

# Is Your Life a Compelling Testimony

by Carter Conlon

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a compelling testimony, which is a life that is so transformed by God's presence and power that it becomes an irresistible argument for others to come to Christ.*

**Duration:** 58:25

**Scripture:** Joel 2:28, Matthew 22:9-10, Matthew 22:14, Luke 14:18-21, Luke 14:24, Acts 2:17

**Topics:** "Testimony"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the three distinct periods of time mentioned in verses 17 to 20, which are believed to refer to the nation of Israel. The speaker emphasizes that God had been speaking to the people of Israel for many years, leading them out of captivity and promising to establish a testimony in them. The sermon then shifts to the idea of having a compelling testimony in one's life. The speaker encourages the audience to consider if their lives are a testimony to God's work and if they are allowing Christ to preach through them in their everyday lives. The sermon concludes with a reference to Peter's sermon in Acts 2, where he declares that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of what the prophet Joel had spoken about.

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## Transcript

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However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. Thank you. Thank you, choir and orchestra.

God bless you. Good morning, Times Square Church. I suppose most of you are aware this morning that Tiffany Yonker, Pastor David's granddaughter, passed away this week and the funeral was held yesterday here at Times Square Church.

What a wonderful time of rejoicing. Tiffany died with such a an anticipation of going home to be with Jesus Christ. She had asked people to not pray for her.

She said, I've had a chat with God and he told me it's my time. I'm going home. And what an incredible strength her life was to so many of us.

We tried to notify as many as we could. And we regretfully I know there are people here today that would have liked to have attended yesterday. But we apologize for not being able to get through to everybody.

But we encouraged as many as could to call their friends and people they know that attend the church so they could be here. But there was a very, very good attendance yesterday. And we do thank you for your prayers and support on behalf of the Yonker and the Wilkerson family.

We just want to say thank you and God bless all of you for your support during what was a difficult time, but a very sweet time because the presence of Christ is right in the middle of it. We're going to be fasting as a church body January Tuesday, January the 28th, then Wednesday the 29th and Thursday the 30th. So please mark that down on your calendar.

Three days, a three day fast. We would encourage those who are able to to fast with us for the three days. Now, we never encourage anybody to fast at any time without liquids.

So please. And of course, if you have a physical condition or your job is demands a mental alertness, please use discretion in your fasting. This is we're not under the law or under grace.

The fasting is a time of just setting our hearts apart to seek the will of God for this church, for our ministries, for the outreaches, for the crusades, for the conferences, everything that the Holy Spirit would have us to do this upcoming year. That's why we're fasting. And many, I suppose you could fast perhaps one meal a day.

But you ask the Holy Spirit what you should do. But don't ever place yourself in a position where you're going to become a danger to anybody around you because you're growing too physically weak or unable to fast. Now.

Now, medically speaking, three days of fasting will not kill you. Your body can go up to 40 days without food. So you're fairly safe.

Doctors tell us that all you really burn for the first seven days of a fast are toxins that are stored away in your body. So you're you're going to be all right. But if you have any doubts whatsoever, there is a good book out called God's Chosen Fast.

We may or may not have some copies of that left, but you can get it in any Christian bookstore. And it really gives a very balanced perspective spiritually and medically on fasting. If you're not familiar with the practice, might be a good book for you to get and to spend some time reading that.

It could really revolutionize your prayer life and your seeking of God. Twenty eight. Twenty ninth will.

Twentieth is a regular Tuesday evening service. Twenty ninth. We will meet for prayer seven o'clock in the evening till about nine o'clock.

And then it goes well. Thursday night to as well from seven to nine. The time of worship, our ministry leaders will be here.

They'll be sharing their burdens with us and what the Holy Spirit is speaking to them and then leading us in prayer for their respective ministries. And there are at least twenty eight ongoing effective ministries in Times Square Church. And so we'll be hearing from the leadership of many of these ministries.

So please be in preparation for that time of prayer and fasting. I was so provoked by the life of Tiffany Anker. I guess I've never really ever dedicated a message to anyone before, but I really would like to dedicate this to her today.

Because her life has become to me a compelling testimony. Compelling in a sense that there is a depth of Christ that I must consider if my life is to become everything that God wants it to be. There is something that a child found that I need to find.

There's a place that she went that you and I need to go. The amazing thing that when you hear the entire story of how she was encouraging and even just a few days before passing away to be with the Lord, when she's unable to speak any longer, still giving people a thumbs up sign as they come into the room where she was staying. Amazing encourager.

People sent her helium balloons. And so she took them when they found out she was sick and wrote encouraging spiritual messages and released them outdoors and prayed for the people that would receive them wherever they would fall. Totally in another realm.

So touched by the spirit of God. So we went to the Wilkerson home the day just after her passing and the peace of God was so evident in that home. It was an amazing thing.

I remember the prophet Isaiah. We shared it yesterday a little bit, said that a little child to lead them into this place, this kingdom of peace and rest. No wonder Jesus said, unless you become as a little child, you shall not enter.

You can't understand it. God spoke to her. She simply received it and said, this is his will for my life.

