

Oh God, How Long Shall the Enemy Reproach

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon calls for a return to God's presence and restoration in the church, echoing the heartfelt cry found in Psalm 74.

Duration: 1:04:06

Scripture: Isaiah 58:6, Matthew 8:20, Matthew 16:24, Matthew 25:35, Luke 4:21, Acts 1:8

Topics: "Reproach"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the church resembling the original pattern set by Jesus. He highlights the need for believers to take up their cross and follow Christ, just as Jesus yielded himself to the provision of his Father. The preacher references Isaiah 58:6, which speaks about the true meaning of fasting and how it involves helping those in need and showing compassion. He encourages believers to walk with God, talk to Him, and trust in His guidance, promising that God will satisfy their souls and make them like a watered garden.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit Series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, PO Box 260, Lindale, Texas 75771, or calling 903-963-8626.

You are welcome to make additional cassettes of this message for free distribution to friends. However, for all other forms of reproduction or electronic transmission, existing copyright laws apply. If you'd open your Bibles, please, to Psalm 74, and just let it rest, because we will be getting to the Scriptures very shortly.

Psalm 74. Father, I thank you, God, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. I thank you, Lord, that you are reaching out to your church.

I hear it in my heart. I know it in my spirit. You are reaching out to all who can hear you.

God, I pray today for an anointing to hear. Lord, it's no good if we preach and don't hear. I ask, O God, that you'd open my inner ear of my spirit to hear what you've given me.

I'm asking for this church, for Times Square Church, that you would give us ears to hear what you, Holy Spirit, are speaking. I'm asking today, O God, that you would give those who are part of the extended church family throughout the world ears to hear. God, touch us, help us, speak to us.

Lord, I'm not interested in delivering a sermon. I want your heart. I want to be able to deliver it to your people.

I ask you for an anointing that transcends all of my natural ability and understanding, and take me out of the way, and let it be your voice that comes from this human vessel. I ask, O God, that we would see no person here, but it would be just simply you, and we would honor you and acknowledge you. We bend our knee before you, and we ask you, Holy Spirit, to speak to us.

God, it's only your voice that gives life and direction. There's no other voice. Nothing else can help us.

Nothing else can lead us or keep us. So, God, just blow away everything that's not of you, and we ask you to come and speak to us. Let there be sovereign and divine change in every one of our lives.

That is the mark, O God, of your spirit. Lord, let there be a change. I'm asking, O God, that we leave this house today not the same way that we came in.

Father, I thank you from the depths of my heart. In Jesus' mighty name. We get a lot of mail.

Now, when I say we, I'm speaking of Times Square Church and World Challenge, Incorporated, which is Pastor David's ministry in Texas. A lot of mail from hungry-hearted Christians all over the world with a cry in their heart. And the cry is found in Psalm 74 and verse 10.

It's, O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? This is the cry of hungry-hearted Christians who are in very dry places. It can be a dry city, a dry town, a dry neighborhood. Please don't misunderstand what I'm about to say, because there are good God-fearing and Christ-seeking churches all over the country.

But this is the cry of people who are in, by circumstance, find themselves in a place where they're unable to find the word of God. They're unable to find anything that resembles the biblical pattern of the Christian church. They're hungry and they write.

And it's like a plaintive cry, a plea of sheep who are out on the mountains without shepherds. And they're saying, O God, how long? How long will the adversary reproach? How long will we be traveling from place to place and church to church? How long, O God, will it be before you will come to us and you will give us your word? How long will it be before your church becomes again what we know your church used to be and what we are aware that your church is designed to be? We are reading our Bibles. Now, I'm speaking this message this morning and it has an application to this church because of a sovereign call that God has placed upon this church.

And I will be sharing that with you a little later in this message. But it also has an application far beyond these walls. There are ministers who are hungry.

And I believe that God, in his grace, will always have a voice or voices in the nations, in America as well as other countries. Now, we are not the only voice, obviously. It would be ridiculous to think so.

There are many voices, but still there are voices that God is raising up of those that are shut in. They're hearing his heart. They have an understanding, a spiritual understanding of the pattern of the church.

Now, how it must grieve the heart of God when he hears this cry. And I believe sometimes it's the cry of the average man just looking for life that he knows should be found in God. There's an emptiness in his heart or her heart.

And he comes to the house of God, perhaps someone who's professing Christ and comes to the house of God looking for life, reads in the Bible about what this life is supposed to be. Jesus said, I've come to give you life. I've come to give it to you abundantly.

Looks in the Bible, reads through the book of John, the book of Acts and sees clearly the pattern and says in his heart, this is this is what I want. This is what I've been looking for. But then goes to the house of God and what's going on in the house of God.

So little resembles what's written in the word of God. And it's strange, but it seems to be sometimes the those that have no influence or authority that come into the church and they they look, they're not wanting to be critical. They're not wanting to judge what's going on in the house of God.

They just want Jesus Christ. But what they see and they find is so far from the heart of God that it produces a cry. And sometimes nobody but God almighty himself hears that cry.

I believe there is a cry in America today in Canada that I believe there's a remnant that are crying, oh, God, how long is this going to go on? How long do I have to travel in my town from corner to corner going into churches that are just so distant from you? There's nothing of God, there's there's nothing that challenges my life. I come in one way and I go out the same way. I'm not I'm not encountering the presence of Christ.

