Lord that would hinder this journey. That would cause us to fall short of what you have for us. Individually as people and collectively as a body.

I pray God for the leadership of this church. Father I ask you Lord to keep us. Keep our hearts alive in you.

Keep us on the right altar. Keep us Almighty God the servants to the body of Christ. God keep us alive in your word.

Keep us alive in the prayer closet Lord. Keep us alive oh God. Don't let us die on our watch Lord.

Don't let us vacate the place that you have given to us. Don't let us start in the spirit and begin to walk in the flesh. Keep us from despising the word of God.

Help us Father. I pray for the musicians God in this church Lord. For everyone who touches an instrument God.

I pray for a cleanness of hands. A pureness of heart and spirit God. A right motive Lord for even being on this platform oh God.

Lord just deliver God. Those who need deliverance set free. Those who need to be set free.

I thank you for the choirs. The various choirs in this church. I pray God Lord for a touch of heaven.

To come upon all who are losing heart Father. Let the song be renewed. Let it be new.

Let it be sweet. Let it be passionate. Let it be powerful oh God.

Let it be Lord as the day of our salvation. The day of our conversion. Let the gratitude in us never diminish.

Let our song never become just rote. Let it not be something we just do. Deliver us God from a religious spirit.

Keep us alive in the spirit of almighty God. Oh Jesus the Son of God. The Son of God keep us till the end Lord.

Keep us Lord till the last day. Let this be a place where your testimony burns God. Where your heart is alive.

Where your word is appreciated God. Let there be tears of repentance and joy here constantly Lord. God bring the stranger into this house.

And let them find the answer to the deepest desires and needs of their heart. Let them not see death and hypocrisy of God. Let this be a house of truth and reality.

Let there be a genuine love between brethren of God. Oh Jesus. Oh Jesus.

We ask you Lord for the privilege of being on the right altar. That altar of laying our lives down. As a living sacrifice for the purposes of God.

Not for our purposes Lord. But for yours. Not our will but your will God.

Not our plans but your plans. Not our future but your future for us Lord. God thank you Lord.

Thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord God. Thank you Lord that you'll send an absolute revival from heaven into this house.

And through this house into this city of God. Father we thank you for this Lord Jesus Christ. My God keep us Lord.

Keep us Lord Jesus Christ. Keep us Jesus. We stand before your throne by invitation this morning.

And we acknowledge we can't keep ourselves of God. We don't know right from wrong Lord. But you do.

And you can speak it into our hearts. You can speak it into our minds of God. You can guide us.

You can lead us. On our part all we have to have is the desire for truth Lord. The desire to walk in the spirit.

The desire to do what is right. God we have that desire today Lord. Deliver us from evil.

Lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory.

Both now and forever. There's no other name. No other kingdom.

No other power. There's nothing else we're living for but you Jesus. My God deliver us from the deceitfulness of the human heart.

God deliver us. Keep us from it Lord. Keep us from it Lord Jesus.

Your glory has always been in this house. Let your glory stay in this house Lord. Let the glory of the latter temple be greater than the former.

My God. My God. My God.

My God. My God we want to live. We want to serve you Lord.

We want to love you Jesus. With all of our hearts we want to love you Lord. We want to love you God.

We want our worship to be true. We want our lives to be right. God it doesn't matter what men say.

It matters what heaven says. It matters what you see Lord. Help us.

Keep us of God. Deliver us from every trap of the devil. God deliver us.

Keep us Lord. Keep us Lord Jesus. Father we thank you for this Lord.

We thank you God. We thank you Jesus. Thank you for these divine moments in your house.

Oh Lord when lives are changed. They're turned God. They're set on an absolutely different course.

Thank you for the hearts. That people have to obey you to hear you God. Thank you Lord that we're not locking you in a prison.

Thank you Jesus. That we can still hear your voice Lord. Thank you that we can hear your word.

Thank you mighty God. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord.

Thank you God. We give you praise and glory this day oh God. We thank you Jesus.

Thank you Lord. Thank you God. Hallelujah.

This choir is going to have a new song. A new song Lord. A brand new song.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah Lamb of God. A brand new song.

A new depth. A new passion. A new power.

By the grace of almighty God. We bless your holy name oh God. Bless your holy name.

We bless you. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you Lord.

Hallelujah. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord.

Thank you God. Shouts of joy. Abound in the tents of the righteous of the Lord.

It's not a flesh induced joy. It's a joy of the Holy Ghost. Shouts of joy abound.

Praise God.

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