And it's not about what I'm going to miss. It's about what I'm going to gain. Thanks be to God.

She has missed nothing. The rest of us down here can spend all of our time talking about the what ifs and the whys. While Tiffany's rejoicing before the throne of God, wouldn't trade places with us for everything this world has to offer.

It's an absolute victory. And we thank God for that victory today. My message title is simply, is your life a compelling testimony? Is your life a compelling testimony? Luke, if you go there with me, please.

Luke chapter 14. Luke chapter 14. Father, we come before you today.

God thanking you for your great grace to all of us. Lord, I thank you for the grace that you will place on me today to be able to speak this message. I thank you for the grace that you will give me to live it.

God, give us great grace and take us into our inheritance. Holy Spirit, quicken these words so that they will not just fall to the ground, but they will find a place, a living place in the hearts of your people. Lord, I yield my life as a vessel that you may use today and speak through.

I ask you, O God, to give us hearing ears and willing hearts in Jesus name. Luke 14, beginning at verse 15. When one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.

Incidentally, the word blessed in the Greek is makarios, and it means indwelt by Christ and fully satisfied. And so he goes on to say, A certain man made a great supper and bade many, and sent his servant at suppertime to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

The first said to him, I bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it. I pray, have me excused. Another said, I bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.

I pray, have me excused. And another said, I've married a wife, and I cannot come. And the servant came and showed his lord these things.

And then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither or hither the poor, the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.

For I say to you that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper. Now, most commentators divide these. This is a continuous parable that Jesus is speaking to people who are sitting at a banquet table with him.

And they divide this continuous story into three distinct periods of time. Virtually, there is a virtual agreement. I suppose you can say that verses 17 to 20 refer to the nation of Israel.

A time, a nation that were bidden, that were told that now all things are ready. God was speaking to this people for many, many years and bringing them out of captivity into a place of promise, saying, I want to establish a testimony in you, and you shall be a people of praise to my name throughout all the earth. I will so bless you, I will so make you different and distinct among the nations, that people will have to acknowledge that I am God.

And that was the intent of God, to so bless Israel as it was physical Israel with his presence, his literal presence in and among them. But as often happens, not only with Israel, but throughout the church ages and throughout the hearts of even Christians that are alive today, people began to beg a release as it is. You see, because to inherit this, Christ had to be an all-consuming Savior.

There had to be an absolute heart focus upon God in order to receive the things that God was promising. And how tragic it must have been, how heartbreaking for God to come to his own people, as John says, and his own received him not. He came down to them, God becoming a man, and even before this, of course, speaking to them through the prophets, and yet his own people refused to receive him.

And they began to trade him off for pieces of land. In other words, I've found another security. I have another investment, and you are calling me to something else that you say is going to satisfy, but I'm quite

satisfied with what I have here.

I've found a piece of land. This is my inheritance, and so I'm going to hold to this, and I do beg you to release me from this banquet. Incredible.

Can you imagine? Can you imagine asking the God of the universe, who's giving us an invitation to be indwelt by Christ and fully satisfied? Lord, I acknowledge your invitation, but I'm just so happy here, and I'm so satisfied with what I already have. Believing it's come from your hand, I do beg you, would you release me from any further commitment or any further inconvenience to my pursuit? Or the others that say, well, I bought your auction. I'm in business, and Lord, you understand.

Yes, I hear you calling me to something, but I have something I have got to do, and I can't see how I could leave this to go to the other. And another man just said, I've married a wife, ironically, and saying, therefore, I cannot come. In other words, God, you understand I have responsibilities.

I have another love. I have other things that I have to attend to. I have other relationships that must be nurtured.

So I really don't have time to nurture this relationship that you are inviting me to. I beg you, please have me released. Paul said in Romans 10.21, he said to Israel, God, or he or God says, all day long I've stretched forth my hands to a disobedient or a gainsaying people.

All day long, God says, I stretched out my hands to a people who refused my invitation and presented, gainsaying means arguing, presenting arguments as to why they shouldn't come. Why I was not worthy of yielding up their entire existence, their entire lives, of why I could not become the absolute Lord as well as Savior of my own people. Now, we do know that God says in the book of Romans through Paul that his dealing with Israel is not finished.

He is a merciful God. And yes, the falling away of Israel or the putting away of Israel for a season has become the blessing of God to the Gentile world which are many of us here today. And the ground wonderfully became level between Jew and Gentile.

Anybody who is Jewish has the same access to anybody who is not Jewish all throughout the world. Same Savior, same God, same call to repent, same promises of a renewed life and an empowerment of the Holy Ghost, same promise of God's provision to make his people, the same promises he made to physical Israel are now made to, as it is, spiritual Israel, which includes Jew and non-Jew. But there is a day also coming that God is going to go back again to the nation of Israel.

He has not forgotten his promises to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob. And Paul says it very conclusively when Israel comes back. He said, Paul said it this way in Romans.

Now, I'm paraphrasing him, but he said it essentially this way. If the falling away of the Jews became the reconciling of the world, Paul says, can you imagine what their fullness is going to bring? When they come back to God, Paul said, I can't compare it to anything but life from the dead. It's going to be an incredible blessing the day that Christ comes and calls the nation of Israel back to himself again.