I'm not wanting to be judgmental or critical. But, oh, God, how long is this going to go on? I see things happening and watch things taking place that that are not in the Bible. And, Lord, I've got no one to go to but you.

And I know there are people that are listening today and are going to listen in the future. This has been the cry of your heart. And I believe that God's going to answer you today and God's going to show you where restoration is going to come from.

You have to really want to hear this. You have to have an open heart because he's going to very clearly answer your cry. He's going to show you how long the adversary is going to reproach.

And when it's going to stop. And I think you're going to be quite surprised. Now, he may not be a leader, but he knows something is wrong.

He encounters a church that doesn't resemble the one he has read about or personally known. The Bible or Bible commentators rather, Hendrick says in particular, puts Psalm 74 at the time of the Babylonian or just following the Babylonian invasion under Nebuchadnezzar. When Solomon's temple had been ravaged or what remained of it and destroyed.

Now, I know it's described to Asaph, a Psalm writer, but really it should say the family or the tribe of Asaph. This was not written at the time of David, but later on after the reign of Solomon in the time of Rehoboam. So the enemy of Babylon, Babylon had come, which always represents a type of the world, had come in to a backslidden church and began to swallow and destroy the things of God.

The writers obviously were personally aware of Solomon's temple and would have perhaps seen it in its glory. I don't know if the writer was an older man or you really don't understand because we don't have the historical background of it. But you remember that God gave to David a pattern in writing by the spirit and Solomon had the temple built to the letter by that pattern.

There was divine order in that house and everything in it resembled the glory of God. Everything from the curtains to the carved workings on the walls. You remember the scripture says that Solomon began to build and God sent skilled workers into that house.

These were men and women with giftings of God. They were empowered and it was such a type of the New Testament church. It was a physical type of the spiritual reality that we live in today.

You see that Christ has called every one of us and he has given us talents and abilities. And whether you know it or not, in the area in which you are called, you have become a skilled worker. You have been assigned and given the ability to do something that nobody but you can do.

You have been called and we have over 100 nations represented here in Times Square Church and God has called you. The Holy Spirit has gifted you. You have the ability.

And when that gifting is developed in your life, you are part of that adding to the dimension of the beauty of Christ and that testimony of Christ. Christ is not beautified by buildings anymore. Christ is beautified by a church, a body on this earth that are allowing the Holy Spirit to grip their mind and their heart that have cast off the words of impossibility and in a sense are allowing the Holy Spirit to make them into everything that God has called them to be.

And in their lives, Christ is being glorified because the spirit of God is upon them and making them into something other than what they have been and giving them skills and talents and abilities. And this is the glory of God. And the psalm writer remembers when everything was done the way it was written.

It is important that everything is done the way it is written. You see, God doesn't change his mind. He is not doing a new thing.

He is not putting away his word. It was ridiculous to even suggest that there are ministries in the world today that are saying we are now in as it is the age of the Holy Spirit. And now God has put away his word.

So put away your Bible. God is doing a new thing. Well, if you believe that.

You see, there's a theological problem with that because the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit is not a river of fire, a feeling of warmth that comes into me. The Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit is Christ. The Holy Spirit is God the Father. It is an indisputable doctrine.

God is three. One God manifested in three persons. And if you believe that the Holy Spirit is God, then you cannot divorce the Holy Spirit from this book because God does not contradict himself.

The theology of much of the charismatic church is beyond ridiculous today. And it's astonishing that people can be convinced by professed preachers of the gospel that somehow the Holy Spirit is on a new wave, as it is, or a new pattern. Doing something that is not found in the word of God.

An absolute, absolute deception. An absolute rebellion disguised as religion. Verse one, he says, Oh, God, why have you cast us off forever? And why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture? The psalmist is crying out.

He says, God, what have we done? And why do I sense your anger towards what is called your house and your people? He says, I'm coming in and I'm sensing your disfavor. Now, obviously, it wasn't difficult to

sense it. The Babylonian army was there.

They were in the temple. They had ravaged the temple. It's a type, in the sense of the world, had come into the house of God and was just tearing down everything that had been done by skilled workmen who had been called by God.

It was all being destroyed. And the psalmist walks in and says, I have a sense in my heart that you have a grievance. You have, as it is, an issue with what is going on here.

And why are you so angry towards what is called your house and your people? And then he calls on God in verse two and three. He says, Remember thy congregation, which thou has purchased of old, the rod of your inheritance, which you have redeemed this Mount Zion where you have dwelt. He says, Oh, God, I'm asking you to remember what your church used to be.

I'm asking you to recall your temple. This was your inheritance. This was where you manifested your power.

You remember in Solomon's day, God had spoken and said, even if you find yourself captivated and you turn and pray towards this place, I will hear you and I will deliver you. And there was such promises of power and restoration. There was supposed to be a rod of God, as it is that this miraculous working in impossible places was supposed to be found in the house of God.

But yet it was no longer there. And he says, God, I'm asking you to remember this. And I'm asking you to keep in mind that you once dwelt.

