

Preparing to Sing in a Difficult Time

by Carter Conlon

To prepare to sing in difficult times, we must have a living relationship with God, seek His truth and spirit, and abide in Christ's love.

Duration: 1:10:07

Scripture: Psalm 137:1-2, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 26:29, Mark 15:30

Topics: "Difficulties"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on their lack of passion and fruitfulness in sharing the message of Christ. They express a deep desire for forgiveness and a longing to be empowered by God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of developing a strong relationship with God in order to have the strength and confidence to sing a song of hope even in the midst of difficult circumstances. They warn against being influenced by the moral evil of society and encourage listeners to turn away from it in order to maintain their hope and be a source of hope for others. The sermon concludes with a reference to Isaiah 24, highlighting the need for the church to be prepared to offer hope to a world in crisis.

Transcript

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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. I'm going to speak to you this morning about preparing to sing in the difficult time.

That's a lovely song. We're going to have to be prepared to continue on singing that in the days ahead. Very, very difficult days, I believe, that await us.

I'm going to pray for incredible grace to speak this word today and then ask God to give you incredible grace to hear it. Father, I thank you that you have planted within us a song that is not circumstance dependent. Father, I just thank you that you are going to prepare us as a people to sing the same songs that we sing today in whatever awaits us in the coming weeks and months and years of time.

For you have ordained a people whose song is not dependent on what goes on around them. There's a much deeper song, a song that only heaven can plant within us. I ask you, God, for the grace to prepare our hearts this day, this week as we fast and pray Lord, as we read your word, as we again determine to live for you in the grace that you've given us.

We ask, oh God, that you give us the power to keep on singing even in the midst of the greatest of adversity. Father, I thank you that you will overpower and overshadow my frailty and that you will enable me with the mind of Christ to speak your heart to your people. This is your church.

Jesus, these are your people. Holy Spirit, this is your truth. I stand only as a vessel.

I do ask for the grace to disappear. I ask, Lord, that you might appear that your voice and your heart might be heard through me. I ask you to help the people to be unaware of any human vessels but to be only aware of the God of the universe who in his mercy chooses to speak through humanity.

Father, I thank you that you're going to do something in our hearts today. You are preparing us and we thank you in Jesus' mighty name. A week or so ago, a little while ago, we gathered in a funeral home and Pastor David led us in the chorus in front of the open casket of his granddaughter, Tiffany, who died at 14 years of age.

We sang, God is good. God is so good. He's so good to me.

Beloved, I want to tell you something. There is nothing but the Holy Spirit can ever prepare you or I to sing that song in those types of times. There has to have been a deep inward work of God.

It doesn't spontaneously come to the surface by the circumstances of disaster. Really, it's everybody's worst nightmare. But the glory of God came into that room because there were vessels in that room that made a choice years ago.

When they came to Christ, it was as the bride and the bridegroom who gathered an altar and say, for richer, for poorer, for in sickness and in health, for better, for worse. Lord, I come to you. I give you my life.

And Christ says the same to his bride. I give you all that I am and all that I have. No matter what we have to walk through together.

And amazing to see a family gather around a casket like that and to sing such a song at such a time. I've not prepared this message based on that experience, but it probably is the greatest illustration that I do have today of how only the Holy Spirit can prepare a heart to sing in a difficult time. We've been very fortunate.

We've lived in a generation that has been at least in part, I'm speaking about North America, acceptable to the practice and presence of Christianity. But that may soon change. Difficult days are ahead for everyone.

If you go with me to Matthew chapter 26, please, in the New Testament. Preparing to sing in a difficult time. Matthew chapter 26.

And I'll begin reading at verse 26. Now, this is the last supper. Christ is about to go to the cross.

And verse 26, Matthew chapter 26, says it this way. And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, take, eat, this is my body. Now, you have to, you understand this.

I suppose those that are in Christ, if you're new to the Lord, I mean, it's a symbol. The broken bread meant that Jesus was about to yield his body as a living sacrifice for the purposes of his father and for, of course, your redemption and mine. And then he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, drink ye all of it.

In other words, all of you have a taste of it. Now, Christ was about to drink a cup that, of course, he alone was going to be able to go through. He said to the disciples earlier on, you can't come with me now, but you will understand later.

And you remember how perplexed they were. And one of them cried out to him and said, well, why can't we come now? And Jesus said, well, you don't understand it, but you will. I'm paraphrasing his words, but you will very soon understand what I'm talking about.

He took the cup and gave thanks. And I thank God that he did. God, the father had given him a cup.

He was about to drink a cup of incredible suffering. And in that cup of suffering and rejection and death, he was going to pay the price for your sin and for mine once and for all. He was going to win a marvelous victory.

He was going to do something in obedience that would allow God the father to take with his hands and rip that veil that separated the power of God from his creation from the top to the bottom. And God in the power of the Holy Ghost was going to be able to come out and now dwell with man, not just in an isolated area, but in the very center of man, in the very heart of man. He was going to come in the form of the Holy Spirit and now take up his dwelling.

And the temple would no longer be exterior, but we would become the temple of the Holy Ghost. And it was because of Christ's obedience to go through and to drink this cup that you and I can sing today. We have a song.

We have hope for the future. In spite of what the physical future holds, our lives are not dependent on that physical future. We have a future much beyond the few short years that any of us have left here on this side of eternity.

We have a future that goes on and never ends. We are going to a place where we're going to rule and reign with Jesus Christ forever. There will be no sorrow there.

There will be no sighing there. There will be no sickness there. There will be no death there.