What an awesome day that is going to be. Hallelujah. He reached out to a people in that particular time who refused him at large.

Now, obviously, there are always people who are part of the whole, who will turn their hearts towards God. We understand that. Then verse 21 is ascribed to the physical ministry of Jesus Christ on earth.

So that servant came and showed his Lord these things, and the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here, or hither, the poor, the maimed, the hauled, and the blind. Now, Jesus Christ was actually the fulfillment of that particular verse of Scripture. It was, in a sense, Israel's last call.

God Almighty came to the earth as a man and walked among the people, the religious, the self-satisfied, those that are entrenched in the land, given to other relationships, consumed with the gathering of material things, rejected him. They could not see anything in the Scripture. We don't understand how a prophet can come out of thus-and-thus place.

We know who he is. We know his parentage. And as they sat on the hillside, as it is, debating who this man was, the poor, the blind, the maimed, the lame, the prostitutes, lepers, tax-gatherers, publicans, sinners began to hear him.

And in Christ was this verse of Scripture fulfilled. God said, OK, those who should have had better knowledge rejected me, so therefore I'm going to bypass you, and I'm going to come and speak in parables, and the religious, you're not going to be able to hear me. But those who know they need a Savior, those who are cast down, those who have fallen, in a sense, from perhaps a better estate, and are crying out, are going to be able to hear.

For example, chapter 15, verse 1 says, Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners, for to hear him. Publicans, people who had no report, no reputation, drew near and began to hear the words of Jesus. Luke 6.20 says he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Not blessed be ye knowledgeable, or ye of royal lineage or wisdom, but no, you are, actually in the original Greek it means you have fallen from a better estate, you're in need of being lifted up, and you are unable to do anything but beg. You know you have nothing, you know you bring nothing to the table as it is, but you have heard the voice of God, and you have responded to an incredible banquet. Incredible, you will be indwelt by Christ and fully satisfied.

This is God's design for his people, it always has been, always will be. Did you and I come to the realization we don't bring anything to the table, we have nothing to offer him, we are little more than beggars, irrespective of our state in life, we don't have the mind of God, the knowledge of God, and we are absolutely powerless to change. But we hear a voice calling to us, it is the voice of God Almighty, gracious and long-suffering and merciful, calling to this as well as every other generation, saying come to me, I'll give you rest, learn of me, I'm meek and lowly in heart, you shall find rest for your soul.

And Christ came and called out of Israel a people, called a ministry, a discipleship as it is, not from those who should have known, but those who knew they needed God. Those who had perhaps lesser religious knowledge, but they had a much deeper inward knowledge of their own bankruptcy and their own need of a savior. And the servant said, verse 22, Lord it's done as thou has commanded and yet there is room.

And the Lord said to the servant, go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house may be filled. Now 22 and 23 are the church age, this is where you and I live today. The age of

Israel, Old Testament.

The age of Israel, New Testament in a sense with the ministry of Jesus Christ, the earthly bodily ministry of Christ. And then the last verses are the age of the church. God said these are a people, you are to go everywhere and you are to compel them to come in.

We have a great commission in the gospel of Matthew, we're to go to everywhere with the gospel of Jesus Christ, teaching them all things that I've commanded you. And he said and I'm with you always. Our lives, your life and my life is to be an irresistible argument that God wants to present to a fallen generation.

That's what you and I are called to be. Actually in the Greek it means present to them an irresistible argument of the goodness, the reliability and the availability of God. God is good, God is reliable, God is available.

And in verse 17 he says all things are now ready. This is now the hour of finding God. This is now the hour of becoming everything that God has destined you to be.

First Peter 2.9 Peter said you're a chosen generation. You're a royal priesthood, a holy nation. You're a peculiar people.

That you should show forth the praises of him who's called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light. God has called you out of something and into something else. Now the word light is the same word that John uses in John chapter 1 and verse 4. He says in him was life and the life was the light of men.

The word means never kindled and can never be quenched. Christ has called you and he's called me to an incredible feast. And he says if you will respond and be willing to release those other things that hold your heart, I will begin to do something in you that will be an irrefutable testimony of the fact that Christ is alive from the dead.

I will do something in you. The age of the church is to be a compelling age. It's not just to be a time when we sing songs in the house of God and make a mental ascent to truth because we don't want to go to hell.

It's to be a compelling age. My life and your life is to compel those who live in darkness that there is a savior, there is a God. There is no other way to do it.

We don't compel by argument alone. There are those who think that if we simply study and can out-argue the next person, that he will be compelled to receive Christ. But that's nonsense.

It doesn't work that way. Maybe in a few cases. No, it's a combination of understanding the truth, but having that truth produce the very life and light of Christ in us.

That people look at us and say, I hear what you're saying and I see what you are. And your argument and your example combined are compelling me to come into the kingdom of God. The man who came to my house, I guess about 24 years ago, a police officer came to talk to me because I was a police officer then.

And his life spoke more to me than his doctrine. His doctrine meant nothing to me because everybody has an argument. Everybody has an answer.