You remember at the dedication of Solomon's temple, the glory came, the glory of God came into that temple and no flesh could stand. Everyone was bowed before the presence of God. And I want to challenge you if you are walking with God for any amount of time to remember the days when God's glory came into your life, when you received Christ and the Holy Spirit filled you and you bowed your knee to God and you recognized.

That he was Lord, you recognized that you were but flesh invited into the presence of a holy God for a divine purpose. It was not about man. It had nothing to do with the mind of man.

It was something in the heart of God. And you knew sovereignly you had been made a partaker of it by grace. It was nothing.

You had not merited this salvation. You hadn't earned it. You didn't deserve it.

You knew it. You were just a sinner. But God, by his grace, had come into your life.

And the psalmist cries out and says, God, remember that you once dwelt in this church. And it was a church that carried a rod of authority. And it was a church that you had purchased with your own blood.

He says, lift up your feet in verse three unto perpetual desolations, even all that the enemy has done in the sanctuary. In other words, come and see what the enemy has done. The psalmist cries out.

He says, oh, Lord, I don't understand what's going on, but I'm asking you to come. I'm asking you to remember and I'm asking you to come back to your house and I'm asking you to fight for your people. I'm asking you, God, to come and do something that cannot be done by the hand of man.

It has to be done by the hand of God. I'm asking you to arise from the right hand of power in all authority and come into your house. Oh, God, come and grip the hearts of your people again.

Verse 18, he says, remember this, that the enemy has reproached the Lord and that the foolish people have blasphemed your name. The word for blaspheme in the Hebrew, the original text means it means a disdain, a not liking as it is for one who had formerly received favorable attention. And he says, remember, oh, God, the enemy has reproached you and foolish people have received it and they have pushed you away.

In other words, they don't want you the way you are revealed. They want you in another way. And the enemy has come in and done this in your house.

He says, oh, deliver not the soul of the turtle dove unto the multitude of the wicked and forget not the congregation of the poor forever. He says, I love the word turtledove in there because it has a connotation of gentleness. It has a connotation of innocence.

Remember, you'll find that in the Song of Solomon and other places in the scripture work where God himself looks down on his people and refers to his own people in such a tender fashion. And the psalmist is saying, God, remember that you delighted yourself in your bride. Remember that your people were your chiefest delight and you spoke so tenderly of us.

And God, I'm asking you now to come and do this one more time. Verse 20 says, have respect to the covenant for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. He says, God, you promised that you would keep me.

And, oh, God, you promised you would keep your people. And you know how cruel it is in the world. Father, we live in a time and a season of cruelty.

We live in a season of rebellion. Our enemies are approaching us and you on every side. It's not right that we should come into your house and not find you.

It's not right that we should come into your presence and have another Christ that we've not known. Jesus, I'm asking you to come and remember your covenant. Remember the promises that you've made to your people.

Verse 21, he says, oh, let not the oppressed return ashamed, but let the poor and the needy praise thy name. This is a cry of a genuine man of God. He says, God, when people who are being oppressed by their enemies come into your house, don't let them leave triumphed over by their enemies.

You have such promises of power. Arise, oh God. Verse 22, he says, and plead your own cause.

He says, God, is not this something that you initiated? This was your idea. The church was your idea. The temple was your idea.

It was not ours. It was your idea. You put it in David's heart and David gave it to his son.

His son built it after the pattern God had initiated with you. You were the one who called Abraham and you told Abraham you would make his life a blessing. You were the one who promised to take him through fire and flood and that you would perform everything that you'd ever promised to him.

And he says, Lord, this is your cause. This is your church. I ask you to rise up and plead for it.

I ask you, God, to rise up and don't leave your glory in the enemy's hand any longer. This has got to be the cry of the church in this hour that we're living in. It is the sigh and the cry of many in the house of God today.

Oh, Jesus, you can't leave your house in the enemy's hand any longer. God, you've got to come and fight for your heritage. This was your idea.

That's why you became a man. That's why you died on the cross. That's why you rose from the grave.

That's why you call the church. Oh, God, come and fight for your people. He said, forget not the voice of thine enemies and the tumult or the noise.

The tumult really means it's the noise of a large gathering crowd. Forget not the voice of your enemies and the tumult of those that rise against you increases continually. Now, the psalmist is speaking in the context of the temple.

And he's saying, God, I go into the temple and there's the noise in the temple now. It used to be praise. You remember, Paul warned in the last days that the professing church would heap to themselves teachers having itching ears and would be turned away from the truth and would be turned to stories, fables.

Now, the word fables means stories with a moral, with a meaning. And they can actually be true, but they're not Christ. That's the incredible thing is that they can move you to tears, but they cannot change you.

There's no power in them. There can be a mental ascent that there is a value in the lesson that you're hearing, but it cannot produce the life of Christ. And ultimately, it causes people to try to pretend like they're having the victory.

Try to pretend like somehow God is in our midst, but there is no transformation. There's no yielding of the heart. There's no life of Christ being formed.

And God looks down and says, it's a noise. And the discerning know it's a noise as well. Verse four, the psalmist says that your enemies roar in the midst of your congregations.

And they set up their own signs for signs. In other words, he's saying your enemies are proud self-promoters who speak about victory. Their message is always about victory.