There will be no trial there. There'll be no back biters there. There'll be no false things happening there.

It's going to be a kingdom of absolute life and light. And I believe that is in hell, the darkness and the awareness of the separation from God is perhaps continually increasing because the conscience will never die there. In heaven, there'll be an ever-increasing revelation, knowledge, a burst of God's glory.

It will be an incredible place to be for all of eternity and made available to us because one man, Jesus Christ, 2,000 years ago, came as a sinless man and made a willful choice to drink the cup that his father

had given him. Thanks be to God. And he said, I say to you, verse 29, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of this vine, or the vine rather, until the day that I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Now he had just previously, if we were to go back in the Bible, Matthew chapter 24, he began to talk about incredible distress coming upon the whole world, a time of difficulty. He told the people sitting around the table that there's a day coming, you're going to be rejected.

You'll even be drawn before kings and governors and magistrates, for my name's sake. You'll be hated of all men. You'll even be betrayed by those that are the most intimate and close to you in your own natural families.

Not a very comforting word, really, when you think of it, but it was a reality. Now he was speaking, of course, of some of the events that were about to follow after his crucifixion, but he's also speaking, the word of God, of course, is not bound to time. He's speaking way into the future, even into our generation, and should the Lord tarry, which I don't really have any sense in my heart that he's tarrying much longer, but should he tarry, he's speaking into the next generation, too, as well.

Matthew chapter 25, they're asking him about the kingdom. You see, the disciples had a sense in their heart that the kingdom was coming to them now, and in reality, they were right, but it was not as they perceived it. They perceived the kingdom as Christ walking into Jerusalem, deposing as it is the Roman rulership that was there, taking over the kingdom because of the power and ability that was within him.

They knew nobody could withstand him. They had seen him raise the dead, stop the wind, calm the sea. They knew he could do all things, and they anticipated it was a physical kingdom, and he said, yes, in effect, the kingdom is coming to you, but not as you anticipate that it's coming, and he begins to try to explain the coming of God's kingdom.

Now, remember that he said elsewhere in the New Testament, the kingdom of God does not come with outward display. The kingdom of God is within you, and today we live in a generation when so many are running the roads as it is, looking for some outward display of God's kingdom, missing the reality that the kingdom of God is within the lives of those who have received Christ as Lord and Savior. His kingdom has come, but it doesn't come with an exterior manifestation.

It comes off times as it did to Elijah with that small, still voice of God speaking into the inward man, the life of God being manifested as it is by the power of Christ that is now resident in the heart of everyone who has received him as Lord and Savior. His kingdom came into my life on May the 12th, 1978, and since that day, since the old nature that ruled this life was deposed from that throne in my heart, a new king has come. He has sat there.

He has overthrown tables. He has thrown down other rulerships and thoughts and arguments against truth, and he has come and conquered, and his kingdom has come into my life. The old song that we sing, you ask me how I know he lives.

He lives within my heart. I don't need any proof. I don't need an exterior proof of the reality of Christ and his kingdom.

I have all the proof I have in the testimony that he's established within my own life. Hallelujah. Thanks be to God.

Matthew 25, Jesus speaks of many who were ill prepared for the dark night which would precede the coming of the bridegroom. It was a very, very dark time, and there were many who professed to belong to him, but they were not prepared. They had no oil.

They had no living relationship with God. Their whole sense of God was other than where he is found. They were not seeking him in truth and in spirit.

They were not asking God for the manifestation of truth to be revealed, not only to them, but through them, that their lives, that the very range of their life as it is, would be taken over by the power of God. They were not asking for it, and so when the dark night came and a cry came into the people and they said, behold, he's coming. He has to be coming.

Look what's coming on the earth, because if you follow it in sequence from Matthew 24, if you read it through as a story as it is, you see all kinds of difficulty coming, and there's an awareness that he's coming, and when that awareness hits, it's as if there's a people that say, I'm not ready. I'm not ready to go through the trials ahead. I'm not ready to face the dark night that has to precede sometimes the light that's coming in the morning.

I have no song. I have no ability to get through it, and again, he goes on in the same chapter in Matthew 25, and he contrasts those that had gained little from what had been entrusted to them and those that had gained nothing at all. Now, there's been an incredible entrusting to you and to me.

When we came to Christ, the Holy Spirit, of course, was given to us as that first deposit, the Bible says, or the earnest, as it's called in the King James, of our inheritance. That first deposit to tell us, in a sense, that this is, you're not living a pipe dream when you came to Christ. This is a reality.

Christ rose from the dead, and here's the proof. The Holy Spirit is now in your life changing you, molding you, making you into a brand new person. The old things in you are continuously passing away, and you are continuously being made new.

This is the deposit of God into your life on this side of eternity, but there were so many who had taken that deposit and done so little with it. The deposit that had been put into them of the Spirit of God and of the truth of God had not ever produced the life of God or the heart of God, and the Bible warns about the last days there will be a people who are learning, and it's not necessarily talking about the philosophers and the religionists of the world, but even in the church of Jesus Christ, there will be a people who are learning, but they're not coming to the knowledge of that truth. They're not coming to the place where that truth is supposed to take them or what the truth is supposed to make them into.

We are supposed to be recreated in the image of Christ. Our heart is supposed to change. Our mind is supposed to change.

Our thoughts, our desires are supposed to change. The Bible says that if we commit our way to the Lord, he'll establish our steps. The Bible tells us if we delight ourselves in God, he will give us the desires of our heart.