And we're living in an age in society when there is confusion abounding, not just in the world, but even in the church of Jesus Christ. There's confusion because of all the arguments, all the different perspectives,

even on God. People are out fastening their own calf and calling it Christ.

But there is an irrefutable proof. I looked at this man's life and I said, this man is not what he used to be. He's telling me the kind of a man he used to be.

He's telling me what he used to do, how he used to live. But this man is not that man. And that was the argument that convinced me that God was alive.

Incredible. A compelling argument. Our ministry today is to allow Christ in us to present through us this compelling testimony that all the things of this world would occupy and own the hearts of men to tell them that these things are worth forsaking for the availability of the great feast which he has now made ready for every man.

In the book of Acts, if you'll go there quickly with me, chapter 2, we see the first really tangible example of a people who embraced Christ in a very difficult and unpopular hour. We are rapidly living there. Christianity is less and less fashionable now.

And will become, according to the Scriptures, increasingly so as the days get darker. Here are a group of people who gather in our room. They have a promise of God that they were being taken to a banquet.

They've heard it. Their Savior has been crucified. They don't fully comprehend all that that entails.

But they've been told to go and wait and God was going to give them an empowerment from on high. The cross is very fresh. The bloodlust in society is very real.

It is not a popular time to come out into the open and say, hey, I am a follower of Christ. There was a bloodlust in society. There was a crowd, an angry mob that had gathered, crucified this man, away with him.

The whole nation, as it seems, had wanted nothing to do with this Savior God as he had proclaimed himself to them to be. And certainly it would not be popular to be one of his followers at this particular time. But this group of people went into an upper room and began to obey God and began to seek Him.

The Bible tells us clearly that there came a sound on them as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house. Acts 2.2, where they were sitting. They were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues.

Verse 4, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And they were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven. And when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded, because every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And now we hear them in our own tongue, every man, wherein we were born. Then they go to list all the places where they had come from. And all these people were speaking in known languages.

Cretan Arabians, verse 11, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. Wonderful works means great works or miracles that are contemplated as outcomings of the greatness of God's power and glory. These people were not behaving foolishly.

This was not a fool around time in Israel. This was a life and death. But God had come because they had accepted an invitation to a table.

And at that table, the empowerment of the Holy Ghost had come upon them. And they stepped out into the open, making an identification with Christ. Not perfected as of yet.

Still flawed. Peter himself was still flawed. He was going to make mistakes in the future.

But under the unction of the Holy Ghost, beginning to speak in ways that people could understand that the God who had now come and empowered them was going to change them. They were beginning to speak the great works or miracles that were contemplated, promised by God as outworkings of the greatness of His power and glory that was now within them. In other words, if I can put it in the simplest terms, I'm not what I want to be.

But let me tell you what God is going to do for me. The promises of God became real. And they stood because they had embraced another kingdom.

Now they were sitting at a table, an incredible banquet table. And it was not just a Bible study now. It was a living Word that was living inside of them.

There was the inner knowledge that this book is mine. Everything Christ has won on Calvary is mine. The Holy Spirit is now revealing it to me.

He's the Spirit of truth and comfort. He's taking the things of Christ and making them known to me. He's showing me what I'm going to be.

He's showing me that sin has no dominion over my life anymore. I can't be bound by the things of this world. That God is going to be taking me places that I don't have the natural ability to go.

He's going to be making me into things I don't have the natural ability to be. He's going to be changing me. And they stood out in the open and in understandable languages began to declare it.

Hallelujah. Incredible. We hear them speak in our tongues.

These wonderful works, these wonderful anticipated outcomings of God's glory and power. Hallelujah. Beloved, that's the mark of a Christian.

We're not called to be perfect because the perfectness is not in ourselves. It's in Christ. It's all about Christ.

But there is a hope. Peter the Apostle said, be always ready to give people a reason for the hope that is in you. Not the perfection.

The hope. The hope of change. The hope of glory.

The hope that tomorrow I'm going to be different than I am today. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

And Peter stood up and preached a marvelous sermon. Now, there were mockers that said, these are drunk. They were not behaving like drunks, folks.

They were mockers. Just like there may be a mocker or two here today who would say, ah, you're all stopped off at a bar. You couldn't possibly be that happy here at Times Square Church.

That's a mocker's voice. And Peter stood up and said, no, these have not been drinking as you suppose. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy. The word prophesy in the Greek just simply means to foretell things to come or to see things to come.

Your sons and daughters. Thank God. I believe in God that he's imparting that in a sense to my children.

That they can see things that God is going to do in their lives. They can see things to come. That it's not just about, all right, I'm a Christian.

Now, what should I do and how will I do it? No, the Holy Spirit begins to speak it. The Holy Spirit begins to stir. And he says, this is what I'm going to do.

I'm going to direct your sons and daughters. I'm going to empower them. I'm going to touch them and they're going to begin to see what I've called them to be.

It's not going to come from the hand of man. It can't. It can only come from the touch of God.

That inward working of the Holy Ghost. Goes on and he says, your young men shall see visions. And the word visions in the Greek text means to look upon something.