They roar their message of victory, but they're proud. They have their own agenda. He says they set up their own signs for signs.

It's their name that's being set up. It's their ministry. It's not the name of Jesus Christ.

It's not the ministry of Jesus Christ. It's all about them. They roar in the midst.

They talk about victory, but they promote themselves. And the psalmist says, God, how long will this go on in your house? How long will the adversaries of truth reproach your name, God, and cause those that are hungry not to find life where you are? Peter warns in 2 Peter 2, the apostle Peter, that they take those who

were escaped from the snares of the world, and they pull them back in to the love of this life. And they are overcome.

The people are overcome with the cares and the love of this life and this world. Verse 5, the psalmist says, a man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. Now, here's what I believe that the psalmist is saying.

He says a man was known or famous by the degree in which his work was conformed to the pattern which was given in writing by God. There used to be a time when men of reputation were men of God because they conformed to Christ. I want you to think now of the history of the church.

I want you to think about how men and women who were fashioned by the Holy Spirit added dimensions of beauty to the church of Jesus Christ as their lives testified to his power and his glory. I want you to think about Hudson Taylor breaking into China at a time when there was very little evangelization being done in that part of the world. Think about D.L. Moody with little or no education.

God's spirit coming upon him and God using him to touch various continents throughout the world. Time and again, we see men or women having risen up of fame and report in the church because they were in line with the word of God and their life was of the pattern that had been given by Christ. They glorified Christ.

Christ was in them. They could say like the apostle Paul, follow me as I follow Christ. You see, beloved, this is the call that's on your life and mine.

It's not about ourselves, and if it ever gets to be that, we are in danger. It's about Jesus Christ. Times Square Church someday will no longer exist.

New York City will no longer exist someday, but Christ will live forever. And he says in verse six, but now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. In other words, the psalmist is God.

Men were famous, and I'm sure he's thinking about Moses. I'm sure in his mind is David. But he says now, now the people are glorifying those who are changing the design.

They're now glorified by how much different they can make it from the original. You see, now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. There was a time when God was glorified by that which had been designed and formed by the spirit.

But now they come into the house and they are literally smashing everything that came from the design of God. And they are glorified. And they're glorified by how much different they can make it from the original.

I've been in meetings like this over the years where supposed preachers of the gospel get up and say, well, now let's see what God is saying. And they begin to preach something that is completely different from the original. And the people stand in awe.

The prophets cried out about this and they said the prophets prophesied falsely. The priests bear rule by their means and my people love to have it so. And there was a cry in the heart of the prophet.

He said, God, how long will this go on in your house? How long will this happen? How long will it be before the people see? Jude wrote to the church of his day and he said, beloved, I gave all diligence to write to

you of the common salvation. And it was needful for me to write to you and to exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. In other words, Jude, now you've got to understand this is less than a generation after Christ's resurrection.

And already those that were inspired by the Holy Spirit are saying you have. I warned you and I wrote to you that you have to contend. That means you have to study.

You have to know. You have to begin to personally walk in the faith that was once delivered to the saints. If the Holy Spirit is warning less than one generation after Christ, how much more should we be aware today of what's going on? He says in verse four, there are certain men crept in unawares who were before of old ordained to this condemnation.

Ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. Now, the word lasciviousness means a readiness for pleasure which acknowledges no restraint. They're taking the grace of God and they're turning it into a pleasure seeking gospel.

Something that caters to and leads and satisfies the natural desires of man. There is no cross or very little cross in it. There's no yielding of oneself to the purposes of God, but a simple using of Christ for the purposes of self.

He says they deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, it doesn't mean they stand up and say that Jesus is not God or Jesus is not Lord. That's not what the denial means.

The denial means rejecting him in the face of former relationship or better knowledge. That's what it really means in the Hebrew text. Having known better or having a history of former relationship, but rejecting that and choosing now to redefine God and to fashion a God that more fits the needs of the human mind than the word of God.

Psalms 74, again, verse 10. He says, Oh God, how long shall the adversary reproach and shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever? Why do you withdraw your hand? Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom. Now, the psalmist is crying out now for change.

He says, For God is my king of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength. Thou didst break the heads of the dragons in the waters.

Thou didst break the heads of Leviathan in pieces and gave him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain in the flood. Thou didst dry up mighty rivers.

The day is thine. The night also is thine. Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.

Thou hast set all the borders of the earth. Thou hast made the summer and the winter. Now, the psalmist is basically saying this.

Oh God, I know you have the power to change this. You are God. You made the world.

You created everything that exists. I know you have the power. You create summer and winter.

You put the stars in their courses. You led your people out of captivity and through the wilderness. You parted the sea.

God, I know. God, I know you can do it. So tell me when.

How long is this going to go on in your name, in your house? When, oh God, are you going to restore your people? Now, God's answer is the same in every generation. And if that's been the cry of your heart, I believe the Lord is about to answer you, not with something new. It's something you've heard before.

It's not about only when, but it's about how and through whom the change will come. Now, go to Isaiah, please. Chapter 58.

Now, Isaiah, of course, is the prophet that was crying out with the voice of God before the destruction of the temple. This was God's cry. There already was a remedy.