It's not talking about if you read the Bible, you'll get a new car. He will give you the desires. The desires will come from God.

You delight yourself in God, and brand new desires will come into your heart. Things you didn't want before. Places you didn't want to go.

People's lives that you didn't want to touch. Countries you never wanted to visit. Things that were not even conceivable to you.

You didn't have them in your heart, but you delighted yourself in God, and the evidence that God's kingdom has come into your life is brand new desires begin to happen. New things come every morning, and old things continuously pass away. Jesus said it this way.

If you'll go very quickly, keep a marker in Matthew 26 and go to John chapter 15. Jesus said it this way, verse 8. He said, Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so shall you be my disciples. Now in verse 9 he says, As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Continue in my love. Now the word for has loved is agape. Now most of you are probably familiar with that if you've been a Christian for any amount of time.

And it really means a benevolent love, or a giving love, a keeping love, finding one's will and joy in something other than his own pursuit. And Christ is saying, my Father has given me of himself, and he has enabled me to bear fruit by entering into his eternal purpose. This is what he's meaning really in verse 9. He has loved me.

I have lived in his benevolent love. I have wanted to do his will. And because I've wanted to do the will of the Father, this incredible love of God has come into my life.

This incredible giving love, this covering of God's life is upon me and flowing through me and flowing in me. It keeps me, guides me, speaks to me, provides for me. Gives me a song in the darkest of times.

Carries me through because he's given me, this love has given me another mind. It's given me the mind of God. I see things now from heaven's perspective, not from the perspective of a man.

You have to understand that Christ was fully man as well as fully God. The Bible says tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. Fully well able to be discouraged or to find an easier path or to do some of the other things that so many of us are oft times so prone to do.

He's given me himself and he has enabled me to bear fruit by entering into his eternal purpose. You see this is the desire of God when he entrusts truth to us. He says, I'm not just giving it to you so you'll know the answer.

I'm giving it to you so you'll be the answer. You will have that life of Christ in you that is the answer to every searching heart in the dark time. It's not about you and me, it's about Christ, but Christ will be the answer in us.

A testament, Paul calls it, that is written and engraven right in the hearts of those that have truly received the word of God. John 17, Jesus talks about the work. He said in verse 4, he said about his father, he's speaking now directly to the father in heaven.

He says, I've glorified thee on the earth. I've finished the work which you gave me to do. And now father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which you gave me out of the world. Thine they were and thou gavest them me and they have kept thy word. Now here's the eternal purpose of God.

Christ said, I have glorified your name on the earth. People have seen you father through me. That's why I could say to Philip, Philip said, show us the father.

And Christ said, have I been with you so long and you don't yet know me? I had the privilege recently of speaking at my father's funeral and an old friend of my father's was there. And I've never met the man. And he said, I've known your father at the end of the service.

He said, I've known your father for about 60 years, I think it was. And he said, I walked into the church, I sat down, I looked up and he said, I saw a man speaking. And he said, I blinked my eyes and I couldn't believe it.

He said, I dropped my head and I looked again. He said, I couldn't believe it. He said, there's Charlie Conlon.

He said, back about 50 or 40 years ago. He said, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. And he walked up to me and he said, son, I tell you this much, as long as you live, your father will never die.

He said, you look like your father, you talk like your father, you move like your father. And I was thinking of that after I said, oh, would be to God that that could be said of me as a Christian by people that meet me and say, as long as you live, your savior will never die. As long as the church is truly alive, the testimony of Christ will live in our generation.

Jesus said, father, you have enabled me with your benevolent love to enter into your purpose and your purpose is that I have glorified your name on the earth where I have gone. You have been known where I've spoken, you've been heard, where I've touched, you've been felt. He said, I've manifested your name to men and I've given them your word and your word is in them.

Thus, my work is finished. I've done what you've called me to do. I've allowed your life to be lived in me and I've taken your word that you've planted in me and I've planted it in others.

They've received it. Now, God, I can go. I can go back to where you are and you can give me the glory that I knew before I came to this earth as a man.

Hallelujah. Again, back in John 15:10. He says, if you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love, even as I've kept my father's commandments and abide in his love.

And these things have I spoken to you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full. In 15:10, he's basically saying, if you want to live as I have spoken to you, an overwhelming sense of my love shall cover you. And in that love, you will abide and the word abide in the Greek text means you will remain.

You will endure, you will stand firm, you will persevere, you will remain alive. In other words, circumstance will not take your life from you. No matter what happens to you, you will still have a song to sing in the night.

Nothing in this world will take your testimony away because as the father has given me this benevolent love because I sought to do his will, so too, if you keep what I tell you. I will give you that same measure of

benevolent love, I will cover you with my presence, I will cover you in my power, I will carry you in my strength. And he said, I've given these things to you, I've spoken these things to you that my joy might remain in you.

It's amazing. Christ said, it's not your joy, it's my joy. There will be an inward joy, but it's not yours, it's mine.

It comes from the benevolence of my presence in your life. You might be going through the darkest hour of your life and there will be out of nowhere that is tangibly visible in this world a joy that begins to spring up where you can stand before the coffin of a 14-year-old girl and say, God is good. How good he has been to me.

There'll be a benevolent joy that springs up inside of your life and that your joy might be full. And the word for full in the Greek text means as a perfume in a sense that is broken and fills the whole house with a fragrance. God said, I come to give you a joy, Christ said, that makes, and this abiding joy will be like the perfume of God in whatever house you enter, in whatever situation you find yourself in, there'll be an abiding joy in you.