It's an inspired appearance. Your young men shall see something. They will look upon something.

Now, Paul defines it, I believe, more clearly in 2 Corinthians 3.17. He says, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's liberty. Or, in other words, generosity. That's actually the word is generosity.

And we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord. He said, your young men are going to see something. They're going to behold Christ.

It's as simple as that. Christ is the feast. Christ is the banquet.

Christ is the provision of God for all of our need. Christ is our hope. He's our wisdom, our sanctification, our redemption, our glory.

He's everything. He's our life. There's nothing apart from Christ.

And Peter was saying, it was prophesied through Joel that your young men will see him. They will begin to understand the light that is available through Christ. And as we see him, we will be changed into the same image from glory to glory.

That means little by little, line upon line, brick by brick, stone by stone. We will be changed into that same image by the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost within us will change us and make us the people that God has desired that we should be.

It goes on to say, your old men shall dream dreams. You know, it's an amazing thing. You look at that and you say, well, that's the natural thing that old men do.

They just sleep and dream dreams. But that's really not the inference. And it's not talking about some kind of cosmic spirituality that they just go, I've had a dream, I've had a dream.

It's not that. You see, the tendency of old age is to relive the past all the time. Talk about what used to be and talk about yesterday and back in 1940 the way it used to be.

That's the tendency of old age. You see, the dreaming of dreams is usually assigned to younger generations. And he says, basically, there's no limit by age now.

God says, I'm going to touch all, young and old, your children, your young men, your old. I'm going to touch. And there's going to be a future.

You can come to Christ at 75 years of age. And the last 5, 10 years of your life, you could have a major impact on your family. Hallelujah.

A major touch on your community. I can raise you up. You have all those previous years of knowing what sin can do to a life.

And now I'm going to give you a vision of what God can do. And even though it's only the latter part of your life, you will see something in the future. You'll have a hope for your future.

It will not all be about the past. No limitation by age. Then he goes on.

He says, on servants and handmaidens I'll pour out in those days of my spirit, and they too will prophesy. In other words, this is for everybody, Peter says. It's not just for a few.

It's for everybody. The ground is level. Thanks be to God.

The ground is absolutely level. It's not about education, experience, language ability. It's not about anything but the heart that says, God, I come.

I come. I hear your voice. I'm coming to the table.

And the Lord says, I delight in taking those who know their need and making you what you aren't. I delight in raising you up and making you a testimony, a compelling testimony. Your family look at you five years down the road after coming to Christ and say, surely God must be alive.

Look at what's happening. How could this be apart from the power of God? How could there be such a change? That's what God says I want to do for you. That's what he wanted to do for Israel.

And then Peter looks. You see, there's an audience. There's a huge audience.

The Bible tells us that 3,000 that day came to Christ. But there's also a testimony. There's a sermon illustration.

Peter is preaching a sermon and God gave him an illustration. Here are 120 God-gripped people standing in the open, declaring they're of Christ, speaking in easy to be understood terms about what God is going to do in their lives. Declaring the intent of God and what each man, I believe, is receiving of the Holy Ghost

that he is going to be and God is going to do, not just for himself, but for those all who will trust in him.

And then Peter goes on and he begins to describe what Joel has said and then he turns and says, This is that. This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. This is that.

Here you are looking at what God said he was going to do. You have 120 God-gripped people. This is that.

Incredible. Now suppose for a moment that I was called to preach a sermon in your office or your neighborhood. I wonder if I could use you as an illustration.

I wonder if I could go into your office or where you live or work or dwell or commune or commute and I could go to the people and say, Oh God, there is such a promise of God that he was going to give his spirit and there was going to be a change in people's lives. There was going to be miraculous things begin to happen in those who would turn to him and believe. And this is that.

Could I use you? Did it occur to you that Christ is always trying to preach a sermon through you? That I might not be there, but Christ is in your office, Christ is in your home, Christ is in your apartment building, Christ is in your neighborhood. Always wanting to speak to those who are destined for an eternity in hell. Who don't see any way out.

They are confused about the existence of God. And God is wanting to so work in you that he can point to you. You're not even aware of it.

You're just walking down the hall with your groceries saying hello to people as you go. And the Holy Ghost is there saying, This is that. This is that.

Our lives are to be a compelling testimony. We have churches all over the nation. We spend weeks trying to out-preach one another, out-sing one another.

And that's the only hope that people even go there, that they have a good program. Because there's so little testimony among the people. What a tragedy that Christ can't even point to his church and say, This is that.

This is that. Pray to God that if I were to bring somebody unsaved on the platform, that I could point to this congregation and say, This is that. This is that which is promised.

And that your life would be a compelling testimony. Then they said, of course, they heard it. They were pricked in their heart and said, What shall we do? What shall we do? Oh, it's my heart's desire to live that way.

To be a Christian that the Holy Spirit can point to. We point to ourselves as worthless in a sense. It has to be the Holy Ghost that does it.

And he could point to us and we might not even be aware of it. And the Holy Spirit could say, This is that. Our children in the church, for example, come into the sanctuary from time to time and are normally drawn to adults as role models.