But God, remember, told Isaiah when he called him that the people are not going to hear you. I'm going to give you the purest word your generation has ever had, but they're not going to hear you. Because, sad to say, there does come a time in every generation when even God's own people don't want to hear his voice anymore.

Isaiah is a young man called into the presence of God. In Isaiah 6, he sees him. He sees the holiness.

He knows he's undone. And then he begins to understand the great mercy of God as he confesses his need. And his lips are tucked with a cold from the altar and his iniquity is purged.

He's given a calling of God to go to his generation and to bring them a pure word from the throne of God. But then the Lord says to him, but there's very few, Isaiah, that are going to hear you. You're going to have a tenth for your labors.

One in ten are going to hear you. There comes a point where the church has drifted so far from God that the people can't and don't want to hear anymore. But my message today is to the one who's crying out.

My message is to the one who's saying, God, how long and when will you come to me? When will you come to me? When will I know you in your glory? When will I know your power? God, when will you come to me? When will you gather me close to your heart? When will you begin to flow through me, O God? I'm so sick of all the religion around me. God, when will you come? When will you come? I've wandered from pillar to post and community to community and building to building and I'm so sick of the noise in your house. God, when will you come to me? When will you touch me? The Lord says, I'm going to show you now.

I'm going to show you if you can hear. If you can hear this today, your life can be transformed and you can be made a transforming influence in the house of God. You can be the vessel that God can use to make the difference.

Wherever you come from, those that are visiting here today, you can be the vessel to make the difference. Isaiah 58. Now keep in mind, the Lord is crying out to Isaiah about this temple that's going to be destroyed that we're reading about in Psalm 74 after the fact.

He says, cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet and show my people their transgression in the house of Jacob their sins. You see, the Holy Spirit is animating Isaiah. And there's a cry.

He says, I'm going to put a cry in you, Isaiah. I'm going to put a passion in you for this. Because perhaps it's the only way that people will begin to hear.

I have to empower you. I have to impassion you, Isaiah. You're not going to be able to just stand with a monotone voice and speak this.

There's going to be a cry because it comes right from the depths of my heart. He said, here's my people. Now, verse 2, they seek me daily.

They delight to know my ways as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinance of justice and they take delight in approaching to God. In other words, the Lord is saying from an exterior sense, this looks like a God seeking people.

They come to the house. They say, God, deal with the abortion issue. God, deal with the immoral agendas in our nation and schools.

They're coming in. They're concerned. They seem to delight to come to the house of God.

But he said, there's a question in their hearts. They say, why have we fasted and you don't see us? Why have we afflicted our soul and it's as if you take no knowledge of it? He said, now behold, in the day of your fast, you find pleasure and you exact all your labors. And here's the issue.

Isaiah, the Lord says to Isaiah, yes, you're fasting. Yes, you're coming to my house. You're seeking to me.

But your heart still has its own pleasure agenda. And you see people as a means to your own happiness. You exact all your labors.

In other words, you are looking for personal comfort and you are willing to use anyone you encounter to fulfill it. And God says, yes, come to my house and pretend you're seeking me. But you are so far from my heart.

He says, Isaiah, I've got to cry out about this. I've got to I've got to speak in a way that maybe only one in ten can still hear. But it's for the sake of the ten, the one in ten who can.

And the ten and a hundred and a thousand and a hundred thousand or ten thousand. He said, behold, you fast for strife and debate and to smite with the fist of wickedness. But you shall not fast as you do this day to make your voice to be heard on high.

I said, now you fast, but you are still given the pleasure, the pursuit of pleasure. And you are still given to using people to achieve that goal. You see you see everything around you as an opportunity to advance yourself.

You use every circumstance as a stepping stone, as it is to something greater and more fulfilling for your own life. You don't understand the heart of God. And he says at other times you fast just for preeminence and reputation.

And I believe this applies to many churches. And God forbid that that spirit should ever get into this house. He says you fast, but it's just because you want you want to be the voice in the nation.

You want to be the one to be esteemed, to be spiritual. You want to be the one to be heard. You want to have all the right theology.

God says that's that's in your heart. And I'm crying out now against it. Because the man who thinks he's something is nothing.

The church that thinks they have arrived are back at the beginning again. You missed something. You are called to represent the one who made himself of no report, no reputation.

You're representing the one who became obedient and a servant even unto the death of the cross. Verse five, he said, is it such a fast that I've chosen? Is it a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, an acceptable day unto the Lord? He said, I've not called for a seeking of me which allows the seeker to remain distant from my heart and my work. It is absolutely useless to pretend that we're seeking God and not become one with Christ.

Tell me, how is it possible to seek him and not become one with him? How is it possible to seek him and not take on his agenda? I want to reason with you today. Think this one through. God became a man.

God left the throne of glory. God came to the earth. God walked among people.

God suffered rejection, reproach and bruising and beating. God reached out through his son, Jesus Christ, and touched the lame and the hurting and the blind, the maimed and the afflicted. Invited them into the kingdom of God, was willing to suffer reproach.

He had nowhere to lay his head. He yielded himself entirely into the provision of his father. He walked according to the will of his father, knowing it was going to send him to the cross.