It's not something that necessarily manifests as some kind of a superficial foolish dancing in adversity. That's really not the joy. It is a confidence in God.

It is a steadfastness, that inner knowledge that God is good and all things work together for good when we understand and when we don't. That God is in everything that he has given us to be and to do. Now back in Matthew chapter 25 again, if you go back there with me, Jesus speaks again, we're carrying on about the kingdom of heaven.

And he speaks in part to a people who perhaps have failed to understand that being in the world as others, that they too were destined to have to pass through times of great difficulty. There are times of personal difficulty that all of us will have to pass through. You know, any preacher that stands and tells you that because you've become a Christian, you will never have to go through trial and difficulty is a liar.

And time will prove him to be so because you will have to go through it. There are times of difficulty that come to every person, every society will experience from time to time throughout history, times of great difficulty. Could the people in Europe in World War II ever have anticipated what was coming their way? The difficulty, the trial, the hard times.

Could the others throughout times in history who are just dwelling day to day, doing what they normally do have anticipated as invading armies came to their borders and such like. There are times of national difficulty. And ultimately Matthew 24 and again and of course Isaiah, I believe it's the same chapter 24, speaks of a time of global difficulty that is coming very quickly towards all men.

A time of distress of nations. A time when the very weather of heaven will be changed. A time when the elements, the Bible says, will be actually on fire.

Incredible. I saw a documentary years ago from one of the inventors of the atomic bomb who said when they set the first, this man obviously is a physicist, and he said we set the first testing of the atomic bomb up, we were terrified because we knew that within this weapon was the potential to ignite the atmosphere itself. And we didn't really know what was going to happen.

Now I'm not a physicist, I don't understand that, but this man had a trepidation that this reaction that is caused by this explosion can ignite the very oxygen in the atmosphere. And the Bible speaks about the very elements being on fire in the last days. Oh beloved, we live on the edge of eternity every day and so often are not even aware of it.

We live on the edge of facing God. We see Christ recognizing in verse 34, a people who have cast off a self-consuming interest for a deep inward working of God, even when some are facing the darkest night. Verse 34, he says, then shall the king say to them, now keep in mind he's talking about the kingdom, come blessed to my father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Now it's amazing because here we see a people who in the midst of adversity are going forward and they have entered into another work. The natural man wants to hide in times of difficulty. The natural man wants to buy a cabin out in the mountains of Montana somewhere and just ride out all the difficulty.

But Christ said, no, there is a kingdom coming. And as much as I do the will of my father, there are a people that are going to belong to this kingdom who have made a willful choice to walk in the will that I have for them. And this will that I have for them is going to take them where there are people who are hungry.

He said, come, the kingdom is prepared for you. I was hungry. You gave me meat.

I was thirsty. You gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in naked.

You clothed me sick. You visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.

Now, when you look these verses of scripture up in the original Greek text, it has a twofold application. It's a physical need, but it's also a spiritual need. For example, where it says I was sick and you visited me.

The word for sick actually means I was weak spiritually in the faith and for visited means you looked upon me with mercy. It really does give it a full meaning, doesn't it? It has a connotation. Of course, if somebody is ill and weak, he came.

But it says, oh, no, I was weak spiritually, but you looked upon me with mercy. You had the heart of God moving in you. I was a stranger and you took me in.

The word took me in means you gently led me. You took me to something. I was naked.

The word naked in the Greek has the connotation of a lacking spiritual clothing, lacking the covering of God's righteousness. And you clothed me. In other words, there are a people that are working the work of God in the midst of a difficult generation, a generation of people who are hungry and nobody's feeding them thirsty and they can't find drink.

They are strangers to God and nobody's there telling them how to get in to the kingdom. Nobody's there to lead them. They are without spiritual clothing and nobody is telling them where to find it.

They are sick spiritually and nobody or so few are looking upon them with mercy. They are imprisoned by sin and the power of the devil. And there are so few that are going to them.

And beloved Jesus said, but I have the kingdom. It's been prepared for those that have done these things, those that have the heart of God now manifested in them and through them. The life of God is in these

people.

Remember that Hebrews 12, 2 talks about Jesus and says, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. There was an eternal perspective in his mind, not just about the here and now. If it was about the here and now, he never would have gone to the cross.

He would have given into the human side and searched out another way that the purposes of God could be fulfilled. But there was a joy. There was a joy of an intimate fellowship that can't be found anywhere else but through the cross of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 26, 29, where we started, he said, I say to you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom. Now I want to tell you exactly how I see this particular verse of scripture. Now we know that Jesus was about to drink the cup alone.

There was nobody could come with him. He was going to go to Calvary. Everybody around him was going to forsake him.

They were going to run away. He was going to suffer and die alone. God almighty himself was going to turn his face against him.

He would die and justify the righteous wrath of God against sin. He would become sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He said, I'm going to drink it alone first.

I'm going to overcome the power of sin and the world over your life. But very soon I'm going to have the privilege of walking through the darkest nights in the person of the Holy Spirit with millions of those whom the father has given me, who also know that the yielding of their lives to God has an eternal purpose, and they will draw strength from my victory. He said, I'm going to walk through and drink it alone, but I'm going to drink it again, and I'm going to drink it again, and I'm going to drink it again, but I'm not going to drink it alone anymore.

There are going to be a people that are going to drink it after me. They're going to drink this cup that God gives to them. James and John, you're going to drink it.

Peter, you're going to drink it. You can't drink it now, but I'm going to win a victory. And then in my father's kingdom, when you finally have found the source of life and strength, you will put your lips to the cup again, but you won't drink it alone, Peter, because I have overcome the world.