That the Holy Spirit could point to you, to any child in this church and say, This is that. This is what I spoke to you about. This is what you're hearing about in Sunday school.

This is that. Incredible. Incredible.

Now, go very quickly to Acts chapter 8. I'm going to conclude with this. What shall we do? I think there's some people here today that maybe that's the cry of your heart today. You're hearing a word like this and saying, What shall I do? Now, keep in mind, Israel would not move from a physical, almost secular place into a spiritual place.

But there's another battle that we fight as the Christian church. And here it is in Acts chapter 8, verse 5, rather. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.

And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. Unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them. And many taken with palsies and that were lame were healed.

And there was very great joy in that city. So Philip, by today's standards, has an extremely successful ministry. He goes down into an unchurched area.

He preaches Christ to people with one accord. Basically, the whole society seems to be turning to God. And there were miracles that God was doing through his hands.

He was preaching. And I don't know what the miracles are, but perhaps the lame are walking and the deaf are hearing and the blind are seeing and the sick are being raised. And all types of miracles are happening.

I mean, this is an extremely successful ministry. Devils are crying out with loud voices and people with palsies are being healed. And great, great joy has come into the city.

And so, in the midst of all of that, the Holy Spirit now begins to speak to Philip. And the angel of the Lord spake to Philip, verse 26. And by today's standards, you'd say, well, build a bigger church, Philip.

But he said to him, arise and go towards the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. Philip, go to the desert. You see, one of the problems that God has with the modern day church is that when things seem to be going well, we don't want to move.

We want to stay where we are. There's this curse of the fallen nature as it is. We want familiarity.

And we have adopted the world's measurements of success. That if it's better, it has to be bigger. Now, here is an obedient man.

It was walking, I believe, in joyful obedience. This is an ingredient that God will have to have today in his church to have a compelling testimony. I fear, oftentimes, that the value system of the world, if I held up a mirror of the world to the church, there is not much of a difference between the two.

The value systems of land and business and relationships, and those that have come to Christ and want to walk with him become entrenched in good religious things. I mean, they're good things. And they were things that are called of God.

But there is a time in everyone's life when God begins to speak about something that he wants you or I to do. And it might be completely different than what all the voices around us are saying. Can you imagine what people said to Philip? Philip, you are crazy.

The whole city is turning to God. Miracles are happening. Philip, you need to be training other ministers.

Philip, you need to be showing them how to do miracles. You need to be doing all this stuff. And he says, no, I've heard from God.

I'm to go to the desert. Well, what awaits you? I really don't know. I don't know.

But I do know that God has something. So he arose and he went. And here's a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians.

And he had charge of all the treasure. And he'd come to worship. He was returning and sitting in the chariot reading Isaiah.

And, of course, the Bible tells us that he had not found yet the truth. And the spirit said to Philip, go near and join yourself to this chariot. And so Philip ran to him and heard what he was reading.

And then he invited him to get up into the chariot and sit with him. I wonder if there was a conversation. There had to be some conversation that's not recorded here.

I'm sure that this is not line by line. And this is only speculation. But can you imagine the Ethiopian man saying, Philip, why are you here? Philip would say, I really am not sure.

I suppose it's for you that I'm here. God has led me here for you. It's an incredible thing.

Wouldn't it be wonderful that that could be the testimony of the church? Why are you here? Why are you in Asia? Why are you in Africa? Why are you in India? Why are you here? Or wherever that happens to be where you live. Well, I don't really know. But I know that God sent me here.

And he sent me here, I believe it's for you. Incredible thing. I remember one time when I was still a police officer that I used to fast every Wednesday for my fellow workers.

And I remember one time we had a very, very rigorous schedule. I remember one fellow saying one time to me, he said, I noticed you never eat Wednesday. And he said, why do you do that? And I said, well, I fast every Wednesday.

What's fasting? So I explained that to him and he said, well, why do you fast? I said, I fast for you. And he just looked at me and he saw the hardnesses begin to melt. He said, you do that for me? And I said, yes, not only for you, but for the other police officers here.

I said, I fast and pray that you can come to know God like I do. And you can have the peace that I have. And the assurance.

And I just saw this man begin to melt. And oftentimes it's just the simple obedience to be taken to a place that we don't naturally want to go. That God begins to use that and begins to soften the hearts of the people around us.

And he shared the scripture. And Philip opened his mouth and began to preach Jesus to him. And they came to a certain place.

And he said, see, here is water. And what hinders me to be baptized? In verse 36. And Philip said, if you believe with all your heart, you can.

What hinders me? Nothing if you believe. There is no hindrance. People could ask that same question today.

Pastor, what hinders me? What hinders me from becoming what God wants me to be? And the answer is the same that Philip gave to this Ethiopian man. There is nothing that hinders you if you believe that God is able to do this for you. Nothing hinders you.

If you are willing to get out of your chariot and get into the water. And humble yourself before the hand of God. He is a man of great authority.

But there was a thing he had to do. He had to go into the water and be immersed in the water. It was a humbling act.