And we are called to represent him in our generation. Tell me how much of the church resembles this today? How much of the church looks like the original pattern? How much of the church is willing to take up their cross and follow Christ? Verse 6, he said, Is this not the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry? You bring the poor that are cast out to your house. When you see the naked, you cover him and you hide not yourself from your own flesh.

He said, Now this is the fast. This is the seeking that I require. It's to be conformed to the image and the work of Jesus Christ.

It's to be his church in this world. It's the man or woman of God that says, God, take me. God, make me.

God, use me. God, send me. Wherever you want me to go, call me to do what it is that you want me to do.

I want your will first and mine last. I want to follow you, Father, as your son Jesus Christ did. I want to hear your voice.

I want to make a difference in my generation. I tell you, a self-seeking church can never do that. Something is wrong when there's a church on every corner and the nation is going to hell.

Something is wrong. How much of it represents Christ? He said, Then, then, verse eight, your life will break forth as the morning and your health shall spring forth speedily. Your righteousness will go before you.

That's the righteousness, the imputed righteousness. That's what it means in the Hebrew text. It will go before you.

And the glory of the Lord will be your rearward. In other words, the glory of the Lord will scoop you up. That's really what the Hebrew translation says.

It says rearward, but it means the glory of the Lord will scoop you up, will consume you. God says, Like I did to Elijah when I came and got him in a chariot, I will scoop you up in my glory. I'll consume you with my presence.

I'll change you. I'll impassion you. I'll give you wisdom you never had.

I'll give you power you don't possess. When you determine in your heart that your life is to be yielded and built according to the word of God. When you're trusting the Holy Spirit to produce the life of Christ within you, God says, I will scoop you.

And you will have life and you will have light. And the glory of God will be your portion. The glory of God will be on your life.

The glory of God will be in your church. The glory of God will touch every hardened sinner. The glory of God will open every prison door.

The glory of God will heal everyone who have been wounded and bruised in heart. The glory of God will set the captives free. The glory of God will set you on high above those that are self-seeking around you.

The glory of God will lead you. The glory of God will keep you through every trial and every hardship. And one day the glory of God will come and take you home to live with Christ forever.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Verse 9, he says, Then you will cry, call rather, and the Lord will answer.

You will cry and he will say, Here I am. Remember the prayer was how long? How long? And the answer is simply till I have a hold of your heart. Until you are willing to be mine.

Until it's not an issue of what the crowd is doing. Until you're hearing my voice and I can talk to you. That's how long.

It's not good enough to wander from church to church. And just decry or cry out about how awful it is. You say, I know the pattern, I've seen the pattern, but I can't find it anymore.

This is going to take grace to hear. But I'm going to say it. You might be just as big a hypocrite as these other places are that you understand.

Because you already know the pattern. By your own mouth, you've said it. And God says, I'll tell you when it will end.

When I can get a hold of your heart. It will end when you say, God, lead me. God, use me.

God, change me. God, make me into everything you want me to be. God, take me.

Empower me. Give me compassion. Give me passion for truth.

Take me away from that which offends you. And draw me into that which is life. And send me.

Send me. Send me to Africa. Send me to India.

Send me to China. Send me to Japan. Send me.

Wherever it is, God, that you want me to go. He said, then he will say, here I am. If you take away the yoke and the putting forth of the finger and speaking vanity or empty talk.

He said, if you set your heart to doing the work of Christ. The work of Christ is to break the yoke of sin and death. If you allow your life to be given to the purpose of this.

And stop blaming. Putting forth the finger. I speak this very lovingly.

I know that there are people going to hear this in the future on tape. It's not good enough for you just to point the finger. God says, I want you to take that away.

Close it. Close your hand. And stop speaking empty.

And stop the empty talk. And he said, and if, verse 10, you draw out your soul to the hungry. And satisfy, satisfy the afflicted soul.

There are starving people everywhere. Now, we're not talking just about physical starvation. There's a spiritual starvation.

The Lord says, if you will stop worrying about yourself and begin to allow me to draw you out as it is to the hungry. You begin to speak about life and Christ to those that are without God, as well as those that are physically hungry. And satisfy the afflicted soul.

He said, then your light will arise in obscurity. Now, the word obscurity means in a place or time of ignorance and blindness. That's what the Hebrew text says.

God says, if you draw out your soul to the hungry, then there will be a light come into you in the midst of ignorance and blindness all around you. You'll stand in the congregation of the dead. And you will raise your hands and there will be a glory in you.

There will be a glory on you because now you're no longer dependent on your circumstances. You put all of that away and now you come into the temple and say, well, God, this is up to you to restore your house. But as for me, as for me and my house, I'm going to live for God.

As for me, oh, God, I am yours. I am yours. I'm not looking to any skilled laborers around me anymore.

I'm looking to you now, Jesus. I'm looking to you, Holy Spirit. I'm coming into your presence.

And God, I'm asking you to fill me. God, I'm asking you to empower me. God, I'm asking you to use me for your glory.

You'll stand in the midst of the worst places and raise your hands and the glory of God will be on you. The light of God will be in your soul, even if ignorance and darkness of spiritual things may be all around you. And he says, even your darkness will be as the noonday, even your difficult times, there'll be life and light.

You'll see, you'll know, you'll understand the call that's on your life. You'll understand the power of God to fulfill it. You'll not be distressed or dismayed by any adversity.