Hallelujah. We'll drink it together. We'll walk it together.

My love will overpower you, will overshadow you in your darkest night. You will have a song to sing, and nothing will take it away from you. What a joy that will be.

We look about the kingdom. He's speaking about us when we get to the other side. I don't think so.

Yes, there is another banquet. There is another cup. He's not talking about that.

He's talking about the kingdom that's going to come the moment the veil is rent. There are going to be millions follow. Millions who say, not my will, but thine.

Millions who embrace the heart of God for a lost world. Millions who reach out, touching those who have nobody to touch them. Leading those gently who have nobody to lead them.

Jesus said, I'll be hated and you'll be hated. I'll be persecuted, you'll be persecuted. There'll be an out of season time for the gospel in every generation, just like I'm about to go through.

But you will not have to drink it alone. We will drink it together. Hallelujah.

And what a joy that will be. I will give you a joy that doesn't come from the world, and the world can't take it away. Can you see Jesus now? Then he says in verse 30, it doesn't say he said this, but it says that they sung a hymn.

He said, now let's sing. Think this through. He's just told them the world is going to fall apart.

People are going to not have God, oil. Others are going to fail of the grace of God. There's going to be difficulty trial.

I'm going to be poured out, betrayed. Closes the book and says, let's sing. Imagine the disciples around that table.

Picture if you were there and you didn't understand what was going on. Say, okay, let's sing. I want to venture a guess.

It was a pretty half-hearted chorus on the part of the disciples. Like our songs sometimes are. He's able.

He's able. I think he's able. Psalm 137.

Turn there with me. Let's sing. Jesus said, let's worship.

I'm going to the cross. Let's get out our hymn books. Let's give praise and glory to God.

Psalm 137, verse one says, by the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. We wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For they that carried us away captive required of us a song. And they that wasted us required of us merge saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Now, here are the people of Israel who are being carried away with a society that is under the judgment of God.

Now, beloved, listen to me. The wicked and the righteous all went. There were people who had abused the kindness of God and they're going.

There are people who have ignored his grace and they're going. There are people have despised him and they're going. But there are also people who have loved him and they're also going.

And they're being carried away in a sense by this captivity. And folks, when the judgment of God comes on a nation, the righteous have to go through the hard times as well. We don't live in some kind of a spiritual bubble that we escape everything that goes on around us.

Now, if difficult times come, we have to walk through them just like everyone else. And here are even the righteous being carried away as it is with it. Mind you, there are very few in that generation, but they're being carried away.

And they say how and those that were those that were in society around them, plus the captors, as it is, are saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion. And they're saying, well, how will we sing the Lord's song when that which surrounds us is both unpleasant and unfamiliar? You see, many of the captivating and captivated world of sin are going to turn to those who profess Christ in the coming days. They're going to turn.

They turned on September the 11th and didn't find a song. They found people unable to sing. They found searches with no truth in so many cases.

That's why the attendance is less than it was after September the 11th. They're going to look to you and look to me for our former songs of hope and trust when everything around us is falling down. Isaiah says it clearly in chapter 24 that all false religion and joy will fail.

Oh, I'm sure people went into the temple and sang their songs. But now the whole of society is going to Babylon. And now the captors are saying, sing us one of the songs that we heard about.

Sing us those songs of joy that your synagogue was so famous for. Sing one of them. And the people, they'd hung their harps up already.

They had given up on the song. There was nothing in them to sing anymore because the songs were all dependent on their circumstance. It wasn't really a living relationship with God.

The Christian who doesn't have God's perspective on life and eternity deep in his heart is not going to stand in the coming days. Christ makes it clear. I bring this message to you today to both encourage you and to warn you at the same time.

You've got to seek God's perspective on life. You have to have eternity and focus. It's not about the here and now.

It's about what God is doing and where he's taking us. It's about the whole plan and purpose of God from before the foundation of the world to send his son who died a horrible death that those who have rejected him since the days of Adam may come and be cleansed of their sin and find eternal life through him. I see people empty, no oil, no increase, no food, no covering, no keys to the prison doors around, no song.

An incredible tragedy. And the people said when they were asked to sing, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? And the word in the Hebrew for strange land really means on ground that's not set apart for God. You remember when Moses was called, he said, take off your shoes.

This is holy ground. You are now standing in a place where you are being set apart for God and for his purposes. That's holy ground.

And the people said, well, how can we sing because we're standing on ground that's not set apart for God. And folks, that's why the song is so dependent on circumstance in so many today, because people are not standing in a place where they are set apart for the purposes of God. It's as simple as that.

They're standing on holy ground, just literally going with the crowd. We have to be asking ourselves, how should we be preparing for this day that's coming? How should we be making our hearts ready? Go to John 17. We're going to close there.

John 17. How should we be preparing for that day? Jesus is praying an intercessory prayer, John 17, for you and for me, for his church. Verse 13, he says, now I come to thee.

Remember, he had fulfilled his mission. And these things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. That's John 17, verse 13.

I have given them thy word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. And here's how we should be preparing so we don't lose our song in an evil time.

He said, I pray, God, my father, don't take the church out of the world in a sense, but keep them from the evil. And here is really the preparation because the word evil in the Greek text is *poneros*, and it has a twofold application. Number one, keep them from the more it means moral evil.