All of the people around would have been watching this. But he said, if you are willing to just obey in a sense as I have. Philip says, then God will do exactly for you what he has done for me.

And beloved, this is an amazing thing. Because this is the first recorded instance of the gospel being taken into Africa. How could Philip have known? That his simple obedience and leaving one religious thing in a sense.

And I use the word reverently because it wasn't religion in the bad sense. But leaving that one thing and obeying God would touch a man of great authority. And the gospel would move then into Africa.

Of course, it's our first recorded account in the book of Acts. Incredible, into Ethiopia. A man of authority.

And God had to find a man who just simply could be moved from one place to another. It's amazing. And then, of course, at the end of the story, they came out of the water.

And the spirit of the Lord caught away Philip. And the eunuch saw him no more. And he went on his way rejoicing.

The Bible tells us that Philip was miraculously taken from one place to another. It's like Philip was so enamored with the will of God that God just couldn't wait any longer. He said, let's just shorten the trip.

I mean, why do we have to? I know you'll obey me. I know you'll go where I ask you to go. So let's just get you there right away.

Amazing. Can you imagine? You come out of the water and you're in some other place. I think it's a Zotus or someplace like that.

He ends up and says, you know, how'd you get here? Well, you know, it's a long story. But it's been a very short trip. I feel very rested.

And this is the compelling testimony of the Christian. And I want you to hear this because this is my whole point. This is the compelling testimony.

God has taken me and continues to take me miraculously from one place to another. That is the testimony. He takes me.

Somebody will say at work, I've noticed you have a fairly nasty temper. Well, yes, I do. But you should have seen me before I became a Christian.

He has taken me and he continues to take me from one place to another. He's moving me forward. People aren't looking for perfection.

They're looking for reality. They're looking for a compelling testimony of honesty. Who am I really in Christ? See, the religious person is never honest.

The religious person is an imposter and deceptive right from the time he chooses to embrace religion apart from Christ. He's never honest. Becomes an absolute total hypocrite.

Plays the game on Sunday morning and Tuesday night but never lives it before a fallen man around him. But the true Christian, the compelling Christian is not perfect. I tell you, folks, when I was a police officer, I was not perfect.

There were times that I did things that I regretted. But still, men came to Christ because it was honest. Even if it was imperfect, it was honest.

And there was a moving forward. There was this continuous changing from one place to another. When God would begin to speak, I would begin to obey him.

And, of course, he provides the vehicle, the travel expense, everything to get where you're going. It all comes from his hand. And you can say, I live at a continual feast, which infuses my life daily with new strength.

And won't you join me? I live at a feast. I live at a table. I was invited and I went.

And I've been changed and I'm being changed from image to image and glory to glory. Your life is to be a compelling testimony of Christ. He said, go into the world, the highways and the hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.

Compel them. The problem we face is that many of us are reluctant to let go and embrace God. We become comfortable.

We do just like Israel. We say, well, hey, you know, this house has been in my family for 80 years. I mean, I'd have to sell it to go to India.

Or I've got this thing that I've got going on the side and I'd have to leave it. Or I've got this other love. God says, I can't use you until you're willing to go from one place to another.

Because that will be your testimony. And see, without that, you have no testimony. And even in the church now.

Now, this is also for the practicing honest Christian who runs the risk, as we all do, of becoming entrenched in what we think is success. God says, I want to take you to something else. And we become religiously resistant.

No, good is being done here. God says, no, I've got something else for you. I'm moving, as it is.

And I want to do something for your life. Won't you come? Will you let me take you from one place to another? One of the dilemmas of being in the church for years is what I call religious entrenchment. And I've seen it because I traveled as a revival preacher for a few years.

It's an entrenchment of religion, of truth, actually, which doesn't move the heart anymore. Because somewhere along the line, Christ called to the feast and there was a refusal. We were able to point to Israel.

We were able to point to other people. But we failed to see that God was speaking to us. Saying, I want to take you somewhere.

And in doing so, I'm going to make you a compelling testimony of my grace and my glory. Today, there are people here that need to let some things go. There are relationships that need to be broken.

There are affiliations that need to be surrendered. And even more than all of these, and of course, obviously, there's always sin that needs to be forsaken, or you really don't grow in grace. But even more than all of these, there's a religiousness that has to be cast off.

We can never get to the place where we can say, I've gone as far as I'm going to go. The chiefest sin of Israel is that they limited God. They limited God.

I want to challenge you today not to do that. Don't limit Him in your neighborhood, your home, your workplace, wherever God has you to go. Let the Holy Spirit be able to preach a sermon through your life.

And look at you and say, this is that. In your college campuses, this is that. To your children, this is that.

You know, it's tragic, but most children are led astray in their own homes, even in the church. Because they're given devotions in the morning, but all day the Holy Spirit can't point to mom or dad or guardian and say, this is that. And they draw the conclusion that there's no reality in it because of what they see.

I want my life to be a compelling testimony. It's the only pursuit I have now. I want my life to be a compelling testimony to you, to my family, to my wife, to my children, to my grandchildren who are not born yet, to my daughters-in-law and my new son-in-law someday.