You will have a fixed look in your eye. You'll be looking at the goal and looking at the one who's calling you. And you will walk with him and talk to him.

And he will give you everything you need for life and godliness. And the Lord, verse 11, says, shall guide thee continually and satisfy thy soul in drought and make fat thy bones. And thou shall be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters fail not.

He said, if you do this, I'm going to plant something of my spirit in you. And there will be a fountain of life in you that never fails. Every time you open your mouth, be it in your office, your community, on the mission field, wherever it is I've sent you, even in your own home, there'll be life come out of your mouth because life is in you.

Because you have found my heart and you're beginning to walk with me. And you understand that this whole thing is about people. God came to save those that were lost.

This is the only mission. He came to undo burdens, release captives, heal those that are bruised in heart. This is the mission of the church.

There is no other mission. If it were otherwise, if it was just about health and happiness and wealth, he'd just take us home today. Because all of that is in heaven awaiting us.

But on this side of eternity, we are called to bear the image of our Savior and the work of our God. And verse 12 says, And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places and raise up the foundations of many generations. And thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach and the restorer of paths to dwell in.

The word restorer in the Hebrew means moving something back to its point of departure. God says, if you will do this, you will lead others into the life of Christ by example. And you will be the one to raise up the foundation again, to repair that which is broken and to restore paths to dwell in.

How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? The answer is until you and me, until we have embraced the heart of Christ. That's how long. It will begin with one person.

I want to challenge those who are going to hear this message in the future. It only takes one person to bring revival into a church, a neighborhood, a home, community, a city, a state, a nation. It takes one man or one woman who have laid hold of God.

The adversary will reproach until you lay hold of the heart of Jesus Christ. That's how long. I've determined in my heart that by his grace, I want to be everything that he has called me to be.

And I want to go everywhere he's called me to go. And it's not about this life. This life is only found in Christ.

There is no other real permanence. Those that trust in other things. The Bible seems to clearly say that the day is coming when all these things are going to be taken away.

And then what will they have? Young people that are here today, don't waste your life seeking fulfillment in this world. Yes, yes, you have to have a job. And it's not wrong to pursue a career.

And the pursuit of knowledge is not a bad thing. But don't waste your life thinking that these things are going to make you fulfilled because there aren't. It's the call of God.

All of these things can only take you so far because they are limited. The Bible itself declares that knowledge itself will pass away one day. The knowledge that's attainable in this world is limited.

But the call of God and the power of God have no limitation, nor do they end at the end of this life. They follow you into the next. I want to challenge you to let God make you into everything that you've been called to be.

Cast off the temporary pleasures, temporary pursuits and say, Lord, you've called me and saved me and you've made me a skilled workman. You've given me a calling and with that calling came a skill that comes from God. I have been called to do something that nobody else can do.

Lord, I'm committing myself to it. I ask you to take me, make me, lead me. And I ask that when it's all said and done, when this whole world is folded up, because the Bible says even the universe is going to be folded up and put away.

And when I one day stand before your throne, that you can look at me and say, well done. I gave you a few things to do and you believed me. You walked with me, you glorified me.

You possessed my heart. What does it gain a man if he has the whole world and loses his soul? If I stood before God one day and I had succeeded somehow in owning the world, but didn't have the heart of Christ, tell me what good is it? Because it's all going to pass away, it's all going to burn, there'll be nothing left of it. Oh no, it's the man or woman who says, God, and they don't have to say anything because God already knows it.

I have possessed your heart. I found you. And in spite of what was going on in a wicked generation, in spite of what was going on in a confused church age, I found you.

I found your work. I understood what it was you called us to do. And I just simply began to move in that calling.

I just began to be kind and speak words of encouragement. I began to give a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul. I began to help those that are finding it hard to find God.

And as I walked with you in the simple things, you just began to bring increase. Because God will do that. He'll bring increase.

I believe that the time of blaming anybody or anything is over. It's now an individual decision. I want us to sing that song, I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.

And as we sing it, listen please, I'm going to give an altar call, but if it's not true, please don't leave your seat. Now some of you here today, I know, Annexin, you have made that decision. If you know in your heart you have, there's no necessity of responding to this altar call.

But I'm speaking to those that the Holy Spirit is speaking to. You have heard this word and something deep in you is stirring. And you're saying, God, I know it's true.

And I'm tired of the talk and I'm tired of the finger pointing. You're calling me to walk with Jesus. Lord, today I make the decision, trusting you for the power that where you lead me, I'm going to follow you.

I'm going to trust you to make me into the person that you've called me to be. And through my life, I'm believing that you're going to wipe away the stain that this generation has put on the name of Jesus Christ, my master. I'm believing it.

And if that's the cry of your heart, now it includes leaving sin. If you're living in sin, it's useless to respond until you're willing to come out of living in sin. And it includes those who are not saved today.

But you're hearing God calling you. If you will respond, he will save you. If you will acknowledge your sin and receive him as the sacrifice for your sin and your Savior and Lord, he will save you.

He will put a wonderful calling on your life and he will use you for his glory. I saw the church being the church in Nigeria, in Jos, Nigeria. I saw it.

It so blessed my heart. I saw this choir and many who had come from the church after the crusade was all over. I saw them go to the I didn't see it.