Keep them from the moral evil that will be in this world manifested through the hearts and lives of those who are without Christ. And of course, increasing until the world explodes in a lawlessness and depravity that is going to shock even the hardest of sinners. I picked up a newspaper yesterday, just casually reading it going out for something to eat in the evening.

And one newspaper started to read about adults who have been arrested this last week for having sex, group sex on a train. I'll read about high schoolers who have been arrested for attacking and attempting to rape a 13-year-old girl in a classroom. And the list goes on and on and on.

The depravity. I read about a musician who's coming to the city to do a concert somewhere and says, I intend to sing the most vulgar, depraved lyrics I can find. And everybody seems to think this is all right.

And it even gets worse. I mean, if I would have brought it here, and we'd become so sensitized to it. Incredible spread of evil.

When Brother Dave stood in 19, I believe it's 73, and warned the church world that our homes were going to become porno centers, people thought he had lost his mind. The Holy Spirit told him in a few short years, every home in America is going to have access to pornography. There was no cable then.

There were no VCRs then. There was, it was almost unthinkable. But now we're living there.

Also in that newspaper, some of the companies, clothing companies are turning to softcore pornography now to advertise in the stores and marketing teenagers. Others are saying we're going to push the envelope now on sexual acts on television. Oh, folks, if the Lord carries another 20 years, it is going to be horrific what's going to be happening in our world.

How far do you think we are from roving gangs? What do you think happens if a society breaks down? This stuff is not at the bottom of the pot anymore. It's risen right to the top waiting to boil over. And whatever is left of seeking hearts in society is going to look to the church, the true church, and say, sing us a song of hope.

Keep them from the moral evil. Oh, beloved, for God's sake, turn it off because it will take your song. You're in a strange land when everything falls apart and people are running in the streets looking for hope.

You're not going to have a song. You have to turn it off. Get away from it.

Society says we'd be out of touch. Good. I'd rather be in touch with eternal things, in touch with the things of God.

Poneros has a second meaning. It means spiritual evil, not just moral evil. I pray you keep them from the moral evil, but keep them from the spiritual evil.

Now, spiritual evil is that which declares itself to be but is not God. Spiritual evil focuses on the temporal. It derives its joy from pleasant circumstances.

Spiritual evil is that which has nothing to do with the will of God and the purpose of God clearly told us and shown us through Jesus Christ. Spiritual evil takes the wonderful truth of the cross and twists it into something perverse that tells us that Christianity is just something we use to better ourselves. That is spiritual evil.

It is an aptness, by definition, to a shrewd or calculated or crooked turn in the road. Father, keep them from spiritual evil. Keep them from that which will cause them to turn from the purposes of God when things get tough, when it doesn't look pleasant, when Christ is talking about a cup, when Christ is saying, you're going to drink it too.

Keep them, Father, from turning to another gospel. Keep them from turning to something that will tickle their ears and make them comfortable, but it's not truth. And then when comfort is gone, where's their song? What do they do? What do they worship? How do they worship? When all the theology is washed out from under them, it's gone.

If the stock market collapses tomorrow, beloved, two-thirds of the churches in America are going to be wiped out. The theology won't stand. It's all about the now.

It's all about self-improvement, self-betterment. It's all about self when Christ says, no, you're to deny yourself. I have something for you.

You are to enter into my work for eternity. You are to be given a new mind and a new heart. Otherwise, all the deposit that I've placed in you will be for nothing.

What would be the point of the deposit? You'll come back to me empty-handed. You will be able to talk about all the wonderful things that you have, but I'm not interested in that, God says. I'm interested in where are the spiritually naked that you brought to a covering? Where are the imprisoned that I could use you to set free? Where are the hungry that your life fed? Where are the thirsty that found drink through the Spirit of God operating through your life? Where are they? Where are they? Here you see, I'm going to go to Mark 15.

This will be the last scripture. Well, it may be not. Mark 15, I'll show you the ultimate in spiritual crookedness.

Christ is on the cross. The devil is manifesting his doctrine as it is through the spiritual leaders all around him. And it's as clear as it's written.

Mark 15, 30. Here's the doctrine of the devil. Christ is drinking a cup that his father gave him.

But in verse 30, the devil speaking through those around says, save yourself and come down from the cross. There it is. Escape.

Find a comfortable path for yourself. You don't have to go through this. Let's not talk about suffering.

Let's not suffer. Let's talk about blessing. Let's talk about giving and receiving.

Let's talk about ruling and reigning. Come down from the cross. You see, that's been the devil's cry to the church since Calvary.

No, we don't atone for our own sins, but beloved, there is a cup. Now, some get through life relatively easy, and that's fine. I mean, I have no problem with that whatsoever, but others don't.

Some, by God's grace, are entrusted with things that others don't understand. And the devil is there to say, save yourself, escape, find an easier path. And Jesus responds incredibly.

Verse 34 says, at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani, which is being interpreted, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Now, I want to draw something to your attention. Psalm 22 is a song. He's not declaring that God has forsaken him.

He is singing a song. That's an incredible thing, because the psalms are songs. They were written to be sung to an instrument, like songs that we sing on this platform.

And he begins with the first verse of Psalm 22. It's an amazing thing. At the last supper, he says, now, let's sing a hymn.

And on the cross, when the devil is trying to say, come down, save yourself, find an easier path to this, this thing that God has called you to do, he responds. And it's among the last words of his life. And he says, he starts, in a sense, and I realize because of the agony, he's not able to perhaps sing this, but it was designed to be a song.

Now, I want to look at some of the words of what he was saying. Psalm 22, beginning at verse 22. Now, he does go through from the previous verses and talks about his situation and how difficult it is and how his strength is dried up and he's poured out like water, his bones are out of joint.