I want my life to be a compelling testimony of the reality of Jesus Christ. That they would come in, that God's house might be full. If that's the desire of your heart and the Holy Spirit has spoken to you today, that some things need to change.

And you know what that is. If I begin defining it, you're going to get off the hook. The Holy Spirit has to define it.

Because you already know what it is because he brings it back as I'm speaking to you. He gives the message. He brings back to the surface the issues.

And you already know what to do, especially those that have been in the church of Christ any amount of time. You know what to do. You know what God's been after.

And here it is, back to the surface again. And today is the day to deal with it. Today is the day to say, Lord Jesus, from this day forward, make my life a compelling testimony.

When we went to Nigeria, it was not doctrine that won those people to Christ, you know. It was the joy of the Lord. It was something that God is doing in his people.

We preach no better than the hundreds that have gone before us. We sang no better than some other places. But you see, the Holy Spirit bears witness when there is a people who say, God, I give it all.

I go anywhere. I want to see your kingdom come. And the Holy Spirit points even to the Muslims.

I don't think I'm out of line to say by the thousands or tens of thousands we saw Muslims come to Christ. The Holy Spirit pointed and said, this is that. This is what you've been looking for.

We got some wonderful letters of Muslim men that came to Christ. A Muslim shopkeeper who had a store outside of the crusade walls heard the gospel of Jesus Christ three days running while he was doing business. He wrote a letter and said, Pastor, I went home at the end of the third night and I had no alternative but to surrender a salvation that cannot be found to gain one that is found, that can be.

That's the way he put it. I had no alternative. I went home.

I was shaken to the core, I believe. Words to that effect in his letter. Hallelujah.

If the Holy Spirit is drawing you today and you want your life to be that compelling testimony, I want to ask you to rise up in a moment and make your way to this altar. In the Education Annex, you can go and stand between the screens. We will pray for you too as well there.

God bless you this morning. Let's all stand together. I ask you just to slip out, make your way here.

It's the cry of your heart. Lord Jesus, make my life a compelling testimony. God will answer you.

Nothing hinders you but unbelief. God will do it. You can be sure of it.

Especially college students that are here today. All college students, the Lord wants to do something with you on your campuses. You have to be willing to step out of the crowd and begin to declare the faithfulness of God.

When you do, the Holy Spirit will bear witness to you. But let it be in truth. Move in closely, please.

Give room for everybody to get here. We're going to pray together. And then I have a word for those that are going to make their way to this altar today.

Hallelujah. Lord, make us a compelling testimony. Pray that with me now.

Say, Lord Jesus, make me a compelling testimony. Forgive me for holding on to things. Valuing things.

And even people. More than your call to be glorified through my life. Give me the courage to believe you.

And to be a Christian with an open testimony of grace. That you can point to. And say, this is that.

That I have spoken about. This is what I have promised to do. For every man, woman and child.

Who trusts in me. I thank you, Jesus. That because I believe.

And I'm willing to step out. That nothing hinders me. Nothing can stop this.

You will be glorified. In my life. You will change me.

You will break. The bondages. Of sin.

And attitudes of heart. That dishonor. Your name.

In me. And through me. You will change me.

So that others around. May know and believe. That there is a God.

Who does rule. From heaven. I have a word for you.

This is for Israel. But it's also for the church. You see, God never fails in his promises.

What a day it's going to be. When all Israel and all the church are gathered together. This is about the future glory of Zion.

But we are spiritual Zion. We are grafted in. Clearly, the scripture says we are grafted in to every promise.

That has been made to Israel. Arise, shine. He said, for your light has come.

And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth. And gross darkness the people.

But the Lord shall arise upon thee. And his glory. Shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light. And kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about.

And see all they gather themselves together. They come to thee. Thy sons shall come from far.

And thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then shalt thou see and flow together. And thine heart shall fear and be enlarged.

Because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee. And the forces of the Gentiles shall come to thee. God made a promise to Israel.

And it's a promise to us today. When you turn to me. I will arise upon you with such glory.

That even kings will look at you and say there is a God. Now Lord, I'm asking today that you make us a testimony to New York City. Make us a testimony in college campuses, in offices, apartment buildings, on the street.

In our families. Make us a testimony. To those who have yet to make up their mind about eternity.

That there is a God. His name is Jesus Christ. He does empower those who trust in Him.

And He is real. My God, I thank you for what you're going to do. I thank you for how you're going to do it.

We don't have to know how. We just have to know you. Father, thank you.

And praise you. And believe, oh God, with all my heart. That you have destined to do something.

In and through this church. That will touch this city. And perhaps other parts of the world.

Lord, it's all in your hands. You tell us what to do. We will do it.

We don't move until you speak. Father, we thank you for it from the very depths of our heart. In Jesus' mighty name.

Now listen, beloved. You don't have to go out from here and get on some tangent. Don't go out and start selling everything you own.

And don't do any of those things. Just wait. You'll know.

Love Him with all your heart. And let Him speak. He never does it under compulsion.

He never does it under condemnation. He will lead. And it will become more attractive than life itself.

This is the conclusion of the message. This is the conclusion of the message.

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