I heard of it. But they went to the polo grounds and began to pick up papers and they cleaned the field before we left. Cars, I'm told, stopped in the intersection.

People got out and said, who are these people and why are they doing this for us? The parts of the church leaders were pricked. And they said, why do people come from New York and do what we should be doing? One denominational leader got up and said, from this day forward to his pastors, he said, our theology is changing. And if you don't come with us, you're going to be left behind.

I saw God do the miraculous. I saw the power of Islam broken, absolutely broken. The hardened Christian melt before God.

I saw unity come into the body. The governor of Plateau State, Nigeria, flew to New York. We had lunch and said the whole area has changed.

The whole city has changed. He had me pray with him here on this platform asking that he would be reelected and could live for Christ. He was reelected about three weeks ago.

I saw church being the church and the people saw it. The question throughout the entire church body in Nigeria was, who are these people and why do they come here? They don't even introduce themselves. We don't even know who they are.

But why do they do this? And there was a provoking because Isaiah 58 was being fulfilled through a people. It was Isaiah 58 in action, being drawn out to the hungry. The doctors and dentists that came from this congregation and affiliated churches who had 10,000 people lined up in the yard looking for medical help who were doing surgeries, pulling teeth, doing all kinds of things, dispensing medicines.

The teams that went into prisons, orphanages and leper colonies and simply ministered the love of Christ so impacted the church. In one church alone, one church alone, the pastor wrote, he had 600 new

converts on Sunday morning. 600 people.

I've received correspondence saying the churches are still working together. There's a revival here now because Isaiah 58. Now, folks, it's wonderful to do it in Nigeria, but now we live in New York or New Jersey or wherever you're from.

We live here now. And Isaiah 58 is as real a call to us today as it was last October in Nigeria. If you're visiting here, it's a call of God on your life to bring revival to your church.

Say nothing to anybody. Just live for God and watch what will happen. You read Isaiah 58 every day and set out in the power of the Holy Ghost to do it.

The Lord will lead you and watch what will begin to happen through your life. Watch as the poor and the oppressed begin to follow you into the house of God. Watch as the people of God begin to look around and say, what's happening? How come all this is coming into the house? You don't have to say a word.

And if you're wise, you won't. You let the Holy Ghost do the talking for you. But I issue a challenge to the whole church of Jesus Christ.

To come back to the heart of God. Get back to the heart of Christ. And let it start here today.

In you and in me. God bless you and keep you. Father, I know I've delivered your heart.

I know it. I don't feel in my spirit that there's one thing that remains to be said. Lord, how you cried after your people.

How you cried. How you shouted out through Isaiah. How you longed to give life.

God, please help us to hear. Help us, God. Help me.

Help us as a church to hear this. And to begin to walk in this way. I thank you.

In Jesus' name. I want to give firstly this morning an opportunity for those in the house who could say, Pastor, I'm here today. I hear what you're saying.

I hear what the Holy Spirit's speaking. But I'm not a Christian. But in my heart, there's a stirring.

I certainly know I'm a sinner. And today, if I'm hearing right, you're telling me that God died on a cross in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ, for my sin. To pay all the price for my sin.

That if I'll receive Him as Lord and Savior today by faith, that I will be saved. I will be saved in eternal banishment from God. I will be saved in eternal punishment.

I will be saved from a future of futile and empty living and brought into the kingdom of God. If that's you today, you can say, Pastor, I'm a sinner. But today, I want a Savior.

I want you to unashamedly raise your hand with me right now, wherever you are. Just raise your hand. Balcony.

You can do it too. God bless you all over. In the main sanctuary, education annexes.

Raise your hand. I've come to Christ. I'm giving my life to Jesus today.

I'm going to live for God. I'm going to receive the forgiveness of my sins. Let's pray now for those that have raised their hands.

Let's all pray together. Lord Jesus, I am a sinner. Jesus, I thank you that you came to this earth, became a man, and died on a cross to pay the penalty for my sin.

I'm sorry for sinning against you. I don't want to live in sin anymore. Thank you for forgiving me.

And I believe that you will lead me and guide me and take me out from under the power of sin into my new life in Jesus Christ. God Almighty, just as you raised Christ from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, so too you will raise me out of death and into a newness of life that I may live for you and glorify you all the days of my life. You will prove this to me.

You will change me. And I will know that my trust in you is not in vain. I believe this very moment as I pray and confess you, Jesus, as my Lord and my Savior, that I am saved.

I am saved. I am saved. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Now, I want to lead those that have responded today in a prayer. Now, this is the statement of Jesus in the temple when he took the book of Isaiah.

The Spirit of God was on Christ for a purpose, and the Spirit of God is on you for the same purpose. Jesus said it this way. As my Father sent me, now even so I send you.

So, he made it very clear. My calling, now obviously he's the only one that could provide redemption, but we are called to lead others to the Redeemer. But he said, my calling is now your calling.

I want to read it to you, and I'm going to ask you to repeat it after me because this has got to come from your heart. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised.

To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book and gave it to the minister and sat down. And he began to say to them, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. This day, this scripture is fulfilled in your ears. Say it again, this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Hallelujah. This is the conclusion of the message.

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