He cries out to God the Father to save him from the lion's mouth. But in verse 22, he says, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Ye that fear the Lord, praise him. And all ye that seek of Jacob, glorify him, and fear him, all that seek of Israel. Now, Christ is saying, Father, I'm going to have a congregation.

There's going to be a church. There's going to be a bride. And when the devil comes and tries to get them to escape the difficult times that they may be heading into, I'm going to stand in the midst of that congregation and I'm going to praise you.

I'm going to bless you because you're going to be faithful to me. You're going to raise me from the dead just like you said you would. I'm going to overcome.

I'm going to triumph over the powers of hell and darkness. And I'm going to be the song in the midst of my people. Hallelujah.

Ye that fear the Lord, praise him. All ye that seek of Jacob, glorify him, and fear him, all that seek of Israel. He is not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, nor has he hid his face from him.

But when he cried to him, he heard. My praise shall be of thee and the great congregation. I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

The meek shall eat and be satisfied, and they shall praise the Lord that seek him. And your heart shall live forever. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord.

And all the kindreds in the nation shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among the nations. And all they that are fat on the earth shall eat and worship.

And all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed, now that's the church of Jesus Christ, shall serve him. It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born that he has done this. A generation shall come, and there will be a song, and I will be their song in the midst of their heart. And in the midst of trial and adversity, like the apostle Paul, they shall say, I am persuaded neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor powers, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul said, we're accounted as sheep for the slaughter, but in all these things, we are more than conquerors to him that loved us. There will be a song. There will be the shout of a king will be in the midst of them.

No power of hell will take the song of Christ out of his church. He will be glorified. He says they shall declare that he has done this.

Verse 31, the word for declare in the Hebrew is negad, and it means this, to declare, to explain, to announce, to reveal something which one could not know without revelation, and to celebrate with praise. They will come and something will be known through them, as in the midst of their trial, they celebrate with praise that can only come from the very life of God within them. There's no other way they could have it.

There's no other way it could be known. Hallelujah. How it must delight the heart of God when his church goes into a season of adversity with the society around it, but is not carried away by that society.

They have been lifted by the arms of Christ long ago. They've been carried in the bosom of God, and people in New York City can turn and say, sing to us a song of Zion, and out of our inward parts comes living water. It doesn't mean we stand back and begin to sing a hymn.

The song is that confidence in God that comes out of the heart because it's been established in our mind. Isaiah 24, last scripture for real this time. I have to read this because it's so profound.

Isaiah 24 is the chapter that describes God's judgment on the whole earth. Verse 4, the earth mourns and fades away. The world languishes and fades away.

The haughty people of the earth do languish. That means just lose strength like melted ice. The earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant.

That's chapter 24 of Isaiah, verse 5. Therefore has the curse devoured the earth. That's the curse of sin. And they that dwell therein are desolate.

Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men left. The new wine mourns, the vine languishes, and all the merry-hearted sigh. The mirth of tabrets has ceased, and the noise of them that rejoice ends, and the joy of the harp ceases.

In other words, all false superficial joy is gone. They shall not drink wine with a song. Strong drinks shall be bitter to them that drink it.

There'll be no refuge in anything that the world has to offer. The city of confusion is broken down. Every house is shut up.

Everyone is in panic and fear. They've locked themselves in their houses that no man may come in. There is crying for wine in the streets.

All joy is darkened and the mirth of the land is gone. The city in the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction. In other words, there's no plan to get out of the difficult situation.

There's nothing but desolation left in the city. And when thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice.

They shall sing for the majesty of the Lord. They shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore, glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea.

This is not just for Israel. Now, the isles are quite often a reference to the other nations and continents in the world. He said there's going to be a lifting up when all of these things are happening around you.

There's going to be a joy that begins to rise up in a certain type of person. It's as if a harvest has come to them. They have sown and something is now grown.

And when everyone else is looking for hope and for joy, they have found it because their whole focus has been in the right place. From the uttermost part of the earth, we have heard songs, even glory to the righteous. Actually, another translation says glory to the righteous one.

From the uttermost part of the earth, even in the midst of desolation and trial and difficulty, Isaiah says we have heard songs of glory to the righteous one. In the midst of the fire, there is a bride that has a song. It has not been taken from her because her song had nothing to do with this world.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

We need to prepare to sing in difficult times. And today, I know clearly what the Holy Spirit has spoken in my heart. Jesus said protect them from the moral evil.

Keep them from it, Father, because he knew it would take your song. Protect them from spiritual wickedness, crooked paths. There are some here today, you say, Pastor, I have no oil.

I'm in a trial and I have no joy. I have no confidence in God. It seems that I've been ever learning and that deposit does not produce fruit.

I'm passionless when it comes to winning people to Christ. God, forgive me. If I am so powerless now, what will I be like when all hell breaks out on the face of the earth? What will I be like then if I don't have a

song now? How inconceivable that I will have one then.

There are some here today that just need to say, Jesus, you've got to come and teach me how to sing now. You've got to teach me how to trust you now. In my present situation, whatever that situation is, Christ, you've got to help me.

I've got to get to victory today. I can't constantly live for a million tomorrows. I've got to start singing about your faithfulness today.

And when that cries in your heart, the Holy Spirit is going to come and say, let me show you now what's taking away your song. I can almost guarantee you today, if you are a partaker of moral evil, that you don't have a song in time of trial. If you are vicariously, as they say, enjoying other people's sins, you enjoy, you wouldn't do it, but you enjoy watching others do it.

You are a partaker of moral evil. And that thing is like a plug being pulled in your spiritual life, just draining the very joy and trust in God out of your heart and out of your spirit. You've got to get away from it now.

Time is getting short. There's others that say, God, you've been sitting under the word for so long, and I'm so fruitless. All I have is what is yours.

And that's what this man came back and says, well, here I am. You know, you deposited all this truth in me. Well, here I am.

Aren't you excited? The Lord says, no, I'm not. I'm not. I deposited in you for a purpose.

And if you had a true living relationship with me, you would have been seeking that purpose. And the purpose will always manifest in a heart, the heart of God to fallen man around you. You can't get away.

That's God's purpose. Anyone who tried to divert that is crooked. God's purpose is to save the lost and to bring those that are outside into the kingdom of heaven.

His purpose is fulfilled by having a people that he changes and empowers with such a trust that the unregenerate look and say, surely, surely there is a God. He has a people that he can take through trial. He can take them through dark times as a living proof that he is everything that he has promised to us that he has.

My altar call today is to the. The person, especially who's going through the trial, and you don't have a song now. I'm not I'm not belittling your trial.

Some trials are very dark and very deep and heavy. But a time of incredible trial is coming to the whole the whole of this city for sure. Most likely the whole of the world, if you can't sing now.

You're not going to sing then you have to let the Holy Spirit take you to the place where you can face your worst nightmare and say, God is so good. He is so good to me. So good.

I'll tell you, if there was a sinner in that room. Unconverted, non convicted, there is absolutely no way you could have left that room unconvinced of the reality of God. Let that be your testimony.

Let that be mine. In everything that God wants to do in us. If you are captivated by moral evil, please come to this altar and repent.

Get it right. God doesn't want you to come here just to hang your head and cry some hot tears. He wants to give you joy.

If you could, if you have to have a long term perspective or or even repentance looks like an empty exercise. Repentance is so that God's joy can be released in you. It's not just to make you sad.

It's to give you joy. Father, just thank you so much. Lord, that you have you have given me truly the ability to speak your heart today.

I do praise you for it with all my heart. God, I just so thank you that you are preparing us for a very difficult day. We will not be caught off guard.

You prepared us for September the 11th. We weren't caught off guard. You're preparing us for another day.

We don't know what the future holds. We don't know how wicked the society is going to become. But we know that if we are in right relationship, you will give us a song that can't be taken from us.

God, I thank you for it from the very depths of my heart. And I pray for this church. I pray for every person here today that can hear my voice.

That my God, you give us the grace to respond. Give us the grace, Jesus, to become the people you've called us to be. Help us to see and to understand spiritual things.

Take us away from crooked spiritual paths. My God, help us. Father, I thank you in Jesus' mighty name.

If the Holy Spirit is drawing you today and he's spoken to your heart about something, you need to get right with God. As we stand together, I'm going to ask you, please make your way to this altar. Balcony, you can go to either exit.

The main sanctuary, slip out. Just please make your way here. Education annex.

If you could just go right between the screens and we'll pray with you as well. Let's all stand together. The Holy Spirit is drawing you.

And you're saying, Pastor, I want a song to sing in the difficult times. I want a song that can't be taken away by circumstance. Those that need to get right with God, please just move right in.

Come ahead. Move right in. Those that are coming, God bless you.

If you're backslidden, come get right with God. Give your life to Christ. If you are without Christ, if you're lost in sin, come and he will receive you.

Just come with an honest heart saying, Lord, I'm a sinner. I need a savior. I'm asking you to come and take away my sin and touch my life.

I know this is not an easy all recall, but it's the one that will give you life. If you are serious, God is serious about what he plans to do in you. The Holy Spirit's drawing you come.

Hallelujah. Those that have come to this altar, just pray with me now. Lord Jesus, though everything is desolate and smitten around me, yet you promise to put a song of confidence and joy deep in my heart.

A song that people can see and they will see it and fear and trust in the Lord. Forgive me for allowing things to come into my heart, known sin and spiritual crookedness where I've tried to take and tried to find an easier pathway out of the hard times in my life. But Lord, you didn't call me to take an easier path.

You said you would walk with me. We would drink the cup together and an abiding joy and abiding love would be my portion forever. Jesus, right now, raise your hands with me, please.

Right now. I thank you for pouring your love and your joy into my heart in the midst of my circumstance. I thank you for a new song of trust and joy and praise.

My God, thank you. You're going to give me a song in the middle of my difficult time and I believe that no matter what comes my way in the days ahead, that this song cannot be taken out of my heart because it's you, Jesus. You are singing it in the middle of my life, in the middle of my heart, in the middle of my situation.

This is your song. This is your testimony. This is your joy.

You have invited me to be a partaker of it. Jesus, thank you for drinking the cup with me, for being my friend, my guide, my life, my hope, my joy, my eternity. I give you praise.

I give you glory. I thank you, Lord. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. My God, thank you.

My God, thank you. My God, thank you. Hallelujah.

Now, the end result, the end result is joy. The end result of coming to an altar like this and responding to the word of God is joy. Joy.

Shouts of joy abound in the tents of the righteous of the Lord. Not just in Times Square Church, but in your tent. When you go home tonight, even if you're all alone or your situation is difficult, God says, shout joy.

Shouts of joy are going to abound in your tent. Shouts of joy, a song. Hallelujah.

This is the conclusion of the message